Chapter 16

Tourist Inflow in a Temple City:
A Study of Cultural Tourism in Bishnupur, India

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ABSTRACT

This paper wishes to study the visitors’ outlook & evaluation of a tourist place as experienced by them. We have selected Bishnupur in West Bengal, India as our sample sight. Our study reveals that opinion about Bishnupur as a tourist destination is negatively related with the problems & positively with the advantages. Socio economic factors such as occupation, caste as well as sub situational variables such as number of visits, reason for visit are important. In all Bishnupur is not a very attractive place as a tourist center even within the state. Given that Bishnupur has a long cultural history as well as cited in the official tourist website, the issue is alarming. The Government has started a number of initiatives (such a Bishnupur mela, renovation of the temple structure of Bishnupur & so on) to facilitated the place & make it attractive to the tourists. Our analysis show that there is a lot yet to done to bring up Bishnupur in the tourist center of the state, not to speak the Indian perspective.

1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of tourism is to become better acquainted & appreciate that builds a better world for all. Tourism goes beyond dependable transportation & comfortable hotels; it enhances all the avenues through which a country presents itself. They include educational cultural media & meeting/congress activities. To increase accessibility cultural institutions need to meet visitor’s needs, some time producing multi-lingual guides & signage. Tourist can then more easily choose the purposeful activities that will match.

While culture is only one factor that determines the overall attractiveness of a tourism region, it is a very rich & diverse one. The elements of a society’s culture are a complex reflection of the way, its

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people live work & play. Cultural tourism covers all aspects of travel whereby people learn about each other’s way of life & thoughts. Tourism is thus an important means of promoting cultural relations & international cooperation. Conversely, development of cultural factors within a nation is a means of enhancing resources to attract visitors. In many countries tourism can be linked with a “cultural relation” policy. It is used to promote not only knowledge & understanding but also a favorable image of the nation among foreigners in the tourism market.

The channel, through which a country presents itself to a tourist, can be considered its cultural factors. These are the entertainment, food, drink, hospitality, architecture, manufacture & handcrafted products of a country & all the other characteristics of a nation’s way of life. A nation’s cultural attraction must be presented. There is great need for encouraging creativity. In this age of uniformity product of one nation are almost indistinguishable from one another cultural diversity. Improve technique of architectural design & artistic representation can be used to create an expression of originality in every part of the world. Cultural factors in tourism play a dominant role chiefly in activities that are specifically intended to promote the transmission or sharing of knowledge & ideas.

Today, cultural tourism seems to be omnipresent from the financial point of view. It also seems to have become omnipotent. It is the Holy Grail quality of tourism- that cares for the culture it consumes while culturing the consumer alongside. Local, national & trance-national bodies have therefore embraced cultural tourism globally.

Cultural tourism had been recognized as a distinct tourism product category in late 1970’s, with the realization that a target number of people travel specifically to gain a better understanding of the culture of their destination. Nearly, 40% of international travelers are now considered as cultural tourists, who visit destination based on cultural heritage of a place- rural, ethnic & spiritual factor. There is a growing need to recognize cultural tourism as a specialized sector of tourism. We need to develop this product for improving tourist-traffic both indigenously & internationally.

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

We conducted a Socio-Economic survey on cultural tourism in Bishnupur in Bankura district of West Bengal. It is a town of terracotta temples & man-made lakes echoes with the history of Malla Rulers, who made it their 16th century’s capital. Since Bishnupur had no stone for construction, the Malla kings build terracotta temples to celebrate their love for Krishna, the Blue God. These temples have elaborate architecture that merges hybrid style. Filigreed terracotta tiles crave out stories from the Ramayana & Mahabharata. Beside temples, Bishnupur is known for its pottery, specially the lovable terracotta horses, which are the mascot of Bankura handicraft, Baluchari, Tussar silk sarees, bell metal & shell handicraft & the quaint circular playing cards called Ganjifa are other specialties of Bishnupur that tourists look out for.

In the month of August Bishnupur resound with the mesmerizing lilt of snake charmers pipes. The annual festival of Jhapan is celebrated with snake shows & snake fights, to revere Goddess Manasa, the dominant deity of the snake worship cult. The weeklong Bishnupur fair brings the entire town alive with the cultural retrospective towards the end of December.

The survey was a part of the socio-economic survey organized by The Department of Economics, The University of Burdwan. Our destination was at Bishnupur in Bankura district, from where we were