CHAPTER - 5

STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

"Like all great travelers, I have seen more than I remember and remember more than I have seen."

-Benjamin Disraeli
CHAPTER - 5

STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

This chapter proposes Best Practices for Tourism Development, Strategy for Marketing of various Tourism Products and Services, Media Planning and the Role of Stake-holders in implementing Action Plans. Momentarily, it keeps an eye too, on the Approaches adopted by other states of India for improving their individual State of Affairs at different levels.

5.1. PROPOSED BEST PRACTICES

Tourism today is a highly competitive industry. Every country and every region is vying with the other to draw as many tourists as it can. Even the oil rich countries of West Asia have recognized the economic value of tourism and are sprucing up their limited resources and building up-market facilities of accommodation, transport and entertainment. The phenomenal rise in international visitor’s movement has not mellowed the severity of competition amongst the nations and regions. In our country every state and union territory, each having different kinds of tourism resources, are developing facilities to attract a larger number of visitors. In this atmosphere of cut-throat competition, the tourism planners have to devise practices, which will be different from others and stand out in eyes of the end user, i.e. the tourists. These are the Best Practices, which are developed to utmost perfection and should be easily discernible [Bhatia (2006)]. The tourists visiting the region should be able to make out a positive milieu generated by these practices, compared to other regions. A few of the states, which are forerunners in tourism, have adopted Best Practices and have considerably gained. But tourism in Sikkim is still in the process of transition and the mission is to make it one of the foremost destinations in India. There is more to Sikkim than just natural beauty. It provides a wide potential in tourism that has yet largely remained unexploited. The unique Buddhist connection, adventure, eco tourism
and scenic beauty blessed with flora and fauna have been perceived as a major strength of tourism attractions in the state. Sikkimese hospitality tangibly manifests itself in the intricately designed welcome gates with pagoda type roofs that are normally located at the entrances of monasteries and important public buildings. The other strength of the state is its multi-season potentiality. The perennially snow-capped mountains, lush green topical and temperate forests, gurgling streams and the rich flora and fauna are all there for the visitors to savor. Besides, one can continuously behold many attractions as already mentioned in Chapter 2 of the present study. Thus, the development of infrastructure and facilities and an aggressive promotion through marketing would build up its image as a unique spot on the globe. But the real difference would be visible when tourists visiting Sikkim experience something new and an atmosphere dissimilar with other destinations. The tourists back home recount this experience; become opinion leaders, which results into word-of-mouth publicity for the state. As such, with this backdrop and after an in-depth analysis of the tourism scenario, the study probed into various practices and future strategies of tourism development in the Himalayan state of Sikkim. These are fundamentally based on our findings and field observations and getting reflected in successive discussions.

5.1.1. FOCUS ON HIGH POTENTIALS

Sikkim offers multiple choices of tourism places and products, but it does not have a strong positive image in domestic market and clear image for consumers in major international tourism generating markets. Few domestic and international visitors explore Sikkim in depth, daunted by long distances and inadequate facilities. Thus, for a comprehensive development of tourism in the state, there has to set the ball rolling by providing infrastructure and fulfilling basic needs of the tourist facilities and civic amenities. This will help in registering a constant growth in arrivals, which would prepare a ground for private sector to step in. Therefore, the focus would be on high potential tourism spots and products as engine of growth. Instead of spreading up the financial resources thin over a number of places and products, it
will be expedient to phase-wise prioritize them on the basis of potentials of tourism resources, accessibility and existing facilities. Those having high potential should be placed in Priority 1 and taken up for complete development within first two phases of the plan to register a speedy growth in tourist arrivals. Development of Priority 2 places should also start simultaneously with provision of basic facilities in the first phase. The process would pick up in the second phase and be completed in third one. Therefore, the role of the government in this regard would be to:

(i) Develop infrastructure and provide facilities for budget tourists. These would be operated by Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation (STDC) for one or two years and then leased out to private sector.

(ii) Engage itself in mapping of vulnerable tourism areas.

(iii) Develop new tourism spots and products after due assessment of tourism resources.

(iv) Develop a package of incentives for attracting private sector participation. It will act as a facilitator to develop high quality facilities and new areas and products as well.

(v) Undertake capacity building of the host population for professional handling of tourism services.

(vi) Handle publicity and marketing of tourist spots and products at national and international level.

Based on the above, 33 tourist spots and 6 tourism products have been identified by the present researcher in consultation with officials of the department of tourism, Govt. of Sikkim and Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation, where prioritization of the same has been done on the following basis:

- Potentials of the tourist spots
- Accessibility to the same
- Availability of tourist facilities or any other amenities
- Places not having accessibility or tourist facilities but have potential to attract visitors
In connection with this, the list of tourist places and products prioritized is reflected below:

Table 5.1
TOURIST PLACES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.NO</th>
<th>NAME OF THE SPOT</th>
<th>S.NO</th>
<th>NAME OF THE SPOT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>East Sikkim</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>East Sikkim</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Flower Complex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Enchey Monastery</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cottage Industry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pastanga Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chorten, Deorali</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Angling at Ranikhola, Singtam</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nehru Botanical Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lingdum Monestry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Water Garden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Himalayan Zoological Park</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Fambong-Lho Wildlife</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sanctuary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bakthang Waterfalls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nathula Pass</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>West Sikkim</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>West Sikkim</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Pelling</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Soreng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rabdentse Ruins</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dentam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Khecheopalri Lake</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Phamrong Waterfalls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yuksom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dubdi Monestry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Singshore Bridge</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>North Sikkim</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>North Sikkim</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Seven Sisiter’s Waterfalls</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yumthang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lachung</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lachen</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Phensang Monastery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Guru-Dongmar Lake (17,800 ft)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yumthang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>South Sikkim</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>South Sikkim</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Namchi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Ravangla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Tendong Hills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Rock Garden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Borong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Self Compilation

The tourist spots as identified above helps prioritization of tourism product as listed hereunder:
Table 5.2
TOURISM PRODUCTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOURISM PRODUCTS</th>
<th>PRIORITY-1</th>
<th>PRIORITY-2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrim Tourism</td>
<td>Wildlife Tourism</td>
<td>Tea Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife Tourism</td>
<td>Adventure Tourism</td>
<td>River Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventure Tourism</td>
<td>Eco Tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco Tourism</td>
<td>Garden Tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden Tourism</td>
<td>Mountain Tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Self Compilation

Thus, Table 5.1 and 5.2 depicts a clear picture of tourism scenario in the state prioritized according to geographical demarcation. But as a whole, at present, Sikkim primarily has to be seen as a stand-alone destination offering a unique combination of different products of tourism interest. These include Pilgrim, Wildlife, Adventure Tourism and other products as reflected in Table 5.2. Pelling and Namchi are expected to emerge as stand-alone circuits in near future. The ultimate aim is to develop it as a part of Buddhist Circuit and an eco-tourism spot in the country. It is therefore suggested that all the benefits available to the Buddhist Circuit should soon be extended to Sikkim because of its strong Buddhist linkage and a number of well-known unique monasteries.

5.1.2. CAPACITY BUILDING OF HOST POPULATION

Capacity Building is one of the development parameters which is to be achieved by long and short duration courses/training programmes at different levels of management as per the changing market requirements. Given below a gist of the same.

► LONG DURATION COURSES
- Senior level management staff
- Middle level management staff
- Junior level management staff
- Supervisory staff
► SHORT DURATION COURSES
• Guides/ interpreters/ pathfinders
• Waiters/ cooks/ helpers/ cleaners
• Drivers/ conductors/ loaders

Institute of Hotel Management, Gangtok, community based organizations as stated in Chapter 2 of the study and Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical and Technological Sciences to be associated with for organizing these sort of programmes and courses at regular intervals.

5.1.3. TOURISM EDUCATION
From a mere leisure for holidays and vacations, tourism has now grown into a massive adventure. It is already a largest service sector and is forging ahead to become a top global industry. The international tourist arrivals to our country has been growing with a steady pace. This has been supplemented by the growing number of middle class who have become affluent in post liberalized era. This segment has real disposable income and demands professional handling of tourism services. Both the foreign and domestic visitors claim quality services managed professionally by trained hands. So, human resource development at present has become an integral part of tourism development. Every sector of the industry like accommodation units, transporters, travel agents, tour operators, guides, escorts, interpreters, pathfinders, drivers and conductors need training to make them tourism friendly and visitor oriented. The states of Rajasthan, Kerala and Maharashtra, being major players, have given due emphasis on tourism education and training along with development of different facilities. From this point of view, tourism industry could broadly be divided into two parts. One is Hospitality and Hotel Administration sector, i.e. hotels and tourist accommodation establishments. The other one is Tourism and Travel Trade. The National Council of Hotel Management, the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, is the apex body, that regulates training of personnel for hospitality sector. In Tourism and Travel Trade sector, the parent institute for education is Indian Institute for Travel and Tourism set up by the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India.
It has chapters located at Bhuvaneswar, Thiruvanantpuram and Lucknow. This institute conducts Post Graduate Diploma Course on Tourism Management and short term courses on Management Development, Airline Ticketing, Tour Packaging and Tour Escorts as well. More or less all the universities in India conduct Post Graduate Diploma Courses on Tourism and Travel Management, while a few have post graduate programme on Master of Tourism Management. With reference to this, the Himalayan state of Sikkim also has an Institute of Hotel Management, located at the capital town of Gangtok as discussed in Chapter 2 of the study. This institute has trained professionals in various segments of the tourism industry which has been able to fill in the market requirements of the state. Coming to the course of interaction of the present researcher with the consultants, they are of the opinion that tourism in Sikkim is at a take-off stage. Secondly, the face of travel plans of visitors is fast changing and they wish to have an ‘Activity Oriented’ tour programme that involves various community projects and interface with rural/local people as well. Thirdly, tourism facilities and seines, provided by the government and private sector are going to augment in near future. These would need professional management of tourism services by trained staff at various levels. That's why, it will be prudent to initiate Tourism Studies at school level at the stage of 10±2. At this phase, it would also act as a vocational course and assist the students in choosing ‘Tourism’ as a career option instead of opting for other conventional academic programmes. Tourism should also be a subject in Bachelor Degree Courses as the University Grants Commission of India has already approved of it. The Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical and Technological Sciences, the only full-fledged university in the state of Sikkim (till date) should be encouraged to initiate tourism courses in its academic curriculum. For hospitality sector, the need would be to set up more Food Craft Institutes though this requirement at present is being partially fulfilled by the Institute of Hotel Management at Gangtok. The products of these institutes would be suitable for operation of the Tourist Lodges and budget category accommodation units located in different parts of the state.
5.1.4. COMPUTERIZATION AND NETWORKING

A large cross section of the budget and shoe-string travelers plan their visits with the help of information available on websites and get the prior reservations of tourist facilities through a Central Reservation System [Buhalis (2003)]. This fact has also been brought forth by the field visit undertaken by the researcher for this project. Presently, the computerization of Sikkim Tourism is at a limited stage. It needs to be expanded by creating special websites for integrated tourism related information and setting up a central reservation process for instant bookings. The tourist information should not only be restricted to the services provided by Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation (STDC) and Department of Tourism, Govt. of Sikkim. It should also have information on the facilities provided by private sector as well so that the visitors are able to make a balanced choice. On the other hand, the Central Reservation System may be for the services provided by STDC. If private player wants to link with the same, they may have to share it according to a pre-defined financial norms. Referring to the development of websites, it could be of two types. One should be completely devoted to tourism information, which will have all major and minor details about the places and tourist services. The other one would be the plans and activities of the department of tourism, which will act as a source of information to private sector. Utmost care has to be exercised so that the website is updated with relevant changes occurring time to time. The Central Reservation System should be linked with all major tourist accommodation units and transport services operated by the tourism department in association with STDC. The other linkage would be the Tourist Information Offices within and outside the state.

5.1.5. PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (PPP)

The recent years have seen a marked increase in cooperation between the public and private bodies for development and operation of infrastructure and facilities for a wide range of economic activities including tourism industry. Such Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) arrangements were driven by limitations in public hand to cover investments needs and also by efforts to increase the
quality and efficiency of public services. There are four principal roles (as indicated below) identified by the present study for the private players in PPP schemes:

- to provide additional capital
- to provide alternative management and implementation skills
- to provide value added services to consumers and the public at large
- to provide better identification of needs and optimal use of resources

However, while PPPs can offer a number of advantages, they are by no means the only or the preferred option, and could, then be considered if it can be demonstrated that they will add additional value compared with other approaches. Hence, it would now be worthwhile to have a glance over the benefits of a PPP scheme enumerated as under:

► ACCELERATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION - PPPs often allow the public sector to translate upfront capital expenditure into a flow of ongoing service payments.

► FASTER IMPLEMENTATION - The allocation of design and construction responsibility to the private sector, combined with payments linked to the availability of service, provides significant incentives for the same to deliver capital projects within shorter time frame.

► REDUCED WHOLE LIFE COSTS - For operational and maintenance service, the provision provides the private players with strong incentive to minimize costs over the whole life of a project, something that is inherently difficult to achieve within the constraints of traditional public sector budgeting.
▶ BETTER RISK ALLOCATION - A core principle of a PPP scheme is the sharing of risk with a party best able to manage it at least cost. The aim is to optimize rather than maximize risk transfer to ensure that best value is achieved.

▶ BETTER INCENTIVES TO PERFORM - The allocation of project risk should provide incentive to a private sector contractor to improve quality of service.

▶ GENERATION OF ADDITIONAL REVENUES - The private sector may be able to generate additional revenues from third parties, thereby reducing the cost of any public sector subvention required for the same.

▶ ENHANCED PUBLIC MANAGEMENT - Last but not the least, by transferring responsibility for providing public services, government officials will act as regulators and shall focus upon service planning and performance monitoring, instead of management of day to day delivery of public services. In addition, by exposing public services to competition, PPPs enable the cost of public services to be benchmarked against market standards in order to ensure that the very best value for money is being reached.

But PPP arrangements come in many forms and are still an evolving concept, which should not be regarded as representing a miracle cure or indeed a quick fix to infrastructure and service development. Several forms of PPP exist and are continuously being developed to suit project characteristics. Main defining feature is the degree of private control and involvement in financing. There is neither unique model nor are there any specific guidelines, which could be developed. Each project will define what is suitable and what is required. The overall aim of PPPs is, therefore, to structure the relationship between the parties, so that risks are borne by those best able to control them and increased value is added through the exploitation of private sector skills and competencies. In developed countries, it plays a dominant role in operation of transport, accommodation, travel agency, guiding and shopping facilities which the researcher experienced himself during his time to time passionate visit to foreign nations. One would
hardly find any govt. owned bungalows and tourist vehicles plying over the road. In other words, the commercial operation of tourism amenities in those countries are mostly in the hands of private sector, while the govt. facilitates by providing infrastructure and regulates the standards through rules and strict by-laws. But in case of Himalayan sister Sikkim, the participation of private sector in providing tourist facilities seems to be in restricted form. It is presently limited to hotels in major towns, adventure sports and transportation at a micro level. But it is believed that in due course of time, the infrastructure facilities would be made available at the tourist places and travel circuits, which will encourage private players to partake in different tourism related assignments. Keeping this in mind, the present study has made an attempt to identify few sectors in PPP scheme for Sikkim Tourism based on the field observation. Followings are the areas to name a few:

(i) Hotels—Resorts, Starred Accommodation, Heritage Units and Economy Lodges
(ii) Guest Houses, Pensioner & Paying Guest Accommodation
(iii) Wayside Amenities and Eco Tourism Units
(iv) Adventure and Sports Tourism
(v) Bars, Restaurants, Eateries, Food Courts & Food Parlors
(vi) Tourist Transport Services
(vii) Package Tours and Conducted Tours
(viii) Ropeways
(ix) Amusement Parks
(x) Recreation and Indoor Games Centers

In the states of Kerala, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, the Public-Private Participation in tourism activities at the identified tourist circuits is hacked by a package of incentives and concessions given by the government. The government acts as a facilitator and regulator and does not directly manage those services. Keeping tune in this line, the researcher feels that the Government of Sikkim may also undertake to provide following package of incentives to the approved projects:
(i) Provide infrastructure facilities of roads, water, electricity supplies, telecommunication and garbage, sewage & solid waste disposal arrangement
(ii) Provide suitable plots of land on lease at reasonable premium and lease rental
(iii) Reduced stamp duty for registration of land
(iv) Subsidy for preparation of Project Report
(v) Interest subsidy on loans from financial institutions and nationalized banks. The subsidy could vary for different categories of accommodation units. Additional subsidy may be given to the entrepreneurs belonging to Schedule Caste/Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. The entrepreneurs setting up hotels at the identified tourist places should get maximum subsidy, while those interested in major towns should get the minimum
(vi) Investment subsidy to medium and small scale tourism projects
(vii) Water and power supplies at reduced tariff for an initial period of at least 5 years
(viii) Relief of sales and luxury taxes for a period of 5 to 10 years
(ix) Expenditure made on Human Resource Development by the hospitality industry and travel trade to be subsidized for at least five years
(x) Single window system of clearance of projects within a stipulated time frame

The above incentives should in no way restrict the entrepreneurs from availing of the concessions given by Govt. of India. These should form a part of the State Tourism Policy and should be given wide publicity to attract investment from within and outside the state. The funds required for the subsidies should be provided annually in the tourism budget because, declaring tourism as an industry does not entitle the projects for getting subsidies from the department of industries. For tax concessions and reduced tariffs too, the concerning departments will have to be taken into confidence.
5.1.6. ESTABLISHMENT OF INTER-STATE LINKAGE

There is no denying the fact that Sikkim is one of the major tourist hotspots in eight adjoining states of Northeast part of India. In fact, the entire Northeast tourism scenario is getting focused in domestic tourism map of the country because of unparalleled attractions of the state. Thus, Sikkim has a pivotal role to play with regard to prompt development of tourism in the region. It has common border with the adjoining state of West Bengal and shares international boundary with Nepal, China and Tibet in different directions. The neighboring state West Bengal is well connected by a motorable road from the nearest towns of Siliguri and Bagdogra. Most of the movement of visitors is, therefore, by interstate road transport services, hired taxis and owner driven vehicles. Since Sikkim enjoys a comparatively more favorable political position than rest of the Northeastern states, it may provide a vital international linkage to the bordering nations as well. Further, the entire Northeast is principally a nature based region where the habitations are located in remote landlocked areas. Tourism is the only industry, that can transform the economic face of these areas by generating employment and self-employment opportunities. The ideal concept would therefore, be to develop a strategy for interstate coordination or regional tourism circuits with the adjoining states as well as with neighboring nations to sell the region and reap the benefits. The circuits could be founded on various themes or on an effective connectivity. The entire region based on the state of Sikkim could then be marketed and publicized as a single entity with multi destinations, travel circuits and tourism products. The present study observes that the same could be achieved by a set of measures in the following forms:

(i) Formation of a ‘Northeast Regional Tourism Council’. It should be a high level Council that will solely devote its activities towards a planned and coordinated development and promotion of tourism in the region. It should also address the problems of inter state movement of tourists and visitors and advise the Central Govt. on liberalizing the entry restrictions.
Siliguri in West Bengal, being a major gateway to neighboring Nepal and Bhutan, could be developed as a Tourist Hub for the region. A combined Tourist Reception Centre of all the sister states of Northeast in general and Sikkim and West Bengal in particular should be set up, which may provide services in the form of tourism information, central reservation of accommodation and transport, issue of entry permits, transit accommodation, handicraft and handloom shops, tourist utility shops, food court having kiosks of the states and other allied amenities.

An annual festival of Northeast should be organized every year at Siliguri to attract travelers from different parts of the region and bordering Nepal and Bhutan as well. The festival should be a forum to display the folk culture, rural sports, martial arts, handicrafts/handlooms and cuisine of the region. It would also act as a platform for mutual understanding and interaction amongst the Northeastern states, that could lead to a better co-ordination in planning and promoting tourism industry.

As such, keeping in view the recent priority of tourism development of Northeast region with the Ministry of DONER, the Govt. of India should soon consider formation of the proposed North East Regional Tourism Council. The projects of combined Tourist Reception Centre and annual North East Festival may jointly be funded by the Govt. of India and the respective state governments.

In this regard, the following practices of Inter-state Coordination adopted by other states of India can be referred to for a clear understanding of the issue.

- **KERALA** — Promotion of a Regional Tourism Circuit through effective coordination with Southern states

- **TAMILNADU** — A complete Regional Grid with Sri Lanka at an international level
• RAJASTHAN – Memorandum of Undertakings with Kerala for joint marketing and publicity of each other’s tourism products and services

• ANDHRA PRADESH — Leave Travel Concession Package for visiting Goa. (This has also recently been introduced for Central Employees by the Ministry of DONER, Govt of India for visiting Northeastern States)

5.2. MARKETING STRATEGY

Publicity and marketing of Sikkim Tourism is at an emerging stage, though the department and STDC had been participating in various trade fairs, travel marts and exhibitions at national and international level. It is, therefore, expedient that along with the development plan, a long-term strategy for marketing and publicity should be designed. Marketing of tourist places, travel circuits and tourism products of Sikkim have to go hand in hand with the development of infrastructure and tourist facilities. This will involve building up a strong tourism friendly environment, creation of a brand image, identification of unique selling proposition and selection of a proper media mix for an effective focus [Kulkarini (2005)]. The study will now make an attempt in these directions.

5.2.1. STRATEGY IN TERMS OF TOURISM PRODUCTS

The present status of the tourism products of Sikkim does not seem to be very encouraging. As evident in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of the present study that the negative aspects are overshadowing the vast potentials of tourism resources that could be marketed and publicized to get advantages of increasing tourism demands of our country. An informal awareness survey of tourist places of Sikkim, conducted by the researcher in a limited time frame, has indicated that a substantial percentage of surveyed population is aware of the tourist wealth of the state. But this awareness has not culminated into visits because majority of them feel Sikkim to be in a psychological distance with time constraint. Similarly, the field observation of the tourists indicated in Chapter 3 of the study revealed some pointers which could be born in mind while developing tourism products for the visitors. The most significant amongst them is ‘Willingness to Visit Sikkim
Again where almost 100% of the respondents had shown their willingness to re-visit Sikkim provided some customized tourism products are developed as per their demand. It is a positive indication that none of the visitors expressed their unwillingness of re-visiting the state which was apparent in Figure 3.14 of Chapter 3.

5.2.2. STRATEGY IN TERMS OF INFORMATION LITERATURE

The information and publicity has a crucial role to play to project the state as a unique tourist destination. This objective is slowly but surely being achieved through the dissemination of information, promotional activities and marketing campaign. The department has produced several brochures on various tourist attractions and destinations. Improving and updating of information carried by these brochures, is another important function of the concerned cell in department of tourism in the state. At present, the Directorate of Tourism, Govt. of Sikkim has a list of following publications:

- Tourist Guide Map of Sikkim
- Sikkim, Small but Beautiful, a Brochure
- Sikkim - The Hidden Paradise, a Brochure
- Sikkim, Small but Beautiful, a Coffee Table Book
- Sikkim- Ultimate Eco-Tourism Destination, a Brochure
- Brochure on Monasteries
- Brochure on Fairs & Festivals
- Brochure on General Tourist Information
- Yearly Calendar and Diary
- Mini VCD on — Capital Town Gangtok

In addition to above, India Tourism, the Regional Office of Govt. of India for Northeast, has published literatures on Northeast that has a write-up on Sikkim Tourism. But the researcher is in a position to feel that the above literatures should be comprehensive in kind and contain more objective data rather than subjective information. It could be categorized according to type of tourism products available in the state.
5.2.3. STRATEGY TO ATTRACT VISITORS

The SWOT Analysis carried out in Chapter 3 of the study has thrown up both strength and weakness of the tourism industry in Sikkim. The first one is a positive indication, while the second one is unenthusiastic, which is injurious to a healthy growth of tourism in the state. The negative parameters have to be countered by adequate reforms along with an aggressive publicity and planned marketing to portray a realistic and favorable image. Thus, a detailed marketing plan generally requires an adequate field research involving selection of marketing mix governed by well-defined objectives and a target market segment. This is a time consuming approach and shall demand additional funding. Further, as the development is in process, it will not be prudent to spend time and funds for such an exercise at present. That is why, the researcher has prepared a few guidelines based on the filed observation and a micro level survey undergone by him. The proposed strategy may involve the following basic issues:

►PRIORITIZATION OF DESTINATIONS

The prioritization of various destinations in the state can be for short, medium and long term as indicated below:

• **Short Term** — Tourist places, travel circuits and tourism products of priority one category that are in the process of development.
• **Medium Term** — Tourist places, travel circuits and tourism products that are being developed including quality tourist facilities provided by the private sector.
• **Long Term** - Aggressive marketing of tourist places, travel circuits and tourism products to position the state as one of the foremost destinations at national and international levels.

►CUSTOMER (TOURIST) SEGMENTATION

Target customers can also be identified according to location, income groups and purpose of travel for short, medium and long term like that of prioritization of destinations.
*TARGET CUSTOMER — LOCATION (FOREIGN/DOMESTIC/LOCALS/WEEKENDERS)

• **Short Term** — During this period, the concentration should be on domestic market because tourist facilities would be limited to budget and economy class visitors.

• **Medium Term** — Facilities of good standard with quality service would start operating during this period. Hence, along with domestic market, the foreign markets should also be taped. Locals and weekenders would continue to remain in target.

• **Long Term** — Foreign and domestic markets and the locals and weekenders from neighboring places would be the target.

*TARGET CUSTOMER — INCOME GROUP (HIGH/MIDDLE/LOW)

• **Short Term** — Domestic tourists of middle (budget) and low income groups and local and weekenders should be focused in view of the available tourist facilities.

• **Medium Term** — Foreign and domestic tourists of high-end and budget class and the locals and weekenders could be targeted.

• **Long Term** — Foreign and domestic visitors of all income groups to be concentrated.

*TARGET CUSTOMER — PURPOSE OF VISIT

• **Short Term** — Tourists interested in Heritage, Pilgrimage, Eco, Adventure/Sports, Culture, Wildlife and River Tourism would be the target.

• **Medium Term** — In addition to above listed in short term, the visitors interested in Conventions, Business and Tea Tourism may be focused upon.

• **Long Term** — Tourists interested in all types of tourism activities should be focused.
MARKET SEGMENTATION
The probable tourist originating markets to be tapped in this regard are:

- **Short Term** - In domestic sector, the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Orissa, Bihar and Northeastern states should be concentrated.
- **Medium Term** - In international sector, the major Southeast Asian Nations and Fast European countries could be targeted.
- **Long Term** - For the foreign visitors, all tourist generating markets of Europe, America, West Asia, East Asia and the neighboring nations should be focused upon. Special efforts may be given to attract NRIs from different parts of the globe. Domestic sector would include all the states and marketing within the state.

5.2.4. STRATEGY TO ATTRACT INVESTMENT
Along with strategy to attract visitors, the tourism authorities of Sikkim will have to design action plan to attract investors as well so that the facilities for up-market and budget tourists are built in and operated on professional lines. This may involve liaison with the followings:

(i) Industrial associations like Chamber of Commerce & Industries, Confederation of Indian Industries etc.
(ii) National and state level associations of Travel Agents/Tour Operators and Hoteliers
(iii) International and national funding agencies, like World Bank, IMF, ADB, State Finance Corporations, Tourism Finance Corporation, IDBI and the nationalized banks.
Some of the approaches to reach out to the prospective investors would be:

(i) Seminars, presentations and exhibitions showcasing the investment opportunities in Sikkim at international and national level

(ii) Presentations to various organizations in tourism sector, like Indian Association of Amusement Parks & Allied Industries, Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Association of India, Travel Agents Association of India, Indian Association of Tour Operators etc. The presentation should convey these organizations the prospective plan proposed by Sikkim Tourism.

(iii) Distribution of printed literature to potential investors stating:

- Information about tourist destinations
- Current tourist inflow and future forecast
- Projects identified and investments required
- Incentives and assistance given by the government
- Investment procedures
- Likely returns

5.2.5. STRATEGY IN TERMS OF PUBLICITY

The promotion of tourist attractions of the state through publicity serves the dual purpose of attracting visitors and also investment towards it. The advertisement campaign should promote selected destinations and activities depending upon the target audience and development priorities of that destination to optimize the resources. Some tourist destinations and tourism activities are proposed for medium term and long term development because of lack of infrastructure and priority attached to them. These destinations and activities should be promoted at an appropriate stage when the facilities would be developed. Therefore, before stepping into a media plan and media mix, three basic issues of publicity, like Friendly Tourist Environment, Brand Image and Unique Selling Proposition have to be dealt with on priority basis that may enhance the impact of media campaign in long run.
DEVELOPMENT OF A TOURIST FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

The steps to be taken in this regard are:

(i) Spruce up the tourist sites with proper signage, civic amenities and environmental improvement. Host community and local service personnel should be trained and become tourism friendly.

(ii) Prominent welcome signage at entry and exit corners like Airports (proposed), Railway Station (proposed), Bus Terminus and cross border entry/exit points should be incorporated in multiple languages.

(iii) Encourage local people to welcome tourists. They should be made aware of the socio-economic benefits of tourism so that cheating and harassment could be avoided and the visitors are given warm welcome.

(iv) Organize ‘Road Shows’ depicting tourism wealth, tourist facilities and the economic benefits to make visitors and travel industry conscious of tourism wealth of the state.

(v) Set up ‘Help Desks’, ‘Assistance Points’ and ‘Tourist Police Post’ at each tourist spot to control exploitation, cheating and harassment. This will build confidence and goodwill amongst the visitors and breed a sense of safety and hassle free travel.

(vi) Organize ‘Tourist Weeks’ at each of the tourist places with active participation of local people. Such celebrations will focus attention of host population on importance of a tourism friendly environment and help in augmenting arrivals.

(vii) Focus attention of the state functionaries of concerned departments by involving them in tourism related seminars and special events. This will help getting better cooperation from them.

CREATION OF A BRAND IMAGE

The marketing experts have opined that -

“Anybody can build a product but consistent branding makes it successful”

Thus, a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors; and brand image is
the total impression of a brand in an individual's mind, what it does for them and what it means to them. Image associated with a brand is a powerful purchase influencer. Consumers buy not only a product but also the image associated with the product. The brand is unlikely to have one brand image but several, out of which one or two may predominate. Good brand images are instantly evoked, are positive and are always unique among the competitive brands. The success of the brand image can be checked from a sample survey of the market. Sikkim has a brand with a logo of 'Dragon' with a cursive representation of 'Sikkim Tourism'. Thus, the concerned stake-holders should constantly focus in creating a lasting image of this brand which may, definitely have a positive impact on the tourism traffic.

► IDENTIFICATION OF A UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION (USP)

For successful marketing, it is necessary to focus on what is special and different about a tourism product. The uniqueness of the product has to be expressed in a single statement though it does not necessarily mean a slogan or a phrase. At the same time, the message has to be unique in itself [Renganathan (2004)]. For framing out a unique message one has to keep in mind a few aspects, which are:

• What is unique about the tourism product?
• Which of these factors are most important to the end user?
• Which of these are not imitated easily by the competitors?
• Which of these can be easily communicated and understood by the end user?
• Can one construct a memorable passage of these unique qualities?
• How will one communicate this message?

The present USP slogan of Sikkim Tourism is “A Hidden Paradise”. It is a catchy slogan but does not communicate unique features of the tourism scenario. Such slogans are being used by other states too. The need is to bring forth the unique characteristics of nature and culture through an well defined USP slogan. This has to be created on the basis of the framework mentioned above. The field investigation of tourism resources of the state has helped us to opine that Eco
Tourism and Pilgrim Tourism are the planks of Unique Selling Proposition of Sikkim supported by Adventure Sports Tourism, Himalayan Tourism and Heritage Tourism.

Therefore, the development of Brand Image and identification of USP are a part of the specialized field of marketing and advertising agencies. It is hereby suggested that a professional agency, with a good track record of tourism marketing, should be assigned this job.

► MEDIA PLANNING

Appropriate media-mix should be used depending on the destination, type of activity and the target audience. This is necessary to achieve targeted objectives and media effectiveness and will motivate and generate urge to visit in the minds of target market segment. It should be noted that a good promotion campaign is only successful if a sound distribution network acts as a back up. Similarly, in tourism industry, development campaign will attract visitors on a sustainable basis only if the accessibility, tourist facilities and services are up to the standards of tourist use. Portrayed below a few tools of media plan as proposed by the researcher which could be of use in this regard—

(i) Comprehensive Printed Publicity Literature - Guidebooks, folders, tariff cards, posters, picture post cards and display photographs
(ii) Display Material - Hoardings, welcome boards, signage at all entry points
(iii) Audio Visual Media — Films, CDs, DVDs at special occasions, taped cassettes, radio and television
(iv) Gift/Memento Items — Caps, T-shirts, bags, purse, key chains at tourist spots
(v) Print Media — Newspapers, magazines, in-flight magazines, travel trade journals for advertisements and featured articles
(vi) Exhibitions and displays in Travel Marts and Expos at frequent intervals
(vii) Street Shows in tourist generating states of the country and within the state
(viii) Special events like Visitor Weeks, Cultural Bonanza, Sikkim Tourism Year on regular basis
(ix) Super Saver Schemes by tour operators and hoteliers during off seasons
(x) Familiarization Tours of travel writers, travel agents, tour operators, hoteliers and investors
(xi) Continuous Liaison with international and national airlines, travel agents, tour operators and hoteliers
(xii) Creation of separate websites for tourist information and online reservations

The media mix based on these tools would be used according to need of the time, because timing would depend upon the development plans earmarked for each term. Due care will have to be taken to ensure that development of the product meets with demands of the media plan; else it might have adverse effects. Keeping in view these aspects, media mix for short, medium and long term is being suggested. But this plan is tentative and might need fine-tuning according to the progress of improvement of tourism facilities. Thus, it will not be out of place to repeat here that a good promotion campaign will certainly be able to attract visitors on a sustained basis, if it is backed by good accessibility to the destinations, facilities suitable to the standards of tourists and the related services are professionally managed. As such, the present study would be in a position to recommend (as already indicated above) that a national level marketing/advertising agency, with long experience of tourism marketing, should be assigned the job to plan a complete package of media and marketing campaign and manage it as per requirements on a turnkey basis. A few of the leading agencies in the country who can be consulted in this regard are:

- Lintas Advertising
- J. Walter Thomson Ltd
- Ogilvey & Mather Ltd
- Contract Advertising
- Grey Worldwide Advertising
- Percept Advertising
- Span Advertising

to name a few.
5.2.6. LEARNING FROM OTHER STATES

The state of Sikkim, in this regard, can follow similar pattern of marketing practices adopted by certain tourist friendly states of India as designated in the under-mentioned manner:

- **ANDHRA PRADESH** — Mobile Museum and Information Centre cum Souvenir Shop. ‘Theme Based Literature and Audio-Visuals’ on tourist places

- **GOA** — ‘Go Goa 365 on a Holiday’, a known brand in national and international market

- **GUJARAT** — Special thrust to ‘Even Based Tourism’

- **KARNATAKA** — ‘Discover Karnataka’, an innovative series of cultural events

- **KERALA** — Focused marketing and strong network with travel, tourism and trade in identified selected markets

- **ORISSA** — Golden Heritage Triangle of ‘Puri-Konark-Bhubaneshwar’ and Diamond Triangle of Buddhist spots — ‘Ratnagiri-Udayagiri-Lalitagiri’

- **UTTARANCHAL** — Appointment of ‘International Management Group’ to promote tourism in potential overseas markets

- **WEST BENGAL** — ‘Bangla Dekho’, an aggressive marketing and publicity campaign

5.3. DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS

As a first step to an effective action plan, a survey of tourism gaps should be undertaken and thereafter, projects should be prioritized on the basis of their overall importance. The different stake-holders in tourism sector have a unique role to play in implementing different development plans on an unending fashion. For this reason, the current study, at this moment makes an endeavor to examine the matter with a clear cut road map focusing on roles and responsibilities of all the concerned.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAKE-HOLDERS</th>
<th>ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directorate of Tourism, Govt of Sikkim</td>
<td>Coordination for infrastructure facilities, feasibility studies, scrutiny of private sector projects and creating database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation</td>
<td>Nodal agency for implementation of Master Plan at different levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Works Department, Govt of Sikkim</td>
<td>Construction, up-gradation and maintenance of links and approach roads amongst the tourists destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Department, Govt of Sikkim</td>
<td>Up-gradation of wildlife viewing facilities, Eco-tourism projects and camping arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Department, Govt of Sikkim</td>
<td>Maintenance of security and safety at tourist spots and international travel routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern Council</td>
<td>Provision for infrastructure at tourist places in North-eastern states, coordinating cross border tourism development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Civil Aviation, Govt of India</td>
<td>Upgradation of Bagdogra Airport to an international level, rationalization of visa formalities and more access to scheduled international airlines amongst SAARC countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve Bank of India</td>
<td>Restructuring of banking operations and foreign exchange facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Information and Public Relation</td>
<td>Promotion of tourism products and making ample publicity in a global perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading Tour Organizers (SOTC, Thomas Cook, Jungle Travel, NCS Travel etc)</td>
<td>Developing new tourist circuits, designing unique tourism package between Sikkim and other places of Buddhist significance, transportation and marketing cross border tourism opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast Chamber of Commerce and Industries</td>
<td>Capacity building for guides and tour operators, creating a global tourism image, organising tourism seminars at national and international level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast Development and Finance Corporation</td>
<td>Financing viable tourism projects with hassle free formalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast Tourism Board (in process of being set up)</td>
<td>Training in manpower, marketing and investment development, exploration of Buddhist linkages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Sub Committee-CII</td>
<td>Promotion of tourism amongst Northeast region and ASEAN, training programmes for hotels and tour operators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Self Compilation

Therefore, the recommended strategies emerging out of our foregoing discussion leads towards attainment of the specific objective (iv) that positioned itself in Chapter 1 of the present study.
REFERENCES

► BOOKS


► JOURNALS


► WEB SITES

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Worlds tallest statue of Guru Padmasambhava at Namchi, South Sikkim