TOURISM AS A MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD: A CASE STUDY OF SENDRA, LOKTAK LAKE, MANIPUR

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The Working Paper Series is being published by the Centre for Study of Social Exclusion & Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP), Manipur University (MU), as a monthly issue since February 2015. Relevant themes are carefully chosen and academicians, researchers, and intellectuals are invited to contribute their works or other experiences in the field of poverty, deprivation, marginalisation, social exclusion and inclusive policies. The Working Paper also makes an enquiry into the causes how the present social structure generates different forms of social exclusion, deprivation and discrimination of individual, groups and people over the years. The papers also serve as a forum to discuss new ideas and concepts analyse within the framework of social exclusion. The marginalised section of the society are continuously facing much difficulty in terms of depression, stress and anxiety, impatience, etc., in addition to their disproportionate burden of lack of income, impoverishment and lack of essential infrastructure among the socially excluded groups,. These are very important issues which need to be addressed as early as possible. Against this background of issues, papers published in this Working Paper Series will be able to provide key inputs government in policy formulation based on larger social, economic and political perspective. The Working Paper Series also serves a yardstick in which issues of poverty, unemployment, deprivation and marginalisation of individual, groups and people may be analysed in different forms.

I am very happy to present this paper entitled "Tourism as a means of Livelihood: A Case Study of Sendra, Loktak Lake, Manipur", by Henry Dangmei. The study argues that tourism serves as a very essential means of livelihood for the people living in and around Sendra, Loktak Lake. Loktak Lake, which is one of the largest freshwater lakes in the North Eastern States of India, is located in Bishnupur District. The famous Keibul Lamjao National Park, the only floating park in the world which is the only habitat for the gravely threatened species known as Sangai (Cervus eldi eldi), a brown antlered deer and the only of its kind in the world is located on an Island inside the Loktak Lake. The paper suggests that there is ample scope for the local people to reap mammoth benefit from the tourism industry while at the same time protecting the environment and Local community.

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The Working Paper (WP) published by the Centre for Study of Social Exclusion & Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP), Manipur University is a refereed publication. The WP is a forum for stimulating discussion, dissemination of research findings and empirical information in the broad areas of social science research. Papers submitted to it should make either a methodological contribution in social science research or a contribution to policy discussion.

The WP aimed at encouraging inter-disciplinary research and analysis to enrich literature of social exclusion and for deeper understanding of the dynamics of social exclusion for effective inclusive policy making. We welcome policy makers, Government functionaries, academicians, researchers, stakeholders and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to contribute their invaluable work for consideration as WP for wider dissemination.

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Tourism as a means of Livelihood: A case study of Sendra, Loktak Lake, Manipur

Henry Dangmei

Abstract

Tourism serves as a very essential means of livelihood for the people living in and around Sendra, Loktak Lake. Loktak Lake - One of the largest freshwater Lakes in the North Eastern states of India, is located at Moirang Sub - Division of Bishnupur District, Manipur. The famous Keibul Lamjao National Park, the only floating park in the world which is the only habitat for the gravely threatened species known as Sangai (Cervus eldi eldi), a brown antlered deer and the only of its kind in the world is located on an Island inside the Loktak Lake. Sendra is an island hillock where visitors can get a bird eye view of the island and also the floating masses of water hyacinth and phumdis. Hundreds of tourists visit Sendra every day. The Local community depends on these tourists for their livelihood. However, there are limited activities and services available for the tourists. The present study focuses on the problems and prospects of the tourism industry as a means of livelihood with the view to develop the local community economically. Loktak Lake attracts lots of tourists throughout the year. There is ample scope for the local people to reap mammoth benefit from the tourism industry while at the same time protecting the environment and Local community. Though, this is not an exhaust study, this article covers the benefits of tourism industry to the local community, the services and facilities available as tourist destination and the problems besetting the tourists and the local people.

Keywords

Livelihood, Tourism, Sendra, Economy, Development

Introduction

Tourism is very common to people almost everywhere. Anthropologists have had a hard time in defining the meaning of the term “tourism”. Essentially, a tourist is “a temporarily a leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change” (Smith 1989, p.2). Scholars are trying to find the motives, Social Profiles and the activities these tourists visit for leisure over time. These questions can be relevantly asked when it comes to tourism “Who are tourists? Where have they travelled and what are they seeking?” (Pearce. 1982). According to World Tourism Organization (WTO), “A tourist is a person who travels
to places other than his usual place of residence and stays at hotels or other accommodation or establishment run on a commercial basis for a duration of not less than 24 hours and not more than 6 months at a time for pleasure, pilgrimage, study, health, meeting and business.” It has become a major part of economics, social and physical development. It comprises the complete system of nature, the universe, the space and the galaxy, which includes the man and his activities, wildlife, mountains and valleys, rivers and waterfalls, forests and trees, social and cultural system, flora and fauna, and the seas (Satyanarayana & Reddy, 2006). Tourism is mainly economics in nature, which directly relates to the entry, stay and movement of non local people from the same region or country or foreigners, inside and outside the country, region or city. According to MacCannel, “modernity brings in a feeling of alienation, fragmentation and superficiality and the search for authentic experiences is a reflection of modern tourists”. “The desire to reconnect with pristine, primitive and natural untouched by modernity is been the motives of tourists” (Cohen 1988, p.374). Tourism also serves as a unifying force in modern society as the frequent contact between strangers brings them a sense nearness to one another. Graburn (1989) characterized tourism as a kind of ritual process that reflects society’s deeply held values about health, freedom, nature and self improvement.

Turner & Turner (1978) theorized that “leisure travel is indeed like a pilgrimage, one that can lift people out of the ordinary structures of their everyday lives. Tourism can offer freedom from work and their obligatory time, an escape from traditional social roles, and the liberty to spend one’s time however one chooses”. In other studies related to the origin of tourism, tourism is conceptualized as a super structural phenomenon, dependent on a range of material factors (Nash, 1996). The particular social, political and environmental conditions in any given society give rise to certain types of leisure travel or particular types of tourists.

Tourism is one of the world’s largest industries and generates national income as well as jobs opportunities for many especially for local population. With the advancement of transport systems and information technology, people could reach any where even to the remotest areas helping immensely in the growth of tourism sector. On the one side there are people seeking for an extraordinary unique experiences by visiting real remote areas. So, there are some who would risk their life to go to some unknown places or not common to other people even in the absence of transport facility and this makes them even more adventurous.

India possesses huge potential in developing tourism as one of the tertiary
sectors with high percentage of untapped natural resources as well as human expertise. However, its contribution to national income is dismally small with 2.5%. The country accounts for only 0.38% in the world tourism market (WTO, 2003) in spite of constituting 15% of world population with 2.5% of the topography of the world (Tourism Policy of Rajasthan, 2002). These figures reflect the very low level of tourism development in India.

It is worth mentioning that the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) predicted that India has the potential to become world number one tourist destination with a demand growth of 10.1% per annum (WTO, 2000). World Tourism Organization (2000) has identified India as an attractive destination with ample promises for tourism development. Tourism development has a multiplier effect. Income and employment generation are very important elements for a developing country like India. Tourism by virtue has a high capacity for labor absorption with varying levels for capital requirement. Tourism development is mainly designed to attract ‘common man approach’ of preserving natural and cultural heritages, maintenance of biodiversity and long term ecological sustenance.

Tourism is a means of economic development for any country or region. The North Eastern States comprising of eight states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim. It covers an area of 2.62 lakh sq. km accounting for 7.9 percent of the total land space of the country with a population of 3.8 per cent of the country’s total population (NEDFi, quarterly data bank 2005). These states of the region have ample scope for development of tourism industry, and Manipur is no exception. However, tourism development in sustainable manner is the need of the day. With more attention on ecotourism, a modified form of tourism that keeps in mind the protection of nature, it is felt that tourism industry must attempt the sustainable socio-economic development of the localities. Tourism is a service oriented industry and is emerging as a revolutionizing phenomenon in the development process of a nation. Tourism is a composite product of transport, accommodation, catering, natural resources, entertainments and other facilities such as shops, travel agents and tour guides.

Tourism is now seen as the alternative strategy for economic development of the North Eastern States with its capacity to provide large scale employment without differentiating skilled and unskilled laborers, jobs creation and eliminate poverty in the industrially backward regions. Statistics portrays that the region has great resources potential. The region is bountifully endowed with biodiversity, hydro-power potential, oil and
gas, coal, limestone and forest wealth (Kangki 2007). The region also has wide variety of crops, spices, fruits and vegetables, flowers and herbs, which could be processed and exported to the other parts of the country and worldwide. Its natural beauty, serenity and rich flora and fauna invite trekking and tourism in the region.

This article is based on the field study at Sendra, Loktak Lake as part of the dissertation required during the Master Programe of the author. The data were collected in July, 2014. The information provided here is not an exhaustive one and is subject to correction.

**Tourism as a means of Livelihood**

The study finds that tourism sector plays an essential role towards the development of local community. It is the major source of income through the various services they provide to the tourists. The main occupation of the local people are fishing, boating and selling fishes among other occupations. All these occupations are revolving around tourists directly or indirectly. When there are no tourists the probability for making money is very low and there are very less alternatives for their income which in turn makes their livelihood hard.

Based on the sample survey, 91.7 per cent of the 60 respondents said that the local people were benefitted from tourists visiting Sendra and the local population wants more tourists to visit Sendra. When the respondents were asked whether they like more tourists to visit Sendra, cent per cent were of the view that there should be as many tourists as possible. This would facilitate the service providers to sell their commodities or services. In doing so, the local people would earn more income and would not give a way to divert to another livelihood options. They would be contented with the type of livelihood option available to them. Though the condition of the tourist spot is not very well equipped the local people still find customers. This way the local people depend on tourists.

Therefore, we can assume that tourism is one of the important sources of income for the local people especially at Sendra through various services like Tourist guides, Boating, Fishing, Shopkeepers, Drivers, Fish vendors etc. The sample survey revealed that majority of the men folk are fishermen. This is because Sendra is surrounded by Lake and fishing is the easiest means of occupation and fish curry is also one of the favorite dishes among Manipuri.
Tourism and employment

Tourism is a sector where common people could get involved in different activities to earn for their livelihood. Anybody who is sound in health regardless of their education or status has a platform to work and earn for their survival. Though there is no permanent assurance from the government, the local people are making their livelihood even after 80 years of age or as long as they are capable to work. The study finds that even old people are fishing and selling fishes to support for themselves and their families. It is also observed that people were not educated and skilled enough. Out of the 60 respondents, 55 per cent are people below matriculation and some of them did not have education at all. There are 28.3 per cent who had studied till standard twelve and only 16.7 per cent are graduated and these people are working as classic hotel staffs.

Majority of the respondents (63.3 per cent of the 60 respondents) agreed that tourism at Sendra reduces unemployment in the community though it is slow. This is because Sendra lacks many of the amenities as tourist spot. There are limited activities available to tourists. The place is failed to develop the tourist spot in spite of the many tourists visiting every day due to various factors like the apathy of the government, lack people’s innovation to create something new, etc. There is a potential to develop as a favorite tourist destination to benefit the local people and attract more tourists. Tourism is an alternative form of employment for the common people at Sendra. All community people could participate to earn their livelihood. Most of the women are fish vendors, shop keepers etc. while most men are fishermen and engaged in boating activities. Some of them owned boats which can carry 5-6 people in one go. Their occupation is to take tourists on boat or look after the boat while the tourists row away for a fixed time. There are differences in the areas of people participation however both men and women could be involved without bias and any age.

The study revealed that the entire community is centered on tourism for their livelihood and they are benefitted from tourists without much investment with 91.7 percent of the sample survey affirmed to be true. This means that tourism sector forms the backbone of the local’s economy at Sendra. The tourism department should take interest improving the infrastructure for a holistic development of Sendra and at the same time local community should be more innovative to create interesting facilities to attract more tourists so that the local people gains more employment and thus enjoy a higher standard of living.
Local People and Tourists

From the empirical point based on the sample survey, it is found that tourists visit Sendra all through the year, though there is peak season when maximum number of tourists visited the place. So on an average, 200-400 tourists visit every day while it goes up to 400-600 tourists every day during the peak season. Some of the respondents have a view that during the peak seasons, the number of tourists visiting Sendra rises to thousands.

Since Sendra is a tourist spot, without visitors the local business goes slow and income level of the locals drops. The other activities like boating, shops and fish selling are severely affected as there are little or no people to buy their products. The respondents said that they are the main source of income for the locals. Without tourists the local people will not be able to earn much and face hardships in supporting their families. And when there are less tourists visiting the place they earn little or not at all. The more the tourists visit Sendra the more the local people earn.

Tourists come to Sendra for various purposes. However, most of the tourists came for adventure, family vacation, recreation, business among other things. So, the service provider, the local people in this case, should please the tourists by making available the tourists want. There should be enough space and environment for adventure, family vacation, recreation etc. The beautiful scenery of the Loktak Lake, boating in the calm and serene water creates inexhaustible memories in the life of the tourists. People who are living nearby Sendra come often to the place to enjoy the scenery and the serenity of Sendra and its surroundings. The gracious nature of the local people will go a long way in creating memories for tourists.

Services and facilities at Sendra

From the study, it is apparent that there are limited services available for tourists visiting Sendra. No doubt, tourists coming to Sendra will enjoy the scenic beauty of the Loktak Lake and its surroundings, the mushrooming hills inside the lake. Tourists will have the opportunity to enjoy these beautiful sceneries. One of the interesting findings is that any tourist visiting Sendra will not go back without rowing a local made boat. Boating is the most favorite activity that one can experience at the Sendra tourist spot. There are different types of boats like motor boat and rowing boat, beautifully designed for tourists to row in the Loktak Lake.

Most of the women make their living by selling fresh and dry fishes of different types to tourists. Tourists would go for a boat ride and the last thing to do for them is to buy the local products before heading back home.
Sendra is located 5 km away from the Moirang town which is 48 km away from Imphal. The tourists are quite diverse from different professions. There are domestic tourists, national tourists and international tourists. Many of the tourists come by hiring buses, taxi or local transportation and some of them by their own vehicles. However, it is different in the case of the local community. Since most of the respondents are from Sendra, some came on foot, some other came by auto – rickshaw to save time and to carry goods and other commodities. While some travel across lake by boating carrying people and other commodities. Majority of the respondents claim that the transporting system has become improved while some claim to be worse than few years ago and want it to be improved. While it is observed that the road condition is good though not comparable with other good roads. From the data it is found that the respondents want to improve the transport system by repairing the worn out roads and also to construct new roads to better connect with the other neighboring villages. The responsible authority should take steps to improve the transportation for better commutation of both tourists and the local community. Some of the respondents are also of the view that there are some small villages in the inland waters which do not have proper roads. For those places the boating services could be improved for their better connectivity and transportations of goods and village products. Majority of the respondents are also of the view that there are no adequate services and facilities for tourists visiting Sendra while the needed facilities and services could be made available if the people are creative and have the willingness to serve the tourists.

There are various changes at Sendra with the coming of the tourists. The respondents have many varied views on how the place is affected. 30 per cent of the respondents said that with the coming of tourists, the place is well maintained and kept clean to make tourists’ visits more favorable. Whereas 3.3 per cent said that they litter the place, 28.3 per cent of the 60 respondents said that the condition of the roads is deteriorated and nobody takes responsibility to repair while 20 per cent said that there is improvement in the road development. One of the interesting findings is that they could afford education for their children through the money they earned.

To make a better place for tourists, Sendra should be properly maintained, revive the ecology of the Lake and Sendra hills which is seen degrading day by day. There should be proper mode of transportation from main town Moirang to Sendra.
Challenges of the Community People

The data collected from the respondents showed that majority of them were uneducated. There are few people who have finished their graduation and these people are working as classic hotel staffs. Most women are illiterate and their jobs are only to sell fresh and dry fishes to tourists. In common, the majority of the residents are illiterate and they are unable to introduce something new to attract tourist which is why there are only limited activities for tourists. Many activities which tourists want like cultural programmes, traditional dress and articles display are not available due to their ignorance. So, it can be assumed that if the local people are educated different activities could be organized and they would have double profit.

Some of the other challenges are that the community people are not able to communicate with the tourists when tourists are coming from different states and do not speak Manipuri. Communication which is essential for building people’s love and trust is lacking and there is a hiatus between the local people and the tourists.

Suggestions to make a better tourist spot

1. The government or the Tourism department of the state should take responsibility for the development of the tourist spot at Sendra, providing them the necessary infrastructures, support so that the local community may get maximum benefit from tourism industry.

2. It should make the tourists spot a Community Based Tourism in which local residents invite tourists to their community with a provision to stay in their homes, experience the local tradition, culture, etc. In this way the local people can also make more earnings from the tourists.

3. To design and implement participatory measures so that more employment opportunities will be available for the local people and also a policy to conserve nature, built and cultural heritage, especially the ecosystems of the locality.

4. To properly maintain the place in terms of health, sanitation and hygiene and improve communication services with better network and internet connection; improve transportation facilities

5. To provide additional facilities like photography, Open theater, cultural programmes, traditional dress and articles, Boating competition etc.

6. Above all the love, warmth and care of the local community will go a long way in creating an inexhaustible memory in the minds of the tourists.
Conclusion

Tourism is a means of economic development for the people of Sendra. Sendra is an island hillock where visitors can get a bird eye view of the lake and it is an attraction to tourists. Sendra as tourist spot offers a huge benefit to the local community. Many tourists visit Sendra every day and the more tourists come, the better for the community people to earn for their livelihood. Sendra offers many exciting sites and experiences. Notable among them are fishing and boating at the Loktak Lake. Through these activities, the local community people earn huge amount of money. Most of the women folks sell fishes, dry fishes and other eatables to tourists. There is a huge potential of tourism growth and development at Sendra and the tourism department should take more responsibility and support the community with infrastructures and skills so that the community people may benefit to the maximum from tourism industry.

Tourism brings in large amount of income into local economy in the form of payment for goods and services needed by tourists. It generates opportunities for employment in the service sector for both skilled and unskilled and improves the living standard of the people living in and around sendra at Loktak Lake. Tourism is seen as growth engine and employment generator. The tourism sector has given the local people enough opportunities to make their living by engaging with the tourists. Tourism sector plays a vital role in the development of the local communities when greater support is given and is seen as the move to sustainable development which will not just about revenue but also how the local people maintain their own lifestyles at the same time. One of the most suggested form of tourism is the Community-Based tourism where the emphasis is on local management and operation.

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ABOUT THE CENTRE

Social exclusion is a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live. The concept of social exclusion is of recent origin and many of our socio-political problems are increasingly attributed to social exclusion in the broadest sense. Our constitution guarantees equality to all citizens yet we are not above different forms of discrimination and inequality. The most elementary pre requisite for the building of a democratic society is overcoming exclusion. Acknowledging that overcoming all forms of exclusion and discrimination is not only a pre requisite for a strong and vibrant democratic state but obligatory for a plural state like India, that the University Grant Commission have approved the establishment of Centres in universities for study of social exclusion and inclusive policy in 2006. The centre for the study of social exclusion and inclusive policy was established in Manipur University by the University Grants Commission on 17th May 2008. The main objectives of the Centre are: to conceptualize and understand the nature and dynamics of social exclusion and suggest for inclusive policies; to study the extent of social exclusion; to develop and understand the nature of discrimination at an empirical level; to make comparative study of exclusion and inclusion in the state vis-à-vis India; to suggest and recommend in the formulation of policies for uplifting the rights of excluded groups and hence eradicating the problem of exclusion and discrimination.

The centre aims at building an egalitarian Manipuri society through dynamic, innovative, inclusive modes of proven quality education and preserving the cultural diversity while promoting communal harmony at all levels. The centre visualises social change by creating a socio-economic and politico-legal justice and sense of pride and dignity in every citizen through inclusive means. It also aims at liberating the marginalised section of the society by redeeming them from their misery and tragic sufferings and ultimately to include them in the mainstream socio-economic and political processes and development by way of inclusive approach.
Vision

Our vision is to develop the appropriate categories in terms of which social exclusion can be best understood and minimised to the extent possible by making it as transient as possible.

Mission

• To study the many dimensions of social exclusion in the region
• To keep a tab on dynamics of social exclusion in the region
• To provide a forum where experiences can be shared
• To disseminate the finding of such study and experience sharing among stakeholders

Objectives

• The main objectives of the Centre are:
  1. The main objectives of the Centre is to study the plans and policies related to the disadvantaged groups and to analyzes and review the studied literatures regarding social exclusion and discrimination in India and especially Manipur and other North Eastern states of India.
  2. It also aims to create awareness at every levels and areas so as to rmpower the marginalized section of the society.
  3. To develop distinctive approach to social exclusion
  4. To create index and indicators on social exclusion
  5. To critically evaluate the existing public policies vis-à-vis social exclusion
  6. To Develop alternative model for future public policy initiatives.
  7. To conceptualise discrimination, exclusion and inclusion based on ethnicity, religion, age, race, gender, physical and psychological abilities in the Indian context
  8. To formulate policy guidelines for protecting the rights of socially excluded groups and suggesting ways of eradicating the problem of exclusion and discrimination.
  9. Developing an understanding of discrimination at an empirical level.
  10. To eliminate social exclusion in all forms from the society
  11. To spread the feeling of oneness of human kind.
  12. To develop an understanding of the nature and dimensions of discrimination and exclusion.