



Marketing strategies for developing tourism sector in Bihar: New initiatives, new hopes

Kumar Arastu¹, Dr. Indra Deo Prasad²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Commerce and Business Administration, L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga, Bihar, India

² Associate Professor, Department of Commerce and Business Administration, L. N. Mithila University, Darbhanga, Bihar, India

Abstract

The tourism sector has enormous potential to lead the socio-economic transformation of Bihar. The State Government has taken several measures towards all round development of the sector. The knowledge of factors necessitating the alignment of tourism with marketing is desired. It has been well recognised that it is the high end tourists which should be focused and all out efforts are required to bring high-end tourists in more numbers. Therefore, the high-end tourists, both domestic and foreign, should be targeted and marketing strategies should be adopted accordingly.

Keywords: Bihar, destination awareness, image building, marketing strategies, tourism sector

Introduction

In a true sense, the term 'Tourism' is a phenomenon of the post-second world war period when the word 'Tour' entered into the common usage, especially in the English language. Though we find its genesis to 'Grand Tour' dating from 1748 AD which was meant exclusively for the affluent sections of the society. The term 'Tourist' is said to be derived from the word 'Tour' which is meant to a journey at which one returns to the starting point; a circular trip usually for business, pleasure or education. This makes it clear that the motive behind a travel may be diverse which creates different market needs.

Tourism denotes the temporary short term movement of people to destination outside the place where they normally live and work and their activities during their stay at these destinations. It is a pleasure activity in which money earned in one's normal domicile is spent in the places visited. An important question in the tourism is concerned with the motivational forces influencing the travelling decisions of potential tourists. There are a good number of motivators influencing our travelling decision, e.g., physical motivators, cultural motivators, inter-personal motivators and status and prestige motivators. The instrumentality of all these motivators becomes effective in activating the transformation process.

Tourism marketing is an integrated effort to satisfy tourists by making available to them the best possible services. It is a device to transform the potential tourists into actual tourists. It is the safest way to generate demand and expand market. It is also supposed to be an effort to make possible harmony between the social interests and interactions of tourist organisations. It is an approach to promote business and to feed the organisations necessary information for framing and revamping the marketing decisions. Accordingly, an overall marketing strategy for development of tourism sector in Bihar is required to untap the potentialities of the sector.

Tourism in Bihar: Present status

Tourism and its allied sectors (travel and hospitality) have emerged as a key driver of income and employment growth

in India. As per the Economic Impact Report 2020 of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), travel and tourism accounts for 6.8 percent of India's GDP, placing India at the 10th position among 185 countries, in terms of the sector's contribution to country's GDP. Of this, the domestic spending accounts for 83 percent. Further, travel and tourism created employment for 3.98 crore people in India.

The Department of Tourism of the State Government is responsible for promoting tourism in Bihar; Bihar is one of the most favoured tourist destinations in India, for both domestic and international tourists. The state's tourist destinations encompass a wealth of tourism products across a range of themes, like heritage, culture, ecotourism. Spiritual, and adventure. To promote tourism, various tourist circuits have been identified and developed in the state. Among these, the important circuits are Buddhist Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Sufi Circuit, Jain Circuit, Guru Circuit, Shiv/Kanwariya Circuit and Gandhi Circuit.

The tourism sector has enormous potential to lead the socio-economic transformation of Bihar. The State Government has taken several measures towards all round development of the sector. The decision to develop prominent sites as 'Iconic Destinations' is a significant effort in this direction; it will serve as a replicable model for other major tourist destinations. Further, emphasis on strengthening infrastructure and rural development will have a multiplier impact on the tourism sector. The capital-intensive infrastructural projects, like ropeways, will make the hilly region of the state accessible to tourists. Schemes such as Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD), Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY), Swadesh Darshan and others are envisaged to develop ample infrastructure for theme-based circuits and improve linkages between major tourist destinations.

Bihar Tourism has adopted a comprehensive marketing strategy to attract higher footfalls and position Bihar as a most preferred destination for both domestic and international tourists. To make Bihar a top destination for tourists and leverage tourism's potential for socio-economic growth, following strategies have been adopted:

1. Tourism marketing and promotion,
2. Development of tourism infrastructure,
3. Development of tourism products,
4. Skill development.
5. Ensuring tourist comfort and safety,
6. Making tourism everyone's business,
7. Sustainable tourism,
8. IT and digital initiatives, and
9. Investment facilitation.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused a once-in-a-century global crisis in 2020 and 2021 that has severely impacted global travel and tourism. However, in the coming years, in course of an up-turn in tourism, the domestic tourism is expected to recover faster than international tourism. Through wider efforts to promote tourism and higher allocation for this sector, the focus of the State Government is to create a brand Bihar' in the tourism sector.

Till 2019, the footfall has steadily increased year after year in Bihar (Table 1). However, there was a sharp decline in the tourist arrival in 2020. The primary reason for the lower tourist turn out can be attributed to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and frequent closing down of international borders and restricted movements within the country.

Table 1: Number of domestic & Foreign tourist arrivals

Year	Number of Tourists (in lakh)		
	Domestic	Foreign	Total
2012	214.5	10.9	225.4
2013	215.9	7.7	223.5
2014	225.4	8.3	233.7
2015	280.3	9.2	289.5
2016	285.2	10.1	295.3
2017	324.1	10.8	335.0
2018	336.2	10.9	347.1
2019	339.9	10.9	350.8
2020	56.4	3.0	59.5

Source: Department of Tourism, GoB

In 2020-21, a sum of Rs 14527.10 lakh was sanctioned for the development of various tourism projects in Bihar, followed by a sanction of Rs. 2025.34 lakh in 2021-22. The trend of approved budget and actual expenditure of the Department of Tourism in Bihar is presented in Table 4.30. As is evident from the table, the utilisation of fund has been high in earlier years, but has dropped to 19.6 percent in 2020-21, which is a consequence of the pandemic. Some of the major developments in the tourism sector in recent years are:

- Modernization and upgradation of Tourist Information Center (2021-22) in Bodhgaya at an estimated cost Rs 95.61 lakh
- To construct State Guest House in Bodh Gaya, costing Rs. 13615.00 lakh
- Beautification and upgradation work at Rajju Marg and surrounding areas near Rajgir, costing Rs. 1638.73 lakh
- Upgradation of Koteswar Dham Temple in Gaya district at an estimated cost of Rs 786.00 lakh
- Development of tourist amenities and landscaping at seven spots in Purnea district, costing Rs 912.10 lakh.

Table 2: Expenditure on department of tourism (2014-15 to 2020-21)

Year	Approved Budget (Rs. Crore)	Expenditure (Rs. Crore)	Expenditure as Percentage of Budget
2014-15	118.1	87.4	74.0
2015-16	66.0	65.4	99.0
2016-17	94.5	86.4	91.5
2017-18	91.0	76.7	84.3
2018-19	84.6	47.2	55.8
2019-20	275.0	82.8	30.1
2020-21	357.9	70.20	19.6

Source: Department of tourism, GoB

In 2020-21 and 2021-22, the following projects have been planned to promote tourism in Bihar under Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Prime Minister's Special Package:

- **Development of jain circuit:** Under this scheme of Prime Minister Special Package, a sum of Rs 5238.95 lakh (revised to Rs 3719.22 lakh) has been sanctioned for the development of Jain Circuit in Bihar. Till date, Rs 2363.14 lakh has already been spent and the construction work is under progress.
- **Development of kanwariya circuit:** The sanctioned amount for the Kanwariya Circuit under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme was Rs 5235.00 lakh. Under this scheme, Rs 3976.01 lakh has already been spent till date and the construction work is almost completed.
- **Development of mandar hill and ang pradesh:** Of the sanctioned amount of Rs 4752.88 lakh for the development of Mandar Hill and Ang Pradesh, Rs. 3334.57 lakh has already been spent. The construction work is under progress.
- **Development of gandhi circuit:** For the development of Gandhi Circuit in Bihar, a sum of Rs 4465.02 lakh has been sanctioned. The construction work is in progress and the State Government has already spent Rs 2232.51 lakh for this scheme.

Finally, one may note that the State Government is developing a Cultural Center in Bodh Gaya to promote the city as a popular destination for meeting, conference and other events related to tourism. For this project, the State Government has sanctioned a sum of Rs 14514.00 lakh. The Building Construction Department of the State Government is the nodal agency for the construction of the Center. The work is under progress, and Rs 7834.16 lakh has already been spent till date.

Alignment of tourism with marketing

Tourism, of late, has emerged as an important sector of the industrial economy. It is an economic bonanza which may contribute a lot to the development processes, if the managerial decisions are creative, innovative, sensitive and effective. This in a natural way necessitates excellence which can't be possible without professionalism, especially when the services are of perishable nature. Our success rate is, of course, governed by excellence. The marketing experts feel that to excel competition, it is impact generating that the organisations engaged in promoting tourism make efforts to activate the measures found effective in transforming the

potential tourists into actual tourists. This would help organisations in paving ways for their prosperity and leadership. The developed countries have been found successful in initiating qualitative improvements, especially with the help of the innovative marketing practices. In a few cases, they have also preferred aggressive marketing practices. The developing countries like ours should adduce examples from them and should make possible alignment of tourism with marketing.

The application of marketing principles in the tourism industry is meant formulation of marketing mix on the basis of users' behavioural profile. The marketers are here required to study the level of expectations of the actual and prospective tourists. On the basis of their changing needs and requirements, hopes and aspirations and taste preferences: the marketing decisions are to be made. The offering of services needs an intensive care, specially to stimulate the buying decisions. The marketing strategies simplify the task of stimulating demand since the services are generated in the face of users' choice. The management of marketing information helps a marketer in coming to a right conclusion. The tourist organisations identify the market potential of a particular segment and revamp the strategies accordingly. The strengthening of research work is found significant to draw the conclusion. On the basis of information, the sub-mixes are formulated or reformulated. Hence, the need of the hour is to streamline the managerial decisions. Here, the responsibility of managing the marketing decisions is found on the marketing managers. The strategic marketing decisions would also be made effective with the help of a marketing manager.

In the marketing of tourism services, an important question is often raised regarding the justification for the alignment of services with marketing. The managerial decisions are not found to be effective in absence of time honoured implementation of the marketing principles. This is due to the fact that tourism marketing is an integrated effort to satisfy tourists. Of late, customer or user satisfaction is found to be a focal point of the marketing decisions since the marketing practices help in offering of right services, to the right persons, in right time. This simplifies the process of transforming the potential tourists into actual tourists which expands market and the tourist organisations find it convenient to take the benefit of scale or size. In the marketing processes, the stimulation of demand is an important factor. The marketing practices simplify the task of creating the impulse using which persuades the potential tourists and the generation of demand gains a momentum. Besides, one important factor is related to the establishment of harmony between the social and commercial considerations. In a true sense, the fair blending of providers' and users' interests simplifies the task of tourist organisations. Not only this, the fair blending also paves ways for the social tourism which in a majority of the developing countries has been found neglected. Thus, the tourist organisations only not succeed in generating profits but also make possible sub serving of social interests. In the present day world, the competition is found at peak. This makes it essential that promotional strategies are innovated. The strategies or policies found sensitive today become insignificant for tomorrow. By strengthening the promotional devices, the marketing information system is managed properly which helps an organisation in revamping

the decisions. It is due to the creative promotional devices that the users always feel satisfied and evince interests in travelling the same place again-and-again. This raises the tourists' influx vis-a-vis makes possible cost effectiveness. The marketing principles facilitate a breakthrough in the tourist system. It helps the tourist organisations in establishing an effective communication system with actual and potential tourists. This makes it easier to know the likes and dislikes or the taste preferences which makes possible conditioning of the supply position in tune with the changing demand position. The marketing experts feel that the best and safest way of getting a positive response in the market is to adjust the services to be offered with the services to be desired. This is known as the conditioning process which helps an organisation in establishing product leadership through time leadership.

In a competitive market, it is essential that the goods producing or the service generating organisations make possible systematic and co-ordinated execution of business policy. Of course, this should be done at different levels. For excelling competition, it is impact generating that satisfaction of tourists touches the optimal point and the marketing practices make it possible. The creativity in the organisational decisions simplify the formulation of product mix since the elimination or inclusion processes are practised well in advance. The behavioural management simplifies the task of tourist organisations, travel guides and other sensitive personnel since the offering of services is found in a decent way. Besides, the aggressive marketing practices are found helpful even in a rough weather when all the tools of business promotion are found ineffective.

Overall marketing strategy for tourism

Like other industries, the tourism industry is also required to study the problems related to overall marketing strategy.

- How to make possible a fair blending of inputs and outputs?
- How to pave ways for excelling the competition?
- How to incorporate the required changes in the marketing mix in the face of emerging trends in competition?
- How to reach the target markets?
- How to accomplish the organisational goals?

All these questions are required to be suitably answered, especially while formulating an overall marketing strategy for the tourism industry. We can't deny the fact tourist organisations have been experiencing a number of problems, especially in the developing countries of the globe. The intensity of competition is found at peak as the leading tourist generating countries have made possible qualitative improvements in their marketing mix. This necessitates formulation of a sound overall marketing strategy as by doing such, the accomplishment of organisational goals would be possible. This would help an organisation in exploring opportunities and thus the tourism potential would be optimally utilized.

Overall marketing strategy of an organisation is its competitive posture in the market place. It is a composite-built up, or put together by blending various inputs in different combinations to achieve desired results or outputs. It is also dynamic; its nature, both its specific inputs and the desired outputs must change with changes in company, its competitive situations, its markets and economic climate.

The aforesaid viewpoints make it clear that management while formulating and implementing the overall marketing strategy is concerned with identifying opportunities to serve the target markets profitably and serve them so effectively that it becomes difficult for the competitors to take business away on a profitable basis. Thus, the formulation process of the overall marketing strategy requires integration of all dimensions of the marketing efforts. This makes it essential that the marketers have a fool proof system to determine whether or not the combination or blending of inputs and the resulting profit is optimal. We consider it a systematic approach which involves evaluation of the possible inputs to the overall marketing strategy in terms of the outputs. For this, we analyse all dimensions of major inputs like product, distribution, pricing and promotion strategies. Further, we are required to evaluate the impact on the desired output related to the achievement of the marketers' objectives. Finally, we select the inputs keeping in view the fact that the combination or say the overall marketing strategy is the best for getting the desired outputs.

In the tourism industry, when we talk about the formulation of an overall marketing strategy, our emphasis is on making

possible a fair blending of inputs and outputs. The inputs are tourism product, distribution, pricing and promotion whereas the outputs are the objectives, such as the target return on investment. Market share, brand image and leadership as displayed in Figure 1. Thus, the marketers while formulating strategy for the tourism industry are required to select the best product, i.e., the well managed tourist resorts, hotels, transportation and communication systems, keeping in view the taste preferences of tourists. Like this, they are expected to make suitable arrangements for tour operators and travel agents so that the quality services reach to the target markets in a decent way and the pricing strategies are in tune with their status. In addition, it is also expected that promotional decisions are in the face of inventions and innovations in the field of printing and communication technologies. After managing the inputs, they have to manage the outputs where the tourist organisations are to be ensured that their investments in no way are to be unproductive or unprofitable and the brand image created is found helpful in establishing a leadership in the market.

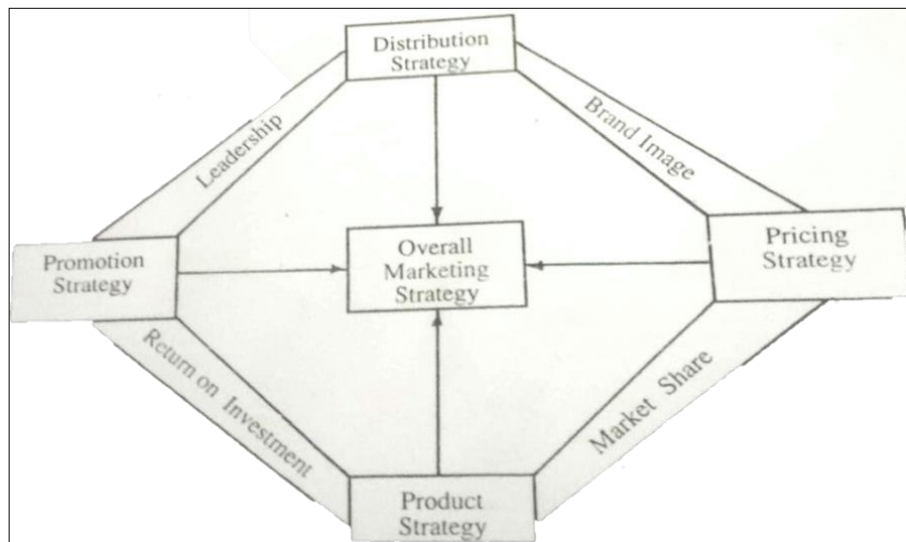


Fig 1: Overall marketing strategy

In Figure 1, we find combination of inputs and outputs which make it clear that overall marketing strategy is essentially a fair blending of the strategies related to product, distribution, pricing and promotion with the motto of achieving the organisational goal. If our goal is to project a positive brand image, it is imperative that we assign due weightage to the blending operation.

Thus, the overall marketing strategy becomes effective in establishing leadership in the market, provided the marketers have successfully amalgamated the strategy related to the four Ps.

The way ahead

We use the word market, especially in the tourism industry in four distinct ways, viz., first, it can be referred to the actual and potential number of customers for tourism product or destination; second, it can be stated as the revenue that results from customers' purchases of the tourism product; third, it can refer to the geographical area on tourist generating area for which the customers are drawn

and finally, it can refer to demand for a particular service or destination, such as package tour market.

Usually, the marketing strategies set the parameters of a number of activities. The marketing strategies involve decisions on almost all aspects of the marketing mix. It is essential that strategies are related to product and pricing strategies. What product can be offered profitably to specific markets or market segments? The policies are based on strategies. In case, the long-term survival and growth are to be achieved, there must be a continuous search for new markets, product, pricing, and distribution and promotion methods.

To implement the strategy for developing tourism sector in Bihar, there is dire need of

- Developing the perception of Bihar in the major source Market areas of India and abroad as a destination offering quality attraction, facilities and experiences.
- Designing and executing marketing activities which should be targeted to image building of Bihar-distinctive features and advantages.

- Attracting additional high spending tourist, taking account of various ways in which spending can be enhanced.
- Creating destination awareness by the state government, which facilitates the private sector in its own marketing efforts.
- Conducting marketing and promotional activities targeted at market segments identified by ongoing market research.
- Expanding penetration in the Asian markets, particularly Japan, South Korea, Bangladesh and Sri-lanka alongwith European markets viz., U.K., Germany, U.S.A, Australia etc.

The marketing strategy must include the need to portray a favourable but realistic image of the State, image building is especially important because of the publicities that have taken place in the context of emerging areas of tourism e.g. religious, heritage, rural, eco, medical tourism and many more.

Conclusion

The present Bihar State is bounded by Nepal on the north, West Bengal on the east, Jharkhand on the south and Uttar Pradesh on the west. The State has huge potentialities for the development of tourism sector. Benefits can be reaped by diversifying the marketing mix, increasing the number of tourists as well as their spending, promoting newer variants of tourism like eco-tourism, rural tourism etc. and above all, creating a positive image of Bihar.

For the successful execution of marketing strategies or for translating the strategies into the meaningful purposes, it is essential to have a detailed knowledge of the changing behaviour of users or services. There are different categories of users like domestic and foreign, rural and urban, literate and illiterate, rich and poor etc. It is very natural that tourist organisations in particular are well aware of their behaviour. This simplifies their task of creating and stimulating demand.

References

1. Bhatia AK. Tourism in India, Sterling Publisher, New Delhi, 1978.
2. Burkart AJ, Medlik S. Tourism-Past, Present and Future, Heinemann, London, 1974.
3. Choudhary Anand Kumar. Marketing Strategies for Developing Rural Tourism in Bihar International Journal of Advances in Engineering and Management,2020:2(9):833-836.
4. Economic Survey. Finance Department, Government of Bihar, Patna, 2021-22.
5. Jha SM. Tourism Marketing, Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai, 2005.
6. Malik Mosarrat. Tourism Promotion of Bihar: An Economic Game Changer, Global Journal for Research Analysis,2020:9(10):69-70.
7. Sharma NK. Tourism: Development and Management, Prism Books, Jaipur, 2012.
8. Singh SR. Bihar on Move, APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2013.
9. www.tourism.bihar.gov.in