

Tourism and Ethnic Food Industry of Manipur

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Abstract

Tourism is a multidimensional crucial development parameter of the world economy. The tourism and ethnic food industry of Manipur has a potential in gaining a major place in the South East Asian countries tourism industry. This paper attempts to study the tourism and ethnic food industry of Manipur keeping in mind the Look East Policy of the Indian Government. The data for this paper have been generated both from primary as well as secondary sources. The study finds that the prospect for tourism can be widen up with proper planning and connectivity. It also identifies the various problems and challenges that are to be overcome to buttress the regional connectivity.

Keywords: Tourism, Development, Problems and Challenges.

Introduction

The Look East Policy has emerged as an important foreign policy initiative of India post Cold War period. It was launched in 1991 by the Narasimha Rao Government with the aim in developing political contacts, increasing economic integration and foreign security cooperation with countries of Southeast Asia. The policy marked a shift in India's perspective of the world, with the strategic and economic importance of Southeast Asia to India's national interest being recognised. Under this policy, India sought to create and expand regional markets for trade, investment and industrial development. Keeping these backdrops in mind, the present paper attempts to study the tourism and ethnic food industry of Manipur.

Data base and Research Methodology

Data have been generated both from primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been generated through personal interview with urban citizen, villagers, tourist, and with the marketers of ethnic food industry while secondary source has been derived through journals, books, magazines and newspapers.

Assessment under Look East Policy

Trade and commerce with Southeast and East Asian nation accounts for almost 45 percent of India's foreign trade. Although its effort has met with considerable success, India still trails behind China in the volume of trade and economic ties in the region. India's cultivation of friendly relation with the military regime of Myanmar and its reluctance to critics or pressure over human rights violation and suppression of democracy has evoke much criticism at home and abroad.

Tourism Industry in Manipur

The natural beauty of Manipur is incredible with its enchanting hills, dancing rivers, roaring waterfalls, thick and dark forest, heavy rains during monsoon, innumerable varieties of flora and fauna, countless

species of wild animals and plants, mysterious clouds, melodious folk music, thrilling dances and festivals, variety of many delicious dishes, handlooms and handicraft, etc. for which tourists get attracted to visit Manipur since time immemorial. Again, the rich and unique culture of Manipur is so appealing that tourists get attracted in order to gain knowledge about the rich culture she possesses. The culture is also bonded with the unique joint synchronization of different tribes and this synchronization makes the culture unique in itself. Thus, Manipur can be a major tourist spot in India and the tourism industry is of great importance from economic and societal point of view. This industry can provide a huge amount of revenue to the state government and the unemployment problem of the state can be reduced to a great extent if proper measure for the development of this industry is taken up. The state possesses a great potential for the development of well organised tourism industry.

Ethnic Food – a brief description

The cuisine is a mixture of different indigenous styles, with considerable regional variation. Although it is known for its limited use of spices, the cuisine has a strong flavour from its use of endemic herbs, fruits and vegetables, dried or fermented. Fish is widely eaten. Other non vegetarian items include chickens, ducks, pigeons, snails, silkworms, mutton, pork, beef, etc. The cuisine involves simple cooking processes, mostly steaming, boiling, barbecuing or fermenting. It is marked by abundant use of rice, fish and leafy vegetables. Apart from fresh catch, fermented and dried fish locally called *ngari* is an important ingredient of a majority of dishes. The common vegetables that are indigenous to this region include pumpkins, various kinds of beans, gourds, brinjals, potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, radishes, pea, carrot, turnip, etc. Apart from this, vegetables that are unique and native to this state are yendem (a kind of taro), kolamni (water spinach), thangjing (foxnut), koukha (katniss), yongchak (pitai), sougri (roselle leaves) and so on.

Tourist spot in Manipur

The tourist spot in Manipur are mainly nature based, religious based and historical based. Out of the numerous tourist spot, some of the important tourist spot in Manipur are highlighted below in table 1.

Sl. No.	Destination	Distance from Imphal (Km)	Speciality
1.	Loktak Lake	48	The largest freshwater lake in northeast India. A scenic and mystical lake which resembles a miniature inland sea. This iconic lake is famed for its unique floating swamps, known as <i>Phumdis</i> , and the world’s only floating National park, the Keibul Lamjao.
2.	Shirui Hills	90	A scenic hill-top panorama covered with stretches of vibrant wildflowers and the rare state flower, the Shirui Lily. It is home to some rare birds and wildlife. An enchanting beauty not to be missed. The Shirui lilies bloom in plethora during the month of May and June, adorning the hilltop of the peak.
3.	Dzuko Valley	83	It is a famous spot for adventure lovers and trekkers. Well known for its jaw-dropping landscapes and flora, the valley is also among the best treks in Manipur and attracts a constantly growing number of

			tourists. The valley is splendid from the end of June till September.
4.	Zeilad Lake	180	Situated on a hill, it is a sight to behold. This is one of the lesser-known escapades in the state. Amongst the wildlife sanctuaries of Manipur lies the Zeliad lake, known for being home to a variety of fishes, birds and pythons.
5.	Yang Khullen	135	Yang Khullen village is home to the primitive Zeme tribe. This hamlet is built on a rocky slope where the whole village and its people live together like one big family, where customs and traditions are passed on from one generation to another.
6.	Ema Market	0	A symbol of feminine power- the only “all women” market in this world. This exclusive women market is more than 500 years old and is run by over 3000 “Emas” (mothers).
7.	Moreh	110	A busy town right on the Indo-Myanmar border, it serves as a gateway to Southeast India. A huge commercial hub which is known as a shopper’s paradise.
8.	Khongjom War Memorial	36	This memorial commemorates Major Gen. Paona Brajabashi putting his courage and skill on full display as he beat back the might of the British army in 1891. The foot of the hillock where he laid down his life is honoured by the memorial atop Kheba hill.
9.	Imphal War Cemetery	0	A poignant site dedicated to soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the battle against Japanese forces during World War II. Maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commissions it is the final resting place for 1600 Commonwealth service personnel. Each memorial bears the insignia of each of the fallen soldier in brass plaques.
10.	INA Memorial	48	A place of great significance in India’s struggle for freedom. This memorial honours the noble sacrifices made by Indian soldiers under the leadership of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose. The museum has a collection of priceless photographs, letters, badges of rank and other war memorabilia. A visit to this memorial will give deeper insights on India’s freedom struggle.
11.	Kangla	0	A symbol of Manipur’s glory. Kangla is the most important historical and archaeological site in Manipur. It served as the royal palace since the period of Pakhangba. Numerous holy shrines are spread across the palace and the site is a sacred place for the Meiteis.
12.	Kakching Garden	45	Situated at Uyok Ching, to the south of Kakching Bazar is the Kakching Garden. Developed as a tourist centre this site includes the Mahadev Temple, Ibudhou Pakhang Laiseng, a statue of Hao Sampubi, park and restaurants. The rose garden here is a feast to behold.
13.	Khangkui Cave	90	Enclosed by different patterns of stalagmites and stalactites, caving in here through the depth and in darkness is an enthralling experience for tourists, archaeologists, and researchers from all around the globe.

Source: manipur-tourism.gov.in

Discussion

Interview with the tourist revealed that, they are greatly pleased with the unique and the attractive natural beauty of Manipur and the ethnic delicious food. But majority of the tourist are not satisfied with the transport and communication facilities available in Manipur. Another view as propounded by the tourist, the requirement of other services like hotel, banking, medical, etc. are still in rudimentary stage and needs to be developed. They are also of the opinion that, there is definite potentiality for the development of well organised and competing tourism industry in Manipur.

On the other hand, during an interaction with the service provider of the tourism industry like hotel owners, private commercial vehicle owners, tourist guides, etc. revealed that they are getting significant response from the tourist during pre-Covid and are satisfied with their profession. However, they also corroborate with the tourist with regards to poor transport, communication and other basic infrastructure of Manipur. Another survey was done with the public and found that they want proper and well organised development of tourism industry in Manipur.

Suggestions

1. The value of tourism industry and ethnic food industry should be realized both by the government and public. The state is incredible in her natural and cultural beauty.
2. The poor transport and communication and other basic infrastructure should be properly developed. There is a need for
3. For the development of ethnic food industry, proper storage and distribution services should be developed.
4. There should be wide publicity about ethnic food of Manipur and modernised marketing system should be developed.

Conclusion

Economic development can be attained only by harnessing the resources of the economy to its maximum extent. The initiation of the Look East Policy has provided the North East Region and particularly to Manipur many opportunities to exploit its vast unexplored natural resources and the natural beauty of the state. Since the state has limited scope in developing large scale industries, the state can focus on the development of tourism from its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. The state can also focus on the development of ethnic food industry from the diverse food habits practices in the state from the diverse community.

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