

Sustainable Development of Eco- Sports Tourism in Manipur

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Abstract

Ecological sports tourism is a fertile ground for sustainable development though the task is challenging. Manipur being among the top ten hotspot biodiversity rich zones in the world and the sports powerhouse of India, ecological sports tourism in the state is a promising area for attaining sustainable development goals (SDGs). Research on ecological sports tourism in India is relatively low in comparison to other countries. The present study explored the potential areas of ecological sports tourism resources in Manipur from the angles of regional planning, multi-ethnic indigenous sports, industrialization programming and design. The methods adopted in the study were mainly descriptive and conceptual. Based on secondary data, SWOT analysis, SDGs through eco-sports tourism, features and resource analysis, planning and designing and countermeasures and suggestions was established in the context of Manipur for sustainable development of eco- sports tourism. These related factors that influence tourist motivation and satisfaction degree include the ecological environment; natural landscape, human environment, service experience, eco-sports tourism facilities and the eco-sports services. Therefore the present study can provide insight and appropriate strategies and countermeasures in terms of infrastructure, service content and service standard to attain sustainable development through eco- sports tourism in Manipur.

Keywords: Eco-sports tourism, Indigenous sports, Sustainable development, Manipur,

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Introduction

Sports tourism has developed at a fast speed in the developed countries. Game and sports is a positive force in terms of health and recreation, and provides social benefits for billions of participants; however it has a simultaneous impact on the natural world. With the rapid development of tourism, eco- sports tourism has become a research hotspot for sustainable development. The main characteristics of ecological sports develop the sports activities in the natural environment and social and ecological environment (Zheng Xiaoxiang, 2005). Forest Park tourism has been favoured as a healthy modern tourism form (Guoxiao Ping et al., 2015), both to carry the natural regulation of the ecosystem, to meet the needs of eco-sports tourists in person, and meet the ecological sports tourists leisure, sports, health and other functions. On the tourists eco-sports tourism research can focus on tourist behavior, tourists perception decision-making, visitors will pay, travel destination market segmentation and tourism travel structure (Chen Ke, et al, 2010). Zhu Zhi, (2015) studied the satisfaction of eco-sports tourism tourists and analyzed the motivations of tourists' tourism. Ecological sports tourism resources are those items which include traditional ethnic sports items, historical and traditional culture resources (Wang,

2005). Sustainable development, on the other hand, has been an important concern for both tourism (McCool, 2015) and sport (Taks, 2013) scholars. In the light of above literatures, the aims and objectives of the present study is to explore key areas of eco- sports tourism resources and its characteristics in Manipur from the angles of regional planning, multi-ethnic indigenous sports, industrialization programming and design and to carry out strategies for sustainable development through ecological sports tourism in Manipur.

Methodology

The material and methods of the present study is adopted purely descriptive and conceptual based on secondary sources of data. The study is incorporated with SWOT analysis, sustainable development goals (SDGs), the features and resource analysis, strategies to develop eco-sports tourism in Manipur and its countermeasures and suggestion.

SWOT Analysis

It can determine the intrinsic strengths (S) and weaknesses (W) of the site and the opportunities (O) and threats (T) that the environment offers. The SWOT analysis is, therefore, may be made with the following components of SWOT

A. STRENGTH

The State of Manipur has many destinations that can cater to religious, adventure, and eco-sports tourism segments.

- i) It offers a cultural treat through the Manipuri dance forms, and adventure treats through avenues for sports.
- ii) Unique Loktak Lake.
- iii) Shirui Hills.
- iv) Dzuko Valley.
- v) Kangla Fort.
- vi) Keibul Lamjao National Park.
- vii) Polo.
- viii) Variety of indigenous sports of different ethnic groups.
- ix) Exploration of caves and waterfalls.
- x) INA, Moirang.
- xi) Khongjom War Memorial Complex.

B. WEAKNESSES

- i) Security and internal conflicts – both in terms of perception and reality.
- ii) Lack of Visa-on-Arrival facility for Myanmar's citizens at Moreh-Tamu border.
- iii) Limited tourism infrastructure facilities, particularly quality, experience, and site services.
- iv) The lack of good road infrastructure leads to poor connectivity with the Tourist spots/destinations.

C. OPPORTUNITIES

- i) The presence of border towns like Moreh and the international boundary with Myanmar has been looked at as an opportunity to develop border markets.
- ii) Linkages to the circuits within the region with significant highway development connecting destinations across States and Southeast Asian Countries.
- iii) We are fostering coordination with other States on developing tourism.
- iv) Opening up of Railway line up to Imphal.
- v) Full-fledged Bir Tikendrajit International Air port , Imphal

D. THREATS

- i) Instability and perception of lack of security in the region can potentially affect tourism movement.
- ii) The continuous fear of an unstable environment can make the tourism investment climate unattractive.
- iii) Over use and commercialization of sensitive eco-zones may lead to depletion of resources and dilution of attraction.
- iv) Inability to utilize the currently available assets due to lack of workforce in Manipur tourism.

Eco-Sports Tourism and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Eco-sports tourism can contribute to sustainable development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) if we properly designed and developed in a proper manner. As a segment of tourism, sport tourism also helps achieve sustainable development in a distinct way stemming from its characteristics. The comparative strength of sport tourism lies in (1) engagement in physical activities, (2) opportunities for interactions, and (3) high development potential almost anywhere in small events or light activities.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	How Eco-sports tourism can contribute to SDGs	What needs to be considered when developing eco-sport tourism and achieving the SDGs
SDG 1 – End poverty in all its forms everywhere SDG 8 - Promote sustainable economic growth and decent work for all	i) It can provide Jobs avenues, income opportunities and Competitiveness.	i) Partnerships and community involvement is highly needed ii) Hiring local people, encouraging local entrepreneurs and utilizing local products iii) The sports events should be designed for good cause and safety.
SDG 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	i) Sport tourism enhances physical and mental well-being of participants. It helps maintain or improve health of tourists.	i) It is preferable to promote sport activities not only to visitors but also local residents for health and well-being of their own.
SDG 10 – Reduce inequality SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities	Accessible sport tourism products may facilitate people with disabilities, both residents and visitors alike, with opportunities for sport.	Eco-sport tourism should be considered as an accelerator for social inclusiveness with local needs taken into consideration.
SDG 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns SDG 13 –Appropriate action to combat climate change and its impacts SDG 14 – Life below water SDG 15 – Life on land	i) It can enhancing awareness and environmental measures ii) Nature-based sport tourism provides opportunities to directly experience and enjoy the nature.	i) Sport tourism must be developed taking into account sustainability of natural resources including biodiversity. ii) Tourism operators should make the best efforts in taking environmental measures and environmentally friendly way
SDG 16 – Peace, Justice & Strong & institutions	i) It provides encounters between people of diverse cultural backgrounds through sport	i) It is important to ensure opportunities where the locals and visitors can interact.

SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals	activities.	
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5. The features and main resource analysis of eco- sports tourism in Manipur

The possibility of features and resources of eco- sports tourism in Manipur can be analysed with the following reasons.

- i) Manipur has rich resources in landscape and variety of indigenous games and sports
- ii) Manipur's economic status is improving and people's living standards are rising;
- iii) The increasing stress on work and study makes people need richer cultural life;
- iv) The success of indigenous and combat sports events has stimulated the development of sports tourism;
- v) As a origin place of polo and traditional style of polo game can be attracted the foreign tourists

In Manipur, resource base is profound for the investigation and development of multi-ethnic eco- sports tourism and maximum attention should be paid to investment and development of high-grade ecological sports tourism industry. The origin of modern *Polo*, the indigenous games of *Yubi Lakpi*, *Kang Sanaba*, *Arambai*, *Thang-Ta* and *Mukna*, *Mukna kangjei* will prove to be a thrilling experience for any enthusiastic domestic and foreign tourists. Therefore, eco sports tourism industry will bring favourable benefits of society, economy and ecology (Zhu, 2001). Through a systematic investigation on such resources and combination with reality, characteristic resource evaluation and development system of history and culture could be developed and followed by production of industrialization (Zheng, 2005).

6. The Strategies to develop ecological sports tourism in Manipur

Tourism policies become more important in view of India's Act East Policy, the Trans-Asian Highways and Railways and Gateway to South-East Asia. By looking the importance of eco-sports tourism, the Government needs to explore and develop the scenic natural beauty of the State in a sustainable manner. Manipur has innumerable prospect for eco-sports tourism as enumerated below

- (i) **Loktak Lake:** It is located at Bishnupur district The lake is very suitable site for water sports like for water sports such as Canoeing, Kayaking and Rowing events.
- (ii) **Dzukou Valley:** It is situated in Senapati District famous for the Dzukou Lily (*Lilium chitragadae*). It is also famous for the snow fall during the month of January & February. The valley may be selected as one of the eco-sports tourism by selecting appropriate sports item.
- (iii) **Shiroi hill and its Shiroi Lily (*Lilium mackliniae*) in Ukhrul District.** *The place is suitable for eco-sports tourism.* There is a best trekking site in and around the Kangkhui cave. It is a remarkable natural lime-stone cave.
- (iv) **Sadu Chiru Waterfall** belongs to the Sadar Hills in the foothills of Bishnupur District near the Sadu Chiru Village. It is also suitable for eco-sports tourism.
- (v) Koirengi Old Airfield, Chingnungkok of Imphal East District and *Barak River* is the best site for parasailing, paragliding, rafting as exciting eco-friendly adventure sports.
- (vi) **Ebudhou Marjing Polo complex:** It is located in Imphal East district. At the centre of the complex, there is 122 ft tall statue, depicting a Sagol Kangjei player. This magnificent work of art serves as a symbol of pride for the people of the state, and a source of inspiration for visitors from all over the world.

- (vii) **The Kangla Fort:** The Kangla , officially known as Kangla Forte, is an old fortified palace at Imphal in the Manipur state of India. The fort is taken as sacred place to the Meiteis. The Kangla is proposed to be declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This Forte is needed to add some components of eco-sport items in the plenty space of its surroundings.
- (viii) **Manipur Olympian Park:** It was constructed in Sangaitheh area, Imphal West District to honour and encourage 19 Olympian from Manipur. Manipur also known as the powerhouse of sports for excellent performance in the field of sports. This park is very suitable for eco-sports tourism.

Countermeasures and suggestions

Previous studies conformed the following several key innovative ideas which can be applied as main criteria of sustainable development countermeasure and suggestions to design and develop eco-sports tourism.

- i) Innovation in this area is to be based on the investigation, analysis and evaluation of eco- sports tourism industry, facilitates understanding the heterogeneity and value generality of natural ecological resources and measures of resource protection and strategy of resource exploitation and utilization (Liu, 2005).
- ii) The local self government and tourism investors, operators such enterprise also should pass local policies and tourism planning approaches for environmental protection.
- iii) The idea of strengthen the forest park mountain with aesthetic views between sports leisure and sports competition.
- iv) We need to focus more attention to build the forest park eco-sports tourism theme and shape of the tourism
- v) We need to provide good security services for tourists need to: improve the security knowledge in the scenic spot, build tourists reliable sports tourism environment and facilities.
- vi) Public Private Community Partnership policy is the key instrument for sustainable and economic development of ecological sports tourism.

Conclusion

Despite there are various measures being taken by the State and the Centre to upgrade tourism potential in Manipur it still remains one of the least preferred choice as a tourist destination. Image improvement, infrastructure up gradation, and administrative and security concerns need to be handled for tourism to flourish as a development industry with community participation. However, this review can provide insight and appropriate strategies and service content and service level to achieve sustainable development goals through ecological sports tourism in Manipur.

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