

Chapter 27

Tourists Income and Its Implications on Spending Pattern: An Empirical Analysis for Tourism Market Infrastructure of Sikkim

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ABSTRACT

The alpine Indian State Sikkim represents nearly hundreds of Himalayan hill stations in India and other South Asian countries. Tourism is the most important phenomenon in almost all alpine states where leisure and recreations are predominating. Most of those destinations are also leaning more towards sustainable tourism practices as these are in a continuum starting from high intensity mass tourism to less intensity adventure and special interest tourism. The present article is a study clarifying the degree of performance and sustainability of tourist spending with a wider dimension of income and its relationship with some core tourism variables viz. the duration of stay, purpose of visit, optional excursion, group numbers and future visit.

INTRODUCTION

Sikkim is a small hilly state, bounded by vast stretches of Tibetan plateau in the North, the Chumbi Valley and the kingdom Bhutan in the East, the kingdom of Nepal in the west and Darjeeling (West Bengal) in the South. Its latitude is 27°30' north and the longitude is 88°30' east. Sikkim is famous for scenic valleys forest, snow clad mountains, magnificent Buddhist culture and heritage and peace-loving people. Though small, the environmental, social and cultural diversities are not so. Some scholars believe that the word Sikkim involves Nepalese dialect and it refers to a 'now place' or the term has been derived from a Sanskrit word which means a 'mountain crest'. The people of Sikkim have ethnic diversity. The

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Bhutias came from Tibet, the Lepchas were the aboriginal community and the Nepalese came from Nepal. When Sikkim was an independent state it faced many invasion by its neighboring countries and the king took the help of the British India and, later, gifted some of its region including Darjeeling to the British India. Now this 22nd Indian State (joined Indian Union in 1975) has Over 81% of the total geographical area under the administrative managerial control of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India. Over 45% of the total geographical area of the state is under tree cover and nearly 34% of the geographical area is set aside as protected area network in the form of national park and wildlife sanctuary. The basic statistics of flora and fauna are given in Table 1.

The maximum summer temperature 28°C and minimum winter temperature is 0°C. Sikkim has a variety of mineral resources including coal, limestone, iron ore, graphite, pyrite etc. The temperature in the bottom of the valleys (up to 600 meters) situated at lower elevations, particularly during summers, are similar to the monsoon type of climate. The temperature starts falling between 600 meters to 2000metres above sea level enjoys cool temperature climatic conditions and further up (2000 meters to 3000metres) it is cold temperate climate. Arctic type of climate is found above 5000 meters. Sikkim is ecologically a fragile region. The state has the responsibility to conserve its rich biological diversity that includes coexistence and protection of over 5000 species of angiosperm (one third of the total national angiosperms). Again this place has multi-ethnic communities. So the need for ecological, cultural and social diversities is not only essential but imperative as well. The people of Sikkim have ethnic diversity. The Bhutias came from Tibet, the Lepchas were the aboriginal community and the Nepalese came from Nepal. When Sikkim was an independent state it faced many invasion by its neighboring countries and the king took the help of British India and, later, gifted some of its region including Darjeeling to the British Indian Govt. Now this 22nd Indian State (joined Indian Union in 1975) has over 81% of the total geographical area under the administrative managerial control of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India. Over 45% of the total geographical area of the state is under tree cover and nearly 34% of the geographical area is set aside as protected area network in the form of national park and wildlife sanctuary. After becoming 25th state of the Union Government of India in the year 1975, the rapid development activities ushered in a new era of tourism in Sikkim. Increased accessibility by roadways and air transport, rapid socio-economic development, competitive advantage both from the

Table 1. Flora and fauna of Sikkim

Mammals	144 species
Birds	550 species
Butterflies and Moths	650 species
Reptiles	33 species
Frogs	16 species
Orchids	550 species,95 Genera
Rhododendrons	36 species, 45 varieties
Flowering Plants	Over 4000 species
Ferns and Allies	300 species
Conifers	9 species
Medicinal plants	Not enumerated

Source: Economic Survey 2006-07, Govt. of Sikkim

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