



The Contribution of Hotels for Promotion of Heritage Tourism in West Bengal – A Study on Selected Hotels in Murshidabad City

Mr. Sandip Chakraborty

Research Scholar, Amity Institute of Travel & Tourism Management, Amity University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India, Pin-700135

Assistant Professor, NSHM Institute of Hotel & Tourism Management, NSHM Knowledge Campus, Kolkata, West Bengal, India, Pin-7000053

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7332-6603>

Email: csandipchakraborty.90@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT:

Tourism is a dynamic social and economic phenomenon that has rapidly emerged as one of the world's largest and most swiftly expanding industries. Its impact is particularly notable in terms of job creation and income redistribution, thanks to its significant multiplier effect. Additionally, tourism's extensive backward and forward linkages make it a powerful driver of economic development. The success of tourism often hinges on the availability and quality of accommodations, such as hotels, home-stays, and palace hotels, which play a crucial role in shaping the tourism experience. In West Bengal, a state with untapped tourism potential, heritage tourism presents a promising avenue for addressing socio-economic challenges. Recent efforts have been made to promote heritage tourism in the region, highlighting its importance. This paper explores the characteristics of select hotels in Murshidabad, a city renowned for its historical significance. It evaluates how well these hotels cater to the needs of both international and domestic tourists who visit for the city's heritage attractions. The study examines the products offered, marketing strategies employed, and the quality of services provided. A key focus is on identifying the existing deficiencies within these hotels and recommending measures to align supply with the potential demand. The paper's contribution lies in proposing a strategic framework to address these deficiencies, explore untapped potential, and enhance service conditions. By doing so, it aims to enable hotels to play a more proactive role in advancing the tourism industry in West Bengal.

Keywords: Tourism Competitiveness, Heritage Tourism, Local Community, Environmental Sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION:

Hotels are fundamental to the tourism sector, providing essential services such as accommodation, meals, and refreshments for varying lengths of stay. They cater to guests who may book in advance or on the spot, making them a critical element of modern travel. As the hospitality industry evolves, hotels have become central to tourism, offering a range of amenities designed to meet the needs of travellers away from home.

The role of hotels in tourism cannot be overstated. They significantly influence the success of tourist destinations by providing necessary facilities and services. Essentially, a hotel is a business that offers lodging and meals, operating as a quasi-domestic entity with a blend of traditional and modern responsibilities. It is committed to accommodating all guests who are willing to pay, offering rooms, personal services, and food at set prices, with flexibility in the length of stay. Hotels also frequently host events and may rent space for commercial purposes, enhancing their role within the community.

Recent inquiries about the hotel room supply in Murshidabad reveal a total of approximately 2,121 rooms, considering both approved and unapproved establishments. This figure is notably insufficient for a state of Manipur's size and population. Increases in business travel or foreign tourist arrivals can significantly impact hotel occupancy rates, highlighting the need for expansion and improved facilities to meet growing demand.

2. RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Hotel is a place which supplies boarding and lodging or a place for the entertainment the travelers. From users point of view hotel is an institution of commercial hospitality which offers it facilities and services for sale. Its location places the hotel geographically in or near a particular city or village' within a given area location denotes accessibility and the convenience and attractiveness of surroundings and the appeal it presents, freedom from noise and other nuisances.

Its facilities which include bedrooms, restaurants, bars, function rooms, conference halls, and recreation facilities such as swimming pools, represent facilities for the use of its customers. Its service comprises the availability and extent of particular hotel services provided through its facilities and the quality of these in such terms as degree of personal attention, speed and efficiency.

The relevance of the present study emanates from the following facts: i) Murshidabad is becoming a hospitality hub in the Heritage Tourism sector, according to West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation ii) the aware of facilities available hotels in Murshidabad as a standard of the world class facilities available in India. In this context, it is quite relevant to make a detailed study of pattern of facilities available to Murshidabad through India, particularly in respect of world class facilities; and to make an exploratory and descriptive study of the role of hotels in the promotion of tourism from the perspective of the different types of facilities available in the hotels.

3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The main objective of this research paper is aimed at evaluating the role of hotels in Murshidabad in promotion of Heritage Tourism in West Bengal. To case archive the main objective, some specific objectives are considered as follows:

- i) To find out the nature and characteristic of the hotels selected for the study.
- ii) To analyse different types of services offered by the hotels selected for the study.
- iii) To find out the total number employees and quality of employees in the hotels selected for the study.
- iv) To study the marketing mix applied for promotion by the hotels selected for the study.
- v) To analyses the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and threats of the various hotels selected for the study

4 HYPOTHESIS:

Ho – There is no significant relationship between hotel industry & growth of tourism in West Bengal.

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THE STHUDY:

The methodology which was followed, for conducting the study, is discussed under the following heads:

- i) **Topic:** “Role of hotels in promoting heritage tourism in West Bengal”
- ii) **Operational area of the study:** The study was conducted in Murshidabad district of West Bengal.
- iii) **Type of research:** The study is mainly exploratory and descriptive in nature.
- iv) **Type of Universe:** The units of the study are those elite hotels in Murshidabad as provided by the West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (WBTD).C).
- v) **Size of the Units:** Ten hotels were selected as sample size of the study.
- vi) **Type of sampling used:** Stratified random sampling was conducted for the hotels under study.
- vii) **Type of data used:** Both primary and secondary data were used for the study.
- viii) **Method of data collection:** Questionnaire cum interview method was used to collect primary data. The questions have been structured and undisguised consisting of both open ended and close ended.
- ix) **Data presentation & analysis:** Data collected are presented in tables & graphs and mainly descriptive analysis were made.

6 DATA ANALYSIS:

Lodging and Service Offerings:

Lodging Facilities: All ten hotels provide lodging facilities. A significant portion, 70%, also offer food services, while half provide tour operator services. This indicates a basic level of service across all hotels, with varying additional amenities.

Hotel Establishment Periods:

Historical Establishment: The majority of hotels (60%) were established between 1981 and 2000, suggesting that the majority of the current infrastructure is relatively dated. Only 30% of hotels were established between 2001 and 2010, and a small fraction (10%) were established between 2010 and 2014, reflecting a slower pace of new hotel development in recent years.

Hotel Categorization:

Star Ratings: A large majority (90%) of the hotels are non-category, meaning they are not officially rated by a star classification system. Only the Classic Hotel has achieved a 3-star rating, indicating a significant lack of formal quality standards across the majority of hotels.

Certifications and Affiliations:

Certifications: The Classic Hotel is distinguished by its ISO: 22000:2000 certification, setting it apart in terms of quality standards. However, only 20% of the hotels are affiliated with the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), suggesting limited formal industry recognition and support among local hotels.

Ownership Structure:

Ownership: A dominant majority (80%) of the hotels are privately owned by sole proprietors, indicating a strong presence of individual entrepreneurs. In contrast, two hotels are joint ventures with the state government, which suggests a minimal level of public sector involvement.

Product Offerings:

Range of Services: The products and services offered by the hotels are primarily conventional and traditional. The offerings are limited to basic services such as room service, restaurants, and travel desks. The absence of modern amenities like conference halls and other essential facilities is evident.

Customer Demographics:

Guest Profile: The primary guests of the hotels include business travellers, official visitors, and those visiting family and friends. This indicates a diverse but generally predictable customer base, with a focus on business and personal travel rather than tourism.

Partnerships and Collaborations:

External Partnerships: The Classic Hotel is notable for its partnerships with government bodies, travel agents, and NGOs. However, no hotels have established partnerships at the community level, reflecting a gap in local engagement and collaboration.

Marketing Strategies:

Promotional Methods: A significant majority (70%) of hotels rely on traditional marketing methods such as newspapers, while 30% use magazines, television, and the internet. Only 20% of the hotels have their own websites, and hoardings are used by a similar percentage. This highlights a reliance on conventional marketing channels with limited digital presence.

Management and Training:

Professional Training: None of the hotel managers or proprietors have formal training, suggesting a lack of professional development and expertise within the industry.

Vision and Motivation:

Lack of Vision: A large majority (80%) of hotels lack vision and motivation, which could impact their growth and service quality.

Coordination with State Tourism:

State Coordination: Almost all hotels exhibit poor coordination with the State Tourism Department, which may hinder their ability to leverage state-level tourism promotion and support.

Management Quality:

Ownership Impact: State-owned or unity-owned ventures are reported to be poorly managed compared to privately owned hotels, indicating that public sector involvement may be associated with lower management standards.

In summary, the study reveals a number of areas for improvement within the hotel industry, including the need for updated infrastructure, enhanced service offerings, better marketing strategies, formal training for staff, and improved coordination with tourism authorities. Addressing these deficiencies could help the hotels better meet the needs of their diverse customer base and improve their overall performance.

7 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

1. All 10 hotels are providing lodging facilities and 70% provided fooding and 50% provided Tour operators.
2. 70% of hotels were established between 1981 – 2000. While 20% were established between 2001 – 2010 and 10% were established between 2010 – 2014.
3. 80% of hotels were privately owned by sole proprietors while two were joint ventures with the state govt.
4. Products offered were quite limited. They were confined to mainly conventional and traditional consisting mainly of room service, restaurants, Travel desk.

5. Customers occupying hotels were mainly found to be a) Business, b) Official c) Visitors visiting family and friends.
6. Only the Classic Hotel was found to have struck partnership with Govt., Travel agents and NGOs, none were found partnering at community level.
7. 70% of the hotels possessed a separate marketing department while 30% did not possess so.
8. 70% used conventional method of promoting through newspaper. 30% used magazines, television and through internet. Only 20% had hosted websites, Hoarding was practiced by only 20%.
9. None of the managers/proprietors possessed any formal training.
10. 80% of hotels lacked vision and motivation.
11. Almost all hotels lacked co-ordination with State Tourism department.
12. State owned or unity owned ventures were poorly managed than privately owned hotels.

8 SUGGESTIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH:

Hotels should transition from traditional accommodation methods to state-of-the-art facilities. This shift can stimulate economic, social, and commercial activities, contributing to overall economic development.

Given that accommodation is a core component of the tourist experience, hotels need to be designed to meet the diverse needs and preferences of various types of tourists.

Both traditional accommodation options (such as hotels and motels) and alternative options (like camps and youth hostels) should be developed to attract international tourists.

The state government should explore the possibility of including tourism projects, especially those related to accommodation, in the list of projects eligible for loans from industrial or other financial corporations. Additionally, establishing special financial corporations for tourism could be beneficial.

The government should consider providing special facilities and incentives for accommodation projects to support their development.

In Murshidabad, the hotel industry must stay abreast of global changes and their impact on all aspects of hospitality to remain competitive.

Hotels should continuously conduct research to anticipate future needs and stay competitive in a dynamic market focused on meeting customer expectations.

Leveraging information technology is crucial for business success in today's data-driven era. It is essential for improving operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Strategic planning should focus on future-oriented approaches that anticipate changes rather than relying solely on historical models.

Hotels in Murshidabad need a well-structured organizational framework and enhanced management capabilities to address the diverse challenges in the marketplace.

Training and development programs should be implemented to help existing hotels adapt to the evolving hospitality industry and modernize their operations.

9 CONCLUSION:

The study indicates that the current efforts in accommodation, food services, strategic planning, and facilities for promoting heritage tourism in West Bengal are insufficient. There is a pressing need to establish effective strategies to enhance heritage tourism in the region. The findings and recommendations from this research could significantly contribute to the advancement of the tourism sector. Given the rapid changes in opportunities and trends, it is crucial to conduct regular surveys to ensure that hotels can adapt and implement suitable strategies effectively.

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