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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ADVENTURE AND SPORTS TOURISM IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Abstract

Tourism is an important and fast growing industry in the world. It has socio-cultural, educational and political significance as well and this sector has significant contribution in the promotion of national integration, international goodwill and understanding. Tourism is multi-dimensional concept and implies many things to many people. India is a vast and diverse country that has something for everyone. Himachal Pradesh is a playground of adventure and sports tourism. Their unique culture, religious faith and peculiar superstitious are very fascinating. Himachal Pradesh is nature only personified and efforts whatsoever expected from it. The main focus of this paper is to study the present status of the adventure and sports activities available in the state to attract the tourists from across the world to visit this beautify hilly state of Himalaya region.

An adventure activity includes Mountaineering, Skiing, Jeep Safari, Trekking, Rafting, Paragliding, Skydiving, Parasailing and Hiking. Shimla is a second preferred destination in Himachal Pradesh after Kullu, Manali for adventure activities. The main objective of tourism policy of Government of H.P. is to promote economically, culturally and ecologically sustainable tourism in H.P. Thus, present study can help in identifying the challenges and opportunities of adventure and sports tourism activities offers by Department of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Govt. of H.P. to cater the need of adventure and sports tourism lovers who visited the various tourist places of the state.

Keywords: Adventure, Activities, Cultural, Himalayas, Sports, Shimla, Tourism.

Introduction

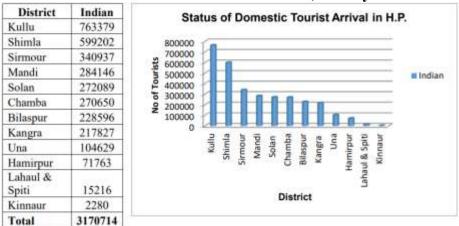
The phenomenon and activity of tourism in India is as old as its civilization and culture. India's glorious tradition and rich cultural heritage are linked with development of tourism. Man since antiquity has been an inveterate traveler. Only the motivation for travel has been changed. In ancient times the main motivation was trade, pilgrimage and conquest. It is often realized how extensive the contacts among people were several years ago. (Batra, 1989) The post war years saw the emergence of a number of international organizations concerned with travel and tourism. India was among the first developing countries to become a member of IUOTO in 1951. Tourism acts as an engine for development through foreign exchange earnings and creation of direct and indirect employment. Tourism contributes to 10% of the world's GDP and it accounts for 7% of the world's exports, services being the third largest export sector after fuels, chemicals and ahead of automotive products. Tourism is responsible for 235 million jobs, one in every 10 jobs, worldwide (UNWTO, 2017). The economic significance of tourism industry is multifarious. This is reflected on the economic, social, cultural, political and environmental aspects of the country. Apart from foreign exchange the tourism industry has a bearing on employment and income generation, development of local economy of the tourism centres etc. The concept of tourism as a phenomenon involves the movement of people within their own country or across the national boarders. Tourism is a multi-dimensional concept and implies many things to many people. For the tourist it is

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travel relaxation, a holiday, an expose to other cultures and traditions. Tourism as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon emerged as one of the world's largest and fastest growing industry. (Bala, 1990) Himachal Pradesh is spread over an area of 55673 sq. km with a population of more than 60 lakh persons. In the North it is bounded by Zaskar valley of Kashmir, in the East by Tibet in the South- East by Uttar Pradesh and South- West by Harayana and Punjab. Many peaks, passes and lakes in the Pradesh are associated with myriads of God and Goddesses. Their unique culture, religious faith and peculiar superstitious are very fascinating. A large variety of colourful festivals revolve around the cultural values, religious sentiments and socio-economic needs suiting in consonance with the moods of climatic and topographic variations of the Pradesh. (Gupta, 1994) The most prominent fairs of state are, Shivratri Fair, Nalwari Fair, Minjar Fair, Kullu Dussehra, Lavi Fair, and Renuka Fair. Himachal Pradesh is a playground of adventure and sports tourism. Himachal has various natural and man-made assets namely, the Himalayas, lakes, rivers, snow, rural landscape, pilgrimage spots like temples, gurudwaras and monasteries, heritage structures, traditional dance forms and attires, local handicrafts and cuisine, and some well-established commercial destinations like Shimla, Manali and Dharamshala. One can pursue any adventure like the trekking mountaineering, rock climbing, skiing, hang gliding, water sports, golfing, fishing, hunting and crossing of high passes over one range to another etc.

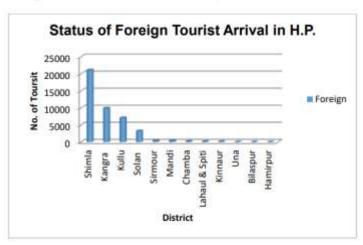
Table-1: Status of Domestic Tourist Arrival in H.P. (January to December, 2020)



Source: Department of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Govt. of H.P.

Table-2: Status of Foreign Tourist Arrival in H.P. (January to December, 2020)

District	Foreign			
Shimla	21111			
Kangra	9921			
Kullu	7080			
Solan	3228			
Sirmour	454			
Mandi	405			
Chamba	192			
Lahaul & Spiti	155			
Kinnaur	111			
Una	8			
Bilaspur	0			
Hamirpur	0			
Total	42665			



Source: Department of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Govt. of H.P.

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It has been exhibited from the above table that majority of the domestic tourists visited the district Kullu followed by Shimla and Sirmaur during the year 2020. While studying the status of foreign tourist who visited H. P. it has been observed that majority of the foreign tourists visited district Shimla followed by Kangra and Kullu district of H.P. It shows that natural and scenic beauty of the state attracts the domestic as well as foreigner tourist to visit this beautiful state of Himalaya. Thus, state govt. must provide all the facilities and safety to all the adventure and sports tourism lovers across the world.

Concept of Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism means a tourist activity that includes physical activity, a cultural exchange, or activities in nature and it is about connecting with a new culture or a new landscape and being physically active at the same time. In this type of tourism tourists engage in adventure activities such as trekking, climbing, rafting, scuba diving, or the likes. The basic aim of the adventure activities is to develop and enhances the spirit of adventure which is inherent in all human beings and inculcate self-reliance, confidence, discipline and leadership qualities.

It is a type of niche tourism, involving exploration or travel with a certain degree of risk (real or perceived), or physical danger which may require special skills and physical exertion. Adventure tourism attracts high value customers who are passionate and risk-taking. It can be leveraged to support local economy with sustainable practices.

Table 3: Theme wise performance of Districts and Potential Areas

S. No.	Theme	Existing Well Performing Districts	Potential Districts				
1	Adventure	Kullu, Chamba, Lahaul-Spiti	Kinnaur, Shimla	Mandi,	Sirmour,	Kangra	and

Source: Tourism Infrastructure Sustainable Development Plan for HP, 2019.

Himachal Pradesh houses several natural and man-made lakes which offer numerous opportunities. The state is also looking forward to provide access to man-made reservoirs for conducting water sports adventure activities. Apart from this, the fast-flowing rivers of Himachal are popular for activities like river rafting, white water river rafting, angling etc., and water zorbing, rappelling and overnight camping along the river banks.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify and analyze various adventurous and sports activities in the state of Himachal Pradesh.
- To examine recent trends in adventure and sports tourism in Himachal Pradesh.
- To find out major challenges or issues in the promotion of adventure and sports tourism in the state and also suggest viable solution for the promotion of the same in the state.

Literature Review

Sport tourism activities have generated enormous economic impacts not considering the social/cultural and intellectual benefits of tourism. A study of North American Convention Tourism Bureaus showed that sport accounted for 25% of the tourism receipts. (Research Unit, 1994) In a 1994 study, analysis of twenty-two "Tourism Event Schedules" from seven world geographic regions indicated that sports tourism activities represented 34% of the events.

This same study also showed that 42% of the scheduled days were sports tourism related. (Research Unit, 1994) Accordingly, the Sports Tourism Index (STIX) calculated that the direct contribution of sports tourism activities to overall tourism equated to 32%. And, based on growing domestic and

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international travel, forecasts for the year 2005 show that the gross output of tourism worldwide will reach 7.9 trillion dollars. (World Travel and Tourism Council, 1994).

Many sports spectators consider themselves to be much more than passive participants, although they are not actively taking part in the sport itself. Such spectators feel that they are inter acting with the active participants and, as such, might be described as experiencing the sport 'vicariously' through such participants. This might be true of spectators in the case of sports events, luxury sports tourism and tourism with sports content as noted above. However, as visits to sports attractions and museums become more widespread, such 'vicarious' involvement may also be a part of sports participation tourism, where the participation is the 'imagined' (Gammon, 2002) journey and vicarious' experience that takes place (Weed, 2008b, p. 10)

In 2002, Gibson (2002, p. 115) explicitly addressed the sport tourism/sports, tourism debate, arguing that the term 'sport tourism' should be used to "encompass a wider analysis of sport as a social institution rather than the micro view of individual sports" and that it is 'sport' that makes "sport tourism unique from other forms of tourism" (p. 115).

Need and Scope of the Study

Tourism is a multifaceted activity. Tourism is an important and fast growing industry in the world. It has become main sector of the economy in some countries while in other's it provides major source of finance for the development as foreign exchange earnings. India is perhaps the most appropriate address in the world of tourism which meets and matches the varied interest of tourist coming from all over the world. Tourism in H.P. is a unique experience, too ethereal to describe.

The main thrust of this study is to examine the adventure and sports tourism in Himachal Pradesh. It is the need of time to highlight the challenges and opportunities for the adventure and sports tourism in the state. The area of the present study is to diagnose the application of tourism policy in practice for the development of adventure and sports tourism to attract more and more tourists in the state. The universe of the present study is confined to study the activities related with adventure and sports tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

Research Methodology

This study is a descriptive research. It has been carried out to examine the adventure and sports tourism in Himachal Pradesh. The data required for the study was collected from secondary sources and data from reference books and official websites of tourism department has also been used. In the light of the objectives of the study, the information has been collected from Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, The India Tourism Development Corporation, Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation and Department of Tourism & Civil Aviation, Govt. of H.P., etc. Keeping in view the nature of study, the data drawn from various sources has been analyzed with the help of simple percentage, averages, charts, and graphs etc.

Analysis and Discussion

In this section adventure and sports related tourism activities available in the state, challenges and opportunities for adventure and sports related tourism in H P, effects of Covid-19 on tourism industry and provision for adventure and sports tourism in Tourism Policy, 2019 of Himachal Pradesh have been analyzed and discussed in detail.

Adventure and Sports Tourism and Tourism Policy, 2019 of HP

In the tourism policy, 2019 of H.P., it is emphasized that to achieve the objective to promote diversification through theme based development there is need to develop tourism activities and products on 10 themes -Eco, Agro, Health and Wellness, Heritage and Culture, adventure, lake, Snow,

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Film, Pilgrimage and MICE and to meet the objective to build capacity and develop quality human resource for the tourism industry, there is need to Strengthening HPTDB by including tourism experts like Lake Tourism, Civil Aviation, Adventure tourism so that the department has capacity to develop high standard infrastructure, create demand-oriented niche tourism products. There is also need to Skill up-gradation trainings to host communities through provision of advance courses in adventure sports activities, sustainability, communication, hospitality, etc. and professional certification of every group of tourism service providers such as tourist guides, cooks, drivers, adventure sports operators etc. shall be made mandatory through certified training programs. Information of the certified service providers shall be made readily available to tourists on appropriate media.

While ensuring safety and security of tourists at all destinations there is need to strengthen HP Aerosports rules (2004), HP River rafting rules (2005) by integrating safety standards as per Indian Adventure Tourism Guidelines 2018 and establishing operation guidelines for new and upcoming adventure sports activities like snow adventure activities, accommodation guidelines for tented accommodations, etc. alongwith mandatory formal certification programs for management of high-risk adventure sports. (Himachal Tourism, n.d.)

As far as incentives and concessions are concerned to the eligible tourism unit, it is clearly defined in the Tourism Policy, 2019 of H.P. that Eligible Tourism Project will mean a tourism project approved and registered by the Department of Tourism, Government of Himachal Pradesh. As per the policy, adventure tourism projects should have the requisite infrastructure, equipments and trained staff, along with appropriate safety and rescue set − up, that will provide tourists with an opportunity to undertake permissible adventure and such other activities like mountain climbing, bungee jumping, zip-line, river crossing, skywalk, rappelling, sailing, water rafting, angling, skiing, kayaking, water scooters, speed boating, paragliding, parasailing, hot-air ballooning, trekking, mountain-biking & camping etc. In the present tourism policy of Govt. H.P., there is a provision of capital investment subsidy for establishing a new Tourism Unit or Existing Tourism unit with expansion with minimum investment of (₹) 5 crores which is applicable for Adventure Tourism Projects/ Golf Resort/ Theme Parks/ Amusement Parks/ Sound and Light Show/ Laser Show/ Musical Fountain). The unit who fulfilling this conditions would be eligible for 5% of fixed capital investment with maximum ceiling up to subsidy (₹) 3 crore. Apart from this, there is also a provision of Excellence awards of ₹ 1 lakh which offers recognition and contribution to tourism growth. (Himachal Tourism, n.d.)

Various Adventurous and Sports Related Tourism Activities in H.P.

Adventure and sports related tourism in Himachal Pradesh has emerged out as one of the most important industries of India. There is no doubt that this Himalayan state has lot of potential for the development of the adventure and sports activities. The nature has blessed this state with natural beauty, peaceful natural environment, thick forests and wildlife, sacred shrines and historical monuments which is a boon for adventurous activities. Amongst other Himalayan region state, this state is unique and peculiar in the perspective of promotion of adventure and sports tourism in many ways as it attracts a large number of tourists throughout the world. (**Kumar, 2018**) Adventure and sports tourism industry also benefits the economic growth of the state. Himachal Pradesh is the land of the high hills and deep gorges, every nook and corner of the state is a playing field for adventure lovers. Blessed with spectacular and gorgeous mountains and river valleys, Himachal Pradesh is India's outdoor adventure playground. From rock climbing on the deadly terrains of Kinnaur to rapping on the mountains of Spiti valley to enjoying the treacherous Heli-skiing in Manali, if there is any adventurous activity, it can be shrewdly done in Himachal Pradesh. River rafting, camping, trekking, mountaineering, rock climbing, campaigning,

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trekking, motor cycling, motor biking, skiing and Heli-skiing are some of the prominent sports which can be enjoyed here by the tourists who visited this state for the same.

The tourism department of Himachal Pradesh makes all possible efforts and provides full supports to promote adventurous and sports related tourism activities in the state.

Camping: Camping in Himachal Pradesh is certainly the best way to reconnect with nature and there is no doubt that a trekking experience in Himachal is about the journeys and stops at various places to learn, observe, and absorb. The best spots for camping in the state are Beas Kund, Triund. Malana Pulga- Kheer Ganga and Kullu etc.

Heli Skiing: It is such an adventure in Himachal Pradesh where tourist can explore great heights and breathtaking glaciers. In Kullu district of H.P., Manali is the matchless destination for all ski enthusiasts who want to explore the challenging topography and stunning beauty of repeated helicopter rides. The passes of Rohtang Pass, Chanderkhani Pass, Mount Hanuman Tibba and Mount Deo Tibba are the impeccable destination and best identifies spots for Heli skiing in Himachal Pradesh.

Mountain Biking & Motor Biking: The facilities for Mountain Biking & Motor Biking are available in many parts of Himachal Pradesh. This Himalayan state is a hidden treasure for adventure enthusiasts, especially for bikers and a ride on the roads of Himachal Pradesh will fill the heart of every paddler with satisfaction.

Mountaineering & Rock Climbing: The exceptional and serene landscapes of Himachal Pradesh is the best place in India to enjoy daring activities. Himachal Pradesh tourism department has offered an opportunity for Mountaineering & Rock Climbing in the state. The mountain ranges of Dhauladhar, Pir Panjal and Chandra Bhaga in Himachal Pradesh are the best places to enjoy rock climbing and mountaineering in Himachal Pradesh. Beas Kund region, Seven Sisters, Mount Deo Tibba the lower ridges of Hanuman Tibba and Deo Tibba, Chandratal and Malana glaciers are most popular amongst mountaineering and ice-climbers.

Adventure Water Sports Activities: The tourism department of Himachal Pradesh has provided and offered various adventure water sports activities to the tourists who visited this state for the purpose of enjoying these activities. The most popular water sports offered by the Tourism Department are Rafting, Kayaking, Rowing, and Canoeing Sailing. In Himachal Pradesh, water sports activities can be enjoyed in Sutlej, Chenab, Beas and Ravi River streams during the summer and autumn season.

Angling & Fishing: The water of Himachal Pradesh is so clear that one can easily see the sea bed and meadows. The lovers of angling and fishing can enjoy these activities at Rohru, Seema, Mandil, Saandhsu, Tikri, and Dhamwari.

Paragliding: Himachal Pradesh is known as Paragliding Capital of India. Paragliding is a wonderful sport that not only enables adventurers to enjoy the excitement of flying, but also admire the wonderful panoramic views. The most popular spots for the paragliding lovers are Bir Billing in Kangra Valley and Solang Nala in Manali, Rohtang Pass near Manali, Kothi below Rohtang Pass, Bijli Mahadev near Kullu and Bandla Ridge in Bilaspur.

Skiing: The government of Himachal Pradesh has developed facilities for the lovers of skiing in Himachal Pradesh. It is one of the most popular adventurous activity in Himachal and ski slopes of Himachal Pradesh provide a platform for the adventurers- from beginners to professionals. Solang Nala (Manali), Narkanda (Hindustan Tibet Road), Kufri, Mahasu ridge (Above Kufri), Rohtang Valley, and Hanuman Tibba are the best skiing destination and spots in H. P.

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Challenges and Opportunities of Adventure & Sports Tourism

Himachal Pradesh is a hill state of India with its natural beauty and surroundings. The tourism department of Himachal Pradesh makes all efforts and provides full supports to promote adventurous tourism activities and this Himalayan state offers a wide range of sports activities for adventure lovers. Inspite of all these supports there are some challenges and problems in the way of adventure and sports related tourism activities available in the state. The major challenges faced by the tourists or adventure enthusiasts are inadequacy of transport facilities, lack of good infrastructure facilities, risk factors and lack of safety measures. Lack of co-operation between local community and tourism department is also one of the major problem find in the success of adventure and sports tourism in the state. Lack of trained and professional guides, weaknesses in marketing system for the promotion of these activities across the world and lack of funds and information channels are other challenges that create obstacles in the way of its progress. These challenges identified should be not only traced but also must be eliminated by taking the necessary measures like to facilitate some protection quality, to frame out strict rules to make the adventure tourism eco-friendly, to improve infrastructure facilities like washrooms, roads, hotels, taxis, parking, etc. for the tourists. (Malik, 2006)

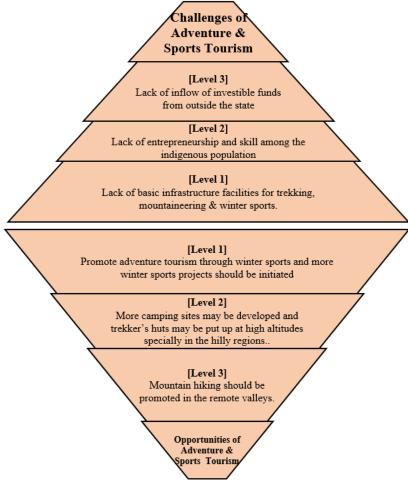


Figure 1: Challenges and Opportunities of Adventure & Sports Tourism Covid-19 and Tourism Industry

The tourism sector has dramatically affected by the widespread of COVID-19 and may remain for a longer time. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19), which is one of its kind of humanitarian disasters, has affected people and businesses worldwide, triggering a global economic crisis. In this aspect, the

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tourism sector is not being left behind. As the world is facing an unprecedented global health, social and economic emergency with the COVID-19 pandemic, travel and tourism is among the most affected sectors with airplanes on the ground, hotels closed and travel restrictions put in place in virtually all countries around the world. The arrival of foreign tourists to India from different parts of the world has reduced by 68% in March 2020 compared to the previous month. It has a great impact on revenue generated from tourism in the form of FEE. Following the border closure, cancellation of international flights, and a series of lockdowns, the tourist's arrival rate in India has been highly affected. The travel industry, which includes airlines, hotels and restaurants, will shrink by 50% in 2020, which would mean a significant loss of jobs and revenue. (OECD, 2019)

Findings

It is believed that adventure and sports tourism is emerging as one of the fastest growing segments in India with more and more travellers are opting for experiential tourism. The latest emphasis of the Ministry of Tourism to make adventure tourism as the next engine of tourism growth by opening of 124 new peaks definitely augurs well for global adventure market. Adventure tourism is resilient, supports local economies, attracts high value customers and encourages sustainable practices. The Union Ministry of Tourism has come out with Guidelines for Adventure Tourism in 2018. In conclusion, there is an immense potential for development of adventure tourism in India since India has all the requirements for developing all kinds of adventure tourism activities possible. Adventure tourism is a space that needs to be looked upon in more depth as it does not only contribute to the overall growth of the industry but ensures the ecology, mountains and the forests are safe.

Himachal Pradesh is a beautiful state and a popular tourist destination for those who love adventure sports. It is one of the best places where adventure sports can flourish because of the diverse scenic beauty and snow-capped mountains. In other words, it can be said that along with the beautiful landscape and scenic beauty, the state also synonymous with adventure sports. Tourists visited this state each year to enjoy the diversity of adventure sports. The state govt. is also in contact with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to provide some grant by way of tourism infrastructure development project for the development of tourism infrastructure in the urban and rural areas of Himachal Pradesh. The main focus of this collaboration would be to create basic facilities and tourism infrastructure in rural areas of the State and develop new tourist destinations in the state. The Tourism Development Corporation & Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation, H P actively and continuously working on the policies, schemes, rules and guidelines related adventure and sports tourism in the state. In this direction Himachal Pradesh Miscellaneous Adventure Activities Rules, 2017, River Rafting Rules, 2005, Aero Sports Rules, The Himachal Pradesh Tourism Policy, 2019 and Himachal Pradesh Miscellaneous Adventure Activities Rules, 2021 are framed and operationalized for the larger interest of the tourists visited Himachal Pradesh.

Suggestions

To promote the adventure and sports related tourism in the state, following are some suggestions:

- To increase the flow of domestic and foreigner tourists in the state, adequate infrastructure facilities like washrooms, roads, hotels, taxis, parking, etc. must be available at all the tourists places of the state.
- Proper training of adventure trainers and availability of the guide are the need of the hour. They all must be aware about the need and the requirements of the adventurous tourists.
- There should be proper destination management and adequate provision for disaster management.

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- Standardization and certification of safety norms for certain adventure and sports related tourism activities operated and offered in the state must be ensured by the Tourism Development Corporation & Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation, H.P.
- To promote adventure and sports tourism in the state, more travel packages are required to be generated at low cost by the travel agents and tour operators.
- Untapped and unexplored tourist places are also to be developed and all these places must be connected with all kinds of means of transport whatever is required to visit these places.
- Proper coordination amongst public and private sector for procuring the equipment for adventure sports is also required to promote the adventure and sports tourism in this hilly state.
- The state Govt. and Tourism department must ensure the adequate transport facilities at all the tourist places of the state and instructed the concerned authorities for the continuous improvement in the air, road and rail connectivity across the state.
- For the more popularity and promotion of adventure and sports tourism in the state, there should be more and more use of advanced technology like apps with features including maps, list of visiting places, contacts of taxi operators, information about hotel booking etc.
- While making policies, rules and guidelines for the promotion of adventure and sports tourism in the state, the concept of eco-friendly tourism must be taken into consideration.

In short, if the above minor changes are introduced and precautions are taken by state government and Tourism Department, H P, it is possible to make the adventure and sports tourism of the state, a success in a big way.

Conclusion

In the recent years, Himachal Pradesh is emerging as a hub of adventure tourism amongst all the hilly states of the Himalayan region. There is no doubt that it is one of the most important economic sectors of the state, which has a potentiality to create new job opportunities for the unemployed local youth and also help in . The state has a great potential for adventure and sports activities. Govt. of India also emphasized on development and promotion of adventure tourism in the Himalayan region. The Tourism Development Corporation & Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation, H.P. also focused on adventurous activities in the state in its tourism policy, 2005.

It is the need of the hour to develop tourism in rural, unexplored areas and improve the infrastructure of the towns and also generate employment for the local youths. There should be more focus on diversification of tourism in new and rural areas by developing tourism infrastructure, create livelihood and employment opportunities in these area. Efforts should also be made to create new tourist destinations for the tourists with self-sustaining infrastructure and facilities.

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