



Tourism issues and prospects in Manipur- A case study of Moreh town

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Abstract

Tourism has become a large contributor to economic growth in various regions around the globe. Tourism is one of the biggest industries in the 21st century and is expected to grow faster in the coming centuries. It catalyzes economic expansion by creating jobs for various segments of the population, both directly and indirectly. Tourism can revolve around wildlife, scenic beauty, distinct flora & fauna, mountainous areas, caves, dense forests, rough and untamed rivers, lively and vibrant tribal cultural festivals etc. It provided numerous effective and lively young individuals with opportunities in recent decades. Examining the historical and current state of tourism nationwide, the tourism industry plays a crucial role in socio-economic development. Simultaneously, it can serve as a tool for growth when developed and utilized wisely to consider a wider viewpoint. Tourism is a diverse industry that provides services to many people to promote economic development sustainably. Manipur has immense possibilities of growth in the tourism sector with its vast cultural and religious heritage and varied natural attractions, but a comparatively small role in the national tourism scene. The tourism industry is crucial for the development of Manipur and Moreh, as it provides employment opportunities for numerous young individuals in the hotel and guest houses sector. This paper aims to review and evaluate the challenges and opportunities of the tourism sector in Moreh town. The paper is exploratory and the cases of various attractive tourist destinations in Moreh have been considered.

Background of the Study: The border town Moreh is in the foothill of the district, which has a common border with the neighboring Myanmar foreign country. It is located about 110 km away from Imphal, the state capital. It lies at an altitude of about 220m above mean sea level

(MSL) and lies rough between 94030" to 94035" East longitude and 24025" to 24035" North Latitudes. The town is divided into 9 wards of which one-third is level plain and has proximity with the neighbouring foreign country, Myanmar, while the remaining wards lies to the gentle slope areas which are partly hills. As per a report released by Census of India 2011, it has a population of 16,847 of which 8,670 are male while 8,177 are female. The town is inhabited by different ethnic communities like – the Kukis, Tamils, Meiteis, Meitei Pangals, Gorkhalees, Biharis, and Punjabis etc. with different colourful culture and traditions. The town of Moreh is a connecting and transitional place with foreign countries that supply and provide business commodities. Thousands of people from different communities are seen in the market for various business purposes.

Objectives and Methodology: The present study explores the environmental setting of tourism in Moreh town and its relation to socio-economic growth. The study applies a mixed method of collecting and analyzing the data from the local population through questionnaires and semistructured interviews. Secondary databases like Governmental Registry Records, PubMed, JSTOR platform, EBSCO host platform, and Web of Science were also utilized. Moreover, the study is made based on the convenient sampling method.

Keywords: Tourism, growing economy, issues, prospects of tourism, planning, management

Introduction

Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that involves the movement of an individual or groups of people from their doorsteps to other distant places for various businesses or official purposes. The time and duration taken may depend upon the plan and the arrangement they had to fulfill their purpose and setting of their work. From the educational perspective, a group of students under the guidance of teachers carry the students on study tours and sometimes organize excursions to view new tourist places in and outside the state or country. This common attitude towards the movement of people is an activity which contributed towards a vibrant tourism industry and opportunities for millions of people. United Nations World Tourism Organisation takes a crucial

initiative to promote the value of tourism as it is one of the biggest drivers for economic growth, inclusive developmental sustainability, and support in advancing knowledge. It is learned that the phenomena of tourism since 1950 have been remarkable in terms of economic growth, reconstruction, and renovation of various tourist places in worldwide. Even the outlook of the people worldwide grows tremendously which would be the stepping stone of the younger generation towards the growth and development of tourism. Given the development of the tourism industry in India and the fulfillment of the Indian Look East policy, the border town Moreh which has a high potential for the tourism industry cannot be ignored, even if there are various disturbances in the way forward to the progress and the development.

Table 1: Tourism scenario in Manipur

Year	No of Tourist spot	No of tourists		Total	Revenue (Rs. In Lakhs) NA
		Foreigner	Domestics		
2006-2007	42	263	120572	120835	
2007-2008	54	460	101000	101460	NA
2008-2009	54	271	115300	115571	NA
2009-2010	54	405	127524	127929	NA
2010-2011	54	431	116652	117083	NA
2011-2012	54	602	133224	133826	NA
2012-2013	57	768	131803	132571	NA
2013-2014	57	2588	143059	145647	NA
2014-2015	57	2900	134584	137484	NA
2015-2016	72	3102	132013	135115	NA

Source: Economic Survey Manipur 2010-11 and 2016-2017

The Economic Survey Manipur, 2006-2007 has indicated the whole scenario of the flow of tourists in the entire state of Manipur. It is seen that in the year 2006-2007 the number of tourists foreigners coming to Manipur was only 263 while the succeeding year gave more picture of tourists which accounted to be 460 visitors. At the same time as per the data recorded it declined in the year of 2008- 2009 which shows only 271 tourists. The data from the table shows that the total number of tourists who visited Manipur from 2006 to 2013 did not cross the digit of a thousand. However, a drastic increase of tourists could be witnessed

from the table 2588 tourists in the year 2013- 2014 and the following years also reflected the increasing number of tourists till 2016. The increasing trend of the tourists from the table focuses the development of tourism industry as well as the raising of revenue in Manipur. It also signifies the importance of the Asian National Highway way which passes through the heart of the city of Manipur to the Southeast Asian countries in the development of tourism sharing many services to the people. This has revealed that the state Manipur has an enormous potentiality of tourism which could be develop and enhances its value in the future.

Table 1: Hotels and Guest Houses in Moreh Town 2017-2018

S no.	Name of Hotels	No room	The average intake mers per	The average intake mers per	Domestic Foreigner tourists/custo	The average tourists/custo
1	Electricity IB	6	10	10	NA	120
2	Forest IB	14	75	73	2	900
3	Trade Centre Moreh	50	40	40	NA	480
4	Lhangkim Hotel	12	30	30	NA	360
5	Hotel Look East	6	144	144	NA	1728
6	Council Guest house	8	7	5	2	84
7	Elora Hotel (5-star standard	75	765	745	20	9180
8	Total	171	1071	1047	24	12852

Source: computed from primary source

From the table, it can be understanding the intake capacity of the tourists in a month and reflects the maximum intake of tourists in one month which makes all the rooms, especially during autumn and winter seasons. At the same time, this has shown the slow development of the tourism industry in the Moreh town. But even though it is a border town the maximum tourists belong to the domestic people, and only a few percent are constituted by foreigners. It is found that the domestic inflow of tourists is very regular, and the table shows and highlights the ground situation of tourism of the present situation in Moreh town, and how it helps in building the economy as well as the tourism status of the town. The table also reflects the maximum inflow of domestic visitors every day. The total intake of customers by the selected hotels and guest houses in a month constituted 1071, which totalled 12,852 in a year.

Gaby’s Café and Resort

Gaby's Café is positioned on national highway no. 2, only half a kilometer from the Tengnoupal Deputy Commissioner Office Complex and Police station. It was founded in 2012 and fulfills various roles in the tourism sector. It is the initial and only establishment in the mountainous regions of Tengnoupal District that offers coffee, tea, light meals, snacks, and fast food instead of formal dining. The Café has

beautiful and cozy seating made from natural materials, which entices customers to relax and enjoy their drinks or food. Customers can enjoy views of the eastern slope of the district to Kabaw Valley in Myanmar from this charming outdoor seating area. It is also a very comfortable recreational spot where we can experience the cool natural breeze that rejuvenates our minds. Furthermore, it has been discovered that individuals from Western and European nations who are not from here have frequented this location and relished the local snacks. This tourist destination has become one of the most appealing spots along this Asian National Highway.

Kondong Lairembi Haraobung Moreh

The ancient Meitei temple "Ima Kondong Lairembi," also known as "The Mother Goddess of Entrance," is in ward no. 7 of the border town of Moreh. It will start on April 23 and end on May 2 annually. This has taken place for a minimum of nine to ten days. Therefore, throughout this festival, individuals from distant and nearby regions in the state desire to travel to engage in various ritual practices such as offering flowers and fruits at the temple. This has caused the town to be packed during this period. At the same time, all the private food hotels, as well as Government and Private lodging centers in the town, were consistently fully booked

every day. Therefore, this has resulted in an increase in profits for the owners of hotels and lodges during this time. In contrast to other Lai Haoraoba festivals in Manipur, the Ima Kondong Lairembi Haraoba festival in Moreh has gained popularity due to its significant tourism potential that draws in people. In addition, various sports activities such as wrestling and marathon races were also held throughout the festival, culminating in all final matches on the closing day. An example is Mukna, a type of traditional Wrestling from Manipur, a north-eastern state in India. A widely practiced local game in Manipur, it is commonly enjoyed during the final day of the Lai Harooba festival and forms an essential component of the traditional rituals. In this sport, athletes with similar physical characteristics such as build, weight, or age are matched up to compete against one another. Therefore, every year numerous participants from different districts of Manipur, along with their guides and supporters, take part in this sport. Since it is situated in a border town, numerous sports enthusiasts are unable to resist attending these events. The primary factor is that the town of Moreh holds great tourism potential, attracting and entertaining visitors from various locations. Nobody cares about the hot and cold weather and climate of the place for now; visiting and participating are more significant for them.

The Chavang Kut Festival

The 'Kut', also called 'Chavang Kut', is a holiday celebrated at the state level in Manipur on 1st November each year. This festival, celebrated by the Kuki-Chin-Mizo people, is both grand and ancient, with a history that dates back 3000 years. Chavang Kut is celebrated to honor the deity's blessing for a plentiful harvest. Furthermore, it denotes that the harvest season has come to an end. Every year, the residents of Moreh town come together under the supervision of the Hill Tribal Council for an organized event. Traditional singing performances and folk dance are included in the festivities. The Kut festival offers thrills for individuals of every age. Young people engage in physical activities like sports and competitions, while older people enjoy entertainment at a relaxed pace. The Kut festival is celebrated annually in all the district Headquarters, with Moreh being a popular tourism center, attracting a larger crowd to the town. Many traditional singers, modern song singers, and talented young people from various parts of the state attended the Moreh Chavang Kut festival, providing significant support in providing food for all the lodges and hotels during the event. The large number of tourists highlights the untapped potential of the tourism sector in Moreh town.

Pongal and Holi Festival

The town of Moreh on the border observed the Pongal festival, which is celebrated by the Tamil Community after the harvest. The Harvest Festival of South India, specifically observed by the Tamils, is known as the Hindu Pongal celebration. The festival gets its name from the ritual "Pongal", which signifies 'to boil, overflow' and is a traditional dish made from new rice harvest boiled in milk with raw sugar and given as an offering to goddess Pongal. The celebration is specifically for Surya, the Sun God, and represents thankfulness to the natural world. After Guwahati's Balaji temple, the Sri Angalaparameshwari temple in Moreh is the second largest temple complex in the North-East. The Tamil community celebrates this festival

annually in January, the most enjoyable season for the region. As a Hindu festival, many individuals from all over the country, particularly from Southern India where the festival is significant, participate in the celebrations. The unseen reason is that Moreh town is situated near the border, where there is a mix of cultures and a strong pull to draw people from every direction. Therefore, at times the current hotels and lodges in the city are unable to house all the visitors. The situation mirrors the actual tourism potential and current tourism status of the town.

Holi, known as the "Festival of Colours," is a lively and festive celebration that signifies the beginning of spring in India. It is observed nationwide. Typically, it includes splashing each other with color powders and water, representing affection, companionship, and victory of good over evil. During Holi, the Tamil Community in Moreh, a border town, celebrated the traditional Fire walking festival known as velvet annually. During these days, numerous followers walked over the fire to show their respect to goddess Angala Parameshwari. Before walking on hot coals, devotees must pierce their bodies with an iron rod and walk approximately 1km on foot. At the same time, numerous individuals from Myanmar came together to observe the festival hosted by the Tamil Community in Moreh.

The Two Entrance Gate of Moreh Town

The twin towns of Moreh on the Indian side and Tamu on the Myanmar side are divided by two gates known as Gate No. 1 and Gate No. 2. Gate number 1 is the entrance that the National Highway number 2 passes through, also referred to as the Asian National Highway, linking India with an Iron bridge painted in white and red colors divided equally. Myanmar claims the red color as its own, while India claims the white color. It was constructed to facilitate connections between the two nations, with a focus on improving trade relations and encouraging social and cultural interactions between the neighboring countries. This bridge and road are the sole pathway linking all South-East Asian nations. If we simply go across the bridge, there is a migration booth on the Myanmar side where they inspect documents such as voter identification and Aadhaar card, while on the Indian side, the Land Customs Station (LCS) office on the eastern side and the Integrated Check Post (ICP) on the western side are the two checkpoints. This is where we can purchase a pass ticket to explore Tamu town in Myanmar and the area around it for one day. Gate No.2 serves the same purpose as Gate No. 1, allowing Tamu town visitors to obtain a pass ticket by submitting their Aadhaar card, voter card, or driving license. However, Nanphalong visitors do not need to pay or provide any documents for entry. The officials at this global entrance are a major attraction for people from both sides of the country, known as the Eastern Gate of India. Certainly, individuals from mainland India desire to frequently visit this location as it serves as the sole link to other foreign countries in the southeast region.

The Integrated Check Post (ICP) Moreh

The ICP Moreh is one of the 13 international boundary check posts set up by the Central Government of India. These check posts were built by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). This checkpoint is located at the entrance of Southeast Asian countries and serves as a vital link for trade and commerce with other Southeast Asian nations. The Government of India has started the trade relation project by

consulting civil organizations in Moreh to measure the land. The Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Border Management has sanctioned and released a compensation of Rupees 130 crores as per Letter No. 11018/1/08-BM. V/ICP dated 23/11/2009. Upon the conclusion of this project, the Integrated Check Post is now operational and has become one of the largest tourist attractions in the Northeast region. It serves as a crucial border crossing and trade facilitation hub to assist with the following:

Original	<i>The cat chased the mouse around the house.</i>
	customs clearance, Trade facilitation. Security and surveillance. Storage. Parking and Transport. Banking and Currency Exchange. Communication and networking. Health and Quarantine Services number. Information and help for tourists
Paraphrased	The mouse was chased by the cat all over the house. Immigration and

Yangngoupokpi Lokchao Wildlife Sanctuary

The Yangngoupokpi – Lokchao Wildlife Sanctuary is among the eight major wildlife sanctuaries in Manipur. Bunning Wildlife Sanctuary and Dzuko Valley are included. Approximately 110 km from Imphal, it can be found along the Indo-Myanmar border. Covering 185 square kilometers, it is situated between 24013’51’’N Latitude and 94013’51’’E to 94023’51’’E longitude. It has been divided into five areas namely khudengthabi, Leibi, Laiching, Kwatha, and Yangngoupokpi. The Sanctuary temperature ranges from 40C in January to 40oC in June, with humidity ranging from 35% (in winter) to 80% (during monsoon). The ecosystem of this wildlife sanctuary is extremely distinct and lively as it showcases the biodiversity of IndoMyanmar. The sanctuary is situated on the border with Myanmar, which explains its location. Being next to the dense forests of Myanmar, this area has been a habitat for many animals such as tigers, lions, wild elephants, leopards, deer, and wild pigs, as well as various types of wild birds for a long time. The forest is rich in natural resources; however, it is distressing to see the declining species caused by different disturbances or threats from humans. In the meantime, the Authority should not hesitate to implement any workable plan to enhance this location. The development of the tourism industry and revenue generation in Moreh will center around this major focal point.

The Climate

The climate is crucial in the development of the tourism sector. In the development of geographical regions or areas, the climatic factor is crucial for success. Therefore, the level of climatic comfort plays a significant role in determining the total tourist traffic, as well as where they choose to go, how many visits, and which direction they take. The rainy season, especially in the hilly region of Manipur and the Tengnoupal district, makes it difficult for tourists to move around freely and comfortably. Due to the steep landscape in this area, landslides and mudflows frequently occur, leading to mass wasting in areas with high leaching and removal of soluble substances or nutrients. This is mainly caused by heavy rain leading to increased water flow. Due to the inadequate infrastructure and amenities in the lodging facilities, the tourist numbers in Moreh, the hottest place in

Manipur, sometimes decrease. Additionally, the inconsistent power supply poses a major risk to tourism in Moreh town. Despite the town's high potential for tourism growth, inadequate infrastructure hinders visitors, including traders and tourists.

Swot Analysis of Moreh Town

When examining the tourism industry, we assess its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The following points are crucial in shaping the concepts.

Strengths

Wide variety of natural and cultural resources

- Moreh border town assumes great significance given the Look East Policy
- Moreh town can develop shopping centers like shopping malls etc.
- Youngnoupokpi – Lokchao Wildlife Sanctuary with an area of 184.80 square kilometres has numerous species of plants and animals

Weaknesses	▪ Limited infrastructure of hotels, lodges, and Guest houses and power supply.
	▪ Insufficient exposure in the tourism-generating market.
	▪ No single recreational resort places in the town.
	▪ Travel Permit system requirement.
	▪ Tourist guides may be arranged properly.
	▪ No Security arrangement for night service, even at the time of emergency.
Opportunities	▪ Moreh border town has great opportunity and significance because of the Look East Policy and the Trans Asian Highway.
	▪ Trade and tourism can get a big boost by developing an international tourist circuit.
	▪ The rich cultural heritage and historical sites can be promoted for culture and pilgrimage tourism.

Threats

To boost the growth of the tourism sector in the town, efforts must be made to improve weaknesses and address threats, while leveraging strengths and opportunities for promotion.

Tourism planning and Strategic Management

Every project requires strategic planning to reach its objectives or endpoint. Likewise, Tourism is a major industry, so the relevant department must create thorough planning that includes physical infrastructure as well as natural and cultural attractions for tourists. The primary goal of tourism planning is to safeguard, preserve, and improve the natural and manmade surroundings while maximizing their potential and quality. Planning for tourism is very important to establish fundamental amenities such as water supply, electricity, lodging options, and dependable leisure destinations.

The tourism sector in the state, especially in Moreh town, lacks comprehensive plans and policies for development from the State Department of Tourism. Regarding the Look East Policy and where it is situated, it is important to start planning and implementing policies early on to create a clear vision and direction for its progress and advancement. To promote tourism growth and development, cooperation and coordination with departments such as Information and Technology are required. Due to its location in the border area, the town does not have adequate internet facilities for tourists to access all kinds of information promptly. In the face of numerous challenges, the State Government must still implement a strategy to help tour operators, travel agents, and tour facilitators. The state tourism department needs to prioritize the growth and marketing of border tourism.

Discussion and Conclusions

The town of Moreh boasts a vast potential, with an incredibly rich and diverse culture. It is nicknamed mini-India due to its variety. Individuals of different beliefs, social statuses, and faiths have been living together for a long period. During cultural festivals in this border town, many people are drawn to the town, serving as a major driving force for the development of the tourism industry there. Regarding the road connection, the Asian National Highway that passes through the town links all South-East Asian countries. Therefore, the road link to Moreh has a high potential to boost the tourism sector in the town. Additionally, the improvement in road infrastructure has left a positive impression on travelers heading to the border town. The new road is now less frightening and hazardous than before, while also reducing the travel time to reach Moreh town. Previously, the journey to the border town took 4-5 hours, but now it only takes 3-4 hours, resulting in a difference of 1 hour. Nevertheless, the standards and administration of the hotels and guest accommodations fail to meet the expectations of tourists. Hence, lodges and hotels need to undergo renovations and upgrades to meet international standards, which are crucial for their survival. When it comes to the tourism industry, the department should not stay quiet but instead should be actively involved in and participate in all types of advancements.

The different species of green plants in the Wildlife sanctuary add a special beauty to the area that should be considered for successful planning. The state has great potential to become one of the top tourist destinations in the country. Branding is not given enough importance in promotional activities. The government needs to proactively take action to ensure the town does not fall significantly behind in terms of development. A distinctive brand must be developed to promote Moreh as a tourist spot, aligning with the state's modernity, competitiveness, strategic location, and commercial factors. In terms of tourism development, the Government must lead by example in various development projects.

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