Chapter 8

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Works
8.1 Conclusions:

Basic aim of this research work was to find out the most suitable positioning strategies for marketing North East India as a tourist destination. In the process of fulfilling this, the following objectives were considered.

a) To identify the variables tourists think most important while evaluating a destination
b) To boil down these variables to a few broad clusters so that these can be highlighted and promoted while packaging a destination.
c) To determine the roles of these factors in creating a position for a particular destination.
d) To ascertain the most effective medium to communicate the position.
e) To find out the profile of the tourists on the basis of certain psychographic characteristics.
f) To offer the most suitable position for NE to be promoted as a tourist destination and the strategies to achieve these positions.

The study arrived at certain conclusions, which are mentioned below.

Tourists' levels of preference on certain variables while evaluating a destination were measured as a part of the study. On the basis of the scores of the respondents on certain variables, in a 0-9-point interval scale, two principal factors were extracted using factor analysis. The new factors are named as Infrastructure, and External Influence. Therefore, these two principal factors were considered for further reference to the variables. These two factors are also treated as the variables tourists consider while selecting a destination. This makes the study on positioning possible as only two variables are considered at one time in stead of 21 variables considered initially.
It is found from the study that tourists can be segmented on the basis of the variables like *Age, Level of Income, Occupation, Background, Idea (Purpose) of vacation, and Frequency of Visit (to tourist destinations)*. The levels of preferences on the principal factors vary significantly for various segments based on these factors.

The perceptions of the tourists on NE, under the individual segments, were also measured for the study. The perceptions are derived on the two principal factors. The factor *External Influence* does not have much difference between the preferred level and the perceptual level for almost all categories of tourists. However, the perception for the other factor *Infrastructure* carries huge gaps with the preferred levels across the segments. In certain segments, however, this difference is smaller. The study identified such groups and found them to be the most feasible segments for targeting NE as a tourist destination. Thus, the positions suitable for NE with respect to the principal factors are derived. A general position, from which NE can reach out to almost all the segments targeted, is also derived. Positioning Maps depicting the proposed positions are constructed keeping *External Influence* on the X-axis, and *Infrastructure* on the Y-axis.

It is also derived from the study that law and order situation of the region, which is identified with the principal factor *Infrastructure*, does not affect the level of perception of the tourists to a great extent. Therefore, other variables under this principal factor are responsible for the low perception. The availability of accommodation, and transportation etc. may also affect the tourists' overall perception towards NE. This, however, is not the effect of limited exposure to NE, as it is found that the respondents who have never been to NE are having higher level of perception than those who are exposed to NE. Therefore, reasons exist to believe that the lower level of perception may be related to prevailing physical environment of the region.
To reduce the physical imbalances between preference and perception, increase in tourist inflow is a must, which would offer the much needed impetus for private investment in the tourism sector in NE.

Therefore, proper strategy for communication to the targeted segments may be taken up without delay. Effective media types for communication may be *Word-of-mouth*, *Travel Brochure*, *Print Publications like Post Cards*, *Electronic media like TV/Radio and web sites*, *Tour Operator*, and *overall Knowledge* of the tourists. A matrix type apex organisation may be created by all NTOs of the region to take up every communication job for positioning NE. This is needed because if individual NTOs work differently with separate objectives, which they have been doing so far, creation of a holistic image for NE may be difficult. Separate segments of tourists have different levels of sensitivity towards the media and hence care should be taken to use proper medium of communication to effectively reach the desired segments.

8.2 Recommendation for Future Work

The study has opened up avenues for certain other works to be carried out in the line of this study. Such areas are discussed briefly in the following section.

8.2.1 Destination Life Cycle: Like every product, destinations may also experience life cycle over a period of time. The stages of the life cycle can be measured by sheer popularity of the destination, since using any other measurement would be almost impossible for such study. The popularity of a destination may fade away because of many reasons. Emergence of competing destination(s) may be one of them. The proposed study may include the cycle of a destination, if any, and the reasons for occurrence of such cycle. The study may also include marketing strategies for destinations at different phases of the life cycle.

8.2.2 Infrastructure of NE in Comparison to Other Successful Destinations: It is established from the study that there remains a huge gap between the perception on
availability of infrastructure in NE and the level of infrastructure expected by the tourists. This may prompt a study on availability of infrastructure in other popular destinations and to find out existence of such gap for the destinations in question. The findings of such study may offer valuable input for future destination positioning works.

8.2.3 A study may also be commissioned to derive the multiplier effects of tourism spending in popular Indian destinations. This study may also find out the proportion of such tourist spending reaching the cottage industry of the nearby regions. This would offer significant input to the development strategies for cottage industries in NE.

8.2.4 A detailed analysis can be commissioned on the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of individual tourist destinations of NE. At the same time the possible competitor destinations may also be identified. The USP of a destination must be a real one rather than imaginary so that consumers do not get disappointed after the experience.

8.2.5 A detailed analysis may also be carried out on the behaviour of tourist segments for different raw variables taken up for this study. This would provide with a micro level view of the importance offered by the tourists on the individual factors.