

Marketing Strategy of Tourism in Bihar: An Evaluation

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Abstract

In tourism sector, all activities starts and ends with the tourist. The needs of the tourist should be identified, according to which the tourism product should to be designed and developed. Tourism marketing plays a major role in this sector. Where, initially market research is done to identify the needs of the tourist, to achieve the objectives of the organization by increasing the sales volume by gradually improving the satisfaction level of the tourist for a long term, to excel the competitor with unique product quality. Apart from segmenting the needs of the tourist, targeting the potential tourist and positioning the product in the minds of the tourist, it is also important to implement the concepts of tourism marketing mix to convert the potential tourist into actual tourist. Hence secondly, tourism marketing mix concepts should be studied to explore its significance with tourist satisfaction. Tourism product formulation, price policies and strategies formulation, designing distribution networks and improving promotional channels, proper environment to deliver the product, skilled and trained employee should be deputed to deliver the service and further the activities taken to deliver the services. Hence with the implementation of seven P's marketing mix strategies will increase the level of performance which will obviously perceive the highly satisfied tourist response. Thus, tourism industry is totally tourist centred.

The present Bihar State is bounded by Nepal on the north. West Bengal on the east, Jharkhand on the south and Uttar Pradesh on the west. The State has huge potentialities for the development of tourism sector. Benefits can be reaped by diversifying the marketing mix, increasing the member of tourists as well as their spending, promoting newer variants of tourism like eco-tourism, rural tourism etc. and above all, creating a positive image of Bihar. For the successful execution of marketing strategies or for translating the strategies into the meaningful purposes, it is essential to have a detailed knowledge of the changing behaviour of users or services. There are different categories of users like domestic and foreign, rural and urban, literate and illiterate, rich and poor etc. It is very natural that tourist

organisations in particular are well aware of their behaviour. This simplifies their task of creating and stimulating demand. SWOT Analysis is important when creating strategies for marketing. With the help of executing Suitable marketing efforts, we can change the present scenario and Tourism can be made a significant contributor of foreign exchange, employment and income in Bihar.

Key words: Bihar, Foreign Exchange, Marketing Strategy, SWOT Analysis, Tourism Sector.

Introduction

Tourism has been rightly said as a major social phenomenon of the societies all along and India is no exception. It is an indispensable sector for the economic development of the country. It is low capital, labour intensive industry having an economic multiplier effect and all the potential to stimulate other economic sectors through its forward and backward linkages with sectors like agriculture, horticulture, poultry, handicrafts, transport, construction and many others. The direct employment multiplier in case of tourism is fairly high.

Tourism today is the world's largest and fastest expanding industry. The vastness of its market, its unpredictability, the diversity of the product itself and above all, the financial and sociological rewards to be gained have made this industry one of the most fiercely competitive industry in the world. Tourism presents an unparalleled challenge to the economics of the developing nations. Its effect on creating Jobs and reducing unemployment is particularly noteworthy and also it has its effect on the industrial and commercial endeavours of the country, as a whole. Bihar remained an underrated tourist destination in India. It is ironic that Bihar was once the seat of one of the most prosperous ancient Indian kingdoms and today it suffers listlessness when it comes to heritage tourism in India. We may have a good amount of foreign tourist swarming in Bihar but the scenario reveals that they have all restricted themselves to fewer destinations in this historically affluent state.

Several tourist places are located in Bihar but they were never been in picture. Amongst the most famous places in Bihar is Gaya, which is a Hindu pilgrimage hub and a transit point for Buddhist pilgrimage Centre of Bodhgaya. It is also the state that gave two important religions - Buddhism and Jainism to the world. Bihar in course of years developed to a rich historic site with diverse culture and tradition. We can witness here flavoursome extracts of the legacy of different empire. 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), Gaya, Patna (ancient city of Patliputra). Sasaram (tomb of Shershah Suri) and Madhubani (Painting)

Darbhanga (Palace, Museum). Hence, a Sound Marketing strategy is needed in this sector in Bihar in order to make a plan for reaching prospective consumers and converting them into customers of tourism Products.

Like other industries, the tourism industry is also required to study the problems related to overall marketing strategy.

- How to make possible a fair blending of inputs and outputs?
- How to pave ways for excelling the competition?
- How to incorporate the required changes in the marketing mix in the face of emerging trends in competition?
- How to reach the target markets?
- How to accomplish the organisational goals?

All these questions are required to be suitably answered, especially while formulating an overall marketing strategy for the tourism industry. We can't deny the fact tourist organisations have been experiencing a number of problems, especially in the developing countries of the globe. The intensity of competition is found at peak as the leading tourist generating countries have made possible qualitative improvements in their marketing mix. This necessitates formulation of a sound overall marketing strategy as by doing such, the accomplishment of organisational goals would be possible. This would help an organisation in exploring opportunities and thus the tourism potential would be optimally utilized. In this regard a sound marketing strategy must be practiced to turn people into customer of the products of tourism in Bihar. The present study has been undertaken to make an evaluation of marketing strategy of tourism in Bihar.

Objectives of the Study

The present study has been carried out with the following objectives:

- I. To study the Socio-economic importance of tourism in Bihar,
- II. To analyse the future prospects of tourism in Bihar,
- III. To evaluate the marketing strategy of tourism in Bihar, and
- IV. To provide suggestive measures especially related to implementing marketing strategy for the development of tourism in Bihar.

Hypothesis

We have hypothesised that the marketing strategy in tourism sector being practiced at present in Bihar is not satisfactory.

Methodology of the Study

The validity of research is based on the systematic method of data collection and analysis. The research design is descriptive and exploratory in nature. The study has made an attempt to analyse the existing data. Both primary and secondary data have been used for the study. The Primary data for the study have been collected from sample respondents of Tourism Sector in Bihar. The data have been collected through survey method by administering questionnaire to people engaged in the tourism sector. An exclusive field study and interview have also been conducted of stakeholders to evaluate the marketing strategy of tourism in Bihar from respondents chosen from Patna, Gaya, Darbhanga and Madhubani Districts. We have chosen one hundred respondents from each district and altogether four hundred respondents' opinions/views have been considered for analysis and interpretation of result thereof.

The secondary data have been collected from different related

- Books,
- Journals and Magazines,
- Reports-Governmental and Non-governmental,
- Working Papers and Discussion Papers,
- Unpublished Theses/ Dissertations,
- Reference Annuals,
- Newspapers and Economic Dailies,
- Websites etc.

The collected data have been analysed and interpreted with the help of suitable mathematical and statistical tools and techniques like Ratios, Averages, Percentages, Sampling, X2 test etc. As per need and suitability, the findings have been presented with the help of bar graphs, pie charts etc.

Plan of Work

The present study has been presented in five chapters namely

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter of the study is introductory in nature and presents statement of the research hypothesis and problem, objectives, importance of the study followed by plan of the work.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

In this chapter, past studies related to marketing strategy of tourism have been reviewed.

Chapter 3: Marketing Strategy: An Exposition

Tourism is a multi-segment industry. The essence of marketing is bringing together the mix of products, possessing the efficacy of satisfying the users. Marketing of tourism involves identifying target markets, anticipating demand for tourism services, communicating the marketing offers to target consumers and executing service production and delivery to the satisfaction of customers. The chapter has been devoted to present an overview of marketing strategy.

Chapter 4: Marketing Strategy in Tourism Sector of Bihar: An Evaluation

In this chapter, analysis has been made on the marketing strategy of tourism in Bihar as well as other issues have also been covered which may boost the tourism sector in Bihar.

Chapter V: Findings and Suggestions

In the last chapter of the study major findings have been presented. Thereafter, conclusion has been drawn and suggestions have also been put forth.

Findings of the Study

Tourism Industry is the most vibrant tertiary sector activity, associated with hospitality and services. It is mainly a combination of 3 things-destination, accommodation and transportation and holds strategic importance in the economy of Bihar providing several socio-economic benefits like provision of employment, income, foreign exchange, development or expansion of other industry such as agriculture, construction, handicrafts etc. In addition, investment in infrastructure facilities such as transportation, accommodation and other tourism related services lead to an overall development of the economy.

The study reveals that

- ✓ Tourism, whether international or domestic, as an industry is tailor-made for a state like Bihar. The labour-intensive environment of the industry is particularly appropriate to its labour surplus economy.
- ✓ Bihar's huge labour force both skilled and un-skilled can act as a very strong point as tourism being a total service- based industry.
- ✓ Lack of security and safety measures for tourists ultimately affect the perception & tourism potential of the state.
- ✓ Lack of Tourism infrastructure such as Tourist Information Centres, transportation facilities, public conveniences such as toilets, refreshment centres etc. need to be taken care of.

- ✓ To attract tourist, there must be dissemination of information, infrastructural facilities like good Hotels, communication network hygienic food, availability of water etc. Most of places of tourists are not situated by the side of State/ National highway and approach road are not in good condition.
- ✓ Being located in isolation in terms of development, the area is facing challenges, which directly and indirectly curb the growth of tourism. The existing infrastructure, safety and security, local awareness and others are the major hindrance for the development of the tourism in the study area.
- ✓ Lack of coordinated efforts has also been found. Accordingly, for proper development of tourism Industry, there should be proper co-ordination among all the agencies related to the Industry.
- ✓ Lack of special tourism security force is another area of concern. Hence, for deployment at major tourist destinations, there should be special tourism security force
- ✓ Absence of trained tourist Guides is among several hindrances of tourism sector in Bihar. The state virtually doesn't have any training Institute for the Guides, who help the tourist on Important tourist places.
- ✓ The study depicts that tourist's perception of sustainable practices at Bihar tourist places is not significantly fulfil their expectations.
- ✓ Respondents have also not seen promotional material or advertisements of sustainable tourism significantly. Thus, the importance of sustainable tourism and its practices needs to be promoted across the state through different dimensions of advertising and promotions.
- ✓ Also, most people think that the state government is not taking the necessary steps and initiatives for the sustainable development of tourism in Bihar. Hence, the government needs to reframe its existing tourism policy and should allocate significant space to sustainability.
- ✓ Bihar has enormous potential for the tourism industry, directly or indirectly benefiting all other primary, secondary, and tertiary industries. However, due to poor infrastructure, lack of awareness, lack of political will, and bad governance, this industry is not flourishing to its fullest extent.
- ✓ The information about the various facilities, shown places and support to be provided by the government was uploaded on the website and have closely monitored by the administrative level. This has shown positive impact.
- ✓ Presence of beggars, and theft annoy the visitors and they often go back promising they will never come back to Bihar.

- ✓ Large-scale political demonstrations increase security risk in the state as we have seen the instances where mob got uncontrolled and damaged public property.
- ✓ Unregulated infrastructure development for tourism can lead to ecological and environmental imbalances. Disposal of waste, destruction of forest, depletion of water level, pollution caused by vehicles can be threatening for the environment.
- ✓ The market is at risk from extreme weather events like floods, rain and scorching summers.
- ✓ Infrastructure seems to be the biggest bottleneck, condition and maintenance of roads, problems of electricity, communication facilities, hygiene factors, pollution and litter on the roads create an annoying situation for the tourist. First of all information are not properly displayed to the tourist and if that is not the case, language creates a barrier especially for non-English speakers.
- ✓ Bihar has a vast variety of cuisine to offer to the tourist, but we have not been able to make the tourist experience the presence of world-class food nor have we marketed our own cuisine.
- ✓ As the tourism industry is closely integrated with several other industries like hotel and accommodation, aviation, railway, roadways, healthcare, entertainment etc., the combined weaknesses of all the sectors make it more vulnerable. Travelling around Bihar is problematic, despite several attempts to improve transfers between airlines, railways and buses.
- ✓ We may have well developed aviation sector, biggest network of trains in the world coupled with the buses and taxicab services, but all these system works independently, that often results in long waiting hours and create confusing situation for the tourist. The problem is that each of these transports systems works independently. An integrated approach, as perfected by more tourism focused countries, is essential.
- ✓ There are various factors which could contribute as key drivers of inbound tourism such as new product offerings, price competitiveness, rich natural/cultural resources and geographical diversity, government initiative and policy support, multiple marketing and promotion activities, healthy economic growth levels, host nations and states for major national international events and many more. The managers of tourism and hospitality industry should make best use of such potential so that tourism industry in Bihar can stand tall in the highly competitive market.

- ✓ The number of foreign tourists visiting Bihar has grown at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 39.6% between 2004 and 2018 as compared to the CAGR of 8.09% for the whole of India (www.bihartourism.gov.in). These figures illustrate the immense potential of Buddhist tourism in Bihar and suggests the possibility of tapping into that potential with the right set of tourism policies at state and national levels.
- ✓ In order to understand the attractiveness of Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Bihar, the statistics of foreign tourist's visits to different locations in the state must be examined. The data released by the government of Bihar shows the number of domestic and foreign tourists visiting different destinations in 2018 and it is evident from this, that the largest proportions of foreign tourists to Bihar visit Gaya, Bodhgaya, Rajgir, Nalanda and Vaishali (these are the major Buddhist tourism destinations) For example, 92.98% of all foreign tourists in Bihar went to these five destinations in 2018 (www.bihartourism.gov.in).
- ✓ Bihar has still more potential to attract foreign tourists as well as encourage domestic tourism. But this potential can be converted into a reality through vigorous marketing of the tourism products and services.
- ✓ Internet play an important role in attracting the worldwide customers for their products and services by just single click and today it become a major tool for the development of tourism sector of a country. It become popular and large access due to lower cost and higher profitability. Maximum number of countries widely use the internet to trade and travel and large number of population are familiar with the internet uses. With the use of IT, people in tourism sector have a good tool for transferring their data and also gain some benefit from marketing.
- ✓ In order to reap the benefits, we need to identify customer's needs Customers choose hotels and other hospitality services for a variety of reasons. From location to facilities and perks, service providers have to be sure that they're providing what buyers are looking for. The role of marketers is to identify what factors make customers choose a particular hospitality service, and this requires extensive research. By speaking to current and former guests, monitoring customer reviews on websites, reviewing industry data and more, marketing professionals learn what makes a hospitality service stand out, as well as how it can be improved.
- ✓ There is an urgent need to create awareness. If potential customers don't know about a service, they can't purchase it. That's where brand awareness comes in.

Marketers make sure information on hotels, resorts and restaurants is easy to find and up-to-date. They can do this by buying ad space on relevant travel sites, creating an engaging website and collaborating with other, noncompeting hospitality services in the same market.

- ✓ Booming Information Technology and Outsourcing, industry can also be a contributor in increasing tourist traffic to Bihar. Increasing internet penetration and smart phones have synced all the stakeholders. and helps in facilitating the dissemination of information. Use of app-based services will also help in boosting the sector. Use of social media destinations like Facebook, twitter, Pinterest and Instagram can be quite helpful for marketing of hotels and destinations.
- ✓ The utilization of social media has been identified as a potent mechanism for promoting and marketing destinations in Bihar. This platform enables tourists to virtually explore various destinations, share their experiences, and establish connections with fellow travellers. Social media has exerted a noteworthy influence on the decision-making process of tourists, who heavily depend on it to collect information, reviews, and recommendations regarding destinations, hotels, and attractions.
- ✓ Buddhist Circuit has a scope to start a heritage walk covering BodhGaya, Rajgir, Nalanda and Patliputra on one side while Vaishali, Vikramshila and kesariya at other side to enrich the tourism prospects. So, we need to Sensitize youth towards tourism and heritage conservation which will improve infrastructure and insure development and means of livelihood for local population.
- ✓ Tourists usually prefer to visit Bodh Gaya and get back without even take interest to cover other important sites like Rajgrih and Nalanda. Buddhist sites are scattered in the state, many of them are identified and many more sites are even not distinguished between Hinduism and Buddhism. This is the problem of proper awareness and destination image in tourist's mind with lack of branding by public and private stakeholders.
- ✓ Bihar is endowed with resources and natural vegetation that include forest cover and wildlife habitation. The major species of land animals are tiger, leopard, bear, hyena, bison, spotted deer, crocodile, gladiator, and varieties of fishes and barking deer, etc. The list of aqua species includes and different species of tortoises. Since a number of major rivers flow through the state, the national aquatic animal Gangetic Dolphins are found in abundance in Bihar.

The 60-kilometre stretch of the Ganga floodplain has been notified as a sanctuary for Gangetic Dolphins. Bihar is also inundated by Kanwar lake, Baraila lake, Kusheshwarsthan lake, Udaipur lake and manmade lakes such as Naagi dam and Nakati dam. The dams and lakes have been notified as natural wetland for different kinds of species. Bihar has a national park, a liger reserve, 13 wildlife enclosures, two conservation reserves, and one community reserve.

- ✓ Eco-Tourism is one among the diverse portfolio of niche tourism products in Bihar. Its rich natural scenery and wildlife make it an important destination for ecological tourism. People, who fancy traveling to new places will appreciate the flora and fauna of Bihar. Bihar Eco-Tourism has much to offer to travellers. Eco-tourism is intended to offer tourists insights into the impact of human beings on the environment, and to foster a greater appreciation of our natural habitats. An integrated holistic plan should be prepared to promote the community based eco-tourism. It must ensure the involvement of all stakeholders and be implemented through the local people in order to harness the potentialities which is yet to be fully exploited and reap benefits.
- ✓ Indian movies and their actors are quite popular in South-East Asia. Shooting on locations in Bihar can increase the popularity of the destinations.
- ✓ Bihar is also renowned for its religious places. There are many Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Muslim and Sikh shrines, which abound this ancient land. Some of the noteworthy Bihar travel destinations are Nalanda, Rajgir, Sitamarhi, Bodh Gaya, Patna, Vaishali, Vikramshila, and Pawapuri. People visiting Ayodhya can be attracted to visit Sitamarhi-the birth place of Mata Janki. Hoardings may be displayed at suitable places so that attraction of visitors might be caught.
- ✓ In the economy of Bihar, Tourism sector induces the tourists for investment in the form of good purchasing. A lot of handicrafts are recognized in world market like Bhagalpur Silk, Mithila Paintings, horticulture based products and the tourists from foreign countries make a huge purchase.
- ✓ Economy of Bihar is still an underdeveloped economy. As we know, Bihar has a great tourism potential, due to its unique heritage, culture and avenues of all three important religions, i.e. Buddhism, Jainism & Sikhism respectively.
- ✓ Tourism potential in Bihar will give the opportunities the tourists to understand the traditions, food habits observe the life style of Biharies, the foreign tourists would participate in the festivals of Bihar, rituals and forms of

other cultural expressions. Tourism would involve a study, research and purchase of local products.

- ✓ Bihar Tourism could be very fascination for the foreign as well as domestic tourists as rural & semi-urban Bihar presents a interesting site because of their unique life styles, fresh environment and splendid beauty.
- ✓ The famous sites which are recognized as the tourist places at Patna, Nalanda, Rajgir, Bodh-Gaya, Vaishali, Sasaram, Jehanabad, Vikramshila, Madhubani, Nandangarh, Rajnagar, Kakolat, Buxar, Munger & all of them have their own glory but unfortunately to the tourists, they are not taking them as tourist demand.
- ✓ The traditional tourists sites like Bodh-Gaya, Nalanda, Rajgir, Parasnath, Mandarhil, Vikramshila, Patna Sahib have been promoted by the Government of Bihar & its public sector, namely, Bihar State Tourism Development corporation. All of them promote community based tourism, participatory and designed to improve the economic and social well being of local people in addition to the concerned institutional and physical environment.
- ✓ It also pin-points the need for careful planning to project the integrity of sites and minimize harmful impacts. Moreover, the local community needs to plan ahead to ensure that tourism sustains and benefits local community sociocultural.
- ✓ In Bihar, Rural tourism has immense scope of flourishing as a socio-economic venture supportive to the conservation and promotion of natural biodiversity of the countryside which will be the instrumental in sustainable development of Bihar, but such dream could be realized only when the issue of rural tourism would be taken up as an innovative strategic marketing endeavour by the entrepreneurial. That will must he supported by Government Initiatives in the interest of rise and development of Rural Tourism industry and Rural Tourism Entrepreneurs.

Suggestions

In the context of marketing front, We need to

- ✓ Identify the ideal target market: The first step to developing a successful marketing campaign is identifying who the ideal target market is. Depending on the experience on offer, the customer will vary.

- ✓ Attract new customers and develop loyalty: Once the ideal target market has been identified, a strategy to reach these potential customers must be developed. Because customer loyalty is key, a lot of time needs to be devoted to building brand awareness and creating ongoing, interconnected campaigns that both target. Previous guests, and attract new ones.
- ✓ Understand the customer journey: In tourism, the ultimate end goal is the sale of an experience-not a material object. This means that the customer journey to making a purchase is rather different and comes with its own set of challenges. Understanding this journey that the customer takes before going through with a purchase is critical to a successful marketing campaign.
- ✓ Stand out from competitors: As the tourism industry becomes more and more competitive, it's important to make sure that your business stands out. Highlighting what is unique or different about the business is one of the best ways to achieve this. A really good marketing strategy is able to communicate these points effectively to the customers in a way that speaks to them.
- ✓ Hone in on the most effective tactics, Using research and analytical tools, a marketing strategy allows you to assess which resources are best helping to reach your audience, and then focus on those resources to ensure the best ROI possible. At the end of the day, having a good marketing strategy in place allows you to feel confident in knowing that all your business's marketing needs are being carefully looked after.

Conclusion

Tourism sector is becoming the most powerful growth engine in the new millennium in India. Estimates reveal that the sector will generate nearly 346 jobs by the year 2025 with a projected growth rate of 9.62 per cent. This 'smokeless' industry contributes around 6 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Many countries in the world have recognized the importance of this sector and are trying to strengthen this industry.

The Bihar Tourism plays a vital role to invite policy makers, entrepreneur's coordinators and stimulators and asked these for balanced economic and social development programmes for tourism sector. It can help the every community of state become more attractive and prosperous. It becomes so because the community acquires the capacity to draw and satisfy visitors who spend money. Visitors who enjoy and appreciate a community will recommend it to increase the demand for Bihar Tourism. Government should go forward as get them to stop, to stay, to spread the word and to return.

The rapid growth of tourism sector has produced both problems and opportunities on the vast scale for societies, and its impact has been economic, socio-cultural, environmental and political. These days, tourism is frequently offended for its adverse impacts on the host country. It is to be critical while the basic nature of tourism makes it particularly difficult to assess its likely consequences. There are so many different types of tourism which occur in a wide variety of settings leading to a diversity of effective combinations. In the economy of Bihar, tourism is now considered a largest industry in view of earning sources of foreign exchange and generate opportunities of jobs than any other industry at a faster rate as well as at a lower cost. It helps to sustainable human development, poverty alleviation; employment generation and environmental regeneration especially, in Northern Bihar. Development of tourism needs to be taken up on priority basis as Bihar has enough untapped tourism potential, which can be successfully harnessed for the benefit of the development of means which have required underdeveloped despite all possibilities of development.

Finally, we may opine that tourism marketing mix related to product, price, place and promotion physical evidence, people and process focuses on tourist needs and aims to increase tourist satisfaction by providing product quality service. It is made possible with the standards of service quality which starts from identifying the tourist hidden needs, creating tourism product as per their interest, delivering the tourism product through proper distribution channels so that service product are consumed by the potential tourist. During consumption the ambiance of the place is so important which adds value to the tourism product features. Further employee being a tangible clue, while delivering the tourism product gets highlighted with the etiquettes, behaviour, attitudes which project the image of the organization in the thoughts of the tourist. Hence, the process to deliver the tourism product to be consumed by the tourist should be designed properly to reach the expectation of the tourist with various activities. The tourism industry depends on profit maximization through serving the demands of the tourist and increasing their satisfaction level.

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