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Chief Editors

Prof. S. P. Bansal

Vice Chancellor
Central University of Himachal Pradesh,
Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh

Dr. Sandeep Kulshrestha

Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel
Management, (IITTM)

Indian Tourism and Hospitality Congress
www.tourismcongress.wordpress.com

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Editor's Note

Tourism is a global economic powerhouse, contributing significantly to the GDP of many countries and providing employment to millions. However, the environmental and social costs associated with traditional tourism practices have raised concerns about its long-term sustainability. Green and sustainable tourism investments offer a promising solution to this dilemma by fostering economic growth while protecting the planet and benefiting local communities.

Green and sustainable tourism investments encompass a wide range of strategies and practices aimed at minimizing the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and society while maximizing economic benefits. These investments focus on responsible resource management, community engagement, and the preservation of cultural and natural heritage. Investing in renewable energy sources such as solar panels and wind turbines can power hotels, resorts, and transportation services, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. Sustainable tourism investments prioritize efficient waste management systems. Recycling, composting, and reducing single-use plastics are essential steps towards minimizing pollution.

Investing in the protection and maintenance of natural reserves and national parks ensures the long-term viability of tourism destinations while preserving biodiversity. Implementing water-saving technologies, promoting responsible water use, and protecting local water sources help conserve this precious resource.

Green and sustainable tourism investments prioritize hiring locally, empowering communities economically, and reducing income inequality. Supporting cultural heritage through investments in local arts, crafts, and traditions helps preserve the unique identities of tourist destinations. Sustainable tourism investments diversify the local economy, reducing dependence on a single industry and increasing overall resilience.

Green and sustainable tourism investments are not just an ethical choice; they are a smart economic strategy. By balancing economic growth with environmental preservation and social well-being, these investments create a win-win scenario for tourists, host communities, and future generations. As responsible stewards of our planet, it is our duty to support and encourage these investments, ensuring that tourism continues to thrive while safeguarding the natural and cultural treasures that make our world so beautiful.

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Prof. S.P. Bansal
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Attributes of The Tourist Destination Image of Shringverpur

Anil Kumar Singh & Aishwary Kushwaha

Abstract

Purpose- *To find the attributes of destination image of Shringverpur which can be used in destination branding.*

Methodology-*Research was done in two stages, first interview of the tourists, vendors, local people and pujaris. Second stage was the analysis of the interview and Ramcharitmanas.*

Findings-*It has all the attributes of the components (cognitive, affective and unique image) of destination image. Shringverpur has attributes of unique image also which makes it different from others. It has very poor services (accessibility, accommodation, restaurants and infrastructure).*

Research limitations-*This was done in Shringverpur as all the tourists were from nearby places only. This research focusses on attributes that can be used for destination branding.*

Scope-*These attributes can be classified in cognitive image and affective image to test the destination image and forming the brand identity.*

Keywords: Destination image, Cognitive image, Affective image, Unique image, Ramayana circuit

INTRODUCTION

Shringverpur is situated near Prayagraj at a distance of 40 kms approximately. Shringverpur is mentioned in the epic Ramayana as capital of the famous kingdom of Nishadraj or king of fishermen where Shri Ram, Laxman and Sita had stayed overnight before crossing the river Ganga.

The Union Ministry of Tourism had launched the "Swadesh Darshan Scheme" in 2014-15. The main aim of this scheme was to develop the theme based tourist circuits in the country. There is a great scope and need to develop tourist's circuits on specific themes to attract the tourists having interests in visiting such places. Every theme is unique in their own way and it should be developed in sustainable manner which supports the local communities and environment. Under the swadesh darshan scheme there are 13 thematic circuits for development.

Ramayana Circuit is among the thirteen thematic circuits identified for development under Swadesh Darshan Scheme. There are fifteen destinations included in Ramayana circuit by the government of India for development. All the fifteen destinations included in Ramayana Circuit to promote religious tourism. These destinations are chosen according to the places where Sri Ram is believed to have travelled across India.

BIHAR	Buxar, Darbhanga, Sitamarhi
CHATTISGARH	Jagdalpur
KARNATAKA	Hampi
MADHYA PRADESH	Chitrakoot
MAHARASHTRA	Nashik, Nagpur
ODISHA	Mahendragiri
TAMIL NADU	Rameswaram
TELANGANA	Bhadrachalam
UTTAR PRADESH	Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Shringverpur
WEST BENGAL	Nandigram

Anil Kumar Singh   Assistant Professor, Tourism Management, Faculty of Arts, BHU
Aishwary Kushwaha   Research Scholar, Tourism Management, Dept. Of History of Arts, Faculty of Arts, BHU

OBJECTIVES

✪ To analyse the information about the Shringverpur from various sources.

✪ To examine the tourist view and perception on Shringverpur as a destination.

✪ To identify the attributes of destination image of Shringverpur.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Destination image is sum of ideas, beliefs and impressions that a person has of a destination (Kotler et al., 1993; Echtner and Ritchie, 2003; Kotler, 2002). Cai (2002) states that destination image differentiates and identifies the destination. Destination image is the perception about the place in the tourist memory.

Brand and image are closely related to each other; the former is created through the latter (Cai 2002). He further state that the image formation is the core of branding.

Morgan and Pritchard (2001) have analysed the branding strategies of the Wales Tourist Board and Welsh local authorities. Wales Tourist Board and Welsh local authorities have constructed a branding strategy for Wales by using the language, legend, emblem, myths, person, and heritage. These were seen as the basic elements of Wales's image.

Cognitive image is individual's knowledge on destination attributes (Pike and Ryan, 2004). Cognitive image are formed on the basis of pre-acquired knowledge about the destination (N. Souiden et al. 2017). Affective image is the feeling formed towards a destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). Affective image is formed after visiting the destination and consuming the services.

The cognitive and affective image are accepted as influential indicators of destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Hosany, Ekinci, &Uysal, 2006). Majority of the studies considered cognitive image for the evaluation of destination image, only few considered both the cognitive and affective image for the evaluation of the destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006). The cognitive and affective image are the important components of destination image in building a comprehensive destination branding model (Qu, Kim and Im, 2011), further they state one more component of destination image i.e. unique image, it differentiates the one destination from the other. Uniqueness gives the reason to travellers to choose one destination over the other. Uniqueness is the differentiation among the similar destinations in tourists mind (Cai, 2002; Morrison & Anderson, 2002).

The cognitive image has the strongest effect followed by unique image and affective image on overall image of destination (Qu, Kim and Im, 2011). Further they state that the image of a destination influences the tourists to recommend others.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method was applied for this study. To gather information interview was conducted at the study area. Information about the study area was collected from various sources and analysed.

In depth interviews of

✪ Local People

✪ Tourists

✪ Local vendors

✪ Pujaris

✪ Analysis of

✪ Ramcharitmanas

Population

Local people, Local Vendors, Tourists visiting Shringverpur, Pujaris

Sample

Local vendors: 14

Local People: 11

Pujaris: 3

Tourists: 95

The interview was done during monsoon in the month of August 2018. 14 local vendors, 11 local people, 3 pujaris and 69 tourists were interviewed, sample was taken randomly. Simple random sampling method was adopted for the study. 123 respondents were approached and 97 have responded. 69 tourists were interviewed in 3 days, sample was taken randomly, depends on the tourist's willingness to answer.

A detailed interview was done with respondents, the questions asked were

1. What is Shringverpur famous for ? (followed by series of questions about the incidents happen here in detail)

2. What are the services that are being offered to the tourists ?(accessibility, hotels, restaurants, toilets, guides and Ganga aarti)

3. How do you feel in Shringverpur ?

This interview shows the respondents overall image of Shringverpur. From the help of interview we generated a list of attributes for destination image (cognitive, affective and unique image). The Ramcharitmanas is analysed for the attributes, the attractions for which Shringverpur is famous and the incidents happened here creates an overall image. The respondents have answered in detail.

Content analysis of the interview of respondents has divided into two parts first one is information about the destination and second one is services:

INFORMATION

✪ All the respondents have stated the place as sacred because Shri Ram, Sitaji and Laxman had stayed here overnight.

✪ All the respondents have mentioned about the Sage Shringi rishi and his temple

✪ 73 respondents(3 pujaris, 14 vendors, 11 local people and 45 tourists) had mentioned about the Nishadraj(King of Fishermen).

✪ All respondents do mention about Bharat with family and army coming to Shringverpur in search of Shri Ram.

✪ All the respondents have mentioned about the sacred Ganga and aarti.

✪ Pujaris, local vendors and local people have mentioned about the tourists coming to the temple of Shringi Rishi for doing pooja to have a child like Shri Ram and also if they are unable to have a child. 14 tourists do mention coming for the same reason.

SERVICES

✪ All the respondents(Tourists, Pujaris and Vendors) mention about that there is no public transport for Shringverpur from Prayagraj. Tourists have to hire a vehicle or come by their own vehicle.

✪ All the respondents have mentioned that there is no sign board from the main road to the destination.

✪ There are 5 dharamsalas, but only one hotel and one restaurant. There are many small snacks shop.

Vendors and Pujaris have mentioned majority of the tourists are from nearby places only.All the tourists have gathered information from the books and people, 69 tourists have stated that the information about the destination is passed on by people to people or from generation to generation and 11 have stated that they have read about Shringverpur in books also. This shows that the tourists have formed *cognitive image* of the destination.

Content of Ramcharitmanas

Shringverpur has got its name from the famous sage Shringi Rishi. King was very sad because he has no son, he told his Guru(Vasistha) about all his joys and sorrows, Vasistha comforted him and said you will have four sons, who will be known in all the three worlds. Then Vasistha called sage Sringi, he performed a noble sacrifice for the birth of son to the king.

When the sage devoutly offered oblations into the sacred fire, the fire god appeared with an oblationof porridge(Kheer) in his hand and told king to distribute among his queens in proportions as think fit. Vasistha distributed the porridge to all his queens, in this way the queens became pregnant. This is the one part which makes Shringverpur a religious destination.

When Shri Ram got exile for 14 years, he stayed in Shringverpur overnight before proceeding to the forest. While he stayed in Shringverpur there were series of incidents and activities happened which makes it more famous as a religious destination.

Shri Ram along with Sita, Laxman and Sumantra(minister) reached Shringverpur and it is situated on the banks of river Ganga. Shri Ram narrates numerous stories connected with Ganga and its transcendent glory while gazing at the waves of Ganga. Shri Ram stays outside the town of Shringverpur as he was on exile. Nishadraj(king of fishermen) got the news that Shri Ram has arrived at banks of river Ganga, he along with his dear ones and taking the presents and fruits in the basket proceeded to meet Shri Ram. He lied flat on the ground in the feet of Shri Ram and placed the presents. He asked Shree Ram a favour of visiting his town and said "My land, house and fortune are yours; my family and myself are your humble servant". Shree Ram tells him about the exile that for fourteen years his home will be in the woods and his mode of life and food shall be that of a hermit. The chief of Nishadas thought of arranging the stay beneath the Sheesham tree and Shree was happy with that and said the place was very beautiful. Guha prepared a beautiful and soft bed of kusa grass and tender leaves. He also placed the bowls made from leaves full of fruits and roots. After having the roots and fruits everyone laid down to sleep while Laxman was pressing Shree Ram's leg. When Laxman was confirmed that his lord had fallen asleep, he asked Sumantra to retire and he himself got ready with his bow and arrows for guarding. Nishada chief also guarded himself beside Laxman was asking question, Laxman answered him in a gentle way. Whole night Laxman was telling Shri Ram's virtues the day dawned. Shri Ram wakes up and performed his ablutions.

Sumatra with folded hands ask the lord to return back but he denied to return and told Sumantra to convey his message to father with folded hands that "be not troubled in any way on my account, dear father". He also requested Sumantra to take of his father, do not feel miserable on account of grief of us. Then Shri Ram tells Sita to leave with Sumantra and she can live with her parents or with the parents of her lord wherever she wants. He try to convince Sita in every possible by giving every possible explanations. But Sita responded in a very wise way by giving her counter side, she said sunlight can never exist apart from the sun nor the radiance of the moon leave the moon. Finally she convinced Shri Ram and told Sumatra to fell on the feet of my father in law and mother in law on her behalf and tell them that she feel happy in the forest.

Shri Ram asked the ferryman to take them across the river but ferryman refuses to do so. In favour of crossing the river he asked the lord to let him lave the lord's lotus feet. Shri Ram let ferryman wash his feet, the ferryman drank the water in which they had been immersed along with

the other members of his family and gladly took the lord across the river. After getting down Shri Ram felt bad for not giving anything to ferryman, but Sita read the mind of her beloved and took off her ring to offer it to ferryman as a toll. With jointed hands he refuse to take the ring, he told them I worked for my life time but today I got my reward by serving you. Then Shri Ram proceed towards the forest with Laxman, Sita and Nishadraj.

All these points have information in detail attach to it which forms the destination image in the mind of tourists. Attributes of affective image are selected according to the type of destination as the Shringverpur is a religious destination and by analysing the interview of the tourists. Many of the researchers in their study have selected the attributes of unique image for comparison so that they can differentiate but in this study the attributes are taken which are not in other destinations and makes it unique as mentioned by the respondents and local people in the interview.

After analysis these attributes were formed:

Attributes for Destination Image
Services and quality

- ✪ Accessibility
- ✪ Accommodation
- ✪ Restaurants
- ✪ Local people (friendly or helpful)
- ✪ Guides
- ✪ Cleanliness
- ✪ Rest rooms/toilets
- ✪ Infrastructure or condition of dharamsalas
- ✪ Safety and Security

Attractions

- ✪ Ganga aarti
- ✪ Ganga
- ✪ Cultural festivals/fair
- ✪ Local Culture/Cultural traditions
- ✪ Temples
- ✪ Archaeological site

Feelings towards the destination (as told by the tourists)

- ✪ Intense
- ✪ Religious
- ✪ Meditativeness
- ✪ Peacefulness
- ✪ Completeness

Attributes of Unique Image

- ✪ Shringi temple (Tourists pray for to have a child like Shri Ram& people who are unable to have a child)

- ✪ Shri Ram started his journey on foot from here.
- ✪ The conversation between Shri Ram and Nishadraj.

The attributes play a very important role in evaluating destination image as mentioned in the study that have been done by the researchers about destination image and branding.

Brand and image are closely related to each other; the former is created through the latter (Cai 2002). He further state that the image formation is the core of branding.

On the basis of these attributes, tourists build an image of destination in their mind. These attributes can be used for branding, the most of the attributes will be same as compared to the other destinations in Ramayana circuit. The unique image will be the key attribute which makes the destinations different from others.

CONCLUSION

Shringverpur is famous as a religious destination because of Shringi Rishi and Shri Ram and the series of incidents happened in Shringverpur which presents a short story related to Shri Ram. Ganga flowing through the Shringverpur, makes it more religious. Shringverpur has everything as a religious destination, but it is hidden or not known to everyone. This study focuses on proposing the attributes of the components of destination image (cognitive, affective and unique image). This study proposes the attributes by analysing the previous studies and interviewing the local vendors and tourists. Also the Ramacharitmanas was analysed for proposing attributes. Ramcharitmanas helps in proposing the attributes of the unique image. According to the previous studies destination image play a very important role in branding, attracting new visitors and preserving the culture.

Limitations and Scope for further study

This study is limited as the data was collected during the monsoon season, the population is limited to the people who are visiting Shringverpur, all the sample were from nearby places, majority from other villages. Study needs to be done on tourists coming to Prayagraj from different states. This study can be helpful in testing the destination image of Shringverpur and in developing brand identity and destination branding.

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