Chapter 8

Conclusions and Recommendations
Vidarbh is a region gifted with many splendid natural attractions. It is geographically positioned at the heart of India. It is a region with many unique features. It is a region capable of achieving virtually anything it sets its mind to.

With collective resolve, tourism in Vidarbh has the potential to be one of the most significant drivers for economic prosperity into the new millennium.

**Recommendations**

Tourism can play a role in diversifying the economy of Vidarbha region. As one of the fastest growing industries in India and the world, it cannot be ignored as a generator of economic activity.

The region has significant tourism resources, and some promotional effort is already in place. However, there are opportunities for broader development of resources and attractions, particularly those related to culture, history, and outdoor recreation. The tourism infrastructure has not been developed to its fullest potential, including the development and interpretation of products and the marketing of those products. An additional goal should be to get tourists "out of their cars and onto the streets" to both enjoy the region and to create economic benefits.

The strategy described below has broad applications in urban and rural areas across the region. The new strategy works via **two** primary initiatives: **destination marketing and sustainable tourism development planning**.

The destination marketing strategy involves coordinated advertising campaigns, promotion at regional and global tourism exhibitions, development of destination brochures, posters and other media, and working with international travel providers to offer promotional discounts on travel to Vidarbh.
The sustainable tourism development planning initiative seeks to promote better private sector/government partnerships to ensure that adventure tourism develops in Vidarbh in a manner that is well planned, sustainable, and beneficial to both the regional economy and local communities.

1. **Articulate A Policy On Tourism To Establish An Agenda And Awareness.**

The Maharashtra government through its tourism promotional arm MTDC has made great strides in articulating a formal policy on tourism development as reflected in the ongoing advertising campaign *“Maharashtra Unlimited”*. Successful execution of a tourism agenda, however, requires a permanent political infrastructure. It requires state’s endorsement and facilitation through the multitude of ministries and government agencies, which have influence over an agenda’s deliverables. In the past setting up Garhwal Mandal Vikash Nigam (GMVN) and Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) has boosted tourism promotion in the respective regions. This time-tested model can also be adopted for tourism development in Vidarbh.

**Suggestions**

- Establish a permanent Vidarbh Tourism Authority Limited (VITAL) with representations from each of the relevant Ministries having impact on tourism to facilitate the development and implementation of tourism policy and programs. VITAL will play a vital role in charting out a path of success for Vidarbh’s tourism development. VITAL must lead the tourism development effort for the region and work to enhance the heritage component of its efforts. It could expand its role in this effort by creating a special committee for regional marketing or other special needs as appropriate, or it might serve as the convener in the future to address new issues. From time to time new alliances or
collaborations may be needed. A model VITAL should constitute the following -

Office of the Governor - Executive Oversight
Ministry of Culture & Tourism - Lead and Ownership,
Ministry of Finance - Customs, taxation, currency
Ministry of Law - Immigrations
Ministry of Home Affairs - Police, security
Ministry of Commerce - Commercial
Ministry of IT & Communications - Communications
Ministry of Transport - Infrastructure

2. Establish a Foreign Advisory Committee to identify priority markets and advise the Administration on Tourism

Vidarbh has a number of strong industries and trade organizations. The airlines, travel agents and hospitality industries all have associations representing the interests of their members. While both the government and MTDC have historically tapped the industry’s native expertise, foreign industry participation has been minimal. This potentially results in the exclusion of the foreign perspective necessary to craft policy and plans from a foreign visitor’s point of view. If Vidarbh is to compete for tourists in a global market place, it must have the knowledge of its competitors, its target markets and the professional executions of an international marketing campaign that are critical success factors to the long-term national tourism agenda as well.

Suggestions
Establish a Foreign Advisory Committee (FAC) within the proposed Vidarbh Tourism Authority Limited (VITAL)
Conduct a market research in countries from where visitors generally come to India for rest and leisure. Initially it could be members of European Union, Gulf and South East Asian Nations. Engage world class PR, advertising and marketing promotion professionals to shape and execute the promotional plans in overseas markets.

3. Develop And Expand The Heritage And Cultural Tourism Market.

There are strong historical themes related to several centuries in the past, industrial heritage, and religious and folk traditions of the region that should be developed into marketing themes or branding concepts to interpret the rich heritage of the region. The region should preserve and develop historic sites, artifacts, and cultural resources. Farm tours, industrial culture and history, and the rural culture should all be promoted on a regional basis.

Suggestions

- Endorse the current efforts of the institutions like Vidarbh Economic Development (VED) and local universities to create a Cultural and Historical Committee. Develop the initial steps to success and monitor and promote future phases of this effort.

- Work closely with entities that are "packaging" tours and events for the region to include heritage and cultural sites and venues.

- Expand and upgrade existing sites. They are generally under-promoted, under-leveraged and under-protected.

- Identify, analyze, and prioritize current sites, their needs and their benefit to the overall program. Sites related to cultural and natural heritage may take priority.
• Explore options for assistance to upgrade sites including advocacy for the appropriate local, state, or national protection measures.

• Create a marketing and promotion strategy for individual sites and for a regional campaign. "Packaging" sites will continue to be critical to success.

• Work closely with state agencies to provide support for high priority sites and to create the appropriate collateral materials, or include the sites in existing state or regional materials.

• Work closely with existing regional tourism entities to create broader support. The newly formed VITAL can work closely with MTDC and ITDC to include some of its sites in the regional and national brochure.

• Use local resources to strengthen the heritage package such as HVPM which are central or state projects and multi-jurisdictional in scope as a model or resource.

4. Develop More Retail Opportunities In The Form Of Outlets And Specialty Stores.

Suggestions
In particular, retail development related to crafts and antiques, historic/knowledge themes, and sports/outdoor recreation would be appropriate. Discourage the development of outlet malls; rather focus retail activities to existing commercial districts. Site opportunities for retail development include former religious-cultural buildings and historic districts. Work closely with successful self help groups (SHGs) to mentor new commercial enhancement groups.
5. **Develop Links To The Natural Resources For Tourism Potential.**

A natural resources tourism strategy would include gaming and fishing activities as well as hiking and biking activities. This strategy may draw more resources and "customers" to the more rural parts of Vidarbh. Links to the surrounding areas will also be necessary. Currently visitors often stay district headquarters and travel to the rural portions.

**Suggestions**

- Understand and support the role of cross county or cross region hiking and biking trails, Rails to trails, and greenway projects. Greenways and trails should be viewed as economic development tools. They tie the region together and create a network of access points. These points could be parks, museums, or main streets. Ideas should be linked to both a strategy for Eco or Natural Tourism and to the Open Lands Prioritization and Management Strategy.

- Explore an increased role for MTDC and VITAL in this strategy. How can the region best use/change the MTDC regional maps to serve the area? How can the region link with the larger region?

- Create new links with the neighboring States, say Chhatisgarh, which may be a new tourist draw.

6. **Continue To Update Information And Entities Related To Tourism – The Tourists, The Sites And The Service Industry That Supports It.**

It will be necessary to continually update information to stay on top of this growing industry. Current events will change markets and tourists attitudes. New facilities will impact trends and opportunities.
Suggestions

- Distribute new data to all parties and incorporate the information into future plans. For example, TCS is working to prepare a new (1st time) comprehensive, regional assessment of the area. It will reflect, "What we don’t have, but need" to recruit new events or tourists to the area.

- Formulate an Institute of Mountaineering (HIM), on the lines of Himalaya Institute of Mountaineering and Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM), National Adventure Foundation (NAF) etc. Their role will be to identify, coordinate and aggressively market to new events that will fill the "voids" in the current calendar. These will be large events that will use multiple facilities. It will include baseline data to help coordinate events to avoid overlapping events. The room tax will help to fund the participating and helping organizations and institutes. The under utilized MTDC Yatri Nivas will function as the housing bureau. In this case, the goal is to better use what is currently in place.

- Continue to survey visitors coming to region, to determine the types of attractions that could be developed to lengthen tourists’ stay in the area.

7. Develop The Appropriate World Standard Infrastructure To Service And Support Tourism

In travel and tourism parlance infrastructure has three components:

i. Basic infrastructure (i.e. transport links, telecommunication, energy, water treatment);

ii. Travel and tourism facilities (i.e. signage, information services, facilitation, etc.)
iii. And product development options (ecotourism, special tourism areas. health tourism, etc)

While all three areas may need concerted action, the policies, mechanisms and level of intervention are likely to be different.

Now, India has been keenly focused on such major infrastructure development projects as ports, high-speed rail, highways and airports. Vidarbh too had its share in projects like National Highway Development Project (NHDP). While these projects are critical to Vidarbh’s economic development, the emergence of Vidarbh as a viable international travel destination requires the needs of the international tourist be more specifically addressed. The following categories are all critical, tourism related areas, which should be embraced as a national development priority:

- Improve access to Vidarbh’s public lands, historical sites and natural attractions
- Application of multi-lingual signage systems and service personnel
- Adoption of international standards for grading hotel accommodations
- The introduction of mid-priced hotels, motels and lodges aimed at the tourist market

**Suggestions**

- Fund infrastructure development to open inaccessible areas of potential

Vidarbh has one of the most virgin forest areas than any other region in the country. Much of this virginity is a factor of
limited access. Vidarbh’s spectacular scenery and recreation opportunities have great potential if made more accessible to tourism. The government needs to make a long-term commitment to fund the requisite bridges, roadways, power, water and basic infrastructure needs to open up its forest areas to tourism. Of course, keeping sustainability in mind.

Establish professional management of national historical sites

Vidarbh has a vast treasure of national historical sites and attractions. However, it generally lack consistent professional management. Its infrastructures fall short of international tourism standards. World class private and public models such as Colonial Williamsburg, U.S. National Park Service, Polynesian Cultural Center, etc., should be examined as potential best in practice applications for Vidarbh’s attractions

- Establish a consistent, regional tourism support infrastructure
  - Expansion of domestic ground transportation systems, friendly to the foreign user
  - Introduction of standardized, multi-lingual signage systems for all airports, roadways, busses, trains, subways and taxis
  - Improvement of foreign language capabilities of those engaged in the tourism industry

- Adopt and apply international grading standards for hotels

The current classifications and the grading of Indian hotels are not always consistent with the standards employed elsewhere
in the world. This leads to potential disappointment and dissatisfaction when foreign visitors experience a level of accommodation inconsistent with a hotel’s advertised rating. Thus a truly international grading standard for hotels must be applied.

- Encourage the development of a 3-4 star hotel infrastructure

Vidarbh lacks acceptable, moderately priced, international standard 3-4 star accommodations. Vidarbh is missing its fair share of this significant middle-income market segment because of its lack of affordable, western standard accommodations.

8. Cultivation Of A Healthy And Robust Air Transportation Environment

Any tourism agenda cannot succeed without the support of a healthy, viable, air transportation sector. Not only must the environment sustain incumbent operators, but also it must be conducive to the stimulation of new capacity. This requisite environment is currently absent.

Suggestions

- It is note worthy to mention the name of AIR DECCAN, which has revolutionized the aviation sector in India. It has provided connectivity to many small cities wherein an Indian citizen can fly with a fare as low as Rs.500/-. Another small airline named JAGSON is dong the same but has restricted its operations to Rajasthan. Vidarbh already have domestic terminals at Nagpur.
It needs to be upgraded to international standards. Besides airstrips must be developed at other district headquarters. Only then budget-friendly no-frills airlines like Air Deccan can be invited to start its operation.

9. Support Balanced Measures To Both Protect Security And Facilitate Flow Of Visitors

The post September 11 environment has produced a number of changes round the globe, which could potentially impede the flow of foreign visitors to the India. At this point, such balanced policies need to be formulated that not only protect security but facilitate flow of visitors.

Suggestions
A special Tourist police wing on the lines of Delhi and Goa Police is a good idea.

10. Increasing Length of Stay
More number of days a tourist stays more s/he spends. As such the average number of days a tourist spends in India is high. But our aim should be to keep the tourist engaged in different activities and itinerary so has to increase his/her length of stay.

Suggestions
- Varied itineraries like ecotourism, culture tourism, adventure tourism, tribal tourism, pilgrimage need to be promoted.
- We need to expand international marketing. Current international travelers on business or otherwise are restricted to Mumbai and Ajanta-Ellora. This element might create a starting point for future efforts. They may be lured to Vidarbh
on some or other pretext. This element could be developed during the 20 year vision as appropriate.

11. Invest In Human Resource

Education and training presents major opportunities and challenges for rapidly expanding travel and tourism sector in India.

Suggestions

- Travel and tourism should have access to government-funded training.
- Education programmes on at least equitable basis with other industries.
- Public education and carrier programmes should draw attention to job prospects in travel and tourism.
- The private sector should also pay an active role in ensuring the maintenance of highest international standards of management and services.

12. Reduce Red Tap

Suggestions

- Easier entry and exit formalities.
- Single window clearance of tourism related projects.

13. Tax Intelligently

Suggestions

- Indian destinations, including Mumbai, Delhi and Rajasthan state are ranked among the most highly taxed in the world.
- Future revenue flows will depend on the competitiveness of travel and tourism, which implies equitable treatment relative to other industries and to competing destinations.
• As a key export, travellers and travel companies should not be taxed in a discriminatory way.
• An increasing number of user fees are being applied to travel and tourism – for air tickets, security, airport construction, highways and the like.

14. Funding
Funding sources could include hotel/motel tax, local sharing, grants, and the budget allocation. Some efforts will not require direct funding. Programs can be enriched by in-kind services, mentoring or advocacy. In this respect the services of Tourism Finance Development Corporation (TFCI) comes handy.

15. Indicators:
The key indicators of progress in this area would include the following:
• Number of visitors in general or at specific sites
• Hotel occupancy
• Spending on food, accommodations and traveler services
• Number of jobs created in tourism services
• Average wage of new jobs
• Business start-ups in tourism and recreation
• Investments in business expansion
• Fiscal impact: urban and rural
• Household income
• New grants for specific tourism venues
• New interpretive programs or packages

Conclusion
Travel and tourism must have been the first hobby of the earliest human being. This is because he wandered across the countries in search of food and shelter. Later, with the development of civilization, the motive for travel shifted to business. Since the barter system was in place, he traveled from one
region to another to exchange the surplus goods he produced with the goods of other region. Over the years travel became a pleasure activity instead of a necessity. Man no more travels just for business but to be away from his home and explore a new place. The invention of automobile made this easier and more comfortable. Cross-continental travel became a habit with people with the discovery of new sea routes. Today it has emerged one of the largest industry in the world with an annual turnover of US$ 450 billion. To quote Singh (1975), 'modern tourism is a direct product of economic and social progress promoted by technological and scientific advances, higher real income, longer leisure time, demographic expansion and increasingly cheaper and varied tourist-plant facilities that provides the essential conditions for the growth of tourism.'

Tourism 2020 Vision is the World Tourism Organization's long-term forecast and assessment of the development of tourism up to the first 20 years of the new millennium. An essential outcome of the Tourism 2020 Vision are quantitative forecasts covering a 25 years period, with 1995 as the base year and forecasts for 2000, 2010 and 2020.

WTO's Tourism 2020 Vision forecasts that international arrivals are expected to reach over 1.56 billion by the year 2020. Of these worldwide arrivals in 2020, 1.18 billion will be intraregional and 0.38 billion will be long-haul travelers. East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, the Middle East and Africa are forecasted to record growth at rates of over 5 percent per year, compared to the world average of 4.1 per cent. The more mature regions Europe and Americas are anticipated to show lower than average growth rates.

Tourism as a driving force for poverty Alleviation, Job creations and social harmony, has a special significance for India. It provides an opportunity for the government to recast its priority, and look at tourism as a catalyst to start the much-needed acceleration of economic growth, particularly in non-urban India where the bulk of the economically disadvantaged people live.
Nonetheless, India has made a tremendous progress in the years after independence. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that contribution of the hospitality industry to Indian GDP is expected to go up to 6.6 per cent by 2010 and foreign exchange receipts from 10.8 per cent to 12 per cent of the aggregate exporter earnings in the same period. Given a thrust and determination it is possible to exceed the rate of growth of 8.43 percent on arrivals projected by WTTC.

Yet another remarkable trend in favor of India is that the average length of stay per tourist (around 30 days) is one of the highest in the world. Moreover, according to conservative estimates, tourism presently is providing employment opportunities to more than 8 million people in its direct sector. It becomes all the more important, since the employment multiplier in tourism sector comes to be about 2.36, i.e direct employment to one person in tourism industry creates employment for 1.36 person in other sector of the economy.

The first thing that comes to one’s mind while planning for tourism development is that why should anyone come to Vidarbha in preference over other known holiday attractions. The answer is, why not – Vidarbha is a region gifted with many splendid natural attractions. It is geographically positioned at the heart of India. It is a region with many unique features. There is Chikhaldara – a hill station in hiding, Lonar – the largest impact crater in the basaltic rock, Markandeya temple – the sculptures of which is no less than Khajuraho, four national parks replete with wildlife, the interesting yet intriguing tribal life, mouthwatering dishes, the best variety of oranges and the rich historical legacy...the list is endless. It is a region capable of achieving virtually anything it sets its mind to.

The marketing jargons eco-tourism, ethno-tourism, niche tourism, high value and low volume fit the bill of Vidarbha market. To create a niche within the
niche market special institutions can be set up to encourage the study of tribals textiles and jewellery designs. This will generate interest among the special interest groups interested in studying the same. Similarly Vidarbha can tie up with NIFT and NID for upgradation of designs for the handicrafts so as to increase the unit price of the products and work out a better export market for them. Also specialized museums giving a glimpse of the tribal life can be set up in the tribal dominated part of Vidarbha. The idea is to establish Vidarbha as an independent brand.

No doubt, the main difficulty is the total lack of awareness. But that's both a blessing and a drawback. Since the area is virtually unknown, it's a great opportunity to put theory into practice and to use textbook strategies for tourism development, though one needs to proceed cautiously. Also, you can't blame your predecessors or learn from their mistakes. We're going to tell the world that Vidarbha is the very heart of India and how can one miss it!!!

With collective resolve, tourism in Vidarbha has the potential to be one of the most significant drivers for economic prosperity into the new millennium. As Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, The Honourable President of India puts it: “Our global society continues to face major challenges, one of the most important being the imbalance between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’. If the Travel & Tourism industry can realize its full potential, this will make a real difference.”