Chapter VI

Interpretation of Data

and

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The concept of customer satisfaction has a long history in the perspective of marketing thoughts and consumer behavior. However, since Cardozo’s (1965) pioneering study on ‘Customer Effort, Expectation and Satisfaction’, the body of knowledge in the field has now considerably expanded. On account of the ongoing globalization process, the business environment has become dynamically competitive where-in strategic marketing based on innovative market research particularly on demand perspective, has become key to the very sustenance. While talking in the context of service industry, Gronoos (1990) and Parasuraman et al. (1988) observe that among all customer demands, quality of service is a crucial factor in the success of any business. In fact, now the service industry is thoroughly convinced that service quality and customer satisfaction are the key factors in competitive differentiation and customer retention. However, on account of the dynamic interplay between ever changing demand-supply perspective and individual perception vis-à-vis the process of advancement, providing and maintaining customer satisfaction remains and would continue to be one of the biggest contemporary challenges for the service industry.

Lam and Zhang (1999) claim that overwhelming customer demand for quality products and services has, in recent years, become increasingly evident to professionals, particularly in the tourism industry. The increasing numbers of international travellers and the concomitant diversity of the market require that standards for service quality be re-evaluated even from the cultural perspective of the markets served (Becker and Murrmann, 1999). Obviously, the same is applied to the tourism and hospitality business, which has emerged as one of the key components of leisure & recreation industry throughout the globe.

Customer satisfaction is different from perceived service quality. Service quality is the customers’ attitude or global judgment of a company's service over the time, while customer satisfaction refers to a specific business transaction (Lam and Zhang, 1999). Service management literature argues that customer satisfaction is the result of a customer’s perception of the value received in a transaction or relationship - where value equals perceived service quality relative to price and customer acquisition costs (Blanchard and Galloway, 1994; Heskett et al., 1990); relative to the value expected from transactions or relationships with competing vendors (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Having had examined the available information on the motivation and satisfaction levels of foreign tourists visiting India, collected and interpreted by the Department of Tourism, Government of India, J.P.S. Associates and Singh (2002), the scholar has analyzed these perspectives with special reference to Indian and International tourists visiting Himachal Pradesh, in general, and Shimla and McLeod Ganj/ Dharamshala in particular in the preceding chapter. The conclusions have been derived by the scholar on the basis of the feedback received from 560 respondents from diverse cultural, economic, motivational and psychological spectrum; through a specially structured questionnaire. Accordingly, it has been observed that transportation is a major constraint felt by a majority of the tourists, followed by quality / availability of the desired food and bar provisions and, accommodation in that order. Likewise, the views of the target samples have also been documented, analyzed and interpreted in the context of destination society, destination environment and other allied aspects which may not directly come under the gamut of tourism but have determining implications on existing tourism trends to the state. However, realistic and applied conclusions on the subject can be arrived at, only if the resultant data is further interpreted on the basis of demographic, psychographic, behavioral and particularly touristic aptitude of the respondents.

Such an interpretation leads to many interesting and often intriguing conclusions. Putting together the availability, reliability and effectivity of internal transportation sector in Himachal Pradesh, has been rated to be satisfactory by approximately 45% of the tourists. However, going by the age groups, more than 75% of the respondents from 55years and above age groups have rated it to be dissatisfactory as against less than 25% of those belonging to the age bracket of 25years and below. Almost similar picture emerges when the responses of the tourists from high-income group vis-à-vis lower middle-income group are reviewed. Likewise, adventure seekers, wild-lifers and naturalists seem to be not much bothered about the state of
transportation of this hill state. It brings home the conclusion that there is considerable variation in the responses of the tourists belonging to different age, income and motivational groups. On the subject, it was really impossible to correlate the expectation level of the respondents with the level of satisfaction only with regard to transport services. However, the cross-examination of travel behaviour (second section of the questionnaire), and the consequent expectation of the respondents indicate towards vital bearing of the former on the later. Obviously, there was option for the scholar to statistically indicate the satisfaction level of the respondents of different age groups, income and motivation group of the tourists with regard to transportation. But, such an effort would have not been of any applied use lest a holistic statistical interpretation on the subject is presented, which was nearly impossible for the scholar. On the whole, the transport service in Himachal needs comprehensive improvement on all fronts including availability, reliability, punctuality and safety / security viewpoints.

Food and drinks emerged to be another major area of concern vis-à-vis tourists visiting Himachal, as much from the food plant aspects as from the service. Whereas cleanliness, hygiene and quality of overall services are the major issues concerned with the food plants, the flavour, presentation and ambience are the service related points that have been highlighted by the tourists. Interestingly, there has been rather commonality in the feedback of the respondents irrespective of age, income, motivation and occupation of the visitors. Nevertheless, approximately half of the tourists have expressed varying degree of satisfaction in this context, which draws quite a dismaying picture which is by no standards, encouraging. Unhygienic environment prevailing in the catering units has specially emerged as one of the main point of criticism. However, better side of it is that, those keen to experiment with the local cuisine have largely appreciated the variety and exoticness of the indigenous dishes. Nice spicy food has been the typical expression of this group of respondents, represented by about 38% of the total sample covered by the scholar. This strength certainly needs to be promoted in an effective and organized manner, simultaneously educating the concerned outlets on hygiene perspectives should be a priority concern. Non availability of the desired brands in the bar has emerged as a major bottleneck, but more in the case of the tourist belonging to high income group, professionals / industrialists / businessmen by profession; and cultural
tourists / business tourists by motivation. Adventurists, naturalists, lower age group and relatively lower income group respondents have not expressed much concern in the matter. Almost similar observations are derived in the context of accommodation. In fact, feedback on accommodation was asked along a wide range of variables including location of a given unit, availability of entertainment facilities, architecture and of course, the quality of service provided by it. While, more than 55% tourists have expressed their satisfaction with regard to the existing accommodation facilities. Students, adventure-seekers, naturalists, and rural / community tourists have generally rated accommodation available in Himachal to be highly satisfactory. Obviously, feedback on accommodation has been considerably destination specific. Thus, Shimla, Dharamshala, Kasoli, Kullu and Manali have received far better ratings, particularly from those respondents who stayed in the traditional and star properties. As such, almost 75% of the respondents who stayed in budget accommodation units have strong complaints, either regarding poor maintenance of the guest rooms and public area, unprofessional services, poor quality of food and rather unethical attitude of the staff.

As regards the quality of natural / social / cultural environment at the selected destinations, more than half of the respondents have given quite a positive feedback on the attitude, behaviour, cooperative- ness, honesty and innocence of the resident population. Interestingly, the observations of the so called elite class tourists have been more positive than the others. The scholar feels that, this class of foreign tourists are generally not used to personalized communication with the strangers, the prevailing environment in the study area is obviously liked by them, as against the budget / lower age group tourist who perhaps have ample opportunities to extensively interact with the later and feel the overall destination environment in its entirety including living standard, quality of basic infrastructure to law and order situation. Traffic problems, parking problems, poor sanitation and hygiene conditions / provisions, polluted environment, beggars mentality, bargaining and
unethical trade practices are criticized generally by the generic cross section of the tourists. Yet another area of closer similarity is the response on the prevailing touristic appeal of the destinations. Again, not going into statistical or percentage terms, majority of the tourists have appreciated the rich monumental, historical and artistic heritage of the state, including the spirituality they experienced at McLeod Ganj irrespective of their age, income, motivation and occupation etc. The general observation is that the destinations are exotic and considerably unique, particularly in terms of architecture, historicity, fairs and festivals, rituals, social cohesiveness and cultural diversity, but the upkeep of the people, places and objects have generally been observed to be rather below par. This consensus on the quality of appeal vis-à-vis poor upkeep of the monuments and even the natural environment is perhaps due to contrasting and cultural background of the hosts and the guests. Variety of landscape, rich diversity in wild life, challenging rivers and fascinating mountains, vales and dales have received considerable regard and respect by the whole cross section of the respondents irrespective of their different demographic profile. However, in terms of tourist activities, while visiting monuments and historical sites, falls in the priority of almost 70% of the respondents, eco-trekking and wildlife watching seems to be strongly coming to the fore. Cross examination of the tourist profile with preferred touristic pursuits leads to somewhat baffling results. Thus, the high income and lower middle income respondents belonging to ‘25-35 years’ and ‘60 and above years’ age group are ore keen to visit monuments, while tourists within ‘36-50 years’ age group of both the income categories are more interested to natural manifestations and hence prefer trekking / eco-trekking, wildlife watching and mountaineering. In case of respondents just from the middle and upper incomes belonging to ‘26-35 years’ age group have a strong aptitude for nature and they particularly like action oriented, nature based adventures, while the ‘36-50 years’ age group tourists from these income groups though like monuments and cultural destinations in the first order but consistently look forward to rather unbeaten nature tourist destinations. There is obvious inclination for ‘spiritual
activities’ among the tourist above the ‘50 years’ age group, irrespective of the income and occupational areas they belong to. Interestingly, there seem to be a growing interest among the tourist for religious destinations as well. Talking in terms of the occupation of the respondents’ vis-à-vis tourist motivation, students, servicemen and self employed people have a stronger urge for nature and adventure in that order, while the industrialists and businessmen are keener in monuments and leisure holidays, respectively. There has been a broad feedback from majority of the respondents regarding non-availability of information on the outstanding opportunities for nature sporting, trailing, eco-trekking, river running and wildlife watching in the state. Those who have pursued one or the other of these activities have rated their experiences to be excellent or say above expectations. They are of the view that the state must promote the otherwise virgin landscapes, cultural focus, wildlife habitats and health tourism in a more aggressive manner. More than 80% of the allocentric cultural tourists have found Himachal to be the most spectacular in terms of the dramatic diversity in traditions, rituals, settlement patterns, food habits, art and crafts etc. They feel that the folk dances, musical instruments and craftsmanship is par-excellence, as much for their uniqueness as for the diversity. This naturally speaks about the rich potential for the promotion of rural and tribal tourism, the growing popularity of tribal festivals organized at Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti are evidence to it.

Whether or not, the respondents actually went for shopping, there has been a consensus on the prevailing potential. Wood-work, stone-work, wool-work and other handicraft objects prepared by the ‘folk-Himachal’ have received accolades. Regarding the prices, it was strange enough to note that the high income group, industrialists / businessmen found it rather on the higher side than expected. In contrast, respondents from the other income groups particularly students, servicemen and self employed tourists, almost unanimously claim it to be either
along expected lines or even below expectations. The later group in a way has rated the study area to be a rather cheaper destination.

Availability of convenient accommodation, internal transport services, recreation and entertainment amenities were not expected up to the mark by as many as 37% tourist while about 21% of the total respondents actually found them to be below their expectation. Likewise as good as 43% tourists, mainly of Indian origin, came mentally prepared for rather poor health and hygiene conditions, traffic problems, over crowding and lack of professional travel trade services while approximately 32% respondents found them to be below expectations, 23% to almost expected lines and 41% to slightly better than expectations.

Rest of the respondents have either not marked their expectation lines or avoided responding to the question. Access to authentic information pertaining to availability and quality of the various services, distances, shopping opportunities and the destination appeals in view of approximately 29% respondents has been a major constraint at the initial stage of their decision making to visit Himachal Pradesh. Majority of them were of the view that they would have better prepared to adjust the destinations, and would have certainly come with more exhaustive itinerary, had they received appropriate information beforehand.

Having had a fair idea on the travel related behaviour or the perceptions of the tourist from information derived from the second section of the questionnaire, it has been derived that the expectation level of the tourist seems to be influenced not only by the quality or amount of information available to them, but is also vital expression of the demographic personality (age, income, occupation, education and sex) and motivation of tourists in specific situations, further through marketing efforts of the destinations cannot be overruled as an important factor guiding the expectation level of the prospective tourist, earlier visits by them to the same or
similar destination or information received, friends and relatives do have decisive role in guiding the expectation levels. In this context, scholar feels that, being a pivotal area of marketing, it needs to be separately researched.

This conclusion conveniently brings to light the fact that, states’ performance largely suffers on the marketing front, which has not been up to the mark by any standard. The affinity for multinational travel trade and hospitality enterprises especially those belonging to the country or place of origin of the tourist have been found to be considerably stronger with upper age group tourist from among the top professionals / industrialists / businessman, generally above 55 years. In contrast, the others seem to have relished quality budget facilities either self arranged, availed on the spot or arranged by middlemen, irrespective of the country of the origin of the later. On the whole, as many as 75% of the respondents, have used the services of travel agencies; 48% for accommodation, 28% for sightseeing, 62% for transport arrangements, 21% for escorting and guiding, 27% for information / itinerary preparation, 8% for shopping and 16% for tour packages. In this context, the observation of approximately 75% tourists is that the travel trade enterprises that use unethical practices need to be seriously taken up. Generally, the budget tourists are keen to explore and effectively use the possibilities of maximum interaction with the local population and hence prefer to make stay and travel arrangements on their own. Likewise, those traveling all alone, seem to be less critical about the places, persons and objects than those traveling with spouse, friends and /or business partners.

Access to information has come up as one of the highly resented issue. There has virtually been a consensus among the respondents that access to information on the destinations is often meager, fragmented or say comprehensively incomplete and that there are not much opportunities to reach to authentic facts. Thanks to the marketing / promotional strategies of the various tourism players that almost every foreign tourist comes equipped with extensive information about the destinations
derived from the accounts of the fellow tourists or from the travel documents, tour planners prepared documented and / or published by individuals or institutions, other than Indians. Our brochures, electronic messages and internet details are generally not or only partially referred by the effective or potential tourists. As many as 23% foreign respondents specifically denoted their keen interest to visit India in general, and Himachal in particular, about a decade back but for the hostile signals perceived by them emanating out the insalubrious political situations, incidences of terrorism or such natural calamities like plague, earthquake and devastating floods. They were firmly of the view that they didn’t have the idea about the vastness of geographic and socio-political expanses of the country and the state; else they would have visited it long back. They could now realize the fact that such inhibiting incidences were confined to only small pockets of the massive sub-continent. This, in turn, indicates the need of a decentralized marketing within the gamut of a centralized department of tourism so that an insalubrious touristic environment in a small part of the country does not prove inhibitory to tourism development in other parts of the country.

The respondents were honest enough to accept that initially they felt irritated by the behaviour of the host population but subsequently got deeply impressed after realistically deciphering the attitude and behaviour of the people. The general view was that, the otherwise misinterpreted , selfish, greedy and rather less aware common man from this hilly terrain is in fact inherently humane, cooperative, honest and a through gentleman. The crux of the problem thus goes into the misinterpreted image of the state. This situation necessitates education of the society so that it is aware of its rich socio-cultural heritage, values and accordingly behaves with the incomers. Marketing within the gamut of de-marketing or de-marketing for the sake of marketing, needs to be strategically applied to achieve the genuine and rightful share of the state in the country’s tourism scenario. Concentrated marketing efforts become all the more, an urgency in view of the
observations of about 56% respondents that they were not aware about many unique destinations of Himachal, else they would have planned their visit in a better way. Approximately 18% of these respondents have claimed to have added one or more destinations to their itinerary after having stayed in the state for some time. Coming to the expectation level of the tourist with regard to attraction and diversity of appeal, as many as 49% have found it to be well above their expectations.

Having had an assessment on the motivation, expectation and satisfaction level of tourists visiting the state of Himachal Pradesh, it becomes pertinent here to test the hypothesis formulated in the research design part (chapter 2) of this research document. It comprises of the following 4 statements:

1. There exists a close relationship between motivation, expectation and satisfaction level of the tourist.
2. Tourists belonging to the same class but traveling under different motives may have different levels of expectation.
3. Expectation level(s) of tourists, to a greater extent, guide their satisfaction level(s).
4. Tourists visiting Himachal Pradesh, coming with different level of expectations, return with varying degrees of satisfaction.

As regards the first subsection of the hypothesis, the cross interpretation of the feedback received on the subsection 2 with subsection 3 of the questionnaire, explicitly proves that there is an intricately close relationship between motivation, expectation and satisfaction levels of the tourists visiting Himachal Pradesh. While the expectations of the respondents have been derived from the 2nd section of the questionnaire, devoted to the travel behaviour of the tourist, the motivation and satisfaction perspectives have been cross-analyzed on the basis of the 3rd section of the questionnaire. Inadvertently, statistical conclusions have
been avoided as the motivation, expectation and satisfaction perspectives are generically based on psychographic parameters which can be effectively interpreted on the basis of derived perceptions, than mathematical analysis.

Subsection 2 and subsection 3 of the hypothesis have been effectively proved on the basis of descriptive interpretation provided above, in the present chapter. As regards the last subsection of the hypothesis, the answer is entirely guided in testing of the above section of the hypothesis and hence obviously stands proved. The analysis, interpretation and assessment of the responses received from the tourists visiting Himachal conclusively drive home the following facts:

There is still extreme paucity of information amongst the tourists, especially Indian, with regard to the touristic personality of Himachal Pradesh in terms of unique and diverse tourist resource treasures and the available tourist plant facilities and services. The effective and potential tourists, in fact, have access to information largely on the selected popular tourist destinations of the state, besides a few mountain resorts and trekking destinations. They do not know much about the eco-tourism, rural tourism and adventure tourism potential leave aside the specific places and activities being promoted by the state to this effect. The feedback through the questionnaire explicitly reveals that many of the respondents would have loved to go for one or the other activities including rafting, skiing, hand gliding, ballooning, eco-trekking, wind surfing, water skiing, wild life watching and the like, had they been aware of the underlying rich scope.

If the expectation level of the tourist with regard to Himachal is assumed to be a reflection of the image of the state in their minds then the feedback of the tourists through the questionnaire is virtually discouraging. More than 70% of them have a deep rooted impression about this region where one can expect over crowding, pollution, traffic snarls, unhygienic conditions, extreme economic backwardness, frequent incidences of crime, law and order problems, bad roads,
poor basic infrastructure, prevalence of beggars’ mentality, ineffective communication system and so on. In fact, in the last section of the questionnaire, two specific questions were asked from the respondents i.e., (i) List 3 major problems faced by them (tourist) during their India visit and (ii) Specific suggestions for tourist development in the state in order of priority.

As per the feedback on the first question, pollution was ranked at number one by 82% of the tourists, lack of hygiene and sanitation by 72%, traffic related problem by 69%, lack of authentic information by 69%, substandard transportation by 68%, non availability of quality food and drinks by 62%, substandard accommodation by 61%, menace of begging by 61%, bargaining by 54%, unethical travel practices by 49% and safety / security problems by 41%, emerged to be noteworthy problem areas. The second question has primarily been incorporated in the questionnaire to authenticate the responses of the tourist on the first question, cited above. Incidentally, the suggestions thus given by them comprehensively support their answers to the earlier question.

Fact remains, that Himachal Pradesh has the inherent strength to attract almost every interest group of the tourists, ranging from the cultural anthropologist, pleasure and business tourist to almost every other interest tourist. The rich scope for promoting an entire range of tourist activities including mountaineering, rock climbing, trekking, trailing, wildlife watching, forest recreation, rafting, canoeing, kayaking, skiing, ice skiing, heli-skiing, hand gliding, ballooning, water skiing, cold desert safari, golf to spiritual pursuits.

This situation specifically indicates towards the failure of our tourism marketing strategies, as the right market segments could not be effectively identified, on the first hand, and penetrated, as well. In fact over the years, almost same destinations have been promoted by almost all the public and private sector tourism institutions. Good many of the respondents who took the opportunity to visit the otherwise offbeat destinations felt highly satisfied with the appeal, as well as the ambience of such places. Incidentally, majority of them came to
know about such places after reaching Himachal. In fact, Himachal Pradesh, like many other Indian states, had been consistently concentrating on the promotion of the already established or the traditional destinations, with little perception on the changing demand patterns. In fact, it is due to these emerging trends that the traditional tourism destinations, the world over are steadily loosing their share in favor of the new world destinations, especially in the Asia-Oceania region. The emerging market is largely represented by the tourists who are interested in pure nature and culture, or say, in the virgin destinations. Incidentally, Himachal has no dearth of such places and attractions all through its length and breadth. Therefore, there is an urgent need to collect authentic information on the newer appeals and activities, systematically document and effectively transfer the same to the potential markets. It is not that the tourism planners have not been aware of its fabulously rich and diverse tourist resource treasure or have not been trying to promote them. The problem lies with the implementation of the policies and planning framework, as is evident from the existing gaps between the policy documents and the real state of affairs.

The only answer to the question as to why the state could not reap the optimum benefits on tourism front lies in its comprehensive failure on destination planning and marketing perspectives. The strong desire that has been working on the psychology, thoughts and actions of the policymakers revolves around identification and promotion of anything and everything which can allure a tourist. Since Himachal is bestowed with enormous touristic appeals all through its lengths and width, the planning efforts lead to a very thin distribution of already scarce resources in the development of anything and everything, leading to absolutely no development in any sphere. There is no dearth of examples to prove that in independent India many states have inherited their popular destinations from the good old Raj days - may it be Mount Abu, Darjeeling, Goa, Shimla or Mussoorie. In fifty years of the history of Tourism planning in the
country and state, one can amply mark the switch over from the priorities given
to the promotion of Hill resorts, Buddhist centers, Historical sites and adventure
focal to the emerging eco-tourism destinations. There has been little if any
considerations to understand the changing market demand patterns and
consequently the provision of facilities/amenities/activities expected by the
effective and potential tourist in terms of the appeal, stay provisions,
transportation inputs or shopping preferences. As a result today either people are
coming half heartedly or going back considerably dissatisfied. Unfortunately we
never thought of trying to perceive who are coming, what one would like to have
in terms of stay, food, transport and recreation/entrainment and, at what price.
Obviously, there has been virtually no effort to touch the nerve of the market
neither in terms of demography of psychographics nor along the economic and
socio-cultural parameters. Now, if the state is generally interested to reap the
multifarious advantage of tourism it has to establish an institution of research,
which could take care of the prognosis, priorities, problems, prospective and
perspectives on development.
In this context it is recommended that a central research body/fund/group be
created to take care of all the research related issues- whether planning,
development, marketing, or tourism impact studies. It should be made obligatory
on part of all the tourism related agencies/institutions/organizations to contribute
to this body in proportion to the volume of business or magnitude of business
involved. The N.G.O.’s, University departments and individual researchers be
given specific research projects, provided their progress is periodically
monitored. The areas of research may range from market survey; motivation,
expectation, and satisfaction levels of the effective and potential tourist,
evaluation of the tourism resource potential; resource potential vis-à-vis cost
effectiveness, H.R.D. perspectives, tourism impacts and carrying capacity
issues; tourism vis-à-vis art, craft and traditions; tourism marketing strategies;
assessment of organizational performance, and so on. The results derived from
the cross examination of the above studies conveniently help in understanding the dynamically changing tourist demand trends and consequently in development of the desired tourist supply - mix.

The ultimate success of any planning, development or marketing efforts depends on the Human Resource Development / Human Resource Management environment. Incidentally there is a fair amount of imbalance in so far as this aspect vis-à-vis tourism in the state is concerned. There is an intensive network of the hotel management institutions imparting training to the prospective aspirants looking for lower middle managerial positions, but with no option to pursue a higher level course. Of late, certain universities have started bachelors’ and masters’ degree programmes, but owing to shortage of the right blend of training programs they are yet to make their presence felt in the professional world of travel trade. As many as 43 institutions are offering master’s level courses but there is initially no opening for those looking for a rather middle management position, the matter of fact is that the masters’ level product prepared by the training institutions hardly finds right career while there is no vocational programme to fill up the middle to lower management cadre. Result is that masters’ in tourism either doesn’t get the opportunity or had to compromise with lower cadre offers, thereby leading to the dissatisfaction of the employee and the employer. Guides play a pivotal role in building the image of any destination; their role in enriching the overall experience of the tourists can never be undermined. The sad paradox is that there is no regular guide training programs in the state, or even the country except the one convened by Department of Tourism, Govt. of India. Not going into unrealistic prepositions, it is recommended that the Government and educational institutes must start playing the key role to ensure training of tourism professionals urgently required for different cadres. It is further suggested that specialized courses be introduced in terms of micro specialization without compromising on the aptitude aspect.
There could be no controversy on the statement that, without the cadre of trained professionals, no industry or business can survive, let alone the highly demanding travel and tourism trade.

Community approach or Participative management has become the key word today. However, no discipline depends on the community more than tourism. Here, the negative attitude of a common man, a taxi driver, shopkeeper or even a nomadic vendor has pivotal impact on the tourist experience, his/her satisfaction level and consequently the overall image of the destination. On the other hand the destination environment belongs to community, thus it ought to have a say on the destiny of its environment specially when unplanned or badly planned tourism is set to consume the environment to the extent of leaving nothing to be reprieved; neither socio-cultural environment nor economic or physical environment. Lessons could be taken from the success of the strategies adopted by Canada, U.K. and Malaysia in this regard.

Destination Environment is as important for the enriched experience of the guests as it is for the continued socio cultural and economic well being of the host population. Quality of environment is a decisive factor behind the decision of a tourist to visit the given destination as well as his/her positive or negative experience with regard to it. Likewise, the overall health of the host population is obviously determined by the prevailing environment. Thus there is an urgent need to constitute destination environment groups/bodies that could realistically interact and react in accordance to the situation for the tourism developers especially in ecologically fragile states like Himachal Pradesh. This problem becomes all the more vital in view of the fact that the major area of tourist satisfaction is generally the quality of environment at the destination may it be Shimla, Manali or Dharamshala. There is also urgent need to monitor the travel trade activities especially when a good number of tourists blame them to use
unethical practices—may it be commissions from hoteliers or transporters or insisting the clients to go for shopping. These unethical situations are not hard to curb down if there is a political will.

Awareness in the local community is the direct responsibility of any local regional or central body of the Government or, a social organization. An ‘aware-society’ is pivotal for its own development as regards the growth and prosperity of the country as a whole is concerned. In the context of tourism, role of the society in the ultimate success of a destination is neither an unknown fact to anybody nor is it difficult to ensure, obviously, socio-cultural awareness created about tourism and the tourists. Of course, it can be always made obligatory for the tourism training institutions/practicing enterprises and the tourism policy makers to effectively take charge of social awareness campaigns. Safety & security is one of the areas of the complaints from the tourists, acceptably the situation is not too bad in this regard in the state vis-à-vis others. The concept of tourist assistance force needs to be followed by all the states and institutions in letter and spirit to improve the overall destination system as well as enrich the experience of tourists.

As of now, a destination may have been marketed by Department of Tourism and the concerned State Tourism Development Corporation, beside the host of travel trade and hospitality organizations who have interest in the growth and development of tourism. This traditional practice is not only leading to multiplicity of efforts and misuse of the resources with little dissemination activity but, all the same creates varying degree of confusion in the market as the facts are put in different style and contents. ‘Is it not possible to follow the British Tourist Authority model wherein the sole responsibility to promote every destination depends on the BTA’ which, in turn, depends on the contribution of the member institution/organization/enterprises to ensure effective dissemination of information or say guaranteed market penetration. Putting it other way round
there could be only one brochure on say Shimla prepared and disseminated by a single body with relative contribution from all the organizations who ever have interest in its promotion.

Last, but not the least, is the revamping of the organizational infrastructure in the state, which despite being multi-tiered has largely proved ineffective on almost every front - destination planning to destination promotion, needed to be modified? The recommendations of the committee headed by Timothy O’Driscoll the former head of Ireland Tourism, could be reviewed and possibly mellowed down to the extend that it is accepted and viably implemented in the context of the state. Undoubtedly the time has come when Himachal Pradesh has to decide whether tourism is to be promoted as saleable commodity in a sustainable way; if yes, honest efforts shall have to be made by every player of tourism, no matter to whatever possible extent; only than the state shall be in position to judiciously utilize it’s enormous tourism treasure and emerge as a force to be reckoned with.