

ROLE OF MEDIA TO PROMOTE TOURISM IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Himachal Pradesh, situated in the lap of north-east Himalayas, has unique fauna and flora, natural panoramas, lakes, snow covered hills, perennial rivers and phenomenal cultural set up. The state ensures the credibility and accountability for the security and hospitality of the visitors with charismatic hotels and restaurants. Government is consistently working in this field with new policies promoting the new locations as destination. Media is the only tool that disseminates the information and the specialties of tourists' destinations across the world. It also plays exclusive role in the growth and development of tourism exploring awareness and cognizance to cater the needs and requirements of native and inter-national tourist.

KEYWORDS: Media, Electronic Media, Social Media, Tourism, Culture, Policies.

Himachal Pradesh is bestowed with natural grandeur, picturesque locations, snow mountains, lush green valleys, a cool climate and hospitable people. Besides this, it is famous for its Himalayan landscapes and popular hill stations. Many outdoor activities viz rock climbing, paragliding, ice-skating are the main tourist attractions in Himachal Pradesh. Shimla, the capital of Himachal Pradesh is very popular among tourists. The Kalka-Shimla Railways is a UNESCO World Heritage Site which is a Mountain Railway. The Ridge is one of the most crowd-pleasing places of Shimla which is also the centre of most cultural activities in the state. Himachal Pradesh is also known as 'Abode of God'. It is amalgamation of many tribes, different religions, culture and natural heritage. The glimpse of traditionally attired deities being carried in meticulously decorated

palanquins, and devotees in the rhythmic play of traditionally drums leaves a lasting imprint on one's mind. This natural, traditional and cultural richness along with its simple loving people and traditional hospitality makes Himachal Pradesh a most favoured tourists destination. Thus, Himachal Pradesh has immense potential which must be sustained for a long. Hence, it is very important for the state to develop its infrastructure facilities and promote its offerings in a sustainable manner.

The popular tourists circuits in Himachal Pradesh are already known to everyone but now remote districts viz Lahual Spiti and Kinnaur are also becoming popular destinations. The state government is playing an exclusive role to develop unexplored destinations by improving the sanitation, roads,

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parking's, accommodation, beautification and tourist interest places etc. To promote any destination as a tourist destination, it is very fundamental to provide veracious information which is very easily susceptible through social media. Social media is one of the fastest growing communication technologies and playing a significant role in tourism industry. Social media and the World Wide Web are two popular media which have brought about pervasive changes in business to business communication, business to customer communication, and customer to customer communication (Kietzmann, Heermkens, MC Carthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Li Wang and Thevenot define social media in the way that the Internet has evolved from broadcasting medium to a participatory platform that allows people to become the "media" themselves for collaborating and sharing information. It refers to Internet-based online media in which individuals with common interests, goals, and practices engage in social interactions constructing personal profiles and sharing information and experiences (Chi, Hsu & Wang, 2006).

The term 'Social media' is understood as Internet-based applications that contain consumer-generated content and facilitate a higher level of social interaction among tourists. Media can be categorized into traditional media and contemporary media which is also known as electronic media. Traditional media as name suggests refer to television, radio, newspaper, magazines and other print publications such as Times of India, The Economist and Wall Street Journal. On the other hand, social media refers to the new generation of digital, computerized or networked information and communication technologies. The examples of social media are Twitter, Google, You Tube, Whatsapp and Facebook etc. These social networking sites have digitalized human social connections

through these sites. People use to maintain their social connections through these sites. These social sites now become a key platform where people can connect to other with whom they can share their own experience about their vacation.

Tourists' positive experiences related to travel and stories encourage other tourists to visit that place. One can say it is free of charge marketing tool for all tourism business (Fotis et al. 2012). Tourists regard these experiences and information as more trustworthy and beneficial rather than professional travel advice. That is why travelers are becoming increasingly more interested in seeking the opinions and reviews of the fellow travelers. (Fotis et al. 2012, Leung et al. 2011).

The relationship between tourism and media is of great importance. Tourism is highly dependent on media because of the fact that the vast majority of travel decision are made by people with the help of social media. Tourists already know through reliable sources on websites how their experience is going to be like in order to reduce uncertainly and they also create some expectations of what they are going to find at a destination. Thus media has great impacts on tourism industry. Tourists acquire more information about the destination in term of accommodation, transportation, sightseeing and other activities with the help of media. This information is very important for functional reasons or to plan trips. Through this information tourists are able to diminish their doubts about trip.

Print media is also playing vital role to promote tourism in the state. This includes advertisement in Newspapers and publishing books like "*Unforgettable Himachal*". According to Brown and Chalmers (2000), published guide books are one of the most typical information for tourists. The use of travel guidebooks is widely welcomed by tourists such as beach

tourists, film tourists (Law, Bunnell, & Ong, 2007). These travel guidebooks play an exclusive role for the guidance of the tourists.

The another form of traditional media such as film and television programs are influencing human beliefs, values and behavior. Film is also considered as a more credible and trustworthy mass media source compared to other promotional materials. There are some TV channels which are advertising tourism in the state. Cinema acts as a pull and push factor in tourism promotion. It helps in conveying and flaunting our cultural and historical heritages across the world. Many visitors have taken trekking trip to Shimla and Manali after watching *Ye Zawani hai Diwani* where as the another movie *Dil Dhadakne Do* has promoted the ship curies to high heights.

Now a day's eco-tourism is considered the fastest growing market in the tourism industry. Many professional have been involved in formulating and developing eco-tourism policies. They are from the different fields such as Geographic Information System, Wildlife Management, Wildlife Photography, Marine Biology and Oenology, Environmental Sciences and Archeologists etc. Eco-tourism focuses on local cultures and wilderness adventures. It is defined as travel to destinations where the flora, fauna and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. It also help to enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Contemporary media has offered many opportunities for tourists to express themselves, share their opinions, reviews and experiences which other tourists may use as a reference in their travel planning. Traditional media is also the best way to promote tourism but it has some limitations. There is no direct involvement of public which is there in electronic and contemporary media.

One cannot deny the fact that the role of media and entertainment industry in Himachal Pradesh is very prominent. This is only the way

to promote culture, landscape and heritage among tourists who have keen interest in Indian culture. Media enabled tourism industry to have appropriate insight in the world of tourists. To promote tourism, it is very important to engage tourists with multichannel integrated communications and encourage them to talk about their good experience which is only possible through social and electronic media.

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