

ADVENTURE TOURISM IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

Suneel Kumar*

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to analyse the present status of adventure tourism in India to work out the SWOT and to provide suggestions based on the analysis to capitalize the promising market segment. Descriptive and exploratory research has been performed. This research is based on various secondary sources like articles, government reports, international reports, research papers and literature on adventure tourism. Adventure tourism allows tourists to explore the undiscovered destinations. It holds a promising future for a geographically pulsating country like India. An upsurge in adventure tourism has been witnessed due to the initiatives taken by the ministry of tourism like establishment of mountaineering institute, adventure summit, development of peaks etc. The system is found underdeveloped in terms of infrastructure and suffers from limited supply potential and hence steps must be taken in laying down the appropriate infrastructure and expanding its reach. On the global front, India misses the mark in terms of foreign tourist arrival rate as it is low as and when compared to domestic tourist arrival rate. India needs to take sturdier steps in this direction to explore the hidden potential of this revenue streaming arena through better planning and marketing. Disintermediation and rising competition trend is what needs to be taken care of while chalking out the plan. This paper will prove as an insightful text for the government in boosting the adventure tourism industry. The suggestions stated will help in making congenial future policies.

Environment Sustainability steps should be taken to ensure the serenity of the environment which will ensure sustainable traffic of adventure tourists. In the adventure pleasing environment safety must be ensured by conducting proper inspection administering the implementation of safety guidelines across various states. Various training programmes at an affordable price can be run by the state or central government in this direction that will ensure a sheer image of tour operators and confidence of the tourists as well. Like other nations India as well can capitalize its vibrant topography for adventure purpose by promoting the country with a slogan. Classifying the adventure activities into no growth, mature and growing activities will help in making apt strategy suitable to each classification in respect of focus needed, marketing efforts, fund allotment etc. Increased connectivity must be ensured. Reliable internet connectivity across the country will help boosting the adventure tourism as it is very essential to tailor a product according to the needs and preferences of the customer.

KEYWORDS: *Adventure Tourism, Present Condition, Adventure Activities, JEL Classification: L83.*

Introduction

An escape from the monotonous life is all what people are seeking in this high-tech and highly engaging life. It can be accounted as one of the primary reasons of burgeoning tourism industry. The rising demand has led the marketers develop diverse tourism products based on the trends and opportunities identified. As per Intrepid Adventure Travel Index 2018 a rising trend has been picking up among people, aspiring an offbeat travel and an experience to be engaged in high adrenaline activity in order to recharge their batteries. This has embarked an adventure fulfilling dazzled journey for the tourist. This

* Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi, Delhi, India.

niche product is called adventure tourism in the tourism arena. This sector attracts high value customers, is resilient and support local economies thus is a continuing growing sector. It benefits not only the tourists and tour operators but also the environment. It encourages sustainable environmental practices as attractiveness of a country as a tourist destination depends on its natural environment exquisiteness and topography. It is the future of tourism as rightly pointed out by UNWTO secretary general Taleb rifai in adventure travel world summit (2012) "Adventure tourism is what tourism should be today and definitely what tourism will be tomorrow."

According to Allied market research, Global adventure tourism market was valued at \$444,850 million in 2016 and is expected to reach \$1335738 million by 2023. This figure is a sheer indicator of presence of sea of opportunities for each country in this segment. To find out its prospects for a country like India it is imperative to know the current scenario. Hence, this paper aims at studying the present regions famous for adventure and other demographics. Marketing initiatives are much needed to promote any product Western country is usually found more inclined towards thrilling activities compared to Asian countries like India. Western people enormously spend over adventure tourism spending. Considering this fact, an irony appears in case of India. According to a report of ministry of tourism of India, domestic adventure tourist proportion is more than foreign adventure tourists. This raises doubts on the ability of adventure tourism to attract foreigners in India. Thus this papers aims to provide suggestions to boost the adventure tourism in India by capitalizing on the strengths and working on the weakness. The suggestions have been built on the basis of understanding and analysis of the present status of adventure tourism in India.

Literature Review

Buckley, Ralf (2006) raised concern over the little researched substantially important industry i.e. Adventure tourism and thus highlighted the future priorities associated with it. Primarily, psychological norms, safety and insurance, impact, participation of management, equipment manufacturing and adventure tourism marketing were acknowledged as major research themes in future. T.A. Bentley & S.J. Page (2008) have addressed the safety and surveillance aspect of adventure tourism in New Zealand. Risk analysis has been performed with respect to range of factors for safety in adventure tourism portraying the scale of adventure tourism injury problem in New Zealand. RALF Buckley reiterated the fiery potential of research on adventure tourism wherein it's research findings can be applied not only to tourism arena but also to non-tourism facets. These facets could relate to effects of tourism on conservation, social capital, altruistic or competitive behaviour adopted by firms, human perception of risk etc. Adventure tourism gives wide opportunity to researchers to lead relevant research thus shouldn't be counted under undervalued topic. Adventure tourism market report (2010) concludes that gradually travellers are intending to spend more on vacation especially the adventure travellers hence marketers should capitalize on this lucrative and growing segment by repositioning and focusing on "other travel" category. Hafizullah Dar (2014) delves into the potential, problems associated with adventure tourism in Kashmir valley. It highlighted the fact that Kashmir valley carries remarkable potential of attracting tourists for experiencing various recreational activities on the bed of natural treasure but the political issues, under exploitation of resources and fear of physical safety makes the region development condition miserable. Its development must become the focal point of the policies of the region as tourism is all what they rely on for their betterment. Seymour M. Guliyev & Konul M. Nuriyeva cites Azerbaijan's niche tourism product entitled adventure tourism rising potential. This country's natural beauty and cultural divergence attract tourists in volumes to indulge in activities like hunting, canoeing, cycling trips etc. Primary data was collected to enquire tourist's perception towards and effect of their characteristics on country's rich products. It concluded the paper with the image being average in the eyes of sampled population and with strong recommendation of developing the policies with respect to adventure tourism. Sreenath Padmanabhan (2018) explores the scope of adventure tourism in India by identifying the major activities like paragliding, trekking, hiking, hang gliding, para boats etc. strongly backing and promoting such tourism in India. This paper also assessed its impact on the tourist's arrivals. Domestic tourists were found to be keener in participating in adventure activities.

Research Objectives

There have been fewer studies that have primarily focused on adventure tourism as a subject matter of study particularly in case of India. Various research paper (Guliyev, Nuriyeva, & M) (Padmanabhan, 2018) has stressed on how significantly adventure tourism can gear up the tourism revenues in light of changing taste and preferences. The kind of exponential growth the niche product

entails requires the strategists to capture the present status of adventure tourism in India. Thus, current study undertaken tries to compress and conclude the current status of adventure tourism in India by examining various initiatives undertaken by the government to promote the state of adventure tourism followed by SWOT analysis and suggestion accompanying the analysis to widen its scope and increase its potential.

Research Methodology

This research is based on descriptive and exploratory research approach. Secondary sources like various articles, government reports, international reports, research papers and literature on adventure tourism have been referred to state the existing regime of adventure tourism and based on which SWOT analysis has been performed. SWOT technique is a strategic tool that is essentially employed to distinctly part out strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. This analysis shall bring out both internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable in boosting adventure tourism in India, which in turn shall help in framing the future strategic ways or course of action to build potential of adventure tourism in India. Thus, the study is followed by suggestions that will assist in capitalizing the opportunities and minimizing unfavourable impact based on different factor that illuminates India's adventure tourism and helps overcoming the internal inefficiencies.

Adventure Tourism in India- An Overview

According to Adventure Travel Trade Association, Adventure Tourism is a tourist activity that includes at least two among the following three elements namely-

- Natural environment
- Physical activity
- Cultural exchange/immersion

Engaging in some risky activities is all what adventure means but adventure tourism does not constraint itself being necessarily active in some risky activities like scuba diving, base jumping etc. It is more than that. It is as all about exploring a new culture or natural environment being physically active at the same time. For example- a tourist exploring places located on a hill (natural environment) on his two feet/ trekking (physical activity) and simultaneous interaction with the local residents (cultural immersion) encompasses adventure tourism. For it to be called a travel, it must include an overnight stay and should not last longer than a year. Adventure tourism can be domestic or international travel and can be categorised into two types- hard and soft tourism. By primary activity one can distinguish between hard and soft adventure tourism. A tourist can access these thrilling experiences directly or indirectly through intermediaries. Intermediaries majorly comprises of travel agents. The market players involved in adventure tourism industry can be categorised into three broad categories namely

- **Outbound Operators:** operators who are connected with different inbound operators located in different countries communicating their entire adventure itineraries and other relevant information to their customers. It is like a one stop destination for the tourist who don't want to piece the information altogether on their own.
- **Inbound Operators:** operators who are based at the destination itself and ripen their itineraries which are handed to outbound partners located around the world
- **Local Suppliers:** they are also based at the destination and include hotels, souvenir shops, transport agencies etc.

The activities listed in table 1 can be classified into land based, water based or air based adventure. Another table below bifurcates the adventure activities into these three categories to get a comprehensive sheer view of the activities parked under the umbrella of adventure tourism.

Table 1

Land based Adventure	Air based Adventure	Water based Adventure
Mountaineering/Hiking Trekking Zip wires and high ropes Rock climbing Artificial wall climbing Snow boarding Motor bikes tours	Hang gliding Hot air ballooning Paragliding Sky diving	Boat safaris Canoeing House boat stays Kayaking Scuba diving Snorkelling Surfing

Abseiling Rappelling All-terrain vehicles Elephant, camel, horse riding etc. Jeep safaris Skiing Cycling Paint ball Self-drive tours Wildlife Caving Camping Bungee jumping Helli skiing Mountain biking		
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India is destined with vibrant topography, thrill seeking environment and weather conditions Leh, Chilling, Dharamshala, Cherapunjee, Nandankanan in Odisha are few to begin with the count down. To get an aggregate view of all what a country like India have it all to offer to the tourist worldwide table 3 (refer Appendix) can be referred.

Demographics of Adventure Tourism in India

- The domestic and foreign tourists visits for seeking adventure experience is reported to be highest in Uttarakhand followed by Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Goa as per a report by Ministry of Tourism.
- The traffic of domestic tourist is found to be more in comparison to foreign tourist exploring the nation for savouring thrilling experiences.
- Without trained and approved adventure tour operators the trip remains a little less audacious. For a soothing and jam-packed experience a tourist looks for a worthy guide. In India, the unorganised sector rule over organised sector of adventure tour operators.
- Majority of the tourists are interested in booking a packaged tour where one can make payment for various facilities in one go like for flight, train, stay, food etc over individual bookings.
- Under land based adventure, trekking rules the heart of tourist as it is one of the most affordable adventure sport in India. The rough terrain and natural beauty of places like Leh Ladakh, Himalayas of Uttarakhand makes it more appealing for the tourists. After trekking land based adventure like mountaineering, camping, wildlife and jeep safaris occupies top position in the mind of tourists due to India's ancient culture and rich topography.
- Water rafting is the most preferred water based adventure sport by tourists in India. Places like Ladhak, Rishikesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand entices tourists. Kayaking, boat safaris and scuba diving are among other water sports relished by tourists.
- Coming over to air based adventure travel, Paragliding and parasailing are the most popular sport among tourists.

Scope of Adventure Tourism

According to a report by thrillophilia 2018 a jump of 178% have been seen in adventure travel in India. This fuelling percentage shows the rising demand and promising potential of adventure tourism in upcoming years. It also signifies the contribution of various developments in the structure as well as ample fertility of efforts of the marketers, private operators and government of India (Ministry of Tourism) initiatives in promoting the niche tourism product (Adventure Tourism) of the country.

Marketing Initiatives

Immersion in adventure activities pumps up the adrenaline of the tourist likewise advent of internet and digitalisation have driven up the business of tour operators as both the demand and supply facets can be tackled with more ease and convenience. As a supplier they now have the opportunity to serve the needs of a wider market and have platforms like own website, social media etc. to fervently market their adventure products. On demand side, demanders have instant access to all the information and tour packages. Prices now can be compared and tickets can be booked online. All these benefits

coupled with India's rich and diverse topography, culture and climate lays the foundation for an upsurge in adventure tourism of the country. Besides this, Ministry of Tourism have taken several initiatives to make the adventure travel safer and more popular among the masses through issuance of guidelines and effective marketing respectively. Recent initiatives taken by government to promote adventure tourism have been enumerated below:

- For the robust development of adventure tourism in India it is very essential to have a network of approved adventure tour operators. For this, MOT (Ministry of Tourism) has issued guidelines for approval of adventure tour operators. This scheme is opened to all bonafide adventure tour operators.
- Tourists are more likely to opt for those adventure sports where the tour operators follow prudent safety standards and give considerable attention over the safety aspect. On these lines, Ministry of Tourism have formulated guidelines entitled as "Basic minimum standards for adventure tourism activities" for water, land and air based adventure activities that will provide resilient support to the revenue streams generated under this niche product.
- Without a congenial infrastructure no industry can develop which in turn cannot be developed without financial support. In every country this support is majorly being extended by the government of the country. In India too, central government is providing central financial assistance to various state governments/union territories for development of appropriate tourism infrastructure. It will help in building demand for the adventure destinations and will thereby support the local economies by generating new and sustainable jobs. These funds are utilised for various purposes like building apt facilities for trekking, mountaineering, aero sports, water sports etc, and purchasing equipment for water sports like canoes, fibre glass boats, water scooters etc.
- Skiing and mountaineering are one of the most resplendent attractions for tourists in India. An adventure tour guide have to have a range of skills varying from having savoir fare of the type of adventure activity and ability to perform the same, handling the physical and emotional stress of tourists in order to make them comfortable during the expedition. Guiders having apt combinations of these skill set act like a catalyst in providing impetus to the underdeveloped industry. Realising its prominence an institute is established in Gulmarg operational as Indian Institute of Skiing & Mountaineering. It is equips with all the latest equipment and training facilities for adventure sports. Various adventure courses are also being run by this institute to stimulate the adventure industry growth.
- Heading in the direction of water based adventure the National Institute of Water Sports in Goa (an organisation of Ministry of Tourism) have set out a new building and upgraded facilities for training in water based adventure sports for raising the count of tourist travelling India for quenching their thirst of having water driven holiday.
- India's position as an adventure destination still need to be located at a point where millions can connect to all what India as an adventure destination have to offer. For this Ministry of Tourism have collaborated with Indian Mountaineering Federation and Adventure Tour Operators Association of India to explore the manoeuvres of promoting India's position as an adventure seeking country.
- Proposal of 104 additional peaks opening in Jammu and Kashmir have been granted security clearance by central government subject to clearances from the state government and other concerned agencies. It will help in building a stronger foot of the nation in terms of one of the most thrilling adventure destinations.
- Adventure Tour Operator Association of India (ATOAI) have organised a "India Adventure Summit" to celebrate the year of Adventure Travel 2018, inviting adventure experts and enthusiasts from all over the world.
- Ministry of Tourism has declared 2018 the year of Adventure Travel.

SWOT analysis of Adventure Tourism in India

SWOT analysis provides a framework to identify the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats associated with an industry or a company's product or project by analysing the various internal and external factors impacting its viability. This exercise helps in decision making and strategically planning the future by giving a snapshot highlighting strengths, weakness, opportunities one can grab faster than competitors and threats one can know in advance to boil down its repercussions.

Table 2

Strength	Weakness
Rich topography Rich cultural heritage Price competitiveness Transport connectivity English based workforce Bounty tiger reserve Indian government pro tourism approach Digitalisation 100% FDI (automatic route)	Ruling of unorganised tour operators Security risk Lack of trained personnel and institutes. Inefficient Marketing structure Lack of awareness Poor infrastructure Low internet and ATM penetration Limited supply of hotel rooms Minor share of foreign adventure travellers
Opportunity	Threat
Tap the burgeoning adventure sector Booming Information Technology and Outsourcing industry Entice private investment	Disintermediation trend Competition from neighbouring countries

One of the finest gifts India is bestowed with is its exotic beauty embellished with exotic mountains, rivers and five seasons which one can savour in a single visit. Its geography is well boasted by many toppers across the world. "There are some parts of the world that, once visited, get into your heart and won't go. For me, India is such a place. When I first visited, I was stunned by the richness of the land, by its lush beauty and exotic architecture, by its ability to overload the senses with the pure, concentrated intensity of its colours, smells, tastes, and sounds. It was as if all my life I had been seeing the world in black and white and, when brought face-to-face with India, experienced everything re-rendered in brilliant Technicolor." Keith Bellows (Vice-President, National Geographic Society) once said illuminating India's rich landscape. It's a cakewalk for adventure travellers indeed. Besides this price forms an important basis for a traveller to travel. India is reckoned to have a price competitive advantage over other countries. As per the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2017 (TTCI) released by the World Economic Forum (WEF) India has jumped to 40th position from 52th position in a span of just 2 years. India has an added advantage in terms of workforce as English is commonly spoken and understood by people. India is home to rare and exotic wildlife species like Indian Rhinoceros, Asiatic lions, black buck, Bengal tigers etc. Besides this, under project tiger India have substantially raised the count of tigers and serves as home to whooping 70% of tigers in the world. Indian government pro tourism initiatives like e-visas, "Incredible India" website, granting 100% FDI and grounded improvements of the transport infrastructure gives an edge to the countries primitive efforts. On the other hand factors like dominant presence of unorganised adventure tour operators, feeble administration of safety standards and lack of environmental sustainable initiatives on account of government, low internet and ATM penetration, presence of weedy roads and infrastructure while making way to offbeat destinations, their maintenance being a major issue weaken the countries competitive position on global front. Moreover a major weakness has been pointed out by Mr. Malhotra in a book by Maneet Kumaron Indian tourism industry citing "One fails to understand why this position is persisting despite the most mosaic personality of the Indian nation. India is a land of spectacular landscape, enchanting coastline, colourful seasons, wildlife paradise aesthetic and exquisite tradition of architecture and a land of rich music and dance which is versatile characteristics of India and attracted May voyagers to India but today our tourism industry is not keeping pace with the volume of trade elsewhere in the world." India fails to configure an image of an adventure seeking country across the globe which is a sheer indicator of inefficient marketing.

According to a Global report of UNWTO on adventure tourism 2017, a trend has been witnessed spotting a rise in the number of tourists going on adventure trips. The rising willingness of the travellers to sense something new and exciting offers deep sea of opportunities for a country like India to attract more traffic and jobs as well. Promotion of adventure destination in Indian movies and at global platforms can immensely help in pushing the tourist arrival rate. India can make up the missing mark in adventure tourism by capitalising the booming information technology industry. In the adventure market disintermediation trend has been highlighted in the UNWTO global report on Adventure Tourism 2017. It poses a threat in future years for a country like India as it will gradually weed out the middlemen (tour operators) from the value chain. People are seeking to manage things on their own. Rising competition from neighbouring countries is worth consideration.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Adventure tourism allows tourist to explore the undiscovered destinations. It holds a promising future for a geographically pulsating country like India. An upsurge in adventure tourism have been witnessed due to the initiatives taken by ministry of tourism like establishment of mountaineering institute, adventure summit, development of peaks etc.. The system is found underdeveloped in terms of infrastructure and suffers from limited supply potential and hence steps must be taken in laying down the appropriate infrastructure and expanding its reach. On global front, India miss the mark in terms of foreign tourist arrival rate as it is low as and when compared to domestic tourist's arrival rate. India needs to take sturdier steps in this direction to explore the hidden potential of this revenue streaming arena through better planning and marketing. Disintermediation and rising competition trend is what needs to be taken care of while chalking out the plan. Following suggestions have been underlined on the basis of current scenario witnessed in India. It will definitely pave the way for optimum utilisation of resources in meeting the embattled mark.

- A destination attracts the best numbers when it is marketed best. Better marketing plans are the need of the hour. Today social media serves as the best platform to market any product. On global front, India has never been promoted as an adventure destination. Through optimal utilisation of digital platforms via means like launching of any quiz, websites, articles, creating a buzz through any challenge etc. which will help in communicating the USP across the world. Adventure can be marketed as being affordable and priceless (experience) at the same time.
- Adventure tourism hovers around natural environment. Sustainability steps like restoring the surroundings disrupted by frequent travellers and raising awareness in the destined community and among the tourists as well as tour operators will help promoting the sustainable tourism simultaneously.
- Outlining guidelines for safety is a partial failed attempt unless an eye is kept on its execution. Proper inspection administering the implementation of safety guidelines across various states needs to be in place.
- Unorganised tour operators are more in population. This sector needs to be covered under the ambit of organised sector. Thus this sector need to be prompted to undertake proper training and get registered too as it will ensure a sheer image of tour operators and confidence of the tourists as well. Various training programmes at an affordable price can be run by the state or central government in this direction
- Like other nations India as well can capitalize its vibrant topography for adventure purpose by promoting the country with a slogan. For example – Norway capitalizes its glaciers with slogan “powered by nature” and New Zealand hike its wildlife and mountains by articulating New Zealand as “100% pure new Zealand”.
- Classifying the adventure activities like trekking, mountaineering, camping, paragliding into no growth, mature and growing activities by gauging the demand of every activity in India. It will help in making apt strategy suitable to each classification in respect of focus needed, marketing efforts, fund allotment etc. Activities PLC (product life cycle) will help in making integrated strategies. New products can also be introduced
- Increased connectivity- These days a tourist rarely travels without a phone. In this way a tourist does not lost his connectivity with the family, information and friends. Reliable internet connectivity across the country will help boosting the adventure tourism as it is very essential to tailor a product according to the needs and preferences of the customer.

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