



RESEARCH ARTICLE

TOURISM AS A POVERTY ALLEVIATION TOOL IN COMMUNITY BUILDING- A STUDY ON ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the main catalysts for the community development in India. It can be used as a tool for fighting poverty. Growth of tourism in developing states, where widespread poverty exists, has paved way for policy makers to use tourism effectively to enhance Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) and eradicate poverty. It is labour intensive businesses which need people from different strata of society and results in increasing Economical Multiplier Effect (EME). Many states in India are encouraging investors for the development of the destination to support the economically backward class dwelling in the destination. International agencies are using tourism as a tool for alleviating poverty globally. The phenomenon of 'Pro-Poor Tourism' (PPT) is different from other type of 'conventional tourism' and has to be used wisely to achieve the desired objectives within the prescribed time limit. This conceptual research paper analyzes how tourism potentiality can be used as a measure to eradicate poverty and develop a sustainable framework for community in a state like Arunachal Pradesh where poverty is above national average and huge amount of untapped tourism resources is available.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism was developed as a strategic tool since 1970 for alleviating poverty (Harrison and Schipani, 2007), (Harrison, 2008). Structured tourism industry has contributed directly or indirectly to the growth of global economy. It has potential to contribute for the development of poor economies (Sofield, 2004). Tourism being one of world's largest sectors has the strength and capacity to fight against one of the world's oldest challenge "Poverty" (Rossetto, Li and Sofield, 2007). India, one of the developing economies is facing the problem of uneven development among its various states as geographical location often plays a vital role in deciding the overall development. States which are located on the north eastern borders face the problem of lower development than other states; Arunachal Pradesh (AP) is one among them. It is sharing International borders with China, Bhutan and Myanmar. The state is also known as the "Land of the Dawn-lit-Mountains" and it is the first Indian Mainland soil to greet the morning Sun. It is estimated that, around 31.98 % population of the state is reeling under poverty, which is much

higher than the national average 21.92 % (Census, GOI, 2011). AP faces a very peculiar and distinctive economic problem arising out of its remoteness, inadequate connectivity, a fragile financial resource base, scarcity of industries, sparse population, lack of skilled manpower, unstructured marketing network, finite working season (November to March), high cost of living index, embryonic primary sector, low credit deposit ratio, sharing porous international borders and mandate for inner line permit for the visitors from outside the state. On the contrary, AP is blessed as a precious treasure house of culture, nature, adventure, and flora and fauna. Poverty plays a vital role for the hindrance in the development of AP. It suffers from the deficiency of the continuous tourist flow because of high precipitation and low accessibility (Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, 2013). Tourism potential of the state was never explored to the optimum level and still major portion of the tourism resources are unexplored due to unavailability of basic accommodation facilities like rest houses, resorts, other tourism supporting amenities and tourism auxiliary services. The UK Department of International Development (DFID) coined the term "Pro-Poor Tourism" (PPT) (Chok *et al.*, 2007). PPT is neither a product nor a form of tourism but it is an approach that seeks to utilize tourism as strategic tool to eradicate poverty among the deprived and under privilege class of the society. The main objective of PPT is to economically

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benefiting poor by expanding economical and employment opportunity for the poor and focusing all aspects and types of tourism in poverty alleviation. Crossley in 2012 stated that there is an empirical relationship between Quality of life, Poverty and Tourism. Tourism activity in a destination increasing the quality of life and standard of living of the economically backward class dwelling in the destination in order to eliminate poverty (Kim, 2005), (Crossley, 2012). It has the potential to emerge as a key economic driver in AP. It was estimated by Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India (GOI) that tourism industry stands second to real estate industry in employment generation for low skilled employees (National Skill Development Corporation, 2013). It was projected that tourism sector will generate additional 25 million jobs in India directly or indirectly during the period of 5 years (2012-2017) in 12th five year plan (MoT, GOI, 2013). In this context, present study assumes special significance and relevance. Important issues are discussed in this conceptual paper which will be of immense use to academicians, researchers and policy makers engaged in development of AP.

Review of Existing Literature

Various researchers' are well aware of the issue and have carried out studies in the area of using tourism as a tool for poverty eradication. Some of the studies undertaken by researchers and their vital outcomes are given below. Concerning the ways in which the fundamental notion of development can be rethought, Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) suggests that rethinking development should focus on multi-pronged objectives. As per this approach, the idea of sustainable development is the only means in which these multidimensional objectives of development like environment conservation, protecting the rights of the people and wiping out poverty; can be achieved at the same time addressing the challenges of the economic progress. Ashley, Boyd and Goodwin (2000) argues that certain steps can enhance the economic participation of the poor in tourism enterprise like imparting education and facilitating proper training programme to the targeted poor (involving proportionate number of female population) to enable them to take up employment or to grab self employment opportunity, by expanding micro financing opportunity. There should be relative growth and balance between the physical infrastructure, local entrepreneurial capability and business experience of the destinations for exploration and involvement of a destination from tourism perspective this was identified by Borgersen and Rye (2004).

Rashid and Bashir (2004) discussed various impacts created by tourism sector on the output of the other industries as well as impact on import and value added tax revenue. Further they insisted that "tourism activity affect a wide range of activities in the economy directly and indirectly". However they found that "tourism spending has no direct effect on output of some sectors such as agriculture, forestry, mining, dairy products, and other such sector. However, when full ramification of the tourism activity are realised, these sectors were seen to derive some benefits indirectly". The influence of the orthodox neo liberalist thinkers while framing policies for poverty alleviation by the prestigious international organisation like UNWTO and World Bank seems to be rhetoric was highlighted by Scheyvens (2007). PPT is not meant for profit maximization or expansion of the tourism sector but it's an approach where efforts are made to bring maximum benefits to the poor, including environmental, cultural and social benefits

as a top up to the economical benefits created by tourism sector.

Truong *et al.* (2013) suggests that "poor people's interpretation of poverty may be substantially different from that of academics and policy makers". The term poverty varies from place to place and person to person. Somewhere lack of rise of income is perceived as poverty and at the same instance in other place lack of opportunity or income is perceived as poverty. Although researchers globally have studied and proved that tourism can be used as an effective tool for poverty eradication. After going through intensive literature review and scrutinizing a compendium of available grey literature and government reports it was found that studies' focusing on poverty eradication exclusively for the state of AP was missing. Therefore this present paper is a continuation of the earlier works with well focused objectives like carrying out the tourism benefits to the bottom level of the society with the help of the strategic tool of PPT and enhancing state GSDP.

Poverty Eradication at Global Level

Poverty is the greatest challenge in the era of 21st century. While taking steps for modernization we neglected the cumulative problems of alarming population growth, inadequate literacy level, gender inequality, low human development index and high corruption level which lead a big chunk of the global population to survive under poverty condition. Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) together have given birth to neoliberal economy where the strategy of development is outward oriented which creates a leakage in the hosting economy creating hindrance for Economic Multiplier Effect (EME) in the local economy. In the UN Earth Summit 2012, the member nations committed to launch an inclusive and transparent inter-government process on Sustainable Development Goals which will follow on from the 'Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that will expired at the end of 2015 (UNDP, 2015), (Weinz, 2013). Eradicating poverty and hunger is one of the main objectives of the UN's MDGs. It further reinforced several bilateral and multilateral agreements with financial institutions including Asian Development Bank (ABD) to promote programmes that will boost tools for eliminating poverty (Harrison, 2008). Along with MDGs, UNWTO has reinforced efforts with full support to promote sustainable tourism development to reduce poverty and launched the Sustainable Tourism-Eliminate Poverty (ST-EP) programme (Bolwell, Weinz, 2008).

Role of Tourism in Poverty Eradication – Current Scenario

Tourism has contributed 9% of the global GDP in 2012. Among the 48 least developed countries (LDCs) 29 countries have selected tourism as an important industry for growth and development, this sector stands among their top three foreign exchange earners (International Labour Organisation, 2013). Tourism represents 33% of LDC's and 65% for island LDC's export. As per the supply chain in this industry 1 job in the core tourism sector indirectly creates 1.5 additional jobs in the related sector (Weinz, 2013). Tourism export represents 30% of world export of commercial services. Tourist arrival in LDC's (1998-2008) has tripled with an average annual growth rate of 13 % and with tourism revenue increased from \$1billion to \$5 billion. This sector is a labour intensive industry which absorbs semi-skilled and unskilled work force

from different strata of the society (Bolwell, Weinz, 2008); on the contrary travel industry enjoys the reputation of a glamorous industry. Hence, it attracts the young generation as a magnet. Through a research study it was noticed that around 50% of the global tourism workforce was in the age group of 25 years or below. Even women was having more than 70% share of work force in tourism industry because of its safety and gender equality standards (UNCTAD, 2010), (Ashley *et al.*, 2000). Tourism can provide ameliorative function to the local poor community and by this it can clearly achieve the pro poor tourism objective (Crossley, 2012). International Labour Organization (ILO), a body of United Nations (UN) has created a toolkit on "Poverty reduction through Tourism". This toolkit was piloted and implemented through workshops in Brazil, Bangladesh, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal and Vietnam. With the aim to highlight how tourism can be a driver of poverty reduction, it promoted more and better jobs for inclusive growth, skill development for youth, developmental activities in the rural economy as well as contributor to the formalization of the informal economy, enhancing productivity and improving working conditions in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Weinz, 2013). PPT is executed successfully in most of the African countries like Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia, etc and outcome was encouraging and fruitful.

Researchers have proved that there is a causal relationship between tourism development and economic expansion, and between tourism and poverty reduction (Croes and Vanegas, 2008). PPT is also termed as "ethical cousin of fair trade in tourism" (Seif, 2004). Practising inclusive tourism will foster linkage between different components in the tourism sector, partnership with private players, integration of women, involvement of local communities. Tourism is playing a leading role in fight against poverty. Its contribution to poverty reduction has increased significantly. It enhances the linkage between tourism business and poor people so that they are able to participate more effectively in product development (Weinz, 2013). In Nepal several tour operators started to involve the local communities in their professional day to day activities by giving them proper training and orientation. The Explore Nepal Group, a Nepali travel company has a policy to hire only locals to work in their resorts close to national parks and wildlife reserves. Similarly, 90% of Tiger Tops Nepal employees have been hired from local groups. MoT the apex body to regulate and implement tourism policy in India have framed Pro-Poor policies which focus on creating job opportunity by imparting training to the local communities under "Hunar Se Rozgar" programme (MoT, 2010) and ensuring that tourism growth directly or indirectly contributes to poverty reduction. Asian Development Bank (ADB) has \$13.5 million as pro poor and equitable tourism component in its greater Mekong sub-region tourism sector (Harrison, 2008). However tourism as a poverty alleviation tool probably does not pull direct investment in the assets of the poor (Education, Health and etc) but it is a potential strategic tool for sustainable Pro-Poor growth. Experiences clearly portrays that when tourism is meticulously planned and executed, it helps a lot in eradicating poverty, bringing people together for achieving their basic needs.

Untapped Tourism Potentials of Arunachal Pradesh

AP is the sentinel of North Eastern border of India with a geographical area of 83,743 sq.km. The state shares 2.55%

area of Indian mainland and 31.94% of North Eastern part of India. It shares 1680 kms (approx) of international border specifically 1080 kms (approx) with China in the north, 160 kms (approx) with Bhutan in the West and 440 Kms (approx) with Myanmar in the east and the south east. The state has an interstate border with Nagaland in the east and south east and Assam in the South (The Hindu, 2006). A hilly terrain, which acts as natural boundaries for the different ethnical communities residing in AP, covers more than 90% of the Geographical area. This state is culturally, climatically and topologically distinct from rest of India (Planning Commission, Govt of India, 2013).

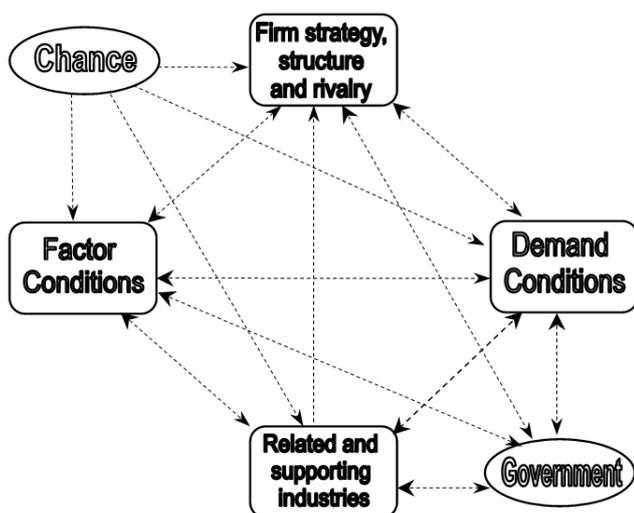
- A.P is a wardrobe full of cultural and ethnic diversity garlanded with the serenity of natural beauty, snow peaked mountains, white water rivers, exotic flora and fauna but heavy precipitation for major part of the year results into massive flood, land slide and soil erosion. This limits the working season to a few months which severely slows down the development activities. With a population of 13,82,611 AP have a sparse population density of 17 persons per sq.kms (Census, 2011).
- Scheduled tribes contribute around two third of the state population which consist of 26 major and more than 100 sub tribes. Tribes in each villages' lives in constant suspicion with the other village which results into maximum unity among the tribes but the by-product is the minimum mental peace (Jha, 2013).

During the British regime socio economic system in the North Eastern part of British India remained practically untouched. Now the state is in a threshold to enter the modern economic activity; but the pace of economic development is unable to cop up with the growing population and socio economic infrastructure. In fact, the Socio economic life and the culture of the ethnic tribal groups largely depend on the forest and related activities. Recommendation has been forwarded by Govt. of India for the inclusion of Namdapha National Park and Apatani cultural landscape in the UNESCO world heritage site list in 2006 and 2014 respectively for further evaluation and acceptance (IUCN, 2006 and 2014). Namdapha is the third largest National Park in India and the only park in the world having altitudinal variation from 200m to 4500m in the snow-capped mountains. This high variation in altitude resulted in growth of diverse species of flora and fauna. Tracks for Wildlife safaris and trekking trails can be identified in the noncore zones of the park to make it economically benefitting to the local communities dwelling around the National Park. Apart from Namdapha, AP hosts eight more wildlife sanctuaries and one National Park. This diversity of topographical and climatic conditions has favoured the growth of luxuriant forests which are home to myriad plant and animals forms adding beauty of the landscape. With over 5000 species of plants, about 85 species of terrestrial mammals, over 500 species of birds and a numerous species of butterflies, insects and reptiles (Official Website Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 2015) it is a real taste to tourists eyes. Apart from bamboos and other grasses five types of forests are found in AP Tropical, Sub-Tropical, Pine, Temperate and Alpine forests. This gives a lot of opportunity for developing Eco-Tourism. 'Anni' have the untapped potential to become one of the popular Wellness destinations. Apart from natural beauty AP is filled with cultural heritage and its decade old signatures, it is very important pilgrimage destination for Buddhist like housing one of the oldest and biggest Buddhist

Monastery popularly known as Tawang Monastery, it is believed to be more than 300 years old and have the potential to become a extended part of the existing Buddhist circuit. AP hosts dozens of fairs and festivals throughout the calendar year, some of the most famous festivals are Tawang Festival, Loku, Pangsau, and Pass Winter festival which attract small number of foreign and domestic tourists. These festivals have roots from the traditional tribal customs and can become a prospective international event if its planned promotional campaign is done. Rural tourism projects are flourishing in this state i.e Ego-Wikte village in west Stang district, Ligu Village and Rengo village in east Siang district of AP. These projects are moderately success compared to 104 projects in rest of India (MoT, 2014) but these projects face lack of awareness and connectivity issues and this existing problem can be resolved by proper implementation of projects, connecting the projects sites with nearby cities through roadways and designing marketing campaigns to attract the target client base. The attractions are scattered throughout the region and are largely located in remote areas within high fragile environment. These attractions and the people of the region constitute the tourism source at large. Now, AP is connected with rest of East Asia by India- Myanmar-Thailand highway passing through Moreh in Manipur (NorthEast Today, 2015). It may help AP to establish itself as a brand among the popular east Asian tourist destination.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

AP has 15 districts, 36 sub-Division and 149 circles. There are 17 medium industries, 2526 small industries, 76 craft centre / weaving/ knitting centres, 25 sericulture demonstration centres and 17 Govt Emporia (Official Website Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 2015). Absence of any heavy engineering industries is the main negative point because of its labour intensive characteristics. Due to remoteness and other short comings this problem can't be solved in near future. Absence of heavy engineering, export oriented industry remains a serious limitation. Manufacturing industries contribution to the GSDP of AP is negligible. This created a way for researcher to deal the situation with Porter's diamond model, why industries are not attracting enough attention especially in AP?



Source: Modified from Porter, M.E. (1990). The Competitive advantages of nations

The above mentioned particular model helps us to understand the competitive advantage of a region in global competition.

Land, Location, Natural resources, Labour and Local population size is main factors for comparative advantage for tourism industry over other labour intensive industry. When used this model the following short comings are found hampering development of industries and export oriented goods from AP.

- There is a lack of adequate infrastructure and connectivity for development of heavy engineering goods but lack of infrastructure and remoteness did not put the tourism industry to complete halt. The average growth rate of domestic and international tourist arrivals in AP are 12.27% and 37.02% respectively for the period of 2010-2014 (MoT, 2010-14). On the contrary Ministry of Development of North Eastern states Region (DONER) is likely to invest 55 crores for infrastructure upgradation of Itanagar and Naharalgaon in AP (NorthEastToday, 2015) for generating connectivity thrust.
- Raw materials are not easily available for heavy industries. This being a reason for less industrial development in the state, an alternative can be provided through tourism development. Transporting raw materials from other areas for purpose of industrial development to this state will not be cost effective. Naturally this state has to depend on tourism segment for its development. Moreover tourism resources are well spread in this state and it must be strategically used to attract more footfalls in years to come.
- Forestry and agricultural products are contributing a lot for the development of AP's economy, than any other products. This limits the industrial development as traditional methods are still adopted in agricultural and in forestry. Tourism potential has stated attracting tourists in recent times. Tourism is in introduction stage of Tourism Area life Cycle and comparatively will prevail for over a very long time in such situation focus oriented strategies must be initiated to reap benefits through tourism development.
- Industrial production even if done in this state will not have any local market consumption as supporting industries are absent which will remain as constraints to bring in industrial goods production units. On the other hand tourism potential of this state if exposed with proper care will bring in lot of tourists from other state of India which will help in further development of the State.
- Tourism industry has a potential to bring in other sister industries which are very much essential for providing supporting services for tourists visiting the state. Once tourism pick up the flow, automatically the infrastructure will get the boost and as a net result of which more long term and medium term investments will move towards the state resulting in more employment and development of the State.
- Unemployment problem is high, ultimately affecting the demand condition for other goods in local market. When employment opportunities increase, it will attract influx of more unemployed youth towards this state. This will increase the economic activities further. Tourism has potential to give jobs to people of all walks of life. Trying to generate employment opportunities through tourism will be more cost effective option exclusively in State of AP.

- Trans-Himalayan tribes are famous for their politeness and tolerance capacity people of AP are well not exempted from this. Humble and hospitality nature of host is a great positive factor in pulling the tourists towards this unexplored state.
- Central administration conducts special capacity building and skill development programme apart from necessary fund allotments through special schemes for the North Eastern people in its flagship institution "Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management", Gwalior, India. Such measures will give a lot of exposure to the individual attending such courses and will form a strong base for understanding their own potentials and will also increase their prestige and image. This will bring a positive situation for further development.
- In order to promote awareness and showcase the tourism products of AP, nationally and internationally Government of India provided free space to North eastern states in the India Pavilion at South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE) and at important international travel fairs and exhibitions such as Internationale Tourismus-Börse (ITB), Berlin, World Travel Mart- London, and etc. As per the look east policy India is taking rapid steps to get connected with her eastern neighbours in order to achieve a multilateral economical advantage. Being the sentinel of North Eastern region of India, AP hopes to attract international and domestic tourist flow (Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 2013) which is possible only through initiating steps in right direction.

No doubt tourism has a lot of potential especially at places where other industries are not possible, further analysis with the help of Porter's Diamond Model pinpoints the same. This help us to decide on which sector the State has to make progress to bring in development so the goal of poverty eradication can be achieved in less time and in cost effective manner. Tourism is a labour intensive industry of low skilled requirement it can survive in the existing condition, through proper implementation of PPT tool, economical leakage can be checked in the host economy which will result in uninterrupted flow of economy to the bottom level of the society through EME.

Conclusion

This conceptual research study highlights the potential of AP's tourism resources. Based on the current demographical, social, economical and infrastructural conditions of the state; tourism industry can contribute much more efficiently for the prosperity, growth and elimination of poverty. As it is a smokeless industry, it will have limited negative impact on the environment (80% of the state's land area is covered by forest) compared to other labour intensive industries. Expansion of tourism will generate more expenditure in the economy, which is likely to have implications for other SMEs and traditional industries, thereby creating a direct impact on the state's GDP. It will lead to appreciation of exchange rate, together with an increase in domestic prices and wages due to EME. Systematic application of PPT tool throughout the tourism sector of AP will result in overall development of the underprivileged class. Puling Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) or Foreign Institutional Investment (FII) for building tourism infrastructure in the state (i.e. Hotels, Resorts and etc) will lead

to leakage of tourism economy out of the state (tourist destination), where as states' participation with the involvement of local community to create small tourism venture will keep the generated tourism economy within the state. PPT checks economical leakage by building linkages with other sectors such as agriculture, construction, textile, transportation services by local suppliers and etc. Tourism industry is a cumulative bundle of different services interrelated with each other creating high EME which will lead the marginalized society of AP towards new heights. To escalate GSDP, tourism can play a key role but to eliminate poverty, the benefits of tourism sector should reach the baseline of the community. From the context of AP the current overall situation can be tackled by optimum implementation of the strategic tool- PPT.

Limitation and Scope for Future Research:

- Optimum outcome through PPT cannot be achieved unless the hosting destination is not developed as a whole.
- Tourism is seasonal in nature - Lack of proper integration between tourism and other economic activities will create hindrance to provide year around livelihood.
- Fragile Linkage to the poor – Lack of engagement of the poor will lead to leakage of tourism spending away from the destination. The balance income may not end up delivering benefits to the poor instead reaching the well-off segment of the society.

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