



EVOLVING 'PANDAV CIRCUIT' IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: ENHANCING THE RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL AND SOCIO ECONOMIC VALUE OF THE SITES VISITED BY PANDAVS

Nitin Vyas, Ph. D.

Assistant Professor, Institute of Vocational Studies (Tourism) HPU Shimla, India.

E-mail - dr.nitinvyas01@gmail.com

Paper Received On: 25 MAY 2022

Peer Reviewed On: 31 MAY 2022

Published On: 1 JUNE 2022

Abstract

Tourism plays an important role in enhancing a country's soft power. It connects people and places and immerses visitors in other cultures. It also helps communicate cultural and governance attributes that make a country admirable. The success of inbound tourism is often seen as a key measurement of a nation's soft power. Tourism industry is a service industry which helps to enhance and raise the revenue/economy of the destination and the local community. The aim of the study is evolving 'Pandav Circuit' in Himachal Pradesh: enhancing the religious, cultural and socio-economic value of the sites visited by Pandavs`. This study is based on qualitative method whereas secondary data used to find out the potential of the site as Pandav circuit. This study is restricted to limited site area. The finding of the study will help to understand the potential to promote this Pandav Circuit as an independent "Pandav tourism" product to a global market.

Keywords: Tourism, Community, Religious, Cultural and Sustainable Tourism.



Scholarly Research Journal's is licensed Based on a work at www.srjis.com

Introduction

India is arguably one of the largest treasure houses for tourism because of its size, culture, and history. With a history spanning more than 5,000 years and a rich heritage, along with a colourful and varied landscape encompassing the Himalayas in the north and the Indian Ocean in the south, India's potential as a tourist destination is vast (Bhattacharya & Narayan, 2005). India has a rich cultural heritage having religious and mythological significance across the country, for instance, The Jagannath Puri, Badrinath, Tirumala Devasthanam, and Vaishno Devi, which explains a lot about the religious sites and what theses contribute to the Domestic as well International tourists. The United Nations World

Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is clear in its enthusiasm for religious tourism, with Secretary General. Taleb Rifai suggesting that "religious tourism can be one of the most effective tools to foster inclusive and sustainable development. In doing so, the main benefits of religious tourism are identified religion and travel industry are interlinked with one another. The pioneer type of travel industry was by visiting religious places, for example, Christian's journey to Jerusalem and Muslims to Mecca and Hindus to Char Dham Yatra. Religious journeys have been one of the overwhelming components encouraging individuals to travel. Following back to religious history, it is discovered that significant religions have internationally invigorated the travel industry as an establishment for spreading their own religious convictions. Tourism is one of the main flourishing sectors after horticulture and hydropower in the economic history of Himachal Pradesh. However, it remains confined to only small pockets and a very small number of people have been able to reap its real benefits. The notion that tourism led development can occur only by opening new areas and permitting tourists to visit these areas, is incorrect. Efforts for tourism development in the region must begin with a clear vision and should include a broad spectrum of issues, because despite its slow growth, the state has experienced a variety of impacts. Tourism is one of the fastest growing Industries in the developing countries, particularly in the hilly areas, which often have rich ethnic cultures, as well as religious significance. Many mountainous regions are safe "heaven" for flourishing traditional cultures, architecture, religions, beliefs and myths. Furthermore, they are also significant in terms of religion and sacredness. Therefore, there is a need to evaluate prospects for the expansion of religious and culturally sustainable tourism (Bhatia 1992). Tourist circuits based on mythological and spiritual Hinduism is Char Dham Yatro of India which include visit to Kedarnath, Jagannath Puri Dwarka and Rameshwaram, Buddhist Circuit of places related to the life of Mahatma Gautam Buddha is already at utmost preference for Buddhist tourist visiting India. Apart from that Uttarakhand's Chaar dham Yatra, twelve Jyotirling Yatra, Shaktipeeth Circuit and Kallash Mansarovar Yatra are other sacred journeys. Government initiatives and schemes such as "PRASAD' and 'Swadesh Darshan are doing very well in developing these theme based tourist circuits. A circuit based on 'Ramayan in Uttar Pradesh is under development which is further divided in to two sectors first as 'Chitrakoot & Shringverpurin Ramayan Circuit' and second as "Ayodhya Circuit" (HPTDC)

Review of Related Literature

Lourens (2007) includes identification of routes based on the target market and its requirement, audit of tourism products in the designated area, scrutinising tourism assets and identification of unique selling features. In the next step, developing the product mix by Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), clear strategy to direct work plan and lastly, branding of the route. **Riyanto et al. (2008)** have reported that Bali International Circuit is a plan to build an international circuit in Indonesia. The study concluded that the design process of the circuit must comply with standard international circuits so that it can lift the image of the country abroad. **Mandal and Das (2012)** have noted that the Alipurduar Tourism Circuit (ATC) in West Bengal, India developed as a spontaneous result of preference of tourists' visiting Eastern Dooars region. As tourism infrastructure is underdeveloped in adjoining places, tourists' are bound to stay at Alipurduar for night halt and other services. The phase of route tourism development identified by **Madhekar and Haq (2012)** argued that spiritual tourism circuit promoted throughout India, based on all religious themes, will be fruitful to optimize inbound tourism in India. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, promotes pilgrimage tourism circuits in the form of Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Sufi and the Sarva Dharma Circuits. Emphasis was given in the twelfth five-year plan (2013-17) to promote the many spiritual tourism destinations. **Ravas (2013)** outlined the importance of a steady flow of information amongst the service providers for successful tourism development. Intense competition for overseas tourists' especially with other countries offering similar products affects tourism sector performance. **Sharma (2018)** religious tourism plays very significant role in socio-economic development of a State. It promotes cultural diversity, spirituality; bringing foreign exchange provides employment opportunities and encourages masses to mutually exchange their values, cultures, traditions and way of living. Further it helps in managing soft power of the countries in maintaining foreign relationships. Religious Tourism in India has been diverse and culturally rich. To promote tourism in India celebration of 'Paryatan Parv' which have three components namely 'Dekho Apna Desh' i.e. to encourage Indians to visit their own country, "Tourism for All" i.e. promoting tourism related activities across all states in the country and "Tourism & Governance" i.e. focusing on the governance of tourism through considering stakeholders in inclusive way are significant steps. **Bhandari (2021)** religious tourism has a strong potential and such sites can generate a huge amount of revenue. Secondly, pilgrimage is a time-bound

ritual and the religious celebrations magnify the associated benefits of pilgrimage. The analysis shows that the majority of respondents spent more time in the temple in normal days as compared to the festive days as they have a better spiritual experience. A large share of respondents feels that the temple needs improvements in terms of infrastructure and there is a need for a site interpreter/educator to guide the visitors

Objectives of the Study

1. To prepare the inventory of the places being visited by 'Pandavs' to create a circuit.
2. To highlight the importance of 'Pandav Circuit' as alternate and sustainable tourism in the region.
3. To study the mythological spiritual and religious significance of 'Pandav Circuit'.
4. To gather the opinion of the stakeholders on creation and development of 'Pandav Circuit'

Study Area: The study was carried out in selected pockets of six districts that are Kinnaur, Mandi, Shimla, Solan, Chamba and Lahul Spiti of Himachal Pradesh.

Places Visited By Pandavas` in Himachal Pradesh

Shimla

The famous Shakti Peeth Hatkoti temple in Kalyug has a relation of Devbhoomi Himachal with Dvaparayuga when Pandavas came here for the forest exile.

Rampur (Himachal Pradesh): About 110 km away from Shimla, the ancient temple of Maa Hateshwari is situated on the banks of Pabbar River in Jubbal Kotkhai. It is believed that this ancient temple was built 800 years ago. Once there stood a city named Virat on the mound of Sunpur adjoining the temple where the Pandavas spent some time of their exile. It is believed that the Pandavas had spent a few days in the temple and the proof of this is still seen here. The temple has idols of five Pandavas made of stones, which people still worship. People have unwavering faith in this temple. There is a legend that Pandavas spent part of their life during their exile here on Hatu peak. There are two giant stones, shaped like a chullah called "**Bheem Chullah**" stands as an evidence in the vicinity (*Balokhra 1997*).

Kinnaur

Moorang Fort – Ancient Fort in Kinnaur: This fort is very mysterious and attractive because of its location. It is believed that the fort was built by Pandavas. Is situated on the left bank of the Satluj on a high hillock and very near to the Morang village. The wooden

extending beams and wooden pillars of the Verandah of the top floor indicate that there was another floor at the top and now it is totally broken.

Mandi

Chindi in Karsog Valley is only about 100 kms from Shimla. Away from the buzzing sound of city, this small village sits quietly in the lap of nature. Packed with apple orchards and blessed with divine beauty of nature, one can also find several small temples near the village. The name Karsog is derived from Kar Shok (mourning). Local folklore says, the Pandavas spent their Van Vaas in these parts. Numerous temples that dot the region dating back to about the same era, somewhat corroborate this theory. Some of the important temples in Chindi are Mamleshwara Mahadev, Kamakshya Mata, Mahunag, Ardhnarishwara, Aledi Mahadev, Palinag at Nalagali, and Churag temple.

Prashar Lake: It is believed that Sage Prashar meditated on the banks of this lake, hence it is named Prashar Lake. Bhima, one of the Pandava brothers, had created the lake, the story says. After the Kurukshetra / Mahabharat war, the Pandavas were returning with Lord Kamrunag. When they reached this place, Kamrunag loved the tranquil surroundings and decided to live here forever. So, Bheem (the strongest of the lot) rammed his elbow on one of the mountains and created a big dent in the land. This dent became Prashar Lake.

Murari Devi Temple is a beautiful place to visit in Sundernagar. This Temple is in the west of Sunder Nagar on the top of a sacred hill named Murari Dhar & is situated at the height of 7000 feet (2,133 metres). The temple is believed to be built by the PANDAVAS during "AGYATWAS" (*Balokhra 1997*).

Kullu

The land is also replete with many legends associated with the Pandavas, who are believed to have spent a part of their exile in the valley. The Hidimba temple in Manali, the Shangchool Mahadev temple in Sainj and the Dev Dhank in Nirmand are believed to be associated with the Pandavas. According to one legend, one of the Pandavas, Bhimsen killed a strong and cruel demon Hadimb and married his sister Hadimba, a powerful deity of Manali. Ghatotkachh, the son of Bhim and Hadimba, showed unparalleled heroism and valour in the Mahabharata. According to another legend, Arjuna, under the advice of Sage Vyas, practiced austerities in a cave called 'Arjun Gupha' in the mountain of Inderkila (now called Deo Tiba) in order to get the powerful Pasupati Astra from Indra. The great sage Vyas is said to have performed his tapa in this valley during the Mahabharata period, at a place

called 'Vyas Kund' on Rohtang Pass. It was because of this that the river Vipasha got the present name of Beas.

Lahaul

Tandi: The confluence (Sangam) point of Chandra and Bhaga Rivers, Tandi village is a town situated close to Keylong. It is believed that the place got its name from the phrase 'Tan Dehi' meaning giving up of the body. Draupadi, the wife of Pandavas from the Mahabharata is believed to have given up her body in this place and her mortal remains were immersed in this river. The confluence point is sacred for both Hindus and Buddhists as the Sangam is considered to be the one of eight Mahashamshans (cremation place) in India which includes Varanasi.

Chandratal Lake in the Lahaul region, we heard the story of the Pandavas again. We were told that this was the place where Indra's chariot descended on earth, to take Yudhishtir, the eldest Pandava, to Swargaloka. It then dawned on me that we had been following the final journey of the Pandavas, though we seemed to have missed the places where the other four Pandavas fell (*Balokhra 1997*).

Solan

Badi ki dhar

Badi dhar was the part of District Mahasu (now Shimla) until 1972 in erstwhile tehsil Arki (Bhagal), later District Solan was formed in 1972 and it merged in district Solan. It is said that the Pandava spent the last year of their exile at this place in the caves of the hill and forest. A temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is situated here, local people call him Bara Dev and the name of this peak is also on his name. It is said that pandavas visited this place after the battle of "Mahabharta", to atone the curse of killing their own brothers. They went in search of Lord Shiva for MOKSHA. They had been told by "Narad" that Lord Shiva is sitting on the peak of this range in meditation. After knowing the place they went there with a plan to meet Lord Shiva. As per saying Pandavas resided around the peak for eight days and on the ninth day they went to meet Lord Shiva. As they reached the top of mountain Shiva disappeared in a shape of buffalo to Kurukhestra leaving the "dhuni." After that Pandavas erected a temple here dedicated to Lord Shiva and every year people around this dhar recreate the same thing for eight days with Music such as big drums and other local music instruments and on ninth day they go to the peak with their five deities "The Pandavas". As per local saying Pandavas visited this place twice (*Balokhra 1997*).

Table - 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (N=180)		
Variables	Frequency	Valid Percentage (%)
Age Group		
Less than 18	11	6.1
18-30	102	56.7
31-45	61	33.3
46 above	6	3.3
Gender		
Male	90	50
Female	90	50
Education Level		
10 th	20	11.1
12 th	42	23.3
Graduate	70	38.9
Post Graduate	48	26.7
Country		
India	179	99.4
Other	1	0.6
Marital Status		
Single	86	47.8
Married	92	51.1
Other	2	1.1
Income		
Low	49	27.2
Middle	122	67.8
Higher	9	5.0

Table – 2 Percentage of Respondents regarding Evolving 'Pandav Circuit' in Himachal Pradesh

Percentage of Respondents								
Variable	Books		Story		Locals		Internet	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
How do you know about this place	47	26.1	4	2.2	103	57.2	26	14.4
	YES		NO		Very Few		NA	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Is there any tourism relevance of this place	132	73.3	48	26.7				
Is there any awareness regarding this place to local people?	165	91.7	15	8.3				
Do you know the history of this place?	146	81.1	34	18.9				

					9		
Have any visitor's visits from outside to this place?	49	27.2	131	72.8			
Do the government take any steps to highlight the destination?	6	3.3	174	96.7			
Accommodations facilities nearby destination?	19	10.56	130	72.2	31	17.2	
Is there any other local attraction nearby this place?	165	91.7	15	8.3			
Is there any potential to develop this place as a tourist destination?	146	81.1	34	18.9			
Is this place is develop as a religious tourism destination that helps local community too?	146	81.1	34	18.9			
Is there any road facility to this place?	19	10.6	130	72.2	31	17.2	
Basic amenities nearby Place	6	3.3	174	96.7			

The analysis and major findings which have emerged from the present study are discussed in the successive paragraphs.

- Table 2, shows that 57.22 percent respondents are of the view that they know the place through local people, 26.11 percent from Books, 14.4 percent through internet and 2.22 percent through stories.
- Table 2 shows that 73.30 percent respondents are of the view that the place has tourism importance whereas 26.7 percent were not of this view.
- The majority of respondents (91.6%) reported that local people have awareness regarding the place whereas 8.3 percent locals are not aware about the place.
- Table 2 shows that 81.10 percent respondents know the history of visited place whereas 18.90 percent do not know the history of place.
- 27.2 percent respondents reported that visitors from outside to this place visit the place whereas 72.8 percent respondents opined that visitors from outside to this place do not visit the place.
- Table 2 shows that majority of respondents (96.7%) are of the view that Government has not taken any steps to highlight the destination whereas very few respondents (3.3 percent) reported that Government has taken steps to highlight the destination.
- The majority of respondents (72.2%) reported that proper accommodation facility is not available nearby destination whereas 10.56 percent respondents reported

negatively. Further 17.22 percent respondents reported that very less accommodation facility is available nearby destination.

- To the question “is there any other local attraction nearby this place” 91.70 percent respondents are of the view that there is other local attraction nearby the place whereas 8.3 percent were not of this view.
- 81.10 percent respondents revealed that this place has potential to develop as a tourist destination whereas 18.90 percent responded negatively.
- Table 2 shows that majority of respondents (81.1%) felt that place be developed as religious tourism destination and in turn it will helps the local community too whereas 18.90 percent respondents were not of this view.
- Majority of respondents (72.2%) reported that no proper road facility is available to this destination whereas 10.60 percent have opposite opinion. Further 17.22 percent respondents reported that very less facility is available to the destination.
- Table 2 shows that majority of respondents (96.6%) observed that basic amenities are not available nearby place whereas only 3.33 percent respondents reported that basic amenities are available.

Conclusion

The investigator has succeeded to draw certain logical findings from the present analysis and interpretation. Majority of respondents revealed that place has tourism potential. Further majority of respondents felt that state government should take appropriate steps to highlight the destination. Proper accommodation facility should be available nearby destination to attract more tourists within and outside the state. Majority of respondents reported that place has potential to develop as a tourist destination and in turn it will helps the local community too. To make the place easily accessible proper road facility should be available to the destination. The study found that there is potential of tourism if we succeed to develop ‘Pandav Circuit’ in Himachal Pradesh.

References

- Riyanto, A., Mildawani, I.I. and Wahyu, M.T. (2008). *Bali International Circuit*, Gunadarma University, <http://www.papers.gunadarma.ac.id/files/journals,4/articles/4074-11272-1-PB.pdf> retrieved on March 15, 2013
- Mandal, P.K. and Das, S. (2012). ‘Tourism Dynamics of Alipurduar and Its Surroundings’, *International Journal of Social Science Tomorrow*,1(5), July, 1-8
- Madhekar, A. & Haq, F. (2012). ‘Development of Spiritual Tourism Circuits: The Case of India’, *GSTC Journal of Business Review*, 2(2), 212-218.

- Lourens, M. (2007): *Underpinning for Successful Route Tourism Development in South Africa*, Dissertation, Johannesburg. Retrieved from [www.wiredspace.wits.ac.za/.../Masters % 20 Thesis%20Routes%20Tourism.pdf](http://www.wiredspace.wits.ac.za/.../Masters%20Thesis%20Routes%20Tourism.pdf) on 06/07.1
- Cohen, Erik. "Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence." MORINIS (ED.), *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage* (1992).
- Sen, Amartya. *The argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian history, culture and identity*. Penguin Books India, 2012.
- Harrison, David, ed. *Tourism and the less developed world: Issues and case studies*. Cabi, 2001.
- Bhandari, H. . (2021). *Religious Tourism and Visitor Perception: a case study analysis*. SPAST Abstracts, 1(01). Retrieved from <https://spast.org/techrep/article/view/3076>
- Singh, Shalini. "Indian tourism: policy, performance and pitfalls." *Tourism and the less developed world: Issues and case studies* (2001): 137-149.
- Balokhra, J.M. (1997), "The wonderland Himachal Pradesh," Delhi: H. G. Publications.
- Bhatia, A.K. (1994). *International tourism Fundamental and Practices*, Sterling Publishing Pvt.Ltd. New Delhi, 39-41.
- Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India (2018). *Report on tourism and hospitality industry*, New Delhi.
- Kothari, C.R. (2000). *Research Methodology - Method and Techniques*, New Age Publication, New Delhi.
- <http://hptdc.in/>
- <http://himachaltourism.gov.in/index.php>
- http://himachal.nic.in/index.php?lang=1&dpt_id=198