



REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)

VOLUME - 11 | ISSUE - 1 | OCTOBER - 2021



MARKETING STRATEGY OF TOURISM SECTOR IN BIHAR: AN APPRAISAL

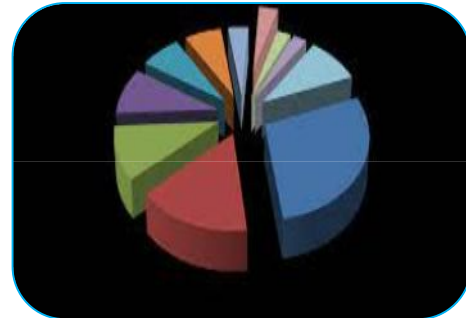
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ABSTRACT:

In the modern era, the tourism sector has grown as one of the dominant sunrise sectors throughout the world. It is one of the productive sectors and a significant component of socio-economic activity, but in Bihar this sector is facing series of problems due to several reasons. Against this backdrop, it is a major task before the tourism industry to bring reasonable changes in the policy. Thus, it would be worthwhile to study to what extent both tourism management as well as people concerned are ready to adopt the changes and make proper marketing strategy to bring this sector on rail in Bihar.



KEY WORDS: Tourism, Bihar, Marketing Strategy.

INTRODUCTION:

The first half of the 21st century paved avenues for a number of positive developments and tourism has emerged as a national movement due to its strengths to solve the problems of unemployment and poverty. Presently, tourism sector finds symptoms of economic depression and it is difficult to forecast how long the trend will continue and whether the intensity will increase and aggravate. Tourism sector constitutes one of the largest sectors throughout the globe. This sector contributes a big volume of revenue (about 7 trillion dollar) per annum to the economy of the world. It had been predicted that this sector will be accountable for 70 million additional employments throughout the globe. It had also been expected that by 2030 tourists' arrival will go up to 1.9 billion.

Unfortunately, tourism sector all over the world is facing new threats, challenges and changes because of recession and competition. Several international phenomena like terrorist attack, wars, **Covid-19** pandemic and lockdown have altered the fate and future of tourism services. Increasing demand of tourist, emphasis on sustainability issues along with socio-economic, political and environmental developments changed the way business are executed in the tourism industry. Tourism services are increasingly integrating marketing principles in their management and are becoming more market-oriented. Tourism industry must open new vistas for meeting various challenges through integrated marketing strategy. This sector has been major social phenomenon of the societies all over the world. It is indispensable sector for the economic development of the country. It is low capital, labour intensive industry having an economic multiplier effect and has all the potential to stimulate

other economic sectors like hospitality, agriculture, horticulture, handicrafts, transport, construction and many others. Tourism is an act of travel for the purpose of recreation. It is essentially a pleasure activity in which the money earned in one's normal domicile is spent in the places visited. It is a service industry comprising a number of tangible and intangible components. Tourism is concerned with the people who desire going away from their own homes on short-term visits.

MITHILANCHAL IN BIHAR

Bihar has been distinguished for its spiritual outlook since time immemorial. It is the birth place of two important religions namely Buddhism and Jainism and also that of Guru Govind Singh of Sikhism. This state is well known also for the Muslim shrines. It has recorded a good number of religious tourists from China, Japan, Thailand and Korea especially in the form of Buddhist pilgrims. For promotion of tourism and attracting more and more tourists, Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation (BSTDC) was established in 1981. During yester decades the tourism scenario in Bihar has changed for the better, resulting in exponential growth of tourism. State Tourism Policy, 2002 and Marketing strategy worked in right manner to diversify the image of state tourism from pilgrimage to leisure destination through marketing of white-sand beach of Ganga river, Dolphin watch, visit of historical sites, water activities and bird watching sites of the state. Bihar in course of years developed to a rich historic site with diverse culture and tradition. We can witness here flavorsome extracts of the legacy of different empires. Important places of tourist interest are Rajgir, Nalanda, Vaishali, Pawapuri (where Lord Mahavira breathed his last and attained Nirvana), Bodh Gaya, Vikramshila (ruins of Buddhist University of higher learning), Patna (Patliputra) and Sasaram (tomb of Shershah Suri).

A variety of fairs and festivals are powerful tool of showcasing the culture of Bihar to the tourists. These events may attract domestic and foreign tourists. Conventional publicity measures have been adopted by the state government to promote tourism, but there is an urgent need for qualitative improvement and hence more focus should be given on IT and electronic media in order to attract more and more tourists in Bihar. Market research programme is an essential input for sustainable development of tourism in this state; hence it should be promoted. Compilation of statistics and commissioning of research studies are very crucial and so focus should be given on preparation of perspective plans for the state and master plan for the tourist places in order to promote tourism by attracting tourists.

Development is an ongoing process while change is a natural phenomenon. During yester decades, we find a large scale domination of techni-driven culture in almost all areas. The information and communication technologies have proved very much instrumental in improving the operational efficiency of tourism services. Tourism sector finds a change in the behavioural pattern of users of services. The tourists, of late, are much more conscious. This necessitates a fundamental change in the attitude of tourism service people bearing the responsibility of managing the tourism affairs. Bihar (Mithila) is famous for Madhubani Painting and Makhana. This region has the potential of attracting tourists from across the globe. Various tourist places of this state may attract the attention of domestic and foreign tourists but for this proper marketing strategy is required.

Last but not the least, no effort for promoting tourism in Bihar would yield positive results without removing the anomalies in the feeder line and adopting proper marketing strategies. Lack of proper marketing strategy, political changes, unskilled work force, vanishing work culture, cases of indecent behaviour and negative attitude of majority of tourism people are few of the prominent factors paralyzing smooth and goal-oriented functioning of tourism in Bihar. By and large, almost all the state managed tourism spots in India have been facing the same problem. In the prevailing conditions, this sector needs a network of sophisticated infrastructure, world class performers and proper marketing strategy. This sector being part of service sector needs a marketing strategy for improving the marketing mix of 7 P's like Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence and Process.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Corporate culture considerably influenced by globalization engineered a sound foundation for the process of economic transformation which has injected new life, strength and continuity to consumerism in which comforts, amenities and facilities emerge as a status symbol. Of late, tourism sector in Bihar has also been successful in sensing, serving and satisfying tourists by formulating a strategy providing much more comforts and convenience but till date this sector is glaringly lacking these traits in absence of sound marketing strategy.

Nothing is possible when tourism services continue with a brigade of non-performers and nothing is impossible when it has a team of star performers. Presently tourism sector in Bihar is facing image problem resulting into large scale migration of people to other sectors and states. The tourism in Bihar is encountering a number of problems and the most effective ways of resolving the same is making available to them quality people and practice of sound marketing strategy. Ad hoc basis appointment of different echelons of managerial cadre need departure. This sector cannot expect managerial proficiency from those who themselves are not of good quality. Proper marketing strategies require the understanding of business challenges. A marketing strategy should be flexible in order to respond to change in customer needs, desires and preferences to identify new market segments and target them properly. This industry needs to organize various factors influencing marketing strategy like resources and competencies they possess. A competitive marketing strategy requires decisions on the product market in which a tourism industry competes, the level of investment needed and the functional area related to strategies like product line, positioning, pricing, distribution and segmentation.

Behaviour is considered to be an important dimension of tourism marketing simplifying the task of marketers in various ways. In this environmental conditions, a number of developments take place and all throw an impact on behaviour of tourism customers. The needs and requirements, likes and dislikes and levels of expectation are influenced by the flow of discretionary income and techno-driven information. In this context, it is highly desirable to take these factors into consideration while formulating effective marketing strategy of this sector. It is essential that marketing professionals have an in-depth knowledge of changing behavioural profile so that they develop their awareness of the levels of expectation and make honest effort to satisfy them.

In the modern era, the tourism sector has grown as one of the dominant sunrise sectors throughout the world. It is one of the productive sectors and a significant component of socio-economic activity, but in Bihar this sector is facing series of problems due to several reasons. Against this backdrop, it is a major task before the tourism industry to bring reasonable changes in the policy. Thus, it would be worthwhile to study to what extent both tourism management as well as people concerned are ready to adopt the changes and make proper marketing strategy to bring this sector on rail in Bihar.

The present research proposes to explore extensively the issue of highlighting places of religious, historical and cultural importance along with other probable spots of tourist interest. Further, an in-depth analysis of the state of unskilled staff manning this sector, prevailing infrastructure and facilities of tourists' convenience and security will also be taken up. Having made these analyses, practical measures would be suggested to do away with shortcomings in these areas so that more and more tourists could be attracted to these places and feel assured of convenience and comfortable facilities. The suggestions thus made would address to the whole gamut of marketing mix of 7 P's with a view to accelerating the pace of tourism sector in the region of Bihar optimally.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A few review of literature related to research work are stated below:

- **Jamal, (2014)** said regarding the implication of the tourism marketing knowledge based on sustainable development and changing behavioral pattern. He further highlighted the various challenges that must be negated in order to make this sector profit oriented.

- **Raja and Baiju, (2012)** in their publication "The Marketing Strategies for Beach Tourism in Kerala" have identified how to find out market for beach tourism and attempted to find out the existing facilities for tourists at the beaches and the type of facilities rising to the expectation of the tourists, besides suggesting ways and means to develop an effective marketing strategy for tourism in Kerala.
- **Selvam, (2014)** in his study "Tourism Industry in India – A Study of its Growth and its Development Needs" has attempted to analyze the growth of tourism industry in India on the basis of tourist arrivals. The study has also analyzed the important tourist infrastructural facilities like tourist attraction, accommodation and transport. The role of tourist guides and travel agents in the marketing of tourism has been discussed.
- **Madhavan, (1999)** in his study "Marketing Strategy – India as a destination for leisure holidays" deals with marketing mix and benefits of tourism and has segmented the tourist market as geographic, demographic, socio-economic and psychographic. This study analyses the potential tourist market for India.
- **Hussain, (2007)** focused on issues related to growth of tourism in terms of accommodation, accessibility, attractions and amenities and suggests making tourism economically viable and ecologically sustainable which can be achieved only through appropriate and effective marketing strategy.
- **Stokes, (2008)** described events tourism by citing the definition as the planning, development and marketing of events as tourist attraction to maximise the number of tourists participating in events as either primary or secondary attraction. Further, he has critically discussed strategy as an integrated set of policies and programmes intended to achieve the vision and goals of the destination.
- **Chaturvedi, (2007)** observed in the context of tourism that Bihar has obtained a distinct and honourable status as an administrative unit on the same footing as that of the more important provinces in the country which has given a boost to tourism in Bihar. He also points out that

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study socio-economic significance of tourism sector in Bihar.
2. To identify the challenges and opportunities of tourism sector in Bihar.
3. To study the marketing strategy of tourism sector to attract more and more tourists in Bihar.
4. To provide suggestive measures for betterment of tourism sector in Bihar.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Today we are on the threshold of a new era, an era in which people of all classes will come to regard travel as norm of life. The various angles through which the importance of tourism sector can be seen include the economic benefits and to a great extent ideological exchange of ideas on various issues. The tourism sector has experienced tremendous growth because of growing economy, higher disposable incomes and improving infrastructure. The government should support air connectivity, projection of status and increasing awareness domestically and internationally, availability of trained guides, reasonably priced hotel accommodation, better tourism infrastructure etc. A large number of pilgrimage centres exist in Bihar which require some investment for improvement for providing better amenities. The tourist pilgrimage centres are frequently visited by domestic tourists where in most cases the basic amenities are missing. Bihar is offering many world class heritages, sites, bio-geographical zones and attractive places. It has viewed arrival of millions of domestic and foreign tourists in the year 2018-19, but attack of corona virus (**COVID-19**) and lockdowns has changed the fate and future of this sector in the state. Further, we have to bring this sector best in class in Bihar.

The future existence and effectiveness of tourism sector in a competitive and financially difficult climate depends not only on its ability to satisfy customer's needs and desires but also to strategically respond to current challenges. This is why strategic marketing becomes an urgent need for contemporary tourism services. The practice of marketing strategies by tourism services can provide it opportunity to respond to latest threat, to achieve competitive advantage and to increase their effectiveness. Strategic marketing is an integrated pattern of decisions that specify its crucial choice concerned to products, markets, marketing activities and marketing resources. A marketing strategy refers to a set of specific ideas and actions that outline and govern tourism sector decisions and managing in the most effective manner, its marketing mix and competitive advantage. Keeping in view its advantages, strategic marketing in the tourism sector is increasingly becoming important for both theoretical and applied perspectives.

HYPOTHESIS

The study is based on the following hypotheses:

1. Tourism plays a significant role in uplifting of economic development of Bihar.
2. Marketing strategy of tourism sector have wide impact on infrastructural development of the state.
3. Marketing strategy of tourism sector can accelerate the attraction of tourists in Bihar.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The validity of research is based on the systematic method of data collection and analysis. The research design will be descriptive and exploratory in nature. The study will make an attempt to analyze the existing data. Both primary and secondary data will be used for the study. The primary data for the study will be collected from sample respondents of tourism sector of Bihar. Primary data will be collected through Survey method using Questionnaire. An exclusive field study and interview will be conducted from stakeholders to find out the marketing strategy of tourism sector. Secondary data will be collected from

- Books
- Journals and Magazines
- Reports
- Reference Annuals
- Newspapers
- Web sources

With the help of data analysis, interpretations will be made by mathematical techniques and statistical tools, like

- Ratio Analysis
- Proportion
- Trend Analysis
- Mean or Average
- Standard Deviation
- Correlation Analysis
- ANOVA Test

PLAN OF WORK

The research work will be arranged in five chapters namely,

Chapter – 1: Introduction

This chapter will be introductory in nature and will deal with problem to be studied, objectives of the study, hypothesis followed by research methodology. This chapter will also highlight the plan of the work.

Chapter – 2: Tourism Sector in Bihar

In this chapter, focus will be put on various challenges and opportunities existing in tourism sector in Bihar.

Chapter – 3: Tourism Marketing Strategy: A Conceptual Framework

In this chapter focus will be given on the basic concepts of tourism sector.

Chapter – 4: Marketing Strategy of Tourism Sector in Bihar: An Appraisal

Tourism sector has been instrumental in shaping economic development. In this chapter, an appraisal will be made to find out proper marketing strategy for tourism sector in Bihar in order to make this sector more productive and result oriented.

Chapter – 5: Findings and Suggestions

In the last chapter of the present study, major findings will be presented. Thereafter, conclusions will be drawn and suitable suggestions will be put forth relating to significance of marketing strategy in tourism sector in Bihar for the benefits of various stakeholders.

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