ABSTRACT

This research work is a field-based report and assessment of the dynamics of Tourism and Eco-tourism development in Sikkim. The entire work is based upon both secondary (published and recorded) data and primary (field generated) data. Sikkim has all the valuable ingredients for the development of tourism industry in real sense. This state has an impressive scenic beauty with exotic natural wealth including the vast forest area, deep blue mountain lakes, gorgeous Buddhist monasteries and hillsides ablaze with rhododendrons against a backdrop of snow-clad mountains. All the four districts of this state have a wide range of worth seeing places which attract tourist from all different parts of India. There has always been a steady growth rate of tourist arrival pattern in the state with 20% domestic and 15% international tourist arrival per annum. With the relaxation of restrictions the foreign tourists are now flowing in this state in sizeable number.

The growth of tourism industry with increased inflow of the tourists in Sikkim has provided significant mark in the advantage of the regional economy. It is one of the important service-providing industries in the state, which is generating income and employment to the local community people of the state. It is estimated that presently the Sikkim tourism sector employs around 40,000 people directly and indirectly (Sikkim Development Report, 2001). Increasing inflow results in more expenditure by the tourists in the state. As a result of spending by tourists in Sikkim state, the hotel industry and other livelihoods of the people, like handicraft industry is prospering in the region.

The aims and objectives of this research has been: to assess the present status of tourism industry in Sikkim, to study the impact of tourism on the economic development to study the role of economic development through tourism examining the growth and strategies used, to evaluate the planning and management processes and policies taken up by the Government in regards to the tourism industry, to analyse Tourism Industry vs. Eco-tourism development and to evaluate the prospects and present recommendations for future development of eco-tourism in Sikkim.
For a systematic indept study, particularly about the emergence of ecotourism under government planning, the East Sikkim District covering the area around the settlements on the Historical Silk Route has been selected. Infield study on the aspect of tourism in the settlements like Dzuluk, Gnathang and Kupuk has revealed that a) there has been a tremendous growth of tourists visiting in this part of Sikkim in recent years, b) tourists are coming mostly from the neighbouring state of West Bengal, c) greater contingent of the tourists visit the places of Sikkim during the early and late autumn season, d) most of the tourist parties comprises member of families, e) day trip makers are greater in proportion, f) although the government is attempting to promote eco-tourism in the emerging tourist spots, the indigenous people are yet to have any clear idea about the ethics of eco-tourism and g) the tourist have been found to cherish fancy to visit the tourist places more than once.