

Exploring Tourism Potential and Encouraging Entrepreneurship in Gajapati District of Odisha

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ABSTRACT: Travel & tourism is an integral part of everyone's lives and the reason of travel being different for every individual. For some, it's a break from the monotony of routine life and for some the purpose is religious whereas some others travel seeking fun and adventure. The reasons may be varied depending on the lifestyle of people. The tourism industry plays a significant role and is a major contributor to the economy of any country and entrepreneurship has been identified as an important factor for creating job opportunities, generating income, increasing standard of living and gradual growth of the economy.

India, due to its varied topography, has something to offer for every kind of traveller or tourist. Every state in India has its own distinct feature and a unique story to tell. Located on the eastern region of India, Odisha, with a 480 km long coastline, is a state filled with exquisite and amazing monuments, beautiful beaches, wildlife sanctuaries and beautiful landscapes etc. In the recent years, with the advent of technology, a number of measures have been taken by the Government of Odisha to promote Tourism, however, till date, the main focus remains on the golden triangle i.e. Puri, Konark and Bhubaneswar. Undoubtedly, these places are well equipped to cater to the needs of domestic as well as foreign tourists. The other beautiful places of Odisha are still largely undiscovered by the tourists and one such place is the Gajapati district of Odisha.

The Gajapati district of Odisha is speckled with many places of religious interests graced with stunning nature. Locations like Chandragiri (Jiranga), Taptapani, Mahendragiri, Gandahati Waterfall, Mankododiya waterfall, Brundaban Palace, the Eastern Ghats and the lush green forests have the perfect ingredient of nature's bounty and peaceful enlightenment for every visitor. This also paves way for too many entrepreneurial opportunities which will not only offer a better living to the locals but also helpful in balanced regional growth.

The aim of this study is to make an explorative study of tourism in the Gajapati district of Odisha which definitely deserves public attention in order to flourish and also the consideration of Odisha Government for protection and preservation. It also intends to discover different entrepreneurial opportunities that can help locals earn a better living which will lead to a balanced regional growth.

Keywords: Development, Entrepreneurship, Potential, Promotion, Tourism.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian tourism and hospitality industry is one of the key drivers of growth among the services sector in India. Tourism in India has major potential considering the rich cultural and historical heritage, variety in ecology, terrains and places of natural beauty spread across the country due to its varied topography. Our country believes in the philosophy of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' and is known for its lavish treatment to all visitors, no matter where they come from. The visitor-friendly traditions, varied life styles and cultural heritage and colourful fairs and festivals hold abiding attractions for the tourists.

Much is believed and acknowledged about the heritage of Odisha, but one can only understand the splendour of heritage by visiting the wonderful state. The exotic monuments, music, dance forms, paintings, cuisines, etc. all adds up to its heritage. Odisha's rich history and its cultural and geographical diversity make its tourism appeal large and diverse. Filled with exquisite temples and extraordinary monuments, home to many prolific artists and craftsmen, possessing beaches, wildlife sanctuaries and natural landscape of enchanting beauty, Odisha tourism is unique and fascinating, however it is still undiscovered by tourists.

The district of Gajapati is named after the king Srbbhangii Krushna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Deo who also played a key role in the formation of a separate Odisha province and inclusion

of Paralekhamundi estate in Odisha. It became a district in the year 1992 and prior to it, Gajapati was a part of Ganjam district. The district is spread on an area of 3,850 sq. km with a population of around 6 lakhs. It gains a large amount of its revenue through the agricultural sector as the soil and climate is most suitable for plantation of crops and there is a great potential of horticulture development in the district.

Gajapati is a perfect destination to detox and rejuvenate oneself as it is miles away from the concrete jungle, drudgery and everyday monotony.

The entire district is speckled with many places of religious and secular interests and graced with vast wilderness of idyllic beauty, pastoral panorama, scenic, serene and sacred countenance. It's a perfect place for all nature lovers and is pocket friendly as well. The best time to visit this place is during winter.

The best tourist spots in the district include Mahendragiri Temple, Chandragiri Temple, Brundavan Palace, Gandahati Waterfall, Serango, Jeerango, Harabhangi, etc.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study was made (Sahu K.K. 2013) to analyse the growth and performance of tourism sector in Odisha. It made a comparison on the tourists visiting Odisha in during five years period. As per observation made in the study, the period between April to October witnessed a small number of tourists owing to various reasons. In order to study the concept and development of rural tourism in odisha (Mohanty P.P., 2014) summarized the impact along with describing the challenges and difficulties and focused on the development of a strategic marketing plan for rural tourism. It also threw light on the government project and policies for development of rural tourism. (Parida S.K., 2015) highlighted destination image and its economic benefits to tourism industry with special reference to Chandipur beach of Odisha. The study also explained the promotion, packaging of destination by public private marketing planner with its unique product image. An attempt was made (Mishra P.K, Rout H.B., et.al, 2016) to study the role of tourism in the development of Odisha. By using multi regression model over a period of 20 years observed the positive contribution of Tourism to the economic sector of Odisha and suggested that the government of Odisha should formulate more plans and policies in order to promote tourism for a stable and sustainable growth of the state. (Mohanty S., 2017) made a study on tourism in Koraput district of Odisha and observed that in spite of having a rich

natural resource and scenic beauty, it has not been able to capture the eyeballs of the tourists. It identified the hindrances in the path of tourism development of the district and suggested appropriate remedial measures. (Mohanty P., Chandran A., et.al, 2018) in their study attempted to unfold the true potentials of Odisha Tourism to be alternatively branded as a rural tourism destination and its consequent favourable impacts. Explorative study was made (Mohanty, P.P., Rout, H.B. et.al., 2019) to explore the role of tourism in promoting peace through community based sustainable tourism development by connecting it with the surroundings around it and other important aspects. The paper also cited through examples participation of the community in initiatives related to development of sustainable tourism leading to harmonious co-existence of both locals and tourists.

Research Gap

The above studies reveal that although studies have been made on Odisha tourism but it mostly concentrated on the golden triangle i.e. Puri, Konark and Bhubaneswar. Therefore it is interesting to make a study on the other districts as well and in this study the focus is on Gajapati district of Odisha especially its tourism and the available entrepreneurial opportunities.

Problem Statement

The ethnicity, bio-diversity and tourism potentialities of Gajapati district deserve public attention in order to flourish and also Government's care for protection and preservation. There is no major industry in the district except for a few agro-processing units.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are;

- To explore the tourism potential in Gajapati district of Odisha
- To find out the issues in the way of development of tourism in the district.
- To find the entrepreneurial opportunities available and suggest ways for improvement.

Research Methodology

This paper is a descriptive study based on secondary data which has been collected from different articles, journals, periodicals, reports, books, bulletin and the web. This information has been analysed and discussed critically so as to arrive at a fruitful conclusion.

III. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Tourism Potential

Gajapati district is about 280 kilometers from the capital town of Bhubaneswar and is well connected by road. This district has a rich cultural heritage and some beautiful unexplored locations like;

Gandahati Waterfall: It is one of the eminent glittering waterfall in the state which is enclosed by dense forest. This forest is a shelter to many animals which come there to quench their thirst and take bath. Close to the waterfall is a beautiful temple, which is a must stopover by people visiting the place.

Mahendragiri Temple: It is a mountain peak and a part of Eastern Ghats situated at an elevation of 4,976 feet above sea level. These hills have a spectacular scenic beauty which attracts a lot people. It has trekking facilities for adventure lovers as well. This place also holds religious significance as it has a mythology tale attached to it. According to the puranas, this was the very place where Lord Parshurama stayed and meditated Lord Shiva after which he received the double axle (Parshu) from God. In Dwapar yug, mother Kunti along with five sons stayed here for a certain time during exile and Bhima used to worship Lord Shiva there. The temple of Lord Shiva and Lord Parshurama has been built here.

Chandragiri Temple: It is one of the best attractions of Gajapati district. It is a shelter to the Tibetians who had come to India a long time ago during 1960s. One can find their culture, religious beliefs on entering this area. Chandragiri is surrounded by dense forest with some amazing landscapes. The gurgling waterfalls, rivers, green forest and amazing mountain slopes make this place a great place for weekend getaway for peace and relaxation. This place is also great for those with creative minds. Here different different types of fruits like mango, guava, orange and pineapple are grown as per season which is a major source of living for the residents. Over a period of time, many Government horticulture farms have been established here. Various cultural activities celebrated all round the year make this place even more vibrant. This place is also famous for making carpets and woollen garments. It is also known for various dog breeds offered here.

Brundavan Palace: The Brundavan palace was built by the king of Paralekhamundi in order to spend time during summers. This palace is located on the banks of river Mahendratanya and is surrounded by thick teak trees. This palace is a three storied building with an underground floor as well which is connected to the king's main palace

in Paralekhamundi. The art work done in the palace is spectacular and worth watching. However, now this place has been taken over by the Department of Tourism, Government of Odisha for its proper maintenance. There is also a beautiful orchard close to this place which makes it ideal for picnics during winter for the people nearby.

Other Places: There are other beautiful places like Seerango, Jeerango known for its scenic beauty. Harabhangi is another irrigation project which has an amazing scenic beauty and known for pisciculture. Each and every place has its own beauty that can draw the attention of tourists from far and near seeking pleasure.

Entrepreneurial Opportunities

This region has immense potential for budding entrepreneurs as well. However, it needs the care and attention of the Government which lead to development of this area and also help in balanced regional development.

There is a lot of scope in hotel industry as this place lacks some good places to stay. Hotels, guest houses are a good option for those who want to start their own businesses. People who do not have much to invest can go for 'homestay' which is slowly becoming popular in other states. People can even start food business service offering authentic and local delicacies to the visitors.

Since this area is blessed with nature's bounty, there is a lot of scope for adventure tourism. Trekking, hiking, camping, powered paragliding and boating and kayaking facilities at water bodies may be customized as per the needs and requirements of the tourists. People can start their businesses as tour operators and guides offering an array of pleasure activities.

People with creative vision can engage in activities of cottage industries like horn work, jaikhadi bag, cane and bamboo work, ganjappa cards, pattachitra mukha, broom work and siali leaf plate making, pottery, etc.

Local people can be trained for wellness tourism as tourists mostly come from far flung places to relax and rejuvenate themselves and spend some peaceful time away from their fast, busy lives. There is ample of opportunities in farming, horticulture, pisciculture and dog breeding as well. All these activities will not only equip the locals but also contribute significantly to the economy of the district.

IV. SUGGESTIONS

As far as tourists attractions are concerned, there is immense potential for travel and tourism along with many entrepreneurial

opportunities, efforts must be made to promote tourism of this region. Comfortable transport arrangements should be made from the capital city and other places as well so that more and more people visit this beautiful place. Safety of tourists is of prime importance therefore steps must be taken so as to provide them a safe environment. Even sanitation is an important aspect in taking forward the mission of 'Swacch Bharat'. These initiatives may be taken by the government as a whole or on public private partnership (PPP) mode.

V. CONCLUSION

The state of Odisha is filled with many such exotic and spectacular places that will leave a lasting impression on anyone's mind. Tourism in Gajapati is God's beautiful creation that everyone needs to visit in order to understand its splendour. With excellent road connectivity from important cities of the state, this place should be everyone's wishlist visiting the state. However the tourism promotion of this place is at a nascent stage. All it needs is attention, promotion and maintenance. Even the development should be aimed keeping in mind its sustainability. With proper planning towards tourism development, it can add significantly to the revenue of the district as well as state.

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