

Natural Endowment and Tourism in the Hills: A Case Study of Darjeeling, Darjeeling

Binita Rai

Research Scholar, University of North Bengal

“Welcome a tourist and send back a friend”- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

Abstract:- Tourism is one of the world’s most important activities, involving millions of people, generating local employment, stimulating improvements to community infrastructure. Amongst other forms of tourism, hill tourism is considered to be one of the important revenue earners. Tourists are more attracted towards mountains, landscape, clean air, aesthetic pleasure and hill tourism is endowed with all its natural ingredients. Darjeeling “the queen of the hills” is very much rich in natural resources and therefore has been a main attraction of tourists worldwide. Darjeeling is mostly famous for three T’s Tea, Tourism and Toy Train and these are also the most significant contributors of Darjeeling economy. Its economy is largely based on tea agriculture and tourism where the former has played a significant role in the development of the region since the beginning. So the present study deals with the zonal pattern of tourism(TCM) in the region which contributes to economic development and sustainable development. This paper also discusses that there is the tourism growth is haphazard because of which the question of sustainable tourism is questioned.

Key words: TCM, haphazard, sustainable development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been recognized to be an important form of economic development in developing countries, contributing to foreign exchange earnings, gross domestic product and employment opportunities (de Kadt, 1979) , and this trend continues to date. Tourism is considered as a factor that contributes to a higher standard of living, able to give effect in terms of attracting investments and spending, which creates greater benefits than costs (Brida, Osti & Faccioli, 2011). In less developed countries the level of income is usually low, the distribution of income and wealth is usually uneven, there are high levels of unemployment and underemployment, the industrial developments are barely existing, there is a strong dependence on agriculture and the service and manufacturing industries are usually under foreign ownership. Darjeeling is one such example. Developing tourism in less developed poor countries is also appealing since the profits usually are higher for the industrialists here, as prices tend to be a lot cheaper due to the low standard of living. In the year 1986, Tourism has been declared as ‘Tourism Industry’ by the government of India. On March 4, 1993, the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted WTO’s (World Tourism Organization’s) recommendations on

tourism. In 2014, the Travel & Tourism industry generated INR 484.69 trillion (9% of global GDP) and 27.7crore jobs (1 in 11 jobs) for the global economy. This research took place in Tiger Hill, Darjeeling. This research paper focuses on the zonal pattern of tourists both domestic and international and the key role played by the tourism sector in uplifting the economic condition of the area. The focus of the study is also to measure unequal distribution of costs and benefits of tourism between the rural areas and the stakeholders.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The history of tourism in the early period has evolved through many phases mainly due to indirect sources. In India during the early days of agricultural abundance, export of cash crops played a significant role in creating the trade link between other countries. Owing to the emergence of trade and commerce, the most important development of this era was the emergence of communication and accommodation. Travelling for pleasure on the rivers and to the hills was a tradition started by the royal courts. With the fall of the great Empires, there was a setback in trade and commerce. This reduced the mobility of the people with the exception of pilgrims. The sea side resorts hill stations and spas which were the centers of recreation and pleasure were hardly over used by the early medieval period. Over the years, however the scenarios changed and the complex character of tourism emerged. The growth of modern technology, rising incomes and improved facilities contributed to the emergence of modern tourism. The invention of railways networks in India (1853) marked the beginning of the development of tourism in India in the modern period. Another accomplishment was the existence of Air India when the entire air transport industry in India was nationalized on 1st August 1963. Today tourism is the largest service industry in India with a contribution of 6.23% to national GDP and providing 8.78% of the total employment in the year 2011. On an average more than 5 million foreign tourist arrivals and 562 million domestic tourists visits are witnessed by India annually. The development of tourism in India can be seen from the arrival of international tourists and foreign exchange earnings in India. The above points are of the concern and concept of this work and I have selected Tiger Hill a hotspot of Darjeeling hills. No tourists coming to Darjeeling miss out going to Tiger Hill and enjoy the recreational service provided there. A 3-storeyed glass-walled observatory or a watch-tower is located on top of the Tiger Hill from where the Kanchenjunga Mountain and all others are visible for a small window of

time. The reason that thousands of domestic and international tourists come to this place is mainly because of the panoramic view of the mountains especially Kanchenjunga as it is the only place one can be so close of. The best season for the tourists to visit Tiger Hill is mid October-November, but tourists also visit during April, May when summer starts in the plains and domestic visitors come to Tiger Hill to spend their holidays.

The entry fee to Tiger Hill varies according to the view tourists prefer. The range starts from Rs. 10 to Rs. 40. The ticket system has been started with effect from August, 2000. Before this, the entry to the point was free of cost. The point has a 3 storied pavilion with glass all over which was built by the tourism department, DGHC way back, where the view is clearly seen. The topmost floor or the super deluxe lounge has a capacity of 40 visitors and entry fee is Rs. 40. It has comfy sofas, cushions, tea and snacks are served to the visitors. The middle floor or the deluxe lounge @30 has a capacity of 100 and it allows the visitors to sit comfortably with cushions lying and watch the view with no tea, snacks served. The ground floor (General Lounge) @20 also has a capacity of 100 with plastic chairs. The remaining visitors stand outside the pavilion @10 which can be called just an entry fee with no amenities provided. In 2015, there are 8 permanent and 18 casual staffs providing services for the area. It is too small staff strength as compared to the area/ value of the site. The employees who work in the ticket counter and others are not well equipped or trained which brings a lot of problems in the tourism industry in Tiger Hill.

Almost 4000 tourists visit Tiger Hill during the peak season everyday for the sunrise. But the facilities provided by the spot are not satisfactory. If the local government provide better facilities and services in the spot then there could be even high number of tourists visiting Tiger Hill. The inflow of tourists for the last 5 years has been provided in the table below:

Fig 1: Inflow of Tourists in Tiger Hill

Year	Number of tourists (Domestic & Foreign)
2011-12	182021
2012-13	228245
2013-14	205607
2014-15	239101
2015-feb 2016	221249

Fig II: Revenue generated by Tiger Hill since 2011-2016

Year	Revenue Collected
2011-12	4236450
2012-13	4802630
2013-14	3973320
2014-15	5497820
2015- Feb 2016	4454780

III. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The information was collected by conducting an onsite survey of visitors to Tiger Hill. The main objective of the study is to find out the zonal travel cost pattern of the tourists, their income pattern, opportunity cost of time and also their experience to Tiger Hill. Hence only two zones are taken for the study. One is inbound tourists (under the state) and the other is outbound tourist (outside the state). Also there are locals and non- locals under the state. This is because of the fact that frequent visitors to Tiger Hill hail from Kolkata and other local areas in Darjeeling district. Also foreign tourists are mostly attracted by this site, but for the case of simplicity foreign tourists are ignored because they take several zones together for their travel. Hence this study is based mainly on the domestic tourists' zonal travel cost pattern to Tiger Hill. The survey questionnaire was prepared asked about the origin of the visitors, mode of transportation used, travel expenses, miscellaneous expenses at the site, income group, time spent on the zoo and other data required for the study. A sample size of 40 was selected. The survey as carried out in the mid of December over 4days to account for variations in the composition of visitors. The time of year represents an average season in terms of visitors. Random sampling of domestic tourists was done in the morning time and also throughout the day to capture variations in the origin of visitors at different times of the day that is whether the visitors are interested only in the morning sunrise or also at the recreational value of the spot during the day time. My objective is to study the value of Tiger Hill with respect to the zonal travel cost pattern. I intentionally took the middle income class people because in case of domestic tourists visiting Darjeeling, most of them belong from this group. Also because Darjeeling is a place where mushrooming of hotels (small or starred), has been increasing since last decade. In the peak season all the hotels of Darjeeling are full. Therefore, a low income or a middle income visitor can manage to stay in Darjeeling and enjoy the beauty of it. Another reason is that, Darjeeling being the near most hill station for the people of Kolkata, the middle income people visit Darjeeling mainly during summers to escape from the heat. The locals also visit Tiger Hill to spend time with their family, friends and relatives. The cost of spending time in this place is very less as compared to others, as the place is for nature and peace lovers.

Key Informants

Key informant interviews were conducted with the manager of the site, Secretary, Department of Tourism, GTA, Tiger Hill Manager, employees to extract information about the inflow, revenue, budget, expenses, current problems, future development plans and major constraints of the site. Employees who operate the admissions booths were also interviewed to extract information on the number of visitors during the sampling period.

IV. FINDINGS

FIG III: Geographical characteristics of the surveyed tourists

Sl. No.	Zone	Places included in the zone	Number of respondents in the sample
1.	I (under the state) Locals	Kurseong, Mirik, Kalimpong, Tukvar, Bijanbari	9
	Non locals	Malbazaar, Kumargaon, Alipurduar, Kolkata, Siliguri, Birpara,	21
2.	II (outside the state)	Bangalore, Orissa, Bihar	10
Total			40

Source: Field Survey

FIG IV: Number of visitors in different age classes

Age (Year)	Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
20-30	11	27.5%
31-40	15	37.5%
41-50	10	25%
51-60	4	10%

Source: Field Survey

FIG V: Occupation of sample visitor's

Occupation	Zone I	Zone II	Total
Government Employees	15	2	17
Private Employees	5	6	11
Business	6	2	8
Students	2	-	2
Unemployed	2	-	2
Total			40

Source: Field Survey

FIG VI: Education status of the surveyed visitors

Education	Zone I	Zone II	Total
Secondary School	3	2	5
High School	8	3	11
B.A	14	4	15
M.A	4	1	5
PhD	1	-	1
Total			40

Source: Field Survey

FIG VII: Visitor's Time spent on the site

Time spent(hours)	Zone I	Zone II	Total
1-2	1	-	1
3-4	18	2	20
5-6	11	8	19
Total			40

Source: Field Survey

FIG VII: Income of Sample visitors

Income(in Rs '000)	Zone I	Zone II	Total
10-20	10	-	10
21-30	9	2	11
31-40	7	5	12
41-50	2	3	5
51-60	1	-	1
61-70	1	-	1
Total			40

Source: Field Survey

FIG VIII: Total Costs spent for the site

Costs spent for the site	Zone I	Zone II	Total
0-2000	16	3	19
2001-4000	7	2	9
4001-6000	3	5	8
6001-8000	3	1	4
Total			40

Source: Field Survey

FIG IX: Total Travel costs spent to visit the site

Travel costs spent	Zone I	Zone II	Total
1000-5000	17	3	20
5001-10000	10	1	11
10001-15000	2	1	3
15001-20000	-	-	-
20001-25000	1	3	4
25001-30000	1	2	3
Total			40

Source: Field Survey

FIG X: Mode of transport used by tourists

Mode of Transport	Zone I	Zone II	Total
Taxi	22	10	32
Own car	5	-	5
Bike	3	-	3
Total			40

Source: Field Survey

FIG XI: Features of the site satisfied by the tourists in Zone I

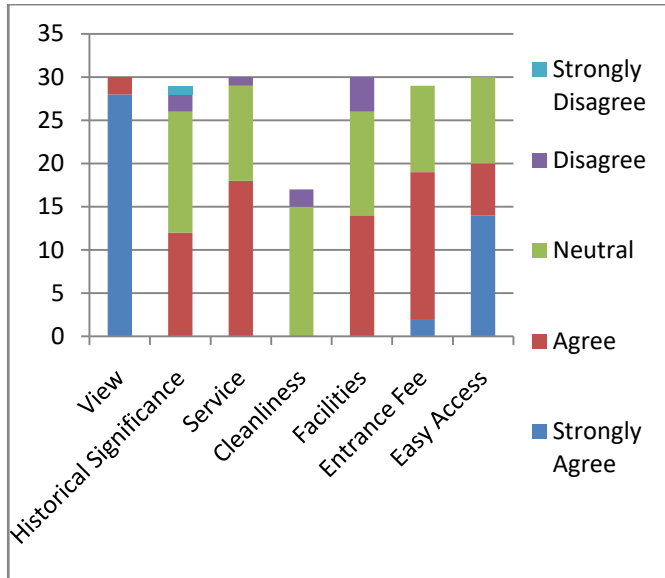
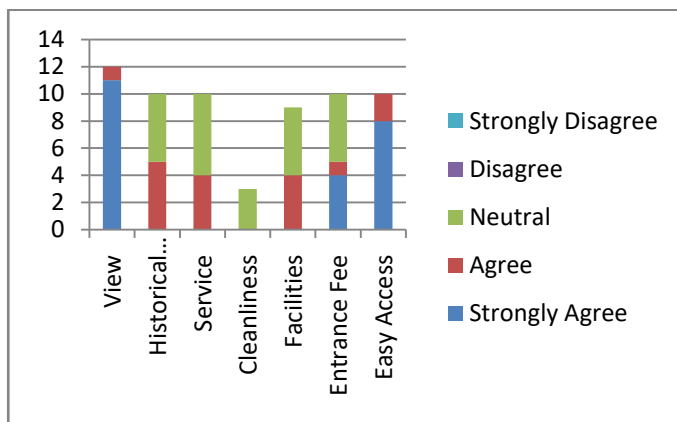


FIG XII: Features satisfied by the tourists in Zone II



IV. CONCLUSION

According to the primary survey, Tiger Hill is the central tourist site for middle income people. The results of the survey shows that the educated people are well known of the place Tiger Hill and they love visiting the place even more than twice. They have a preconceived notion that the sunrise in Tiger Hill is magnificent and undoubtedly the site satisfies their thoughts. The view of the sunrise, nature friendly environment, and chilled weather allows the tourists to visit the place. It shows that university educated people are more interested to visit this site. This result is similar to the results of Enyew (2003). In virtue of its great scenic view, historical significance and its special location, including its special geographic location and city development advantage, the site possesses its considerable recreational value that will bring about great revenue. With the continuously increasing amount of trips in recent years Tiger Hill is more and more recognized by visitors from different places. The purpose of this study was to study the pattern of travel costs zone wise. The size of the sample was 40. According to the results of the survey, the

domestic tourists stay in Darjeeling for not more than 2 or 3 days. Even few tourists come to Darjeeling for one day. Despite their short stay enormous pressure is exerted to the place as the number of tourists is large. The surveyed tourists stay in medium hotels and spend less. Hence it can be said that the tourists of both the zones spent their amount of income within what was planned in their budget. They spend their morning in Tiger Hill with hired vehicles which also take them for sightseeing of major tourist places in Darjeeling. They generally try to visit every place within the short period of time. As such the places become more crowded as in the case of Tiger Hill. The tourists of Zone II have come to Darjeeling mostly for 2 days and they try to visit each and every spot in Darjeeling with a second visit to Tiger Hill on their way back home. It is also seen in the survey that the tourists of Kolkata (Zone I) are mostly frequent visitors to Darjeeling. But they cannot stop going to Tiger Hill and enjoy the scenic beauty. They even talk highly about this place after going back which makes more inflow of tourists in Darjeeling. This is same in case of the visitors of Zone II. Even if they are first time visitors, they want their friends and family to visit Tiger Hill as they are ignorant about such ‘heaven on earth’ as said by respondent 32. It has also been observed that most of the tourists of both the zones that they are slightly unhappy with the congestion, dirty environment, water scarcity, charging of fess sometimes almost double, forcible sale of commodities inside hotels by local hawkers, absence of easy transport system and lack of internet services leaves them unsatisfactory. The tourists of Zone II (Bangalore) who stayed in some reputed hotels in Darjeeling faced trouble with the scarcity of water. The hotel charged Rs.50/bucket of warm water. They even charged them Rs.400/hr of Wi-Fi internet services. There are 200 registered hotels but there are nearly 150 located within the town. Some of them have mushroomed even in the residential areas.

According to the survey, the trips of the tourists of both the zones are made by themselves. No tour operator is being involved in it. Hence it can be said that, Darjeeling has a easy access and so it can be reached without any help from the tour operators. This also means that for some tourists of Zone I, Darjeeling is the primary site and visiting Tiger Hill and other spots made them satisfied. But for visitors from Zone II, Darjeeling was not only their site for their trip. For most of the tourists of Zone II, the primary destination was Gangtok. Hence they preferred Gangtok more than Darjeeling. But for some tourists of Zone I, Darjeeling was their primary destination. Therefore, it can be said that Tiger Hill is the first preference of both the tourists of Zone I and II. The surveyed tourists enjoyed the spot and preferred to visit again with their friends, family and relatives. They are ready to sacrifice 1 week (at most) to visit Darjeeling (Tiger Hill) which can bring to the conclusion that, Darjeeling is the most preferred destination of the middle income group domestic tourists. It is observed from the sample that visitors under the state and outside the state visit Tiger Hill primarily for recreation. It may be said that most of the tourists visiting Tiger Hill are

well educated, mostly in middle age and primarily in government and private sector jobs. Though, some businessmen, unemployed youths and students also visit Tiger Hill for rest and relaxation. They visit mostly during summer when there is vacation in job in many plain areas and the pleasant climate of the area attracts people to spend their vacation. Visitors from foreign countries also visit the area from a number of countries throughout the year. The overall analysis reveals that the income of the tourists, education, and expenditure incurred, experience in the site, view and mostly distance required reaching the site have significant positive impact on the frequency of visit. It is necessary to adopt a strategy of development, with special features and problems of Darjeeling and formulate programmes for the socio-economic development, as also for conservation, protection and preservation of this place

Nowadays, there have been more and more development projects implemented in Tiger Hill. This policy of the state government well protects the site from unnecessary damage, effectively protects the recreational environment and the view in the site, consequently increasing the recreational value of the site. The pavilion is being reconstructed by the local government with better amenities, services and facilities and new entrance fee. Now the entrance fee is Rs. 10 for the entire visitor coming to Tiger Hill as the observatory point/Pavilion is under construction. In the near future, there will be big parking lots built up at the front gates until when social public vehicle forbiddance would be completely implemented with no time exceptions. By that time, the trips by visitors will present great and rapid growth, which definitely brings a considerable increase on its recreational value and revenue.

V. DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The growth and development of any place depends on its economic activities and tourism being an important sector in Darjeeling has helped to gain its glory from a sanatorium to a tourist destination now. Tourism generates annual revenue of Rs 450 crore with tea and DHR playing a niche role with it (Bhutia.S, 2013). It has helped the town to sustain livelihoods and being the most important sector creating income and employment. With the development of the sector and rapid inflow of tourists in the region, many new buildings have been constructed for the accommodation of the tourists. Hotels have even grown up in the residential areas. The conversion of residential houses into paying guest accommodation units is suggested (Aijaz & Malik, 2014) which is aimed at providing economic benefits to local residents while maintaining the environmental quality. Hence with high number of tourists flowing in the region, tourists are accommodated as paying guest in the region. Henceforth low and medium hotels have grown up at a larger proportion. The growth of tourism in Darjeeling has been very haphazard and therefore it is can still be called an informal sector. Therefore, during the peak season the hotels are full and tourists are sent to some rural

places in Darjeeling wherefrom the idea of eco tourism and home stays have sprung up (Help Tourism).

Enormous profit making within a short period of time of tourism without knowing the consequences of high inflow of tourists for a long time in Darjeeling might create serious problems in the future. Planning should be made immediately to overcome the situation. The benefits are enjoyed the stakeholders and the costs is incurred on the community, environment.

Recommendations

- Checking of the mushrooming of hotels with low grade and poor hygiene standards should be closed.
- High socio economic profile/international tourists should be more attracted to the region that will spend more and damage less.
- Tourists must be made conscious and aware of using the mountain environment.
- Training should be provided to the guides, tour operators, hotel owners, community villagers and drivers for their attitude toward the tourists. As drivers are the first ones to impress the tourists.
- Ignorance of the villagers should be removed and proper education should be given for proper maintenance among local people.
- The benefits and costs of tourism should be realized by the local people, tourists, local/state government and the policy makers.
- Too much dependence on tourism is risky. Hence improvement of other economic sectors are also much needed in this region.
- Excessive development of Darjeeling town has begun to destroy in itself; hence diversion of a portion of tourists to other areas is required.
- In the political gambling scenario of the town, development and proper planning of tourism is difficult to implement.
- The quality of services given by hotels, tourist resorts and facilities must be supervised by experienced and knowledgeable managers.
- The growth should be organized with proper planning and management.
- Local culture, language and heritage should be preserved.
- There is no available policy in Darjeeling because the growth is very haphazard. There is no coordination between the government and the private layers in tourism which leads to unavailability of authentic data. Hence it is still called an unorganized sector.
- B₂B Business to Business links promotion of travel marks nationally and internationally should be done. Familiarization of tours for travel writers and travel bloggers should also be enhanced (Help Tourism).

- Organizing of local tourism festivals and highlighting the traditional festivals should be on a frequent basis for attracting the tourists and increasing the revenue of the sector in the hills.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abinash Bharali and Ritwik Mazumder: Application of Travel cost method to access the pricing policy of public parks: A case of

- Kaziranga National Park Journal of Regional Development and Planning, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012
- [2] Bhutia, S (2013), Growth & Development of Tourism Sector in West Bengal: Issues & Concerns, American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, 4 (1), pp.239-246
- [3] Malley, L.S.S. O, 1999: Bengal District Gazetteer: Darjeeling, Concept Publishing Company, ISBN 978-81-7268-018-3
- [4] Timah Paul, NDE: Agricultural Economics and Management - Master's Programme Degree thesis No 704 • ISSN 1401-4084 Uppsala 2011