

# The Emerging Role of Himachal Pradesh Government in the Promotion of Tourism

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**Abstract:** Himachal Pradesh is a beautiful small hilly state of India surrounded with natural beauty of mountains and it receives almost three times more tourists than its population, but the number of foreign tourists is still negligible as compared to the Indian tourists. There are so many potential to develop tourism industry if some more effective steps are taken by the government. However, the government of Himachal Pradesh initiated its first tourism policy in 1991 and after that some positive steps were taken to make the growth of tourism business in the changing global scenario of tourism business. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that still we need to go further for the development of tourism business in the state of Himachal Pradesh. It is said that the government needs to frame out a new marketing strategy and improving better connectivity with airports services to boost the tourism business in the state. Here it is also noteworthy that rural tourism, wildlife tourism, eco tourism, pilgrimage tourism, health tourism and adventure tourism maybe key sectors of tourism business in the state, therefore, the government should frame out and implement a new tourism policy in the changing global environment.

**Keywords:** Tourism Sector, Tourism Policy, Tourism Strategy, Marketing Strategy, PPP Model.

**Introduction:** The fact is that tourism sector in India is emerging as a key sector of economy and it is contributing in the growth of GDP by generating new job opportunities for the unemployed youth. Therefore, in the perspective of Himachal Pradesh tourism, some studies have proved that foreigner tourists have to face some problems which are a cause of concern for tourism sector in the state. However, pleasant weather, scenic beauty, suitable environment for adventure activities, hospitability of local community and government's policy to attract the foreigner tourists as well as Indian tourists are positive factors which may boost tourism business in the state of Himachal Pradesh, but in inadequacy of transport facilities, marketing strategy and lack of information channels are the weaknesses of tourism policy of Himachal Pradesh. Moreover, environmental factors have recently been observed as a great threat to the tourism of Himachal Pradesh. Therefore, the government needs to review the existing tourism policy and work out to boost the tourism business.

**Research Objectives:** The key objectives of the study are:

- To analyze the tourism policy of Himachal Pradesh.
- To point out the key sectors of tourism business in the state.
- To suggest about the new marketing strategy to boost the tourism sector in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

**Research Methodology:** The present research work is exploratory in nature and based on the secondary source of data collection. The researcher has collected the secondary data from the reputed books, journals and official websites of the tourism department of Himachal Pradesh. To pace the study, the researcher has also used some observational facts.

**Key Sectors of Tourism in Himachal Pradesh:** Tourism business in Himachal Pradesh has emerged out as an upcoming industry in the recent years. The reason behind it is that the state is blessed with the beauty of nature and comfortable climate including fascinating customs, fairs and festivals. Therefore, there is a great potentiality for the development of various types of tourism activities. On the basis of various studies, it has been observed that tourism sector in Himachal Pradesh may include the following tourism activities:

- **Adventure Tourism:** Adventure tourism is one of the fastest growing trends in the travel domain in the state of Himachal Pradesh. It is also one of the important segments of tourism in the state which includes various adventurous activities like trekking, river rafting, camping, rappelling, paragliding, mountain biking, hali skiing, etc. Recently, Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation and Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation in collaboration with the Indian Air Force successfully organized a joint event from 12 to 17 June 2017 which witnessed various adventurous activities and a large number of tourists and local people participated in skydiving, parasailing, river rafting, trekking, mountain climbing, rappelling, river crossing, paragliding and mountain biking activities in the various parts of the state.
- **Pilgrimage/ Holy Tourism:** Himachal Pradesh is a land of serene environment. There are a large number sacred shrines and religious places where a large number of religious tourists visit throughout the year. The government of Himachal Pradesh has worked out on the policy of holy tourism and has developed parking, civic amenities and beautification of temple sites including the facilities of Sulabh Shauchalayas, drinking water, disposal of garbage and ban on the use of plastic bags near religious places. Some of the NGOs and Temple Trusts play a crucial role to aware the tourists and local people to take some effective measures to keep the religious beauty of the state. Dharamshala is a famous holy land for the holy tourism which attracts a large number of religious tourists.
- **Rural Tourism:** India is a land of villages and the concept of rural tourism is based on the slogan of 'Athiti Devo Bhavo'. It has been the custom of rural people regard guests as a God. Therefore, tourism

department of Himachal Pradesh has identified the role of rural tourism and developed some rural areas for this purpose with the help of village panchayats. The tourism policy ensures a fund of 5 lakh to create infrastructure in rural areas for the development of rural tourism. The foreigner tourists as well as Indian tourists from other states enjoy local and traditional food of Himachal Pradesh. The procedure for the registration of village tourism guest houses has been made simplified and promoted rural tourism in the state.

- **Eco Tourism:** Himachal Pradesh is surrounded with beautiful mountains. Therefore, it is famous for natural beauty which provides a beautiful environment for the development of eco tourism activities like trekking, rock climbing, nature walks, jungle safaris, etc. The wildlife tourism is also an integral part of eco tourism and there are 37 National Parks, Game Reserves and Sanctuaries. The state government has also developed lakes and wetlands as a part of eco tourism. The government has also developed water sports activities, bird watching, setting up of house boats, angling, etc. Moreover, the tourism policy of the state has encouraged the private sector to setup house boats and to operate shikaras including the improvement of forest rest houses made easily and comfortable for the tourists.
- **Health Tourism:** There is a vast scope for the development of health tourism in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The state has an enormous wealth of herbal plants, therefore, the tourism policy of the state has made a plan to develop health resorts in association with private partnership at various sites. There are facilities of spas, recuperative centers with the facility of 'Panchkarma' treatment under the guidance of Ayurveda Department.

**Tourism Policy of Himachal Pradesh:** The state government of Himachal Pradesh announced its first tourism policy in the wake of liberalization and globalization. The government felt that there are so many dangers for the future of tourism sector like eco tourism, heritage tourism, religious tourism, adventure tourism and rural tourism. Therefore, the government revised its tourism policy in the year 2000 and declared that it is very crucial that we develop an appropriate regulatory framework to ensure that all tourism activities take place in a safe and orderly fashion and to make sure that all future development takes place in a manner that will enhance and protect our natural and cultural environment. Moreover, the government realized a considerable ecological imbalance on the part of tourists and it was also felt that local community was unaware to get the real benefits of tourism activities that could be available for them by providing better job opportunities. Therefore to achieve the real goal of tourism sector in the state, the government of Himachal Pradesh initiated a new tourism policy in 2005 with full potential as a tourism mission. It announced: "To make tourism the prime engine of economic growth in the state by positioning it as a leading global destination by the year 2020." The policy included the basic areas as under:

- To regulate tourist destinations in the state.
- To improve the quality of tourism activities.
- To focus on the development of infrastructure.
- To keep the tourist destinations neat and clean, environmental friendly, sustainable and tourist oriented.
- To concentrate on key sectors and core areas of tourism business.

Therefore, due to efforts made by the state government and the policy makers, the tourism in the state has become sustainable. Nevertheless, we still need to work out in this direction more effectively in the current scenario, because environmental problems have challenged the concept of sustainability in the tourism sector also. There is an urgent need to ensure the training of all professionals related to the tourism business or hospitality sector. The government of India has also announced to implement tourism packages in the state of Himachal Pradesh. An initiative towards the growth of tourism business has been started in Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. Today, tourism sector in Himachal Pradesh has been recognized as one of the most significant sector of the state economy which maybe realized as a major engine of economic growth in recent years.

The recent scenario of tourism policy indicates that tourism sector in the state has been given a due importance for economic growth and the state government has developed appropriate infrastructure facilities such as roads, communication network, airport connectivity, transport facilities, water supply and some other civic amenities. The government has made a huge investment to develop the tourism business. There were more than 1800 hotels having bed capacity of more than 40,000 registered with tourism department in the last decade. Now this number maybe more than two thousand. Recently, after the formation of new government in Himachal Pradesh more emphasis has been given to develop a quality infrastructure in the tourist destinations. Today rural tourism has become a center of attraction for foreigner tourists as well as Indian tourists. Under the tourism policy of the state government it is said that serve tourists in a better and effective manner. For this purpose a master plan has been formulated and air port facility has been provided to boost the tourism sector in the state economy.

The state government has decided to involve public private partnership to develop tourism infrastructure and Naldhera golf course has been expanded. A Panchkarma facility has been started in hotel holiday home Shimla. In the summer season special concessions are given to the tourists and all the tour and travel operators cooperate with the tourism department of Himachal Pradesh. Recently, the state government has modified the tourism policy of 2005 and focused on the following objectives to boost the tourism sector:

- To develop modern infrastructure for the foreigner tourists.
- To establish Himachal Pradesh as a leading and most popular tourist destination.

- To make tourism sector an effective engine of economic growth.
- To encourage tourism sector on the model of Public Private Partnership.
- To promote the sustainable tourism and make it eco friendly.
- To safeguard the cultural heritage of the tourism business.
- To ensure the employment of trained staff in tourism sector.
- To develop the adventure tourism in the state.
- To strengthen the new marketing strategy for tourism sector.
- Up gradation of information centers and to organize tourism fairs.
- To put a due emphasis on advertisements through electronic and print media.
- To provide and improve air port connectivity.
- Strengthening of tourism development board.
- To promote private sector investment.

**Major Attractions of Tourism in Himachal Pradesh:** The state is very famous for its Himalayan landscapes and many popular hill-stations. Moreover, outdoor activities such as rock climbing, mountain biking, paragliding, ice-skating, and heli skiing are popular tourist attractions in Himachal Pradesh. Shimla, the state capital, is very popular among tourists. The Ridge is a large road in Shimla which is the centre of most popular cultural activities of Shimla. The Kalka-Shimla Railway is a mountain railway which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Shimla is also a famous skiing attraction in India and other popular hill stations include Manali and Kasauli. Dharamshala, home of the Dalai Lama, is known for its Tibetan monasteries and Buddhist temples. Many trekking expeditions also begin here. Some of the major attractions of tourism in Himachal Pradesh are: Shimla, Manali, Tattapani, Spiti Valley, Kasol, Tosh, McLeodganj, Dharamshala Kheerganga trek, Parvati Valley, Paragliding Sight (Bir Billing), Chamba and Triund.

**Conclusion:** Thus the tourism policy of Himachal Pradesh emphasis on the development of infrastructure and to work out on a new marketing strategy for tourist destinations in the perspective of changing scenario of tourism business in the state. The government has observed some critical points in the existing tourist policy and analyzed it. Now after the formation of new government in Himachal Pradesh, the more emphasis has been given to develop some key sectors of tourism and consequently a growth in state economy has been observed. Now the tourism policy of the state has been made based on public private partnership model and eco friendly. Nevertheless, there are some weaknesses and threats of tourism business in the state of Himachal Pradesh, therefore, here it is an urgent need to make the tourism business sustainable and environmental friendly. Moreover, there are so many potentialities for the development of rural tourism, agri-tourism, health tourism, eco tourism, and adventure tourism in the state.

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