

# Tourist data in himachal: an analysis



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Himachal Pradesh is one of India's best tourist attraction regions, with its green valleys, snow covered Himalayan ranges and unique beauty, it is indeed a comfortable place for tourists. The region has a rich cultural heritage that attracts thousands of tourists each year.

The outer fringe of Himachal is formed by the Shiwalik hills, which are characterized by shallow valleys and dense scrub forests. The mid ranges have the majestic Himalayan cedar and the spruces followed by alpine meadows that intersperse themselves with the snow clad peaks of the Greater Himalaya. (tourism policy 2005)

The variances in climate and forest cover in Himachal make it attractive in different seasons of the year. The region also has a varied topography with beautiful flora and fauna. According to tourism policy 2005, Himachal has 32 sanctuaries, that is; Simbalwara (Sirmour), Churdhar, Chail (Solan), Maharana Pratap Sagar (Kangra) Manali (Kullu), Kanwar (Kullu), Kalatop Khajjiar (Chamba) and Daranghati (Shimla)., 2 national parks, Pin Valley National Park, Spiti and the Great Himalayan National Park, Kullu; and 3 game reserves, Kufri (Shimla), Manali (Kullu) and Gopalpur (Kangra).

There has been an increasing number of tourist visits to Himachal since the 90s to date. Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur districts have emerged as the most common destinations. Table 1. Below shows the increasing rate of tourist visits in the region. Visitors come from different nations all over the world, some of which are; United Kingdom, United States of America, France, Germany, Canada, and Malaysia. There are also domestic visitors that have

been recorded and the ratios predict that there are more domestic visitors as compared to foreign visitors.

The trend of tourists' visits follows the climate seasons of Himachal, the seasons in Himachal are not different from those of the whole India, India has quarterly climatic seasons, occurring every three months in a year. The first quarter is snowing and stormy, the second quarter is dusty because of the sun, it is a dry season, the third is the rainy season and the fourth is just fine weather. The tourist season normally begins in the snowfall and the numbers escalate in the summer.

### **More Data on Tourists Visits to Himachal**

Number of domestic tourists between 2003 and 2004 was 5 million [HT May 2004]

Number of foreign tourists between 2003 and 2004 was 15, 000

Total Number of tourists in 2007 was 720, 000 [CNEI Jan 2007]

Increase of foreign tourist inflow from 2005 to 2006 was 20%

Target for foreign tourist inflow from 2006 to 2007 was 18%

### **Table3: Tourist Visitation to Himachal**

**YEAR(Monthly visitors)**

**DOMESTIC**

**FOREIGN**

2001

521, 866

8, 171

2003

673, 914

8, 501

Source: Hindu times 16th May 2004

In 2003 the average population in Kulu Valley found in Himachal during summer was 50, 000; the number of foreign visitor to the Kulu valley is 35, 000 annually. The number of visitors to Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh during the peak season can go up to 10, 000 daily.

### **Government's Involvement in Tourism**

In 2005 the government came up with a policy to improve tourism in Himachal and other areas and below are the objectives of the policy;

- (1) To establish Himachal Pradesh as a leading tourist destination in the country and abroad;
- (2) To make tourism a prime engine for economic development and prosperity of the State and as a major means for providing employment;
- (3) To encourage a strong and sustainable private sector participation in creation of tourism infrastructure especially through public private partnerships;

(4) To promote sustainable tourism, which is not only environmentally compatible but also leads to economic betterment of the rural people;

(5) To attract quality tourists and to increase their stay in the State;

(6) To safeguard the State's natural and manmade heritage;

(7) To encourage civil societies & non-governmental organizations for promotion & the conducting of tourism related activities;

(8) To position Himachal Pradesh as a one stop destination for adventure tourism;

The Tourism Department proposes to work actively with the Wild life Wing of the Forest Department to further develop and improve wild life parks/zoos, bird watching towers and other public utility services for the facility of the tourists. The government plans to set up a reasonable fee for the maintenance of the parks.

The state government together with the central government is also planning to make some efforts in developing the unexplored destinations to improve the sanitation, the accommodation, the parking, the roads, toilets, beautification and land scaping of areas that are of interest to the tourists. According to the government efforts will be made to keep these areas clean. And in the area of construction there is a plan to limit construction so as to control the population and hence reduce congestion in these new areas, the construction that is to be accepted is supposed to preserve the architecture and ecology of the state.

The government is concerned with preserving the cultural uniqueness of tourist areas so as to maintain the tourist visitations.

By focusing on quality tourists the State Government also aims at promoting sustainable tourism and encouraging the private sector to develop tourism related infrastructure in the State – without disturbing the existing ecology and environment.(India tourism Policy 2005)

To promote tourism in the countryside and to lesser-known areas, appropriate infrastructure will be developed within available resources. Himachal was earlier known only for the summer season. Efforts are being made to break the seasonality factor and tourism products have been diversified to attract the tourists in other seasons too.

### **Involvement of Other Local and National Authorities in Hospitality**

According to the tourism policy, the private sector will continue to be encouraged to set up guest houses for which subsidy will be provided from the State budget. Tented accommodation will be encouraged with local participation so that maximum benefits accrue to the local economy.

The government has also set up tourism councils under the Tourism Act 2000 in the tourist attraction areas so that some fee is charged from the trekkers and tourists the proceeds of which will go to the locals for the maintenance and upkeep of the tourism related infrastructure and for regulating tourism on sustainable basis.

## **To Improve on Transport**

The Manali Leh route which has already become a favorite for both domestic as well as international tourists will be further improved in coordination with the Government of J & K and efforts would be made to link it to the Buddhist Circuits of Shimla – Kinnaur- Spiti – Udaipur -Pangi and Palampur - Dharamshala – Dalhousie.

## **Economic Implication of Tourism in India and Himachal in Particular**

Tourism is a key sector in India's economy. It is presently India's third largest foreign exchange earner after garments, and gems and jewellery. The best way in which the tourism industry is helping in income generation is through generating employment opportunities to the locals, hence improving their life styles. Many women and youths have gotten jobs in hotels, travel agencies, airline services, making art pieces and other cultural activities. Tourism also offers potential for utilizing natural resources like landscapes, rivers, beaches, mountains and others for the economic benefit of the population. The tourism industry employs more than 3% of the total Indian labor force while about 23 million persons derive their livelihood from tourism indirectly. So many new jobs are being created as the sector grows and because of this it is clear that tourism has become a very important sector in the Indian economy.

The economic contribution of tourism income to state revenue is around 5 billion Rs annually. (Hindu times 12th May 2004) which is 8%, the tourism Policy of 2005 proposes to increase it to 15% by the year 2020 and the contribution of tourism to Himachal Pradesh's state domestic product is 2%.

## **The Hospitality State of Himachal;**

By 2003 Himachal had 53 hotels, having 963 rooms and 2, 052 beds; there were 60 restaurants and cafes, 25 luxury coaches, 1 Tata Sumo. These are all HPTDC (Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation) tourist facilities. News has it that some of these facilities have been privatized and others are also up for the same. Himachal Pradesh has 1, 512 hotels that have been registered by the tourism department and these have a bed capacity of 32, 302. In Manali there are 14, 000 registered hotel beds.

## **More Data on Hotels**

### **Hotels in Shimla**

Shimla being the capital city of Himachal Pradesh is always frequented by visitors either on official duty or for holidaying. Shimla boasts of a few heritage hotels in addition to luxury and comfort hotels.

Hotel Woodville Palace is a premier heritage hotel has 31 rooms, Hotel Springfields is spread over 4 acres of land but only has 11 rooms. Guests checking into this heritage hotel experience a wonderful blend of old world charm and modern facilities; it is a hotel for high class tourists.

Another hotel is the Cecil belonging to the Oberoi group, is a deluxe luxury hotel having 79 aesthetically designed elegant rooms.

The other hotels in Shimla include Hotel Span Resort, Hotel Snowcrest Manor, Hotel Ashok, Hotel Banon Reosrt, Ram Regency Honeymoon Inn, Hotel Devlok, and Manali Inn. The Regent Center Point and Apple Valley Resort.



## **Five Star Hotels in Shimla**

There are three major five star hotels in Shimla. Those are Radisson Shimla, Hotel Windflower Hall and Shilon Resort. These 5 star hotels offer excellent accommodation facilities and are highly preferred by visitors.

## **Four Star Hotels in Shimla**

There are three major four star hotels in Shimla. Those are Hotel Asia The Dawn, Hotel Quality Inn Himdev and Hotel Pineview. These hotels are well known for the facilities offered by them and are highly favored by visitors too.

## **Three Star Hotels in Shimla**

The three star hotels in Shimla are well known for providing visitors with good facilities at reasonable prices. The three star hotels in Shimla are Hotel Ashiana Regency, East Bourne Resort, Baljees Regency, Hotel Combermere, Fair Mount Shimla and, Himani's Premium Shimla.

## **Heritage Hotels in Shimla**

The heritage hotels in Shimla are normally buildings with historical importance or are old buildings. The leading heritage hotels in Shimla are Chapslee Palace, Hotel Oberoi Shimla, Clarke's Hotel, Woodville Palace Resorts and Hotel Springfields.

## **Luxury Hotels in Shimla**

There is a wide range of luxury hotels in Shimla. Those are The Cecil (Oberoi Group), Shimla, Radisson Jass Hotel , Shimla, Wildflower (Oberoi Group), Mashobra, Hotel Willow Banks, ( The Mall ) Shimla, Woodville Palace, Shimla,

Hotel Combermere, Shimla and The Destination, Kalka-Shimla Highway, near Kandaghat.

### **Deluxe Hotels in Shimla**

There are a lot of deluxe hotels in Shimla. Those are Woodpark hotel, (near Kufri), Shimla, Hotel Silverine, Shimla, Ashiana Regency, Shimla, Brightland Hotel, Shimla, Hotel Baljees Regency, Shimla, Hotel Himdev, Shimla, Hotel Surya, Shimla, Hotel Leela Regency, Shimla and, Honeymoon Inn, Shimla.

### **Standard Hotels in Shimla**

There are eight major standard hotels in Shimla. Those are Hotel Victory, Shimla, Hotel Shingar, Shimla, Hotel De Park, Shimla, Sukh Sagar Resort, Shimla, Hotel Himland West, Shimla, Hotel Blossom, Shimla, WILDSIDE- Eco Retreat & Campsite, Shimla and Cedar Heights Resort, Shimla.

### **Budget Hotels in Shimla**

The budget hotels in Shimla are for those who want good facilities at lesser costs. There are five major budget hotels in Shimla. Those are Galleu Resort, Shimla, Hotel Mayur, Shimla, Park Woods Resort, Shimla, Hotel Dreamland, Shimla, and Hotel Taj Palace, Shimla. This is where most of the domestic visitors with a relatively low but not so low standard of life spend their nights when they visit Himachal.

### **Banjara Camps and Retreats in Shimla**

There are 5 major banjara camps and retreats in the vicinity of Shimla. Those are Sangla Valley, Himachal, Mori Retreat, Shimla, Thanedar Retreat, Shimla, Sarahan Retreat and Shoja Retreat, Shimla.

## **Resorts in Shimla**

There are a couple of resorts in Shimla that are well known for the superb facilities offered by them. The major resorts in Shimla are Snow King Retreat, Whistling Pine Resorts and The Chalets Naldehra.

## **Hotels in Kullu Manali**

Kullu Manali is among the most visited hill stations not only in Himachal Pradesh but also in India. A few of the notable hotels in Kullu Manali include Hotel Span Resort on the River Beas banks, Hotel Snowcrest Manor, Hotel Banon Resort, Ram Regency Honeymoon Inn, Sagar Resorts, and Manali Inn.

The other noteworthy hotels in this north Indian hilly state are Hotel Grand View in Dalhousie, Hotel Hill Top in Chamba, Hotel Aupam Resort in Dharmsala, Hotel Taragarh Palace in Taragarh, and the Judge's Court in Kangra.

## **About Transport in Himachal**

Because of shortage of vehicles in Himachal, there are many other vehicles from out of Manali that are used for tourist activities, the number of vehicles entering Manali on a daily basis are over 1, 000 during the peak season. The number of vehicles heading to Rohtang Pass during the peak season can go over 2, 000 vehicles daily.

During the peak season, many vehicles come to these tourist areas causing a lot of traffic jam and therefore discomfort to the tourists, the traffic jam can go on for about two hours or so, which is time consuming on the side of the site seers. This is also attributed to the size and number of roads which seems less as compared to the number of visitors trafficking Himachal

Pradesh for tourism. Also because of development purposes the towns are under construction, for example in Shimla, the roads have had several disturbances because of the electricity boards that have been digging from time to time and not only them but also the telecommunications people as well as the road constructors.

Traffic is not only experienced by the vehicle owners but also the increasing number of pedestrians is becoming a problem in this tourist area, the malls and shopping are no longer as attractive because of the masses that crowd the places, dropping all sorts of waste papers, waste bottles making the place so hard to maintain, the government has been trying to find ways of improving the situation but there is still a lot of work to be done in order to ensure that the environment is taken care of. Because of the different developments the forest areas of Shimla have not survived the saw and many trees have been lost in the process. The rise in population has led to increased air pollution in the area; the mountainous areas are no longer as clean and attractive as they used to be. The pollution levels goes to the peak during the winter season because of the heating machines which use coal and others wood, releasing a lot of carbon monoxide into the atmosphere, and it reduces in the rainy season. The pollution is also increasing because of the vehicles that use fuel for their running, the exhaust into the atmosphere is increasing day by day and it is worse during the peak tourist seasons, burning garbage is another factor leading to increased pollution.

Below is a SWOT analysis that has been carried out on Himachal Tourism

SWOT refers to Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

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**According to the tourism policy of 2005 the STRENGTHS are:**

Himachal is one of the rare places in the world offering five distinct seasons, thus having potential to attract tourist inflow round the year;

It is both politically and socially stable.

India is Recognized as a peaceful and hospitable State;

The climate is healthy.

It is a pollution free environment;

Offers a rare conglomerate of eco-tourism, pilgrimage, adventure, culture, heritage, leisure, wilderness etc.;

Fairly good infrastructure;

High literacy;

Rich history and heritage that has something to offer to all.

Its Buddhist monasteries, which are of thousand years of old, ancient temples, churches and cemeteries;

Special package of incentives for setting up of tourism units;

Strong political will to promote tourism;

**WEAKNESSES:**

Negligible air and rail link in the State;

Inadequate flow of foreign tourists;

Non-disbursal of tourists round the year, putting severe strains on civic infrastructure during the peak season;

Lack of trained tourist guides at important tourist places and historical tourist sites;

Saturation at the established tourists destinations;

No new major tourists destination has come up recently;

Lack of adequate parking places at important tourist places;

Poor marketing of the State abroad and inadequate marketing within the country;

Very little budget;

Problem of land acquisition;

Problem of conversion of forest land.

## **OPPORTUNITIES:**

Strong potential for activity based tourism such as white water rafting, Paragliding, trekking, mountaineering, water sports, mountain biking, Car Rallies etc.;

A strong base for heritage tourism to attract persons from all walks of society and religious beliefs;

To develop an ideal destination for nature lovers by promoting eco-tourism;

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Create synergy between heritage and pilgrimage tourism;

Development of wetlands of the State to attract nature lovers especially bird watchers;

Promote the State as an open university and learning centre in mythology, anthropology and ornithology etc.;

Position it as an ideal destination for the film industry;

Himachal has something to offer to persons of all ages, groups, beliefs and interests. There is unlimited scope for development of varied tourist packages;

Himachal can become one of the leading adventure destinations in the world;

Promote wilderness tourism for lovers and seekers of nature, peace and quiet.

Create new destinations in yet unexplored but beautiful areas. This would also ease the burden on established tourist destinations.

## **THREATS:**

Tremendous strain leading to collapse, at times, of civic amenities at leading tourist destinations during the season;

Haphazard growth & construction threatening the environment, especially at the leading tourist destinations;

An alarming growth of concrete structures creating a disharmony with the local environment;

Unscrupulous commercialization of tourism could erode the social and cultural values;

Aggressive competition amongst the leading tourists States and a strong promotion of tourism by other States;

Lack of coordinated strategy by the different Government Departments;

A large increase in volume and limited increase in value;

Poor garbage/ waste disposal posing threat to the environment.

## **Discussion and Analysis of Data**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

According to the data above, the number of tourists coming to India and to Himachal Pradesh in particular increases every year, on average the number increases by 10, 000 tourists annually, this has an implication that the income generation of the nation through ecotourism in Himachal Pradesh is also increasing annually. This large increase would therefore call for an increase in the number of hotels and transport facilities in the tourist areas. The 53 hotels and 60 restaurants in 2003 cannot be counted sufficient to hold the increasing number of tourists, the number of hotels and restaurants are also supposed to be increasing at the same rate as the number of tourists.



Looking at the government plans in the data above, there is hope that more hotels, restaurants and transport facilities will be put in place but there is also a challenge of space and environmental conservation which have to be considered while thinking of increasing the number of hotels and other facilities.

In reality it is hardly impossible to consider increasing facilities depending on the number of tourists because according to the data above tourists will continue increasing and therefore if buildings are to increase depending on tourist numbers then there will come a time when the government will have to encroach on the natural resources space to meet accommodation needs, if this ever happens that means the whole sense of tourist attraction won't have meaning because there will be very little left in terms of scenery to attract tourists.

The SWOT analysis above shows that the government is so aware of the potential that is within the tourist attraction areas and therefore knowing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats it is easy to know where to invest much. But the challenge comes in on the national budget, despite the fact that the above data tells us that tourism industry contributes 8% to the state revenue, the government analysis shows that the industry has a limited budget, and that is why development is becoming so hard. This shows some contradiction, the contribution of the tourism industry to the national revenue is enough to develop the tourism industry and therefore there should not be a shortage in terms of budget since the industry can run on its own.

According to the data, there are more domestic tourists visiting Himachal as compared to foreign tourists, any nation would prefer to have more foreign than domestic tourists, for the case of Himachal the reasons have been explained in the data that there is a shortage in the airline services and of course accommodation as well, government has realized this need and has come up with ways of increasing availability of air transport for the tourists which is good, all this has been stated in the policy above.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

To start with the point of increasing the available airlines and air crafts in order to allow more tourists to visit Himachal, this is a bright idea on the part of the government, and the data depicts a gap by not clearly explaining how the government plans to do all this without degrading the environment of the area and therefore without disturbing the eco system, there is an obvious challenge here which the government and local authorities need to address and integrate in their planning.

According to the above data, the government is fully involved in developing ecotourism and data shows that the government is ready to work hand in hand with the local and national authorities in improving the hospitality sector, something which is really encouraging.

The SWOT analysis shows that one of the strengths of Himachal is that the environment is pollution free, as the number of tourists increase in Himachal this strength is turning into a weakness and a threat at the same time, pollution is increasing at a high rate as some part of the secondary data is showing us that the more the people, the more garbage, the more fuel use

and therefore combustion activities are increasing which cause greenhouse gas emission in the environment, there is need for the government to think highly on this.

Some of the threats spelled out by the SWOT analysis can be controlled by the authorities for example the alarming growth of concrete structures leading to destruction of the environment, the authorities can think of an alternative to concrete structures and as for the threat of haphazard growth and construction also threatening the environment, there is need to restructure the tourist areas and come up with infrastructure standards to be followed by the local and national authorities who are dealing with hospitality.

According to the data on hotels in Himachal, the luxury hotels are very few in number, with the government's aim of increasing quality tourists, tourists who know and appreciate the environment, tourists who come with the aim of not only enjoying nature but also getting educated through nature, there calls for increase of the number of luxurious hotels in the area because such would prefer to spend their time in a more comfortable place. In this case the local authorities have to work hand in hand with the government because such developments need a lot of land and funds.