

## The Conception of Tourism Communication and strategizing for Tourism Development in Himachal Pradesh

Ranjna Thakur

Ph. D Candidate, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, IKGPTU, Kapurthala, Punjab;  
Asst Prof Journalism & Mass Communication, Shoolini University, Solan, Himachal Pradesh, India

Ranbir Singh

Associate Professor, Dept of Journalism & Mass Communication, IKGPTU, Kapurthala, Punjab,  
India

### Abstract:

Community in Himachal Pradesh and many similar communities around the world were increasingly dependent upon the outside 'urban' world. Interacting with the outside world was not easy for these local communities without sufficient and strong social, cultural and economic resources (Kishore and Gupta, 2000). But gradually, there were new horizons related to tourism which created new social trends in Himachal Pradesh that opened alternative directions for the future of Himachal community towards participation in tourism activities. Communication with the tourists also cultivates a guest-host relation, which endorses their unique traditions worldwide. Development of Himachal tourism industry would not have been possible without the crucial role played by the communication techniques or tourism communication. This concept note will provide an insight into the tourism development in Himachal Pradesh which is a result of tourism communication techniques. The conception of tourism communication or the whole idea of this originated from the marketing mix, public relations activities and advertising which form the marketing communication mix and this in turn constitutes the tourism communication which further strategizes and leads to the development of tourism in a region. This paper attempts to comprehend the tourism communication techniques which aid in strategizing for tourism development (entrepreneurship and economic development) in Himachal Pradesh in terms of its objective.

**Keywords:** Tourism communication, tourism industry, marketing communication mix, role of communication, tourism development.

### I. INTRODUCTION

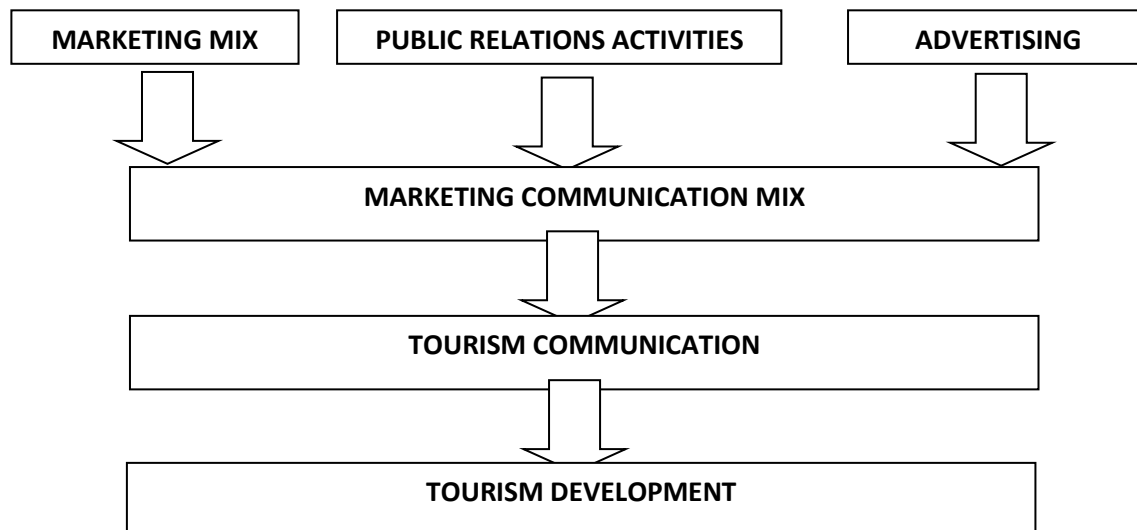
Tourism sector contributes a major share to the economic growth of a region. Himachal tourism has proved to be an imperative economic activity for the state and major emphasis is laid on its overall development. Most of the people of Himachal Pradesh stay in rural areas. Many of them are quite poor as well. A majority of population in Himachal has been reliant on agriculture for livelihood. Initially they relied on agricultural activities, but they realized gradually that the tourism industry can be a major source of their livelihood and there is a need to promote their unique culture, traditions, heritage and other interesting attributes which can be utilized for tourism purpose and in return could engender employment and increase non-farm sector based enterprises in their residential areas, which further started attracting the attention of tourists from all over the world. Tourism is a service industry and has become absolutely multi-dimensional due to its nature and trajectory. This has been identified as a service which fulfils the individual's desire for expected leisure and ultimately improves the health of the society be it social, psychological, cultural or even economical. It has become one of the fastest growing economic sector in the world. There are many nations whose large portion of the national economy comes from tourism. It is multi-dimensional and multi-faceted because of its nature as one can see that at the one hand it gains mammoth revenues for the country, on the other hand it promotes global brotherhood or sense of attachment among various cultural groups and societies.

As it becomes one of the fastest economies in the world at the same time it is also called as the smokeless industry which without spreading pollution creates great opportunities for income, employments, leisure and soft power of the country. Tourism has become such an embedded industry that knowing it from the elementary to highest end

becomes quite crucial. There is a dire need to understand each element of the tourism industry or the idea of the tourism so that governments could create ideal platform for the further betterment of the tourism sector. Various techniques of communication can be roped in for strategizing for tourism development.

The progress of Himachal tourism industry would not have been conceivable without the vital role played by the communication techniques or tourism communication.

### 1.1. Models of Communication Applicable to Tourism Communication:



This figure has been designed by the researcher and it depicts the relationship between tourism and communication and tourism development. This depicts that marketing mix, PR activities and advertising constitute the marketing communication mix which forms an integral part of tourism communication. Tourism communication helps in strategizing for the development of tourism in Himachal Pradesh. The models applicable to tourism communication are as follows:

Diffusion of Innovations (1962), Communication of Innovators (1971) and a revised work Diffusion of Innovations (1983) are the works of Everett M. Rogers (1962) a renowned communication expert. These are ground-breaking works and are based on a series of generalizations from research work on the diffusion of innovations and expedite greater understanding of the diffusion process. E.M. Rogers initiates with defining communication and diffusion. According to him, innovation is the primary and most important factor responsible for diffusing various new and latest ideas over a period of time into a social system around us and this innovation is conveyed to us through various other means. According to him the workability of an innovation depends on five major characteristics, and these are – if an innovation has any added advantage over the previous innovation; if this innovation is in line with the ongoing situation; if this innovation is easier to adapt or has some complexities, if this innovation can be taxed and if it can be observed or not. To him, the knowledge about the latest innovations can be created through the medium of mass media while the channels at interpersonal levels are more equipped in guiding and shifting attitudes for adoption of a new idea and thus these channels at interpersonal levels are the reason behind the adoption and rejection of any idea.

He also refers to terms like heterophily and homophily. Heterophily, to him, is the unit or degree of difference in characteristics like educational status, belief systems, social status and so on and so for, between the interacting pairs. On the other hand, to him, Homophily meant the amount of similarities between the interacting pairs regarding the abovementioned characteristics. According to him, more effective communication takes place between individuals who are homophilous. He talks of five major classifications of the adopters, these are – “innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and the laggards.” Lastly, he analyses the consequences that took place after the rejection or the adoption of an innovation. These consequences can be anything, i.e., they can be direct or indirect, anticipated or unanticipated, undesirable or desirable. One of the undesirable consequences is the widening of socioeconomic gaps. According to Rogers, one important role of diffusion agencies is to make ways to minimize the differences among the units or members of a social system and maximize the equality by filling gaps among the different members of the similar social systems.

*If Rogers' concept of diffusion of innovation is applied to the tourism development in Himachal Pradesh, it can be inferred that various communication processes and techniques aid in trickling the ideas or innovations in the tourism technology and the benefits to the masses.*

Shirley White and K. Sadanandan Nair in their book titled, “Perspectives on Development Communication” (1993) have talked about a new model. This model, by them, re-imagined development communication and adopted the thought or notion of an exchange or interface between the processes (organizational) and participation and communication along with the social and cultural change which guarantees justice (social) and equal and egalitarian developmental rights. The main point of the developmental model, propagated by them was to enhance the communication of the human resource available with the social system and thus to garner the support of human resource in the process of development. By doing this (using communication strategies effectively) the growth of an equitable social system can be achieved as per this developmental model.

This model, i.e., the one propagated by Nair and White doesn't eradicate some of the oldest essential ingredients, such as – “Sender, Message, Channel, Receiver, Effect.” This model indiscriminately promotes the equal and egalitarian relationship between the source and the receiver and by doing this, promotes dialogic communication process. The major argument of this model is that it focuses more on the traditional knowledge and considers this as the most important component in a dialogue.

*This model also serves as a base for this concept of tourism communication being discussed in this paper, where the tourism sector can spread the messages to the masses effectively with the aid of tourism communication strategies.*

To Schramm, “Society is a sum of relationships in which information of some kind is shared.” According to Schramm, the problem of a developing nation is to mobilize resources for modernizing many of their life patterns and in doing so, to bring about the necessary social change speedily. This is where information becomes important. To achieve social change, the populace has to be an informed one so that it could be persuaded and educated. Information has to have a two-way flow, so that the needs of the people can be known to the policy makers and by this they (the people) can contribute in the process of nation-building. According to Schramm, only formal education has the “potential ability to carry new ideas and skills from the modernizing cities to traditional villages. Mass media is swifter than formal education and serves adult population as well whereas the impact of education

is mainly on youth.” Schramm opines that in most developing countries, mass media is under used and underdeveloped.

*Schramm's concept is widely and aptly applicable to the present study where mass media plays a crucial role in tourism communication for the development of tourism in Himachal Pradesh.*

Thus, tourism communication can follow the outline of the above mentioned models and aid in strategizing the development of tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

## II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research paper provides a conceptual outline to highlight the tourism development in Himachal Pradesh which is a result of tourism communication techniques.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This paper is centered on the existing literature and focus group discussions. A qualitative analytical study has been used by the researcher. The available literature was selected from various sources and covered the major aspects of role of tourism communication techniques for the development of tourism in Himachal Pradesh. Besides, four focus groups consisting of six members each were selected and invited to take part in focus group discussion about the major aspects of role of tourism communication techniques for the development of tourism in Himachal Pradesh. The first focus group consisted of the local residents of Himachal Pradesh, the second group had the journalism and mass communication academicians, students and doctoral fellows, the third group included the tourism and hospitality academicians, students and doctoral fellows and the fourth group consisted of tourists. Each member was required to give her/his comments and additional ideas. The facts and suggestions were thus summarized on the basis of the literature review and the members' suggestions.

## IV. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION: ANALYSIS AND OUTCOME

- 4.1. The first point of discussion was that whether tourism communication strategies of Himachal Pradesh focus on entrepreneur development, where the focus groups opined that although the schemes like *home stays* are already being publicized and promoted in the state since long time and people have utilized the benefits, but more frequent publicity and promotion is required at a large scale to make the benefits trickle down to the masses. This is quite feasible by completely harnessing the tourism communication techniques including marketing mix, public relations activities and advertising. The frequency and reach of the promotions and publicity by the HPTDC (Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation) should thus be increased manifold.
- 4.2. The second point of discussion was whether tourism communication strategies of Himachal Pradesh provide information about the new schemes for starting new business. The crux of the focus group discussion was that new schemes for starting new business in tourism sector are being promoted with the help of tourism communication at a limited level only and this needs a wider promotion in order to reach the masses of Himachal Pradesh and make them understand the benefits. Majority of the people don't have much information and this can be resolved by using local media channels and local newspapers as

well as by incorporating special informational or infotainment programmes at the local level through the local media or through the panchayat heads.

- 4.3. The third point was whether tourism communication strategies of Himachal Pradesh provide skill based information to the entrepreneur and in nut shell maximum members held an opinion that skill based information is reaching the entrepreneurs only if they are approaching the relevant authorities and are vigilant enough to catch hold of the new developments. There are cases where people are potential entrepreneurs but lack knowledge of the new advancements and cannot approach the relevant channels to obtain the essential skill based information just because of lack of relevant information. This can also be dealt quite well through the panchayats and the block development office type bodies who can harness the trainers in order to develop the requisite skills for entrepreneurship. Successful tourism entrepreneurs can be roped in to interact with the interested budding entrepreneurs or the masses.
- 4.4. The fourth point was whether tourism communication strategies of Himachal Pradesh encourage people to start entrepreneurship. Here the summarized opinion was that people are encouraged to start entrepreneurship at some levels but not at a wider horizon and because of this, many people don't have this information. A mix of local media should be tied up with by the HPTDC and the masses can thus be encouraged to start entrepreneurship. Success stories of the entrepreneurs like OYO success story, etc. can be shared and spread across to motivate the masses.
- 4.5. The fifth point was whether tourism communication strategies of Himachal Pradesh provide information about the various incentives and concessions for entrepreneur. The opinion of the majority of the members was that tourism communication strategies about this have a selective reach only and cannot reach the masses in the state. Mainstream media need to be harnessed and roped in for an extensive reach. Every entrepreneur should be registered and no one should be missed. For example, the registered home stays in Himachal Pradesh can avail many concessions on SGST, etc. Various incentives and concessions are mentioned in detail in the Himachal Pradesh tourism policy every year, which is also made available online by the Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of Himachal Pradesh.
- 4.6. Sixth point of discussion was if tourism communication provides special assistance to economically weaker sections to start their own tourism venture as an entrepreneur. Most of the focus group members suggested that special assistance and subsidies are provided to the economically weaker sections of Himachal Pradesh to start their own tourism venture as an entrepreneur, but some sections do not get access to this assistance because of lack of knowledge regarding availability of such assistance. Hence it needs to be communicated in a way that the information reaches the target groups and no one is missed. Special section on the incentives and concessions or the special assistance for the economically weaker sections of the society to start their own tourism venture as an entrepreneur should be added in the Himachal Pradesh tourism policy, by the Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of Himachal Pradesh.
- 4.7. Last but not the least point was whether tourism communication provides information about the upcoming trends and innovative ideas in tourism business, for which the opinions and suggestions were that this information isn't reaching extensively to the masses of the state and an appropriate media mix is needed to be roped in for the far and wide reach of this. As per the Himachal Pradesh tourism policy 2019, the vision goes as, "Positioning Himachal Pradesh as a leading global sustainable tourism

destination for inclusive economic growth” and as per the guiding principles, inclusive tourism intends to reduce poverty by integrating disadvantaged groups, so that they can participate in and benefit from tourism activities. Now, this point of inclusive tourism needs to be emphasized upon and disadvantaged groups should be identified and roped in as soon as possible. Here, the local governing bodies at the block level or the panchayats and the local media can play a pivotal role.

## V. CONCLUSION

The objective of the present study was to comprehend the tourism communication techniques for strategizing the tourism development (entrepreneurship and economic development) in Himachal Pradesh and the suggestions and opinions of the focus groups regarding this can be summarized as follows:

Marketing mix, public relations activities and advertising which form the marketing communication mix need to be harnessed in such a manner that tourism communication spreads the relevant messages regarding entrepreneur development, new schemes for starting new business in tourism sector, skill based information to the entrepreneur, encouragement of the people to start entrepreneurship, information about the various incentives and concessions for entrepreneur, special assistance to economically weaker sections to start their own tourism venture as an entrepreneur and information about the upcoming trends and innovative ideas in tourism business. A suitable media mix including the mainstream newspapers, TV and radio channels and the local newspapers, TV and radio channels, needs to be harnessed in a way that the requisite messages can be spread as wide as possible and can thus reach the mass audience as well as the class audience and the masses of the state at global as well as local levels. Regular repetition of the relevant messages on the mass media platforms is also required as it ensures retention by the audience and thus trickling down of the benefits to the masses of Himachal Pradesh is completely practicable. This is definitely going to aid in the development of tourism sector in Himachal Pradesh.

## References

- Nair, K.S. and S. A. White. (1993a.). The Development Communication Process. in K.S. Nair and S. A. White (eds.). *Perspectives on Development Communication*. New Delhi. Sage.
- Rogers. Everett M.(1983). *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York. Free Press.
- Schramm,W. E. (1954). *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*. Urbana. University of Illinois.
- Schramm,W. E. The Unique Perspective of Communication: A Retrospective View. *Journal of Communication*. Vol. 33. No. 3.(1983). pp. 6-17.
- Schramm, Wilbur E. and William. E.Porter (1982). *Men, Women Messages and Media: Understanding Human Communication*. New York. Long Men Higher Education.
- Shah, Kishore and Vasanti Gupta (2000). *Tourism, the Poor and Other Stakeholders: Experience in Asia*. London: Overseas Development Institute.