



Manipur Sangai Festival And It's Role in Tourist Attraction

Nongthombam Rabi Singh

MTM Student, IGNOU, Sabantongba Mayai Leikai, Dist: Thoubal, State: Manipur

Dr Kh Dhiren Meetei

Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, Manipur University, Canchipur, Imphal

ABSTRACT

The 10 days long Manipur Sangai Festival is annually held from 21st November to 30th November every year. The festival is organised by Department of Tourism, Government of Manipur. The festival was earlier known as the "Manipur Tourism Festival" which began in 2008. In 2010, it was renamed as "Manipur Sangai Festival" with an aim to popularise "Sangai" the rare species of deer which found only in Manipur. The Festival strives to showcase and promote the best of what the state has to offer to the world in terms of art and culture, handloom, handicrafts & fine arts, indigenous sports, cuisines & music, eco & adventure sports as well as the scenic natural beauty of the land. The Sangai festival of Manipur is becoming one of the most popular festival in the state day by day. Knowing the important of this festival, it has become an opportunities to the people of the state to showcase and exchange their rich culture. It is also hope that by analysis finding, suggestion and conclusion of this study will contribute to a better step for the improvement of tourism sector in the state.

KEYWORDS

Manipur Sangai festival

1. INTRODUCTION

Manipur is situated in the north eastern part of India. Manipur is bordered on its north by Nagaland, on its east lies Myanmar (Burma). The southern part is bordered by the state of Mizoram, while the green valleys of Assam bound the western part. Manipur Sangai Festival is an annual cultural festival organised by Manipur Tourism Department on every year from November 21 to 30 every year. Even though many editions of this festival has been celebrated till 2009 with the name of Tourism Festival, since 2010 this has been renamed as the Sangai festival to stage the uniqueness of the shy and brow antlered rare species deer popularly known as the Sangai Deer, which is the state animal of Manipur and found nowhere in world but only in Manipur at Keibul Lamjao National Park in Loktak Lake and to further promote Manipur as a world class tourism destination. Akin to a bowl-shaped valley surrounded by hills, the festival has a great significance in recent years and celebrates with various ethnic diversity of Manipur society.

As this festival is being celebrated to promote Manipur as a world class tourism destination, it showcase the best of what the state has to offer to the world in terms of art and culture, handloom & fine arts, indigenous sports, cuisines and music, eco & adventure sports as well as the scenic natural beauty of the land. Participation of various neighbouring Indian states, foreign traders and cultural troupes in the festival makes a grander in scale and style. In view of the richness of the Manipur culture and the vast potential in the field of tourism by this ongoing tourism festival of the state, the tourism prospect in Manipur is likely to boost in the near future.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Manipur is a state with glorious history, rich culture and various tourist places. The Manipur tourism department is taking major initiatives to develop Manipur a prime tourist destination of north east by introducing Manipur Sangai festival as one of the largest Government sponsored tourism promoted festival to showcase the cultural heritage of the state. Every year Sangai Festival is thronged by large number of people from across the state and beyond. Stall from Bangladesh, China, Myanmar, Thailand and Mauritius including neighbouring state like Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Bihar, Mumbai

are also taking part in the event with various food, handicrafts & products and showcasing their rich culture.

Apart from various adventure and eco system activities at various locations of the state, a varieties of cultural programmes, presentation of Manipur dances, Tribal folk dance and various indigenous sports of Manipur like Sagol Kangjei (Polo), Yubi Lakpi (Manipuri style Rugby), Khong Kangjei (the Manipur form of Hockey) Mukna-Kangjei, Arambai, Thang-Ta (Manipur martial arts), Hiyang Tannaba (Boat race) & various adventurous sports events. Sagol Kangjei (Polo), the indigenous game of Manipur is also participated by country like Australia, France, Germany, Thailand, UK and USA in the Sangai Festival. The mystery of the Indian Classical Dance form *Ras Leela* with their intricate costume design, the wonder of the *Pung Cholom* (Drum Dance), the vibrant tribal dances, *Lai Haraoba* the traditional festival celebrated in honour of the sylvan deities known as Umang Lai represents the worship of the traditional deities and ancestors are some of the precious treasures any tourist will find appealing. Weaving is a time-honoured occupation in the land and has been fine-tuned to an art form with its intricate designs most popularly the *Wangkheir Phee*, *Haophee*, *Leirung Phee*. The exotic cuisines, the unique tribal cultures and the soothing native music can be an enchanting discovery for various tourists visiting the State. It not only helps us foreign exchange but also generates employment and enhances the standard of living of the people. Consequently, it helps to promote the economy of the state.

In view of the above tourist arrival and the state Manipur, with her comfortable climate, mystique cultural heritage and sublime natural beauty, located strategically in a hitherto considered disadvantageous geographical area, promises to be a huge potential for the growth of tourism.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

- (i) To study the tourism profile of Manipur.
- (ii) To highlight the historical background of Sangai festival.
- (iii) To examine the major component of Sangai festival.
- (iv) To study its role in tourist attraction.
- (v) To collect data and analyse from various group of people.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION

The methodology adopted in this study has been based in a very systematic way and data collections were employed in two ways namely Primary and Secondary data collection respectively. The first one was through questionnaire by interacting with different 200 individuals & people, 50 officials and 50 participants. The second one was based on data collected from various Books, State Tourism Department, various Libraries, Journals, News Papers, Government notification and others relevant books etc.

Further an analytical cum empirical method has been employed to uphold the finding of the study. The data and information collected has been analysed and empirically certified with cross examination in the form of tables, graphs and charts. An endeavour was made to develop a frame work of the study on the basis of analysing and interpretation available information and data collected. The data so collected from primary and secondary sources have been classified, compiled, analysed, and checked before preparation of the report.

5. IMPORTANCE OF SANGAI FESTIVAL

The development of tourism industry in the state is vital in progress of the state, which has been affected by insurgency. The Union Government's policy to develop the north-eastern region, the "look east policy", is closely related to the tourism scenario of Manipur. "The tourism department can play a major role in making the "Look East Policy" a success because the look east policy is a combination of many activities like industry, commerce, agriculture and tourism. It is indeed the most important area to make the look east policy successful. The most interesting aspect of the festival is the participation from South East Asian countries like, Thailand, Myanmar, China, Bangladesh and Mauritius showcasing their rich culture, handicraft, jewellery, clothing, and other products. Moreover, there is close cultural affinity between the people of East Asia and Manipur and expressed desire for organizing similar festival in Thailand as well. On promotion of Manipur as an important destination of the tourists, it was noted by the authorities that there is an immediate need for improving the existing infrastructure and adding new one.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Tourist visit records in last five year are given below:

YEAR	DOMESTIC	FOREIGN	TOTAL
2008-09	1,15,300	271	1,15,571
2009-10	1,27,524	405	1,27,929
2010-11	1,16,652	431	1,17,083
2011-12	1,33,224	602	1,33,826
2012-13	1,31,803	768	1,32,571

Table-1: Tourist visited record in the state

Mentioned may be made that after relaxation of PAP, the visit of foreign tourist are on the rise in the state

A survey was conducted during the festival, amongst 200 respondents, 50 official and 50 participants from within and outside the state to determine their preferences of destination as well as their experience which influence the tourist traffic. The survey has also revealed the class of tourists to the state. This provided a scientific approach in formulating a strategy for development of Tourism in Manipur.

Also, from the Questionnaire conducted during the festival, it has been found that different data has come up with the response as given below:

Figure-1: Visitors Employment status

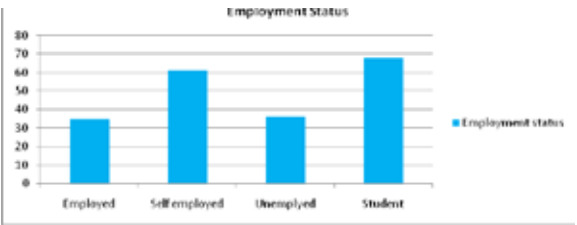


Figure-2: Mode of Communication

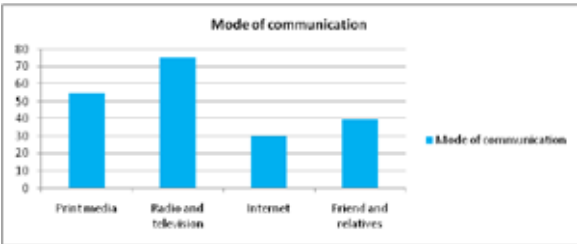


Figure-3: Reason for visit

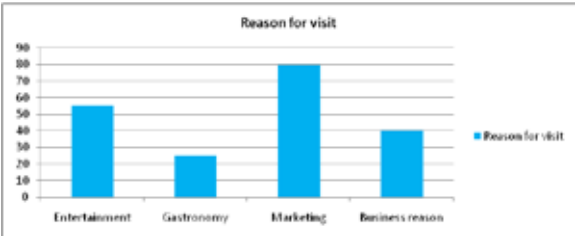


Figure-4: Availability of Tour Operator



- (a) The awareness and knowledge and mode of communication is about the festival is very poor and publicity through internet and social media need to be emphasised more.
- (b) Although transportation is rated as fair, the general opinion is that the infrastructure is inadequate and hence there is an urgent need to promote investment for infrastructure development which includes road linkage to the various destinations and within, accommodation, drinking water facilities, wayside amenities etc.
- (c) The security and safety is a high priority concern for the tourists and hence any development through tourism can be expected only through improved law & order within the state.
- (d) Based on the tourism assets of the state, the development must be based on the assets supplemented by exposure of cultural and ethnological diversity. Business tourism can be considered only for the border trade centre namely Moreh.
- (e) It has also witnessed that most of the people visited during the festival are for the purpose of marketing, entertainment, gastronomy and business reason. So, more emphasis should be given to the untouched area.
- (f) The accommodation sought is primarily of economy class.

Potential for development of tourism is rated high by all tourists, irrespective of their class. Tourism is viewed by the local population as a potential source for generation of employment and economy in the state.

- (g) Educational excursions at school level and students of colleges are observed to be major tourism traffic for the state at intra state tourism.
- (h) Manipur has rich in culture, various indigenous games & sports and a festive state. So by this tourism festival, it has got a chance to showcase their identity to the rest of the world so that it can be developed world widely.

7. IMPACT ON TOURIST

The festival has major impact on the development of cultural tourism to the host communities. The festival organisers are now using the historical and cultural themes to develop the annual events to attract visitors and creating cultural image in the host cities by holding festivals in the community settings. The desire for festival and event is not specifically designed to address the needs for any one particular group. The hosting of events is often developed because of the tourism and economic opportunities addition to social and cultural benefits. However, local communities plays vital role in development of tourism through festival. Sangai festival provide an opportunity for the local communities to develop and share their culture, which create a sense of values and beliefs held by the individuals in a local community and provide opportunity for members of the local community to exchanges experiences and information. It also provides the tourist the opportunity to see how the local communities celebrate their culture and how this effects the community development, it also helps the visitors to interact with the host community and help people to enjoy and meet their leisure needs.

There is no doubt that tourism festival has major effect on the local economy directly and indirectly. That spending by visitors on local goods and services by event-tourist has a direct economic impact on local businesses and also passes the benefits more widely across the economy and the community. On the other hand, soft cultural tourism does not take into account the loss of local beauty, environmental degradation and effects it creates on the local people of the host communities through their direct and indirect involvement with tourists. Sangai festival can bring many economic and social benefits, particularly in rural areas and developing State like Manipur, but mass tourism is also associated with negative effects. Sangai festival can only be sustainable if it is carefully managed so that potential negative effects on the host community and the environment are not permitted to outweigh the financial benefits.

8. FINDINGS

The study has come up with some interesting findings which has great benefit to the state and are enumerated below:

- (a) The people of Manipur include the Meitei, Nagas, Kukis, Meitei-Pangals and other communities which have lived in complete harmony for centuries. So by this festival gives an impetus to live in harmony and tranquillity.
- (b) Manipur is one of the seven sister states of the North East Region of India which has been given various names like Switzerland of East India and the Jewel of India. With the introduction of Manipur Sangai festival, this little corner of India which remains largely untouched and vastly undiscovered for a long time has now promises to be the great tourist discovery of the 21st Century.
- (c) The radio, television and print media are witnessed to the visitors as backbone of information provider. So, it is felt that extra efforts needs in IT and communication sector in parallel with modern technology as to give a wide awareness idea about the festival.
- (d) The tour operators available during the festival are quite helpful and helping hand to the visitors. But few numbers are employed during the festival and sometimes make unwanted delay to the visitor and specially for the inbound tourist.

- (e) Sangai festival of Manipur has given special attentions to the South East Asian countries like Myanmar, China, Thailand, Bangladesh and Mauritius to showcase their rich culture and exchanging various trade items.
- (f) As the Imphal Tuliha Airport upgraded into International Airport, this festival has been ensured to boost to a great extent.
- (g) The critically endangered rare state animal (Sangai Deer) is on the verge of extinction. This festival gave an awareness programme on the importance of owning the endangered Brow Antlered Deer (Sangai) to the masses and the poachers in particular and habitat destruction among others.
- (h) Sangai festival has given a great impetus especially to the road and connectivity of the state. The road connecting in and around the capital has been boost up to the maximum standard level on priority basis.
- (j) Manipur is a strike prone and insurgent hit state. Sometimes the festival is abruptly disturbed to the general public and creating a chaotic situation which is a hindrance to the progress of the festival.
- (k) Most of the time, the festival recorded a massive crowd and remarkable turned out of people from every nook and corner of the state from the beginning till end of festival. This is also a positive outcome of the festivals.
- (l) This festival makes an opportunity to showcase varieties of locally flavoured cuisines the state Manipur made available to the rest of the world.

9. SUGGESTION

- (a) More attention should be given into the areas of Information, Hospitality, Accommodation, Transportation, Safety, Leisure, Cooperation, Hygiene, and Eco Friendly environment so that the visit could be comfortable, to visit an endless temptation and make everyday a new day with a fresh input.
- (b) The inclusion of various adventure sports including the MMTA's trekking to various part of Manipur is a great initiative but, yet there have been many complaints about the duration and short cuts of the trips. It has to be relooked and improved to some level.
- (c) The food items selling in the stalls produce so many junk food items and prices are sky high. So, it has to be improved and policy may be enacted in order to improve the quality and prices of the food items. The state government and concern organiser needs special attention so as to find a reasonable price of all available items.
- (d) The charges for standard shops during the Sangai festival could be checked in order to bring to a reasonable quality and quantity. Finally, the mission is to make the festival a grand success and in turn to flourish the state as world class tourist hot spots.
- (e) Awareness campaign by establishing information networks should be taken up. Tours and travel operators shall play a significant part of this game-plan.
- (f) Focus to be concentrated on high-end domestic and international tourists in the immediate years. Patient-tourist from neighbouring States and country (Myanmar) seeking sophisticated medical facilities should be maximally encouraged to avail of these in our hospitals.
- (g) There is a need to design new products using our skill, ideas and technology so that the rich culture of the state including handloom and handicraft of the indigenous state could be showcased to the outside.
- (h) Manipur is a strike prone and insurgency hit state. The government and concern organisation needs to take appropriate security measure for the visitors and inbound tourist so that a sense of safety could develop to the common people.
- (j) There is a need for awareness programme and campaign on "Sangai Deer" the brow antlered species of the state.
- (k) Maximal efforts shall be initiated to showcase and promote the nascent Manipuri Film Industry, Shumang Lila and indigenous sports, cuisines and the festivals.
- (l) The Government shall endeavour to include tourism as a non-credit compulsory subject in the syllabi of high school and higher secondary standard in the State. This will in-

culcate among the youth of the State a sense of our traditional sense of hospitality and good mannerism for the development of tourism in particular.

- (m) Inter-departmental and inter-agency linkages are crucial to the development of Tourism. Public Works, Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), Municipal Administration Housing & Urban Development (MAHUD), Rural Development, Power, Health, Home, Forest and Arts & Culture Departments are important departments which need to play a critical role. Close relationships shall also be established with NGOs, Clubs, Civil Aviation and others.
- (n) Niche tourism products related to the special interests of tourist target markets shall be improved, developed and promoted to position Manipur as a unique and competitive destination for tourists both domestic and international.
- (o) Being the birthplace of modern Polo, Manipur has the added advantage to promote Polo tourism and a concerted effort shall be undertaken with related associations to develop this unique form of tourism. Also, the comfortable climate and the lush, green landscape make Manipur an ideal place for Golf tourism. Efforts shall be taken up to develop Manipur a world class tourism places.
- (p) The rich cultural heritage and the historical sites can be promoted for culture and pilgrimage tourisms.

10. CONCLUSION

Manipur is a beautiful place located in north east of India. Manipur is a very famous state with its folk dance, songs and cultural treasures in India. Also this little paradise is power house of sports. Manipur Sangai festival is a promoter of arts and cultural activities, adventure, sports and natural beauty of Manipur. This festival being a very special part of Manipur, it creates new human relationship among the people and it is also a way to express Manipur itself in front of world. This festival witnessed not only Indian states but also many foreign troupes of cultural activities and games and sports. This festival is famous not only for cultural and other entertainment activities but also it is also famous for delicious foods items.

The people of other countries are satisfied to the hospitality and services made available to them.

The mission of this festival is not to seek a panacea but to create a direction that will drive the tourism industry in Manipur and to let the dynamics of the industry to take over thereafter. The Manipur Sangai festival seeks to harness the tourism potential of Manipur and to present to the world as a "Tourism Hotspot" for attracting tourists and investments with the development of hotels & restaurants, resorts, transport & communication, heritage sites and handloom and handicrafts. This will ultimately help in creating jobs and revenue, and in contributing to the economy, development of backward areas, thereby reducing poverty. The State intends to create a robust and vibrant tourism industry through planned, innovative and systematic approach producing an efficient tourism multiplier largely governed by diversity of tourism products, lengthening the period & comfort of stay, and creating various spending avenues. The economic benefits of the Industry should be able to filter down to the backward sections of the society and bring all round development of the State. The friendly nature of the people should be enthused into the industry for the spirit of "Meeting as a stranger and Parting as a friend".

The Manipur Sangai festival vision is to create a unique brand for the State to market, build critical infrastructure by prioritisation and manage its valuable resources in a sustainable and integrated manner to make Manipur a favourite national and international tourist destination so that the experience of the visiting tourists are enriched and the quality of life and economic benefits are handed down to the backward sections and regions of our state for all round prosperity and poverty alleviation of the society. The festival aim to destine Manipur a commercial hub and world class tourist destination.

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