

Conflict Impact on Tourism Industry in Manipur A Case Study of select Travel Agencies & Tour Operators in Imphal

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Abstract:

According to the 2018 World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) report, the travel and tourism industry contributes 10.4% to global GDP and employs one in every ten people worldwide. According to the WTTC's Economic Impact Research report from 2018, India will be among the world's fastest-growing tourist economies in the following years, with travel commerce expected to bring 10 million jobs to the country by 2028. Tour & Travel tourism sector in India is accounted as very important in development of tourism and employment generation. It plays an important role such as bridging between clients and principal suppliers, image builder, rapid travel services, social and continues process. Manipur conflict cast a pall over tourism sector in the northeast. Over a 3 month-long clashes between two communities of Manipur, mounting death and destruction in the north eastern states of Manipur has brought life and livelihood to a grinding halt and completely derailed the momentum that tourism sector in the state and the region as a whole has received over the last few years. The key important of the study is the assessment of the existing impacts in the Travel Agents & Tour Operators undertaken in the study and to suggest measures so that supply meets the conflict period.

Keywords: Tourism Competitiveness, Conflict, Environmental Sustainability.

Introduction:

Travel agencies are the basic ingredient of tourism industry, therefore, it is said that tourism revolves around travel agencies and tour operators. Travel agency is the private sector organization which plays a vital and crucial role in the promotion of tourism, because in some countries 90 per cent international and 70 per cent domestic is organized by them. Travel agency business mostly functions in the private sector.

Tourism has been the most affected sector by the Covid-19 pandemic. It has highlighted the vulnerabilities of the tourism sector and our capacity to respond to such a crisis. Post COVID-19, it is improbable that tourism will return to business as usual. Safety and hygiene will become critical factors in selecting destinations. Sustainability will become more prominent in tourism choices due to greater awareness of climate change and the adverse impacts of tourism. The crisis is an opportunity to consider the long-term implications of the problem, reimagining the future of tourism, and coordinate action across governments at all levels and in the private sector.

The Tourism industry in the northeast of India is in a state of shock and disbelief at the turn of events in Manipur over the last three months. For a State which was showing a serious intent to leave the past mistakes behind and march ahead on the path of growth and development and build an image as a peaceful destination for people to visit as well as businesses to invest in the last few years, the current state of affairs is something which even an incorrigible pessimist would not have dreamt of.

Relevance and Significance of the Study:

The tour and travel tourism industry in India is currently evidencing unprecedented growth. The industry is one of the largest and most profitable industries in India and contributes significantly to the national income. In this paper an attempt is made to understand the determinants and impact factors of Tour and Travel agencies in the promotion of tourism industry in Manipur. Present paper is finds to study conflict: impact on tourism industry in Manipur from the different effects of Travel Agencies & Tour Operators in Imphal. The relevance of the present study effects from the following facts: i) effect of employment of conflict on the functioning of Travel Agencies and Tour Operators in Manipur, ii) effect of profitability conflict on the functioning of Travel Agencies and Tour Operators in Manipur, iii) effect of service provided of conflict on the functioning of Travel Agencies & Tour Operators in Manipur.

Research Design

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research paper is aimed at evaluating the impact on tourism industry in Manipur in the conflict period. To case archive the main objective, some specific objectives are considered as follows.

- i) To find out the nature & characteristic of the Travel Agencies & Tour Operators under study.
- ii) To analyze different types of products offered.
- iii) To find out the problems faced by the Travel Agencies & Tour Operators in Manipur.
- iv) To study the effect of conflict on Travel Agencies & Tour Operators.
- v) To find out measures to overcome adverse effect caused by conflict.

Hypothesis

Ho – There is no significant effect of conflict on the functioning of Travel Agencies & Tour Operators in Manipur.

Research Methodology

The methodology which was followed, for conducting the study, is discussed under the following heads:

- (i) Topic: “Conflict: Impact on Tourism Industry in Manipur: A Case Study of selected Travel Agencies & Tour Operators in Imphal.”
- (ii) Operational area of the study: The study is conducted in Imphal.
- (iii) Type of research: The study is mainly exploratory and descriptive in nature.
- (iv) Type of Universe: The units of the study are those elite Travel agents in Imphal as provided by the Tourism Department Govt. of Manipur.
- (v) Size of the Units: Eleven Travel Agencies were selected as sample size of the study.
- (vi) Type of sampling used: Stratified random sampling is conducted for the Travel agencies under study.

- (vii) Type of data used: Both primary and secondary data are used for the study.
- (viii) Method of data collection: Questionnaire cum interview method is used to collect primary data. The questions were structured and undisguised consisting of both open ended and close ended.
- (ix) Data presentation & analysis: Data collected are presented in tables & graphs and mainly descriptive analysis is made.

Analysis of Data

Table-1: Table Showing Organization Profile & Structure

| Sl. No. | Name of Agency | Date of Estd. | Location | No. of Chains | No. of Employee |
|---------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Air Traffic | 1985 | Paona Bazar | 0 | 4 |
| 2. | World Travel Services | 2015 | Keishamthong | 1 | 3 |
| 3. | Khuibo Tours and Travels | 2013 | Yaishkhul | 1 | 4 |
| 4. | Siroy Travels | 2007 | North AOC | 0 | 1 |
| 5. | Sony Tours & Travels | 2008 | Moirangkhom | 0 | 2 |
| 6. | Network Travels | 2001 | Moirangkhom | 0 | 3 |
| 7. | BRN Travels& Printing | 2022 | Moirangkhom | 0 | 2 |
| 8. | Kangla Travels | 2008 | Yaishkhul Police Lane | 0 | 2 |
| 9. | Milk Tours | 2008 | Yaishkhul Police Lane | 0 | 4 |
| 10. | R.K. Aviation | 2014 | Yaishkhul Police Lane | 0 | 1 |
| 11. | Sorarel Travels | 2007 | M.G. Avenue | 0 | 1 |

Source: Field Survey

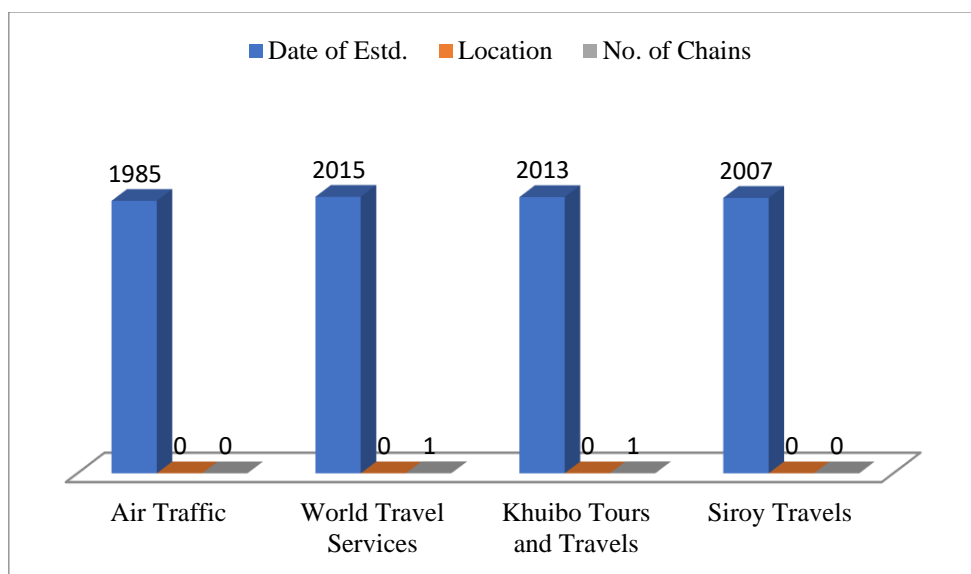


Figure-1: Showing Organization Profile & Structure

Year of Established

| Sl. No | Decadal Year | No. of Agents |
|--------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. | 1980 | 1 |
| 2. | 2000 | 6 |
| 3. | 2010 | 3 |
| 4. | 2020 | 1 |

Interpretation: It is observed from the table that the major numbers of Travel Agents were established in the decadal period of the 2000s. One agent existed in the 1980 and 2020, and three were established in the 2010. All the offices of the Travel Agencies & Tour Operators are located in strategic locations within the greater Imphal area. Only 2 agents had outlets or branches in other districts.

No. of Employees

| Sl. No | No. of Employees | No of Agents |
|--------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. | 1 | 3 |
| 2. | 2 | 3 |
| 3. | 3 | 2 |
| 4. | 4 | 3 |

Interpretation: The table shows that agencies employed 1 people, 2 people and 4 people employees in 3 agencies each, 3 people employees in 1 agency.

Table-2: Showing Category of Travel Agents

| Sl.No. | Category | No. of Agents | % |
|--------|-----------|---------------|------|
| 1. | Retail | 11 | 100 |
| 2. | Wholesale | 02 | 90.9 |
| 3. | Both | 02 | 90.9 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: From the above table, it is seen that all the 11 (eleven) respondents operate Retail business while 2 (two) operate both wholesale as well as retail trade.

Nature of Business

| Sl. No | Nature | No. of Agents | % |
|--------|------------------------|---------------|---|
| 1. | Travel Agency | 10 | |
| 2. | Tour Operator | 2 | |
| 3. | Advisory & Consultancy | 2 | |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: From the above table, it is clear that 10 out of 11 respondents operate as tour agents, 2 (two) of them operate tours and another 2 (two) offer advisory and consultancy services.

Table-3: Depicting Type of Travels

| Sl.No. | Category | No. of Agents | % |
|--------|---|---------------|------|
| 1. | Inbound Tours | 3 | 29.8 |
| 2. | Outbound Tours | 5 | 49.5 |
| 3. | Destination Management/ Ground Operators | | |
| 4. | All the above | 2 | 19.8 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: The table shows that most of the respondents 49.5% operate outbound tours 29.8% operate inbound tour and only 19.8 % operate all the three types of tours.

Customer Analysis

| Sl. No | Category of Customer | Most | Moderate | Somewhat | Seldom | Never |
|--------|-------------------------------|------|----------|----------|--------|-------|
| 1. | Official | 2 | 6 | - | - | - |
| 2. | Tourist | 3 | 6 | 1 | - | - |
| 3. | Business | 1 | 7 | 1 | - | - |
| 4. | Sports | 1 | 7 | 1 | 1 | - |
| 5. | Health | 1 | 3 | 3 | - | - |
| 6. | Political | 1 | 4 | 2 | - | - |
| 7. | Visitors(Friends & Relatives) | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| 8. | Missionaries | - | - | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| 9. | Adventure | - | - | 2 | 4 | 1 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: Customers in all travel agencies are mostly or moderately on tourists and official work. Visitors on business and sports are also ranked most & moderately. Health, Political and Visitors (Friends & Relatives) are ranked most & moderately 60% of agencies. Missionaries & Adventure clients are ranked somewhat, seldom and never by 40% of agencies.

Table- 4: Depicting Categories of Travel

| Sl. No. | Category | No. of Agents |
|---------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. | Commercial | 7 |
| 2. | Leisure | 3 |
| 3. | Official | 4 |
| 4. | All the above | 5 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: The table shows that the major ascending order of customers of Travel agencies are commercial, all the above, Official and leisure.

Table-5: Depicting Promotional Methods Used

| Sl. No | Category | No. of Agents |
|--------|------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Newspaper | 0 |
| 2. | TV | 0 |
| 3. | Magazines | 1 |
| 4. | Posters | 3 |
| 5. | Bill boards | 3 |
| 6. | Hoarding | 2 |
| 7. | Events | 1 |
| 8. | Door to Door | 0 |
| 9. | Personal Selling | 2 |
| 10. | Referrals | 5 |
| 11. | Others | 1 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: It can be seen that most popular method of promotional used is through referrals followed by posters and bill boards. Hoarding and personal selling each was used by 2(two) agencies. One used magazine and another one used events and other methods of promotion.

No. of Employees in Years

| Sl. No | Name of Agency | No. of Employees | | | |
|--------|--------------------------|------------------|------|------|------|
| | | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| 1. | Air Traffic | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| 2. | World Travel Services | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 3. | Khuibo Tours and Travels | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 4. | Siroy Travels | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 5. | Sony Tours & Travels | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 6. | Network Travels | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 7. | BRN Travels& Printing | | | 2 | 2 |
| 8. | Kangla Travels | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| 9. | Milk Tours | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. | R.K. Aviation | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. | Sorarel Travels | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: From the above table it can be seen that Air Traffic, RK Aviation and Sorarel Travels saw a decrease of 1(one) employee each, Milk travels had an increase by one while the rest remained constant. Generally, the employment rate is seen to be very few in number, the highest number of employees being 4(four).

Opinions on Quality of Services

| Sl. No | Opinions | No. of Agents | % |
|--------|-----------|---------------|----|
| 1. | Very poor | | 0 |
| 2. | Moderate | 9 | 82 |
| 3. | High | 2 | 18 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: With regards to the quality of services, 82% opinions that it was moderate while 18% opinions that it was high. None opinions that it was very poor.

Opinions on Demand for Service in Manipur

| Sl. No | Opinions | People with that opinion | % |
|--------|----------|--------------------------|----|
| 1. | High | 2 | 18 |
| 2. | Moderate | 9 | 82 |
| 3. | Low | | 00 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: 82% of the respondents felt that demand for services are moderate while 2 felt that it was high. None opined it to low.

Opinions on Awareness of People about these Services

| Sl. No | Opinions | People with the opinion | % |
|--------|----------|-------------------------|-------|
| 1. | High | 1 | 13.6S |
| 2. | Moderate | 6 | 59.4 |
| 3. | Low | 2 | 19.5 |
| 4. | Absent | 2 | 19.5 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: Awareness about the services is moderate at 59.4 %, 13.65 % at high and low or absent at 19.5 %

Table-6: Showing Degree of Affect in their Business Caused by Manipur Conflict

| Sl. No | Degree | No. of Agents | % |
|--------|---------------------|---------------|------|
| 1. | Greatly affected | 6 | 59.4 |
| 2. | Moderately affected | 4 | 39.6 |
| 3. | Not much affected | 1 | 09.9 |
| 4. | Not affected at all | | 00.0 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: 59.4 % strongly feels that conflict has greatly affected their business, 39.6% expresses that it was moderately affected. Only one responded that conflict did not have much significant effect on their business.

Table-7: Depicting the Areas Affected Due to Conflict

| Sl. No | Degree | No. of Agents |
|--------|------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Booking | 11 |
| 2. | Ticketing | 11 |
| 3. | Transport | 9 |
| 4. | Payment/Fund Transfers | 10 |
| 5. | Communication | 11 |
| 6. | Marketing | 11 |
| 7. | Others | 2 |

Source: Field Survey

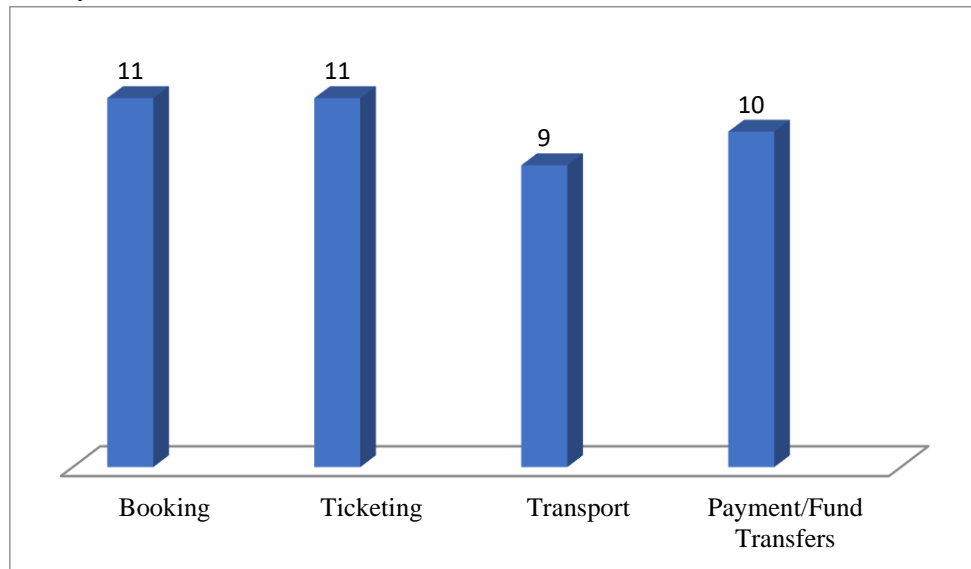


Figure -2: Depicting the Areas Affected Due to Conflict

Interpretation: Conflict has affected booking, ticketing, communication, marketing all the agencies, payment/fund transfers was affected 10 agencies, 9 was affected transport agencies and 2 agencies was affected others.

Table-8: Showing Psychological Effect on Customers/Tourists

| Sl. No | Degree | Total | % |
|--------|---------------------|-------|------|
| 1. | Great extent | 4 | 39.6 |
| 2. | Moderately affected | 7 | 60.4 |
| 3. | Not affected | | |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: The above table shows that the respondents felt that 39.6 % of their customers were psychologically greatly affected by the conflict while 60.4 % were moderately affected.

Table-9: Depicting Disadvantages Faced Due to Conflict

| Sl. No | Disadvantages | No. of Agents | % |
|--------|----------------------------|---------------|---|
| 1. | Technology breakdowns | 6 | |
| 2. | Fear Psychosis | 3 | |
| 3. | Reluctance to travel | 3 | |
| 4. | Law & order breakdown | 4 | |
| 5. | Frequent closure of hotels | 1 | |
| 6. | All the above | 4 | |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: From the above table shows that disadvantages due to technology breakdown was break 6 agencies, law & order and all the above breakdown was faced by 4 agencies each, fear psychosis & reluctance to travel were faced by 3 agencies each, 1 faced frequent closure of hotels.

Layoffs During Conflicts

| Sl. No | Layoffs | Total | % |
|--------|---------|-------|-------|
| 1. | Yes | 9 | 81.82 |
| 2. | No | 2 | 18.18 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: The above table shows that layoffs during conflicts were faced 9 agencies and 2 agencies were not faced layoffs during conflicts.

Cancellations of Bookings Due to Conflicts

| Sl. No | Cancellations | Total | % |
|--------|---------------|-------|-------|
| 1. | Yes | 9 | 81.82 |
| 2. | No | 2 | 18.18 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: Conflict has affected most cancellations by customers of 10 agencies, 2 agencies have not affected.

Perceptions of People Towards Conflict Areas

| Sl. No | Perceptions | Total | % |
|--------|-------------|-------|-------|
| 1. | Fear | 7 | 63.64 |
| 2. | Reluctance | 3 | 27.27 |
| 3. | Distrust | 1 | 9.09 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: From the above table shows that perceptions of people due to fear of conflict were 7 agencies, reluctance faced 3 agencies and 1 agent faced distrust.

Services Provided & How Much it has been Affected Due to the Conflict

| Sl. No | Name of service | Total (0-20%) | Total (20-50%) | Total (50% +) | None |
|--------|------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|------|
| 1. | Booking/Reservation | 2 | 3 | 6 | |
| 2. | Ticketing | 3 | 2 | 6 | |
| 3. | Package Tours | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| 4. | Transport | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 |
| 5. | Internet | 1 | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| 6. | Payment/ Fund Transfer | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| 7. | Communication | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| 8. | Marketing | | 3 | 8 | |
| 9. | Event management | | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| 10. | Outdoor Entertaining | | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| 11. | Others | | | 2 | 9 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: In respect of service provider majority of the Travel Agents failed that they were affected above 50% and more.

Income Reduction During Conflict

| Sl. No | Income % reduced | Total | % |
|--------|------------------|-------|-------|
| 1. | 0-20 | 3 | 27.27 |
| 2. | 20-40 | 2 | 18.18 |
| 3. | 40-60 | 3 | 27.27 |
| 4. | 60-80 | 1 | 9.09 |
| 5. | 80+ | 2 | 18.18 |

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation: From the above table shows that conflict has reduced income 0-20% and 40-60% by 2 travel agencies each, 20-40% and 80+ were 2 travel agencies each and 1 travel agent reduced was 60-80% respectively.

Findings

- (i) Majority of Travel Agents were established in the decadal period of the 2000s. One agent existed in the 1980 and 2020, and three were established in the 2010.
- (ii) All the offices of the Travel Agencies & Tour Operators are located in strategic locations within the greater Imphal area. Only 2 agents had outlets or branches in other districts.
- (iii) Khuibu Tours & Travels and Milk Tours employed maximum number of people at 4 each.
- (iv) All the 11(eleven) respondents operate Retail business while 2(two) operate both wholesale as well as retail trade.
- (v) With regard to the nature of business 10 out of 11 respondents operate as tour agents, 2(two) of them operate tours and another 2 (two) offer advisory and consultancy services.

- (vi) Most of the respondents 49.5% operate outbound tours 29.8% operate inbound tour and only 19.8 % operate all the three types of tours.
- (vii) Customers in all travel agencies are mostly or moderately on tourists and official work. Visitors on business and sports are also ranked most & moderately. Health, Political and Visitors (Friends & Relatives) are ranked most & moderately 60% of agencies. Missionaries & Adventure clients are ranked somewhat, seldom and never by 40% of agencies.
- (viii) The major ascending order of customers of Travel agencies are commercial, all the above, Official and leisure.
- (ix) Most popular method of promotional used is through referrals followed by posters and bill boards. Hoarding and personal selling each was used by 2(two) agencies. One used magazine and another one used events and other methods of promotion.
- (x) With regards to the quality of services, 82% opined that it was moderate while 18% opined that it was high. None opined that it was very poor.
- (xi) 82% of the respondents felt that demand for services are moderate while 2 felt that it was high. None opined it to low.
- (xii) Awareness about the services is moderate at 59.4 %, 13.65 % at high and low or absent at 19.5 %
- (xiii) 59.4 % strongly feels that conflict has greatly affected their business, 39.6% expresses that it was moderately affected. Only one responded that conflict did not have much significant effect on their business.
- (xiv) Conflict has affected booking, ticketing, communication, marketing all the agencies, payment/fund transfers was affected 10 agencies, 9 was affected transport agencies and 2 agencies was affected others.
- (xv) The respondents felt that 39.6 % of their customers were psychologically greatly affected by the conflict while 60.4 % were moderately affected.
- (xvi) Disadvantages due to technology breakdown was break 6 agencies, law & order and all the above breakdown was faced by 4 agencies each, fear psychosis & reluctance to travel were faced by 3 agencies each, 1 faced frequent closure of hotels.
- (xvii) Layoffs during conflicts were faced 9 agencies and 2 agencies were not faced layoffs during conflicts.
- (xviii) Conflict has affected most cancellations by customers of 10 agencies, 2 agencies have not affected.
- (xix) Perceptions of people due to fear of conflict were 7 agencies, reluctance faced 3 agencies and 1 agent faced distrust.
- (xx) The time of conflict has reduced income 0-20% and 40-60% by 2 travel agencies each, 20-40% and 80+ were 2 travel agencies each and 1 travel agent reduced was 60-80% respectively.

Suggestions

- The Travel Agents should move away from traditional ways of providing products i.e., ticketing and move towards providing various products and services to fulfill the needs of the modern travelers. This will lead to economic, social contract and commercial activities resulting in economic development.
- Since transportation constitutes the most vital and fundamental part of tourist supply, Travel agents should be tailored to fit the need and comfort of varied types of tourist.

- In Manipur, no Travel Agents operating today can be unaware of the swift pace of global change and its impact on every fact of the Tourism industry.
- Travel agencies must contently conduct research to identify what will be required in the competitive environment of the present and future with its intense focus on serving customer needs.
- It is very important to inform the masses regarding the various facilities and services provided by Travel agents through advertisement and promotional campaigns.
- A strategic planning focus is not only essential, but must embody a concept of planning for the future that anticipated change, rather than being based exclusively on historical models.
- Conflict is an unnatural and unforeseen occurrence and comes without a caveat. Losses during times of conflict are sudden and abrupt. Hence, the government should evolve a policy whereby loss could be minimized and compensated.
- Confidence building mechanism should be initiated by the State so that normalcy can be restored and all economic sectors can be revived as soon as possible.
- The State Government should consider the possibility of including tourism projects and particularly those relating to transportation, in the list of projects eligible for loans from their industrial or other corporation, and that where required, they should establish special financial corporation's for tourism.

Conclusion

The study shows that tourism is a fast emerging priority sector of Manipur's economic development. Travel and transport is the backbone of the industry. The study reveals that the development of tourism depends to a large extent on the transport industry. A tourist always thinks of safe, comfortable and convenient mode of transport. And of course, costs and time are also important considerations while deciding on the mode of travel. Here lies the challenge before the transport industry to attract the tourist by offering suitable means of travel as per their requirements in the recent past, there were a good number of tour providers and travel agents in Manipur. With the advent of the Pandemic, many travel agents went out of business as they could not sustain the business. However, a gradual recovery was being made and new travel agents emerged. Another unprecedented conflict hit the state in the month of May and disrupted the entire sectors of economy. Travel agents being hard hit. Loss of income due to reduced demand, cancellations, disruption of internet services, lay-off of employees, law and order breach, fear psychosis and insecurity were the main problems faced. Restoration of normalcy and peace are tantamount to the development and growth of the tourism industry in general and tour operators and travel agents in particular.

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