

ANALYZING THE POTENTIALS OF TOURISM CIRCUIT: A CASE OF MANDI, H.P.

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is not only a tourist pursuit now, nor a trip to any holiest sites to see. But it is an industry and one of the economic operations of manifolds and measurements that are rising fastest. The growth of Tourism depends on a variety of issues. Reputation of the destination, tourist friendly environment, affordable travel and distinctive tourist circuits are some of the valuable considerations of success for the tourism industry. The essential parameters for the success of the tourism industry is the development of the Tourist circuit and destinations to attract the tourists from different places in the world. This paper discusses about the importance of developing tourist circuit in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh and its significance. It's importance in tourism development and attracting wide range of tourists as a famous tourist circuit with renowned destinations. The aim of this paper is to identify the destinations and highlight the potentials in Mandi connecting Kullu, Manali and other nearby tourism destinations.

Keywords: Tourist circuit, Tourism Destination, Mandi, Himachal tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Defining tourism can be a tedious job when practically, the activity has been prohibited considering the covid-19 constraints. However, looking into the traditional and more concise meaning of the same, it is defined as the act of travelling across the globe mainly for aesthetic pleasure of beings, which is essential to bring about a feeling of satisfaction and achievement.

Imbibing tourism also has a huge impact on various businesses. Business operation or industry related to the provision of information, accommodation and additional facilities for visitors, is also linked to income earned by the travellers. Associated by the movement of people, tourism is directly linked to profit making by showcasing art and culture with utmost hospitality.

The tourism industry can impact communities and is perhaps one of the biggest and fastest changing field in the world. It can affect civilizations like no other. India is a country of more than 1.3 billion people speaking over 20 languages. Each part of this country offers a different and unique kind of culture, art and heritage. Hence, a large part of attention of the government has been on increasing tourism of the country over the years.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In recent years, tourist circuit literature has been limited to tourism reports, proposals, master plans, and policy decisions in most countries that practice tourism. It barely finds a spot in the academic dialogue of specialists in tourism around the world. No literature, of course, has shed light on the creation and promotion of tourist circuits.

The creation of the route tourism process identified by Lourens (2007) involves the selection of routes based on the target market and its criteria, the audit of tourism goods in the specified region, the scrutiny of tourism properties and the identification of specific sales characteristics. In the next step, the product mix is established by designation marketing organization (DMO), simple strategy to guide work plan and finally, route branding.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATABASE

The basis of the work presented is both primary as well as the secondary data. The work comprises of the destinations, tourist circuit and prospective of Mandi tourism. The data comprising of the tourist demand and potentiality was based on the primary survey conducted. In contrast to that, the data regarding the destination information, review of literature, important maps and photographs are collected from secondary sources.

Tourism demand, in terms of percentage, was found out after data estimation. Then, on the basis of accessibility, seasonality, popularity and importance; the destinations were categorised. Considering the average score of demand and supply, the potential destinations were developed upon calculation of scores. Subsequently, the locations/ destinations were connected upon reflectance from the tourist map and a total score for each was designated depending upon three major destination's score. With more than two destination in one line interconnectedness, each circuit has its own merit. Ultimately, the best tourist circuit for Mandi tourism is the one with highest rating/score.

4. ABOUT MANDI

Mandi, also known as Mandav Nagar and Chhoti Kaashi is a major town and municipal council in Mandi district in Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. It is located in the north-western Himalayas, 145 kilometers north of the state capital, Shimla, at an average attitude on 800 meters and enjoys warm and cool winters. Mandi is connected to Pathankot by National Highway 20, which is almost 220 km long, and to Manali and Chandigarh by National Highway 21, which is 323 km long. Mandi is located approximately 184.6 km from Chandigarh, the closest major city and 440.9 km from New Delhi, the national capital. In the Indian census 2011, Mandi city had a total population of 26,422 people. Mandi district is actually the second largest economy in the state after Kangra. Mandi has also the second highest sex ratio of 1013 females per thousand males in the district.

It serves as the headquarters of the Central zone of Mandi district and Zonal divisions, including Kullu, Bilaspur and Hamirpur districts. Mandi is sometimes referred to as “Varanasi of Hills” or “Chhoti Kaashi” or “Kaashi of

Himachal” as a tourist spot. Mandi is also the starting point for the Prashar Lake trek. Trekkers go from Mandi to the village of Bagi, which acts as the base village for Prashar Lake.

Mandi is known for International Mandi Shivaratri fair. It is Himachal Pradesh’s first heritage city. The town still has the ruins of the ancient palaces and important specimens of ‘Colonial’ Architecture. The city also has one of the Himachal Pradesh’s oldest buildings.



Figure 1, Mandi District Map ,Source: HP website

Mandi is well connected via roads to the other cities of Himachal Pradesh’s like Kullu, Manali, Lahaul, Spiti, Leh and Jammu and Kashmir.

4.1 CULTURE OF MANDI

Mandi is the Cultural capital of Himachal Pradesh. Mandi has more than 300 old and new temples. Mandi is also known as Chhoti Kaashi because of the large number of temples and its location along the Beas river. Many of the temples are devoted to Lord Shiva and Goddess Kaali. Due to the historical importance, there are a lot of classical temples that have been designated as ‘Protected monuments’ by the Archeological Survey of India. Some of the major temples are:

Panchvakta temple which is located at the confluence of the Beas and Suketi Khad river, Ardhnateshwar temple; which is one of the very few temples of its kind in India, Triloknath temple which is on the bank of Beas river and Mata Kuan Rani Temple, which consists of a slate-roofed temple over a deep well dedicated to the 'Princess of the Well'. Most of the temples are on the bank of Beas river which allows the pilgrims to visit all the temples at one single time.



Figure 2&3, Triloknath Temple ,Source: Survey conducted by self

5. TOURIST CIRCUIT

In laymen's language, Tourist Circuit can be defined as a path or route, connecting three or more distinct and apart tourist destinations. The circuit should have a well-defined entry and exit point.

The planning should be such that prompts the traveler to visit maximum locations inside the circuit. For such a strategic planning, it becomes inevitable to neglect the passenger's desire of experiencing aesthetically and culturally rich places. Also, the needs and profits of the local stakeholders have to be kept in mind. Basically, this makes the circuit a kind of vending machine which can work efficiently to increase profits. Thus, the forethought and planning should place the destinations such that they help to achieve the goal.

Thoughts on land use planning, destination assessment, heritage denotation, culture, marketing strategies, require to contribute in the economy and biodiversity protection.

An efficient example of the same is developed by the Indian government by the name, Swadesh Darshan Scheme, which has 15 thematic tourist circuits under it.

6. IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

The circuit is to be taken up and, in coordination with Himachal State Government, is identified by the Ministry of Tourism at the beginning of each year. The tourist potential of the sites should be considered when choosing

the Circuit. It should also be assured that for plan duration, every circuit so specified for each state/UT should be assured. A circuit could be limited to a state, or it could be more than a state/UT spanning a regional circuit. The project's identification, In coordination with the state Government/UT Administration, the execution organization and the mode of channeling of funds should be carried out.

7. MAJOR DESTINATIONS IN MANDI, HIMACHAL PRADESH

a. Sundernagar

The beautiful town of Sundernagar is known for the shady walks amid-tall trees. The town is famed for its temples, the Mahamaya Temple being the most famous among them. Sundernagar, situated at an altitude of 1,174 meters, is famed for its shady walks among towering trees. A lovely garden here is the Sukhdev Vatika. It is also home to the largest Hydel Project in Asia, the Beas-Stulej hydro-electric project, which has brought unparalleled wealth to Sudernagar, irrigating almost one-fourth of the northern plains of India. In Himachal Pradesh, the Beas-Sutlej Link Colony is the largest colony.

b. Devidarh

The area has lush green fields, meadows and thick deodar forest with stunning natural beauty. The site is located at an altitude of 7800 feet and is the last village in the valley of Jiuni. Mata Mundsan's Temple is located here. Devidarh is on the Janjhali-Shikri Devi-Devidarh-Kamrunag trek route. Tourists stay here at the Devidarh Forest Rest House.

c. Kamrung Lake

Located at an altitude of 3,334 Mtr. Besides the lake, Kamrunag is popular for the lake and the temple. The view of the Dhauladhar Range and Balh Valley adds to the scenic beauty of the location where dense deodar woods surround the lake and pent roof temple of Dev Kamrunag.

d. Barot

Barot, located at an altitude of 1835 meters, is a lovely location on the bank of the Uhl River. It is well-known for its Trout Fish Farm. It is run by the Department of Fisheries and every year the Angling Meet is held. The reservoir of the British-built Shanan power plant is situated here and contributes to Barot's scenic beauty. Barot is also the gateway to the 278-sq.-area Nargu Wildlife Sanctuary. Kms. This is the den of the Monals, the Wild Cats, the Apes, and the Black Bears. Brot is also the base for the Kullu & Kangra Valley trek routes.

e. Rewalsar

For Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists alike, Rewalsar is an important religious spot. Rewalsar's natural lake is renowned for its floating islands of reeds and fish. On the edges of the Lake, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh shrines remain. It is assumed that the spirit of Padamasabhava is represented in the small islands of floating reeds in Rewalsar Lake. Also installed in Rewalsar is an enormous statue of Padamsambhava.

f. Prashar

It was located at an altitude of 2730 mtr. Prashar is famous for Prashar Pool, slopy meadows, thick forest and Dhauladhar's panoramic view of the snow-clad ranges. "Prashar Lake" with a perimeter of approximately 300 mtrs. A floating island is decorated inside it. Its sparkling blue water adds to this scenic spot's beauty. A visit to Prashar is a great combination of a spiritual trip to discover the serene and majestic mountains of the Himalayas. There are many camping and trekking sites here.

g. Janjehli - Shikari Devi Temple

Shikari Devi temple is about 18 km from Janjehli and is linked by a forest road that is jeepable. It is located at a height of 3359 mtr. The dense woods are great on the way to Shikari peak. It is also named the Crown of Mandi, the highest point of the Mandi District. Vast green pastures, sunrise and sunset captivating, panoramic views of the snow ranges make this spot a favorite for lovers of nature.

8. POTENTIAL ANALYSIS OF MANDI

In consideration of Mandi as a tourist place, it holds much importance on account of all the traditional and cultural value it has to offer. It is, in itself, a complete package providing the tourists with all the aesthetic, traditional, cultural, scenic and relaxing experiences that they would reminisce for their entire lives.

S.No.	THEME	EXISTING WELL PERFORMING DISTRICTS	POTENTIAL DISTRICTS
1	Eco Tourism	Lahaul-Spiti	Kinnaur, Kangra, Chamba, Mandi (Janjehli, Barot Valley), Kullu, Shimla (Chansal)
2	Agro/Organic Tourism	Chamba, Shimla, Kinnaur	Sirmour (Rajgarh), Mandi (Karsog Valley), Bilaspur (Ghumarwin), Lahual-Spiti (Spiti), Chamba and Kullu

3	Snow Tourism	Kullu	Shimla (Narkanda and Chanshal), Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti, Chamba
4	Lake Tourism	Lahaul-Spiti, Kangra	Chamba, Mandi , Bilaspur, Una
5	Adventure	Kullu, Chamba, Lahaul- Spiti	Kinnaur, Mandi , Sirmour, Kangra and Shimla
6	Pilgrimage	Promotion and Marketing through Religious Circuits in all districts of HP	
7	Cultural & Heritage	Kullu, Shimla, Kangra, Lahaul Spiti	Chamba, Sirmour (Nahan), Kinnaur, Mandi and Hamirpur
8	Health & Wellness	Kangra	Solan (Chail), Kullu, Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti, Mandi
9	Film Tourism	Shimla, Kullu	Lahaul-Spiti, Kangra (Palampur), Kullu (Manali), Chamba (Priungal), Shimla (Fagu)
10	MICE Tourism	Shimla, Solan, Kangra	Solan, Kangra, Kullu & Sirmour

Source: Himachal Tourism website

The above table is an exact representation and instance, proving that Mandi, as a tourist place, is capable of providing all the joyous and mesmerizing experiences to the tourists visiting as a package altogether. As an additional bonus point, the location of Mandi is such that it can effortlessly be included in the Himachal tourist circuit. It lies on the National Highway-21 which connects Bilaspur to Kullu. The road connectivity acts as a supplementary benefit, connecting NH-21 as well as NH-20 (through Dharamshala) to Mandi. It is also connected by all means of transportation.



Source: (Himachal Tourism, n.d.)

S. No.	District	Apr l	May	Jun e	Jul y	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
1	Bilaspur	11	12	13	8	6	4	6	1	2	2	0	6	71
2	Chamba	528	575	435	242	184	127	113	120	168	160	84	112	2848
3	Hamirpur	0	0	5	3	2	2	3	2	2	0	0	2	21
4	Kangra	836 4	900 9	943 0	462 1	330 5	905	893	645	101 2	947	985	107 2	41188
5	Kinnaur	390	144 3	166 4	143 0	126 0	103 7	797	788	935	0	0	0	9744
6	Kullu	134 50	156 38	1655 2	1253 8	636 9	104 61	980 5	864 2	997 4	565 3	526 4	579 0	120136
7	Lahaul & Spiti	117	148	189 1	605 4	384 3	129 2	892	805	102 1	0	0	0	16063
8	Mandi	641	761	851	879	817	419	242	226	265	292	302	260	5955
9	Shimla	108 38	115 72	1226 1	1265 5	122 99	104 76	944 5	877 3	111 86	975 8	871 9	921 9	127201
10	Sirmour	241	246	260	258	220	197	162	318	192	150	112	157	2513
11	Solan	580	687	486	246	193	235	206	105	254	265	356	128	3741
12	Una	12	15	17	13	6	2	3	2	2	4	6	4	86
TOTAL		351 73	401 04	4386 5	3894 6	285 04	251 58	2256 7	204 26	250 13	1722 9	158 27	167 50	329562

(Tourism Survey for the state of Himachal Pradesh, 2012)

According to the statistics, tourist traffic in Mandi is very low in comparison to other tourist locations such as Kullu, Manali, Solan and Dharamsala. As per the tourism survey of Himachal Pradesh (April 2011- March 2012), Shimla observed a total of 127201 foreigner visits and Kullu indicates 120136 foreigner visits. On the other hand, Mandi experienced only 5955 visits in the entire year.

Most Visited Tourist Destination	%age of Visitors	%age of Domestic Overnight Visitors	%age of Domestic Day Visitors	%age of Foreign Overnight Visitors
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Manali	18.16%	15.08%	1.90%	1.18%
The Mall	10.75%	4.87%	5.30%	0.58%
<u>Hadimba Temple</u>	8.21%	4.82%	2.54%	0.85%
<u>Kufri</u>	7.66%	2.39%	4.48%	0.79%
<u>Raghunathji Temple</u>	3.84%	2.84%	0.66%	0.35%
<u>Trilokpur</u>	2.39%	0.75%	1.53%	0.11%
<u>Solang Valley</u>	2.27%	1.81%	0.32%	0.13%
Naggar	2.00%	1.58%	0.36%	0.06%
<u>McLeodganj</u>	1.85%	1.24%	0.36%	0.25%
Bhoothnath Temple	1.76%	0.60%	1.12%	0.03%
<u>Sankat Mochan</u>	1.68%	1.20%	0.35%	0.13%
<u>Jaku Hill</u>	1.58%	1.10%	0.28%	0.20%
Bajjnath	1.42%	0.89%	0.51%	0.01%
<u>Narkanda</u>	1.41%	0.69%	0.48%	0.24%
<u>Sri Naina Deviji</u>	1.37%	0.19%	1.19%	0.00%

Source: (Tourism Survey for the state of Himachal Pradesh, 2012)

As per the table above, tourism of Mandi is minimal. If included in the tourist circuit, Mandi has an immense potential to enhance the tourism business and the economy of the country.

9. ISSUES IN MANDI TOURISM CIRCUIT

Mandi is also known as Mini Bombay of Himachal Pradesh. It is the fashion hub with all the facilities and opportunities but major issues identified as highly urbanized town is facing lots of challenges like insufficient parking, encroachments, staying facilities and waste management facilities etc. Therefore, tourists are not favored to stay in this city for a long duration. They use this town as a connecting

destination to other areas with natural scenic destinations. Mandi's potentials are not highlighted by the authorities and policy makers in front of tourists.

10. CONCLUSION

In course of the entire paper, promoting tourism can be co-related to selling of dreams. It is obligatory to tempt tourists/people to visit locations considered divine and eye-catching.

Integrity, status and steadiness are three main keys to ensure true promotion of tourist circuit in Mandi. Both public and private sectors need to act responsibly for the advancement and growth of Mandi as Tourist Circuit. With a boost in tourism sector, the economy would witness a significant increase. 'Chhoti Kashi', Mandi is located along the banks of river Beas, its patrimony and rich culture has been retained till date. Due to the presence of old palaces, temple architecture and rich traditions, it is considered as the cultural capital of state.

All these qualities, make it essential to place Mandi in the tourist circuit. In addition to an increase in tourism, the place also has potential to reminisce traditional practice which might have been forgotten by the world today.

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