Chapter 7

Strategy for Tourism Promotion in the Vidarbha Region

Identification Of Priority Market
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IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITY MARKET

India's tourism industry is booming due to a rush of foreign tourists and increased travel by Indians to domestic and overseas destinations. Nearly three million foreign tourists visited India in 2003, a 15 percent increase over the previous year. Prospects look even better this year, with tourist arrivals already up by nearly 20 percent.

The visitors are pouring in from all over the world: Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia and Australia. At the same time, the number of Indians traveling abroad last year increased by 30 percent, to 4.5 million. The boom has come even as global tourism has dropped, due to the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in East Asia, and the Iraq war.

Tourism professionals cite several reasons for the buoyancy in the Indian industry. The recent surge in the Indian economy has raised middle class incomes, prompting more people to spend money on vacations abroad or at home. At the same time, India's emergence as a global information technology hub and an aggressive advertising campaign by the government are credited with changing India's image from that of a land of snake-charmers, and sparking new interest among overseas travelers.

The world's leading travel publication, the Lonely Planet, last year listed India as one of the five top "must-see" destinations for global leisure travelers.

Earlier it was a winter industry, but now even in the so-called lean summer and rainy seasons tourists are pouring in. Some of them are from Middle East countries. They come to witness the drenching monsoon rains in India, a phenomenon never seen in desert climates.
Domestic tourists are also fueling the industry's revival. Many of them escape from the summer heat on the plains to resorts in the Himalayan Mountains. One of the major beneficiaries this year is Kashmir, where a cease-fire between India and Pakistan has reduced violence, if not completely, at least enough to help revive the state's sagging tourism industry.

According to the market research done by WTO, Western Europe and the USA is the main tourist generating regions for India. But most of them end up doing the Golden Triangle (Delhi, Agra, Jaipur) in the north and of late, Kerala down south. Clearly, Vidarbha is a neglected part in between. Thus, in the beginning, Vidarbha must consider these cash rich countries as its priority market and focus on projecting itself as an extension of a golden triangle itinerary or south India itinerary.

Vidarbha can adopt a two-pronged strategy for its promotion. On the one hand, it must do an aggressive marketing campaign at the tourist generating regions. This will generate more queries about the region and information kiosks at convenient locations can convert these queries into business. On the other, it must persuade the local inbound tour operators at the gateways to India, namely Delhi and Mumbai, to suggest Vidarbha to their clients. With discreet incentive they can be lured into the business.

**Infrastructure Development**

Infrastructure is the lifeline of tourism industry. As discussed in the previous chapter it includes the three ‘A’s namely, Accessibility, Accommodation and the Amenities. Many destinations of Vidarbha with tourism potential lie neglected for the want of accessibility. At some places there is not even a motorable road and the visitor have to walk miles for the destination. Similarly the central location of Nagpur and its equidistance from the metros can make it a super railway hub. Indian Railways can be a partner in the promotion of tourism circuits in the Vidarbha region. Besides the surface
transport aviation needs to be developed in the region. Besides making Nagpur an international airport, the airstrips at Amravati and Akola can be developed into full-fledged airports. Even the helicopter services are recommended for far off places like Chandrapur and Gadchiroli.

Similarly there is an acute shortage of accommodation units in Vidarbha. While the private entrepreneurs are shy to invest, the MTDC has accommodation units at selected places. In the previous chapter a table gives the number of beds available at each location. The amenities at a destination are equally important to draw tourists. These include telecom and broadband facilities, banking and exchange facilities, wayside amenities etc. These are in its nascent stage in Vidarbha and needs to be taken care of urgently.

**Peoples Involvement, Training And Awareness**

For the success of any tourist destination the guest-host relationship is very important. Though the people of Vidarbha are in general very hospitable, yet there is a need to create awareness about tourism and at the same time seek their participation in the development of tourism industry. A service industry like tourism needs highly professional people. Hiring people from other regions or the metros may be costly and thus Vidarbha must have a state-of-the-art institute to train its manpower and utilize their services. Therefore the existing universities can diversify to include tourism in their curriculum.

**Promotional Strategies**

Enthralled by its beauty and the culture, many foreign tourist want to visit India. But they also have their reservations like health concerns, difficult living conditions, and poverty. It's an image India - one of the world's fastest-growing economies, and a nuclear power eager for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council - wants to shake off. Going on a major makeover offensive, the country jacked up its tourism budget from Rs.500 crore ($116.3 million) in 2003 to Rs.786 crore ($182.79 million) in 2004.
Indian President Abdul Kalam has set the country a target of luring 15 million foreign tourists per year in five years - an ambitious jump from the 3.7 million visitors India welcomes each year. If Vidarbha has to take its pie from this it must harp on an aggressive promotional campaign. Some of the promotional strategies are discussed below.

**Brochures**

Brochures are the basic promotional literature that every tourism organization uses. However if Vidarbha has to make a mark, it has to be different. The promotional literature has to be of high quality with modern outlook. It has to have easy lay out, accurate data and supported by interesting pictographic maps. Sufficient brochures must be distributed to agents abroad and inbound tour operators in India. Thematic brochures on the following themes are recommended:

1. Arts & Crafts
2. Adventure Sports
3. Shopping
4. Fairs & Festivals
5. Dance & Music
6. Body, Mind & Soul
7. Nature & Wildlife
8. Pilgrimages
9. Museums & Art Galleries
10. Things To Do

Two model brochures are given below:

**Model- I**

10 **Must Things to Do at Vidarbha:**

1. **Steal Some Quiet Moments At Chikhaldara**

Chikhaldara is a quiet hill station that yet to be commercially exploited. So if someone wants to spend a few quiet moments with his nears and dears, this is just the right place.
2. Visit The Nature’s Wonder – Lonar
Lonar is a nature’s wonder that will create equal enthusiasm among a casual visitor as well as a geomorphology scholar. Its similarity with the rocks of the planet Mars will definitely bring in more scholars.

3. Visit An Orange Orchard
One of the most spectacular sights is the ripened orange in the orchards. Vidarbha’s orange is famous both for its size and taste. So just visit an orchard and savor the mouth watering oranges.

4. Attend A Nature Orientation Camp At Melghat
A nature orientation camp is an opportunity to understand our Mother Earth and the need to save it in its pristine form to our next generation. Given the environment depletion worldwide attending such nature interpretation camps are a necessity.

5. Dance To The Tune Of Tribal Music
Tribal music is a welcome change to the urban people who are used to the blaring electronic instrument. The soothing music of simple natural instruments coupled with the unique sounds of the jungle is a different experience altogether.

6. Know The Culture Of The Dwindling Parsi Community
The number of Parsi community is fast declining. With that the very culture of the Parsis too is becoming rare. However the Parsis are charming hosts and one must get the feel of their culture before this community becomes extinct.

7. Taste Varhadi cuisine
A visit to Vidarbha is incomplete without tasting its cuisine. It has something for everybody. For those who have a sweet tooth there is Puranpoli, Shrikhand, Basundhi. For those who like it hot and spicy, Varhadi Mutton is worth giving a try.

8. Spend A Day At Baba Amte’s Anand Van
Anand Van is a place set up and run by those afflicted by Leprosy disease. The smooth management of this place is living symbol of ‘simple living, high
thinking’. A visit to this place has inspired many to take up the cause of selfless service to the humanity.

9. Spot The Tigers At Tadoba And Pench
Spotting a tiger in the wild is a different experience altogether than watching it in a zoo or a circus. The thrill associated with it is just inexpressible. One has to see it to believe it. Given the vast area of nature cover in Vidarbha, spotting a tiger in the wild is much easier. It will never disappoint any tourist.

10. Watch The Birds At Lakes In Bhandara
Bhandara, the land of thousand lakes, is a bird watcher’s paradise. In the winters migratory birds from as far as Siberia visit these wetlands. Thus this place is of equal importance for the amateur visitor as well as professional scholars.

Model – II

A to Z of Vidarbha (26 Jewels of Vidarbha):
A: Ancient Heritage
The history of Vidarbha is as old as Indian Civilization itself. Since it has been the part of the great epic Ramayana and Mahabharata, it has been it the folklores from time immemorial. One more interesting feature of Vidarbha is that it has written records of past 900 years. No other region of Maharashtra matches this feat.
B: Bison
One of the endangered species.
C: Chikaldara
Quiet Hill Station
D: Dinosaur egg
Fossils of the giant dinosaurs and their eggs
E: Education
F: Flying squirrel
An animal unique to the forest of Vidarbha
G: Ganesh Festival
The grand gala 10-days festival of Lord Ganesh.

H: Hemalkasa
The first and only orphanage of wild animals

I: Ideally Located
Central India location

J: Jungles
Jungles dense enough to give you a feel of night even in broad daylight

K: Korku
The largest tribal community.

L: Lonar
The only impact crater in basaltic rock in world.

M: Migratory Birds Watching Paradise
Bhandara, the land of thousand lake invites migratory bird from as far as Siberia.

N: Naturopathy
Physical well being using the natural resources

O: Oranges
The best quality of Oranges in India

P: Puran Poli
Mouth watering Sweet Pan-cake

Q: Quaint Forts
Gavilgad, Narnala, Ambagarh.

R: Rangoli
The colourful art found on doorsteps.

S: Sevagram
Where Gandhiji, the apostle of peace taught simplicity and truth

T: Tigers
The largest concentration of royal Bengal tigers in the forests of Vidarbha.

U: Underground Temple Treasures
Temples having underground tunnels at Salbardi, Kaundanyapur.
V: Varhadi Mutton
The hot and spicy non vegetarian cuisine

W: Wildlife
Anoundance of wildlife in the forests of Vidarbha.

X: Xanadu (Beautiful Place)
Serene and beautiful natural places at Gadhchiroli

Y: Yoga
The ancient Indian science of mind, body and soul

Z: Zunka bhakar
A common bread and pulse specialty

Multimedia Presentation (CD-Roms)
After India’s stupendous success in information technology revolution, both national and state tourism organizations have been making use of multimedia presentation to woo the tourists. In the western countries virtually every household has a personal computer. Thus presenting them Vidarbha in the electronic CD-ROM format will have its own inherent advantages. First, a single CD-ROM of a few grams can contain information of loads of printed brochures and thus it is very handy. Secondly, since it can contain moving images the prospective visitors can take a virtual tour of the destination. To make it more interesting and active these CDs can be made in an interactive format. These CD-ROMs again can either represent whole of Vidarbha or just take one of the above theme at a time. But it must have high resolution quality images, user friendly and easily navigable. These CDs can be distributed to the local in bound operators who in turn can make presentation to their principal agents abroad. Also it can be placed in Indian embassies/ missions as well as tourist offices abroad from where the prospective clients can easily pick up.
Print and Electronic Advertisement
We are now in a world in which all goods and services are advertised in both print and electronic media as a part of aggressive marketing campaign. Vidarbha too must advertise its destinations in leading dailies, radio and television programmes both in India and abroad. If a person reads about Vidarbha in morning newspaper, sees a billboard about it on his way to the office, hear about it on the local FM radio on his way back and finally watches about it in the evening soap operas on TV, he is at least bound to make a query. Now it will be our turn to make this query into business. The advertisement must have images of exotic locales so that it stays in the memory of a person long after he saw it. The only hitch is that while advertising abroad careful selection of the print dailies or weeklies as well as the programmes of radio and televisions are to be made.

Fam Tours
Familiarization tours, or Fam Tours in short, are the trips organized by the host destination for the stake holders of the business. Vidarbha need to organize such fam tours for the foreign outbound operators and Indian inbound operators. These fam tours must give them a taste of everything about Vidarbha. Such fam tours will give them a first hand experience of Vidarbha and will motivate them to send their clients to this place.

Celebrity Campaign
Celebrity campaigns have become the order of the day. When a popular film star or a sports icon endorses a destination everybody listens. Thus Vidarbha too can give such celebrities paid holidays and make him / her brand ambassador. Either it can hire a celebrity from the target market who has an appeal the prospective market or it can rope in world famous Indian personalities, who have a pan-Indian appeal, to do the same. Making celebrities associated with them can make several themes more interesting.
For example, when promoting dance and music, we can have a world famous dancer endorsing the same.

**Develop Circuits and link them with other known circuits**

It is not feasible to develop all tourist sites together due to financial, human and infrastructure constraints. Therefore, some of the tourist centers should be developed and packaged with other in what we call a ‘circuit’. Tourist circuits are designed to give a visitor a variety of flavour on a single platter. The tourism policy of India apart from developing destination focuses on development of tourism circuits. The model can be used in Vidarbha too. In order to dispel regional imbalance different circuits can be developed and can be interlinked. At the same time care should be taken to link them to the broad national tourism circuits. Four suggested circuits are as under:

1. **Nagpur 58kms Ramtek 127kms Wardha 12kms Pavnar 07kms Sewagram 20kms Bordharan 65kms Nagpur**

   Apart from being the premier city in Vidarbha, Nagpur also has Deeksha Bhoomi and dragon palace. It is also a haven for the shoppers. Besides having the famous temple of Lord Rama, Ramtek is well known for its scenic beauty. Wardha has a piece pagoda and close by Sewagram has Mahatma Gandhi’s Ashram. Pavnar has a unique concept by the name Geetai Mandir. And finally, Bordharan is a the right place for those who would like to get close to wilderness.

2. **Chandrapur 45kms Hemal Kasha 15kms Anandvan 25kms Tadoba 50kms Markanda 80kms Chandrapur**

   Chandrapur is famous for its handicraft made of Bone China, coalmines and Buddhist Caves. Being a part of the pre historic Gondwanaland there are fossils of the great dinosaurs, which again can be of much interest to the visitors. Hemalkasha is an orphanage for the wild animals, perhaps only in the world. Anandvan is a self-sufficient village set up by the visionary social
worker Baba Amte. What is striking here is that the whole administrative set up is run by the leprosy center. Tadoba national park is one of the best habitats of the royal Bengal tigers. Markanda temple is called as “Khajuraho of Vidarbha” for its beautiful sculptures.

3. Amravati 100kms Chikhaldera 30kms Muktagiri 08kms Bairam 45kms Salbardi 25kms Ridhapur 18kms Astamasiddhi 25kms Amravati

Amravati has Amba Devi temple and Kaudanyapur, famous for natural beauty and temples. Shegaon is well known as Vidarbha’s Pandharpur and Anand Sagar. Chikhaldera, a hill station in hiding is worth paying a visit. Nearby is the Melghat wildlife sanctuary for the nature lovers. Muktagiri which is famous for Jain pilgrimage and waterfalls. Bairam is place of scenic beauty and pilgrimage. Salbardi, situated on Satpura range has both hot and cold springs, underground temple of Lord Shiva. An annual fair held during the month of February/March draws crowd from far off places. Ridhpur is the pilgrimage center for the Mahanubhav cult and is also known as 'Kashi of Mahanubhav cult followers' throughout the country. Astamasiddhi has a well the water of which cures skin diseases and temple of mahanubhav architechture.

4. Buldhana 60kms Shegaon 85kms Lonar 50kms Sindkhe Raja 20kms Rajur Ganpati 60kms Buldhana

Buldhana has Balaji temple and is well known for excavation of statues of ancient era. Shegaon is well known as Vidarbha’s Pandharpur and Anand Sagar. Lonar has the largest impact crater in basaltic rock in the world. Another noted feature of Lonar is the star shaped architechture. In Sindkhed Raja there are a number of monument in this small township which owe their existence to Rajmata Jijabai and her father Lakhujji Jadhav, ancient temple of Neelkantheshwar and Rameshwar have great heritage and architectural value. Raju Ganpati is one of the Ashta Vinayak temples of Maharashtra.
Trade Shows
Vidarbha needs to participate in the trade shows both India and abroad. There are a number of national and international forums where a tourism organization can showcase its tourism products. At the same time these since these trade shows provide a platform where both buyers and sellers meet, it can really be an opportunity to bring in business. Some important international forums are International Travel Mart (ITM), Berlin, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), and south Asian Travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE) etc. Likewise in India Travel Agencies Association of India (TAAI) and Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) meet annually and old trade shows. At each such forum a special theme can be highlighted. E.g. the stall can be specially designed as a tribal hut and can show case the rich tribal culture of Vidarbha.

Internet
Internet today has become a powerful means of communication. The world can be at one’s fingertips. The advantages of internet are many. The prospective clients can take a virtual tour of Vidarbha at the click of a button. At the same time they can post their queries online and be replied in minimum possible time. Thus there must be a website on Vidarbha replete with quality images that can draw the attention of whoever visits the site. The site must have different language options as the visitor can be from any part of the world. Another intelligent way of using the internet services is to post ads at the popular website which when clicked should lead the browser to the Vidarbha’s website.

Information Kiosks With Touch Screen Info-Systems
The information kiosks play a very important role in motivating a visitor to a particular destination. It must be a unique blend of man and machine. Firstly, it must have officers with professional outlook who can politely listen to the clients and answer their queries. For the tech savvy visitors there must be a
touch screen info kiosk that provide all the information about Vidarbha at a feather touch. Such touch screen kiosks are very helpful at public places like bus stand, railway station and airports.

Tourist Offices Overseas
The help of tourism offices overseas can be sought to promote Vidarbha. They can hold special meeting with the local stakeholders and promote the destinations. They can even make Vidarbha a theme for different festivals organized. However it must be supplemented with sufficient printed material.

Theme Campaigns
An annual theme campaign can bring in the attention of the whole industry to a particular attraction of Vidarbha. It could be the Lonar one whole year followed by tribal life and so on. Such theme campaigns are of special importance as they can hold the interest of the prospective customers for long.

Popular Contests And Sponsors
Some popular game contest can be organized to make more and more people aware of the places of tourist attraction in Vidarbha. At the same time Vidarbha can sponsor a free holidays to the winner of various other contests. There are several travel magazines and TV serials that come out with such contests. These contests in a way promote the destinations. Besides the winners who get to see the places can bring in word-of-moth publicity.

Cultural Nights
The cultural nights have become a big draw in the recent past. The Khajuraho Dance festival, the Konark dance festivals are to name a few. Such dance festival can be organized in and outside Vidarbha to showcase the culture of Vidarbha. Besides it can show case the painting, performing art, music (Vocal and instrumental) and sculpture. Traditional bazaars where the artisans can
Light and Sound Show
The sound and light shows have become very popular with the visitors from both India and abroad. There already exists such a show at Prerna Sthal at Yavatmal. Such projects can be implemented at other destinations to draw more and more tourist. The presence of so many forts in Vidarbha provides ample opportunity for such shows.

Fair and Festivals
The fairs and festivals of a place can itself be promoted as tourism product. The Pushkar Fair in Rajasthan and the Rath Yatra festival of Orissa are good examples of festivals that have been cashed upon. Similarly the unique way of celebrating festivals like the Ganesh Puja and the Janmastami can be easily promoted as tourism product besides show casing the culture of the region.

Inviting Film Crews To Shoot In The State
The locations shot in the films create an aura around them and becomes sought-after destination. If Yash Chopra’s movies shot in Switzerland can boost outbound travels from India to Switzerland, the same can be done to Vidarbha. If films from both bollywood and abroad are shot in Vidarbha it will create an interest among the domestic and international visitors to have a look at the same places shot in the movies.

Conservation Campaigns
There is an apprehension that bisons in wild would soon become extinct and Vidarbha is one of the their last bastions. Therefore a conservation campaign can be kicked off that would save these animals and at the same time bring much needed publicity. The pandas in china were saved from being extinct through this model campaigning. Back at home, Assam has used this model for the One-horned rhinos and it was a very successful campaign. Therefore bison can be given the status of a national animal of Vidarbha and similar campaigns can be launched.
Ghotul – A unique institution

Ghotul is a primitive practice that is as modern as it can be. Among some tribal community like the Muriya in, it is compulsory for single men and women over the age of six to be part of an institution called Ghotul for free sex. The tradition is practised to train the youth on how to overcome attachments, jealousies and possessiveness and to instill the idea of community love.

Ghotul is a large hut outside the village where everybody assembles after sunset. The girls and boys pair up after dancing and singing and have sex for five days. After this, if a boy wants to marry the girl, he visits her family and pays her price. If he is unable to do so, he works in her house till the money is raised. If he does not want to marry her after five days, both of them start looking for a different mate. No man can sleep with a woman for more than five days. Meanwhile, if a woman conceives a child, it stays with her. Whoever she marries becomes the father of the child.

A great part of the unity and happiness of the tribe depends on Ghotul. The songs and dances performed in the evenings are mostly sexually suggestive and provocative. However, the final decision regarding the pairing rests with the leader of the boys, Sirdar, and the leader of the girls, Belosa. In order to impress the girls, the boys give them gifts like combs. A wooden comb is considered a gift of love among this community. A good comb collection is a matter of great prestige and the bigger the collection, the more popular is the woman.

Ghotul is becoming extremely popular among tourists visiting Chhatisgarh, and is the reason why crimes committed due to jealousy have hardly occurred and adultery ever committed, similarly this concept can be promoted in the Vidarbha region also.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges before Vidarbha in promotion of its destinations are many. Firstly, it does not have the required fund for such a massive campaign. As has been discussed in the previous chapters, this region has been utterly neglected by the state and the central government. Alternatively, the private entrepreneurs are shy to invest in the region since they are doubtful of their returns. Secondly, many of the beautiful temples, sculptures and forts are loosing its charm for the want of conservation. Only when the place is well conserved and is equipped with all the amenities, we can think of even promoting it abroad. Else, it would dissatisfy our guests. Third and the foremost challenge is the ignorance among the local people about the cultural heritage their region possess. Also they are unaware of the benefit that tourism industry can bring about. Therefore, it’s a big challenge to educate the whole mass about this. This can only be achieved when a specialized institution comes up with a mission to make the local people aware about the importance of preserving the cultural heritage and make tourism a thriving industry.

The extent and depth of the lack of awareness of Vidarbha is truly unbelievable. Many are not sure about the geographic location of Vidarbha in Indian map leave apart its USPs. If Vidarbha has to create a name for it a massive campaign is what is required. The challenge will also lie in Cultural Sustainability – to balance where information ends and intrusion begins. How much exposure will help the tribals and how much will change their intrinsic way of life. Some of the other challenges are:

   i) Lack of adequate infrastructure in the form of air services and airports, roads, telecom and accommodation.

   ii) Levy of tax on tourism and tourists that are not only high but also unconscionable.

   iii) Plethora of clearances to be obtained from numerous agencies of the Central and State Governments.

   iv) Difficulties in obtaining land for hotel projects.
v) Restrictions on movement of tourists and tourist vehicles since Vidarbha has many natural sites which are restricted areas.

vi) Lack of adequate security to tourists to go around without fear of bodily harm or loss of belongings as there is always an apprehension of naxalite attack.

vii) Inadequate human resource development leading to the visitor being treated more as an intruder than as an honoured guest.

Despite these challenges, there exist many promotional opportunities in Vidarbha. Since most of the western countries have shown their interest in rural India Vidarbha can take advantage of it. Rajasthan has already cashed upon this rural aspect. Similarly, farm tourism has caught up in Punjab and Haryana. Even United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) has funded Rs.11 crores for the development of rural and indigenous tourism. The rural tourism does not need much investment in infrastructure. The very rural life can be promoted in the campaigns. Similarly, Bharud, the indigenous street play can be used to promote tourism. The tribal culture again can be used for promotion. Vidarbha can be promoted as the destination for nature, adventure and eco-tourism.
References


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