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# Tourist Expectation Gap – A Study on the Tourist Spot Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, India

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**ABSTRACT:** The state of Arunachal Pradesh in the North Eastern region of India has huge potential to become a strong force in the tourism industry of the country. But the state is yet to get the attention of tourists. Efforts must be given to develop and promote tourism to get the attention of tourists and to boost the tourism business of the state which has tremendous scope for tourism activities. However, developmental efforts in tourism should be based on expectations of tourists. This paper tries to find the gaps in tourist expectations with respect to the tourist spot Tawang, which is considered as the most important tourist spot of Arunachal Pradesh and suggests steps to bridge the gaps. The paper puts forward the view that if the gaps are removed by taking appropriate steps, the region can go a long way in tourism business.

**KEYWORDS:** Tourist Expectation, Tawang Tourism, Arunachal Tourism, North East India Tourism

### I. INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh is a state in the north eastern region of India which has tremendous tourism potential due to its breathtaking natural beauty of green hills and valleys, wildlife that represents unique Himalayan biodiversity, cool and pollution free healthy climate, simple people with great hospitality and their rich cultural as well as religious heritage. Lush green forests, snow clad mountains, roaring rivers, deep gorges, places of historical and religious importance provide ample scope for a wide range of tourism activities such as wildlife tourism, eco-tourism, adventure tourism, religious tourism, rural tourism, cultural tourism etc. in this beautiful state of north east India. For tourists who love adventure, the state has the potential to provide attractions such as river rafting, trekking, mountaineering, snow skiing, angling etc. Again the state has a number of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks namely Eagles' Nest wildlife sanctuary, Dibang wildlife sanctuary, Namdapha National Park etc. to cater to the needs of wildlife enthusiasts. Tawang which has the famous Gaden Namgyal Lhatse, which is more than 300 year old Buddhist monastery, is one of the most important seats of Buddhism in the entire world. Parasuram Kund, located in the Lohit district of the state is an important religious place for Hindus. Vijaynagar, Itanagar, Bhismanagar, Zimithang Chorten, Tawang etc. are places that attract tourists interested in ancient archeology and history (Department of Tourism, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh).

In spite of having great tourism potential, the state of Arunachal Pradesh has only 3.71% share in tourist inflow to north eastern region of India and at the country level, the share of tourist foot fall of Arunachal Pradesh is absolutely insignificant (Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India). This indicates that the tourism potentialities of Arunachal Pradesh have not yet been capitalized for attracting tourists. Again, if we see the nature of domestic tourist arrivals, we find that 50% of domestic tourists of Arunachal Pradesh come from the neighboring state of Assam, 30% from West Bengal, 15% from within the state and only 5% from other states (Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India). From this it is clear that Arunachal Pradesh is not a sought after tourist destination even for the domestic tourists. The above figures provide ample logic to think that there is a gap between the tourism propositions offered by Arunachal Pradesh and the expectations of tourists. In this study, Tawang, the most important tourist spot of Arunachal Pradesh which receives maximum number of tourists of the state has been taken as a sample spot to study the tourist expectation gap.

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## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of relevant literature was carried out to set a suitable conceptual framework for this study. During the review of literature it was found that Padure & Turtureanu (2005) in their research established that tourism as a business is growing and with the growth of the business, the need of tourists are changing and therefore expectation of tourists from a tourist destination has changed a lot. Again, Elumalai & Rajendran (2013) did a study on pilgrimage tourism in the state of Tamil Nadu in India in which they came to know that the experience of tourists greatly depend on the changing factors of the environment. They also found that the problems that tourists face in a tourist spot depend on nationality, income level, education status etc. of tourists. Usman Ahmed Qadri (2015) in a study, made an attempt to find out the gap between customer expectation and customer perception for the bank customers in Pakistan. The study revealed that the expectation of the bank customers were higher than the service they get in banks in all aspects. The study suggested development of new strategies to minimize customer gap between expectation and perception of customers. The suggestion is to give positive experience to the customers at each point of contact with the bank. In another study, Dr. Sumit Agarwal, Dr. Garima Bhardwaj, Dr. K S Thakur (2014), tried to analyse gap between in customer expectation and employee perception with respect to services in Indian call centers. The study showed that largest gap exists for the parameter Empathy which is followed by Responsiveness and Assurance. Ghassem Abedi, Farideh Rostami, Marzieh Ziaee, Hasan Siamian, and Aliasghar Nadi (2015), in their study evaluated perception and expectation of patients in outpatient service in a hospital. The study revealed that expectation of patients was higher compared to what they get in the hospital. The important shortcomings were in the dimensions of behaviour of staff, responsiveness, affordability and accessibility. In one of the studies, Rafikul Islam, Selim Ahmed, Dzuljastri Abdul Razak (2015) tried to identify the gaps between customer expectations and perceptions on service quality dimensions of Islamic banks in Malaysia found that the service quality dimensions failed to meet the customer expectations. The study also revealed that young aged customers have higher expectation. Marie von Meyer-Höfer, Sina Nitzko and Achim Spiller (2015) in their study, made an effort to see expectation of customers towards organic food in European food markets. They found that customers expect naturalness in organic food associated with health benefits. Customers also expect organic food to be produced locally and they expect such products to be affordable.

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the expectations of tourists with respect to the selected tourism related parameters for the tourist spot Tawang.
2. To study the present status of the selected tourism related parameters for the tourist spot Tawang
3. To find the tourist expectation gap with respect to the selected parameters for the tourist spot Tawang

## IV. METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on both primary and secondary data. For collection of primary data, at first twenty (20) numbers of tourist expectation related parameters were selected and then responses from fifty (50) tourists who visited the sample spot Tawang were taken in the form of a questionnaire. Tourists were asked to rate each parameter twice in a five point Likert scale. One rating is to know the level of importance (expectation) of the parameter for the tourists and the other rating is to know the present status of the parameter with respect to the tourist spot Tawang. On the basis of these two ratings for each parameter, the tourist expectation gaps have been determined. To calculate the gaps mathematically, weighted averages have been calculated for each of the elements. Secondary data were collected from govt. records, journals, websites and books to supplement the primary data.

## V. FINDINGS

The following table (Table 1) shows the weighted averages of the above mentioned two ratings given by the tourists for each of the selected parameters. The difference of the respective weighted averages has been taken as the gap in tourist expectation for a particular parameter. The maximum possible value of the weighted average is 5 and the minimum possible value of the weighted average is 1. The value of weighted average close to 5 represents a favourable opinion

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by the respondents and a weighted average value close to 1 represents an unfavourable opinion by the respondents. The table below (Table: 1) shows the Tourist Expectation Gap Values for the tourist spot Tawang.

ELEMENTS OF TOURIST DESTINATION	LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE OF EACH ELEMENT FOR A TOURIST IN THE TOURIST SPOT (Expectation of Tourists, Wtd. Avg. Mean Value out of 5)		THE PRESENT STATUS OF EACH ELEMENT IN THE TOURIST SPOT (Wtd. Avg. Mean Value out of 5)		TOURIST EXPECTATION GAP VALUE (A - B)
	Mean (A)	SD	Mean (B)	SD	
1. Personal safety & security	4.6	0.494	4.2	0.606	0.4
2. Ease of travel to this destination	4.3	0.646	2.5	0.814	1.8
3. Accessibility of tourist information centers/office/agencies	4.7	0.462	2.7	0.462	2
4. Overall cleanliness	4.6	0.494	3.8	0.606	0.8
5. Unspoiled nature	4.7	0.462	4.4	0.670	0.3
6. Climate conditions	4.3	0.788	4.2	0.606	0.1
7. Diversity of attractions (architecture, culture, landscape, adventure etc.)	4.5	0.505	2.5	0.677	2
8. Quality of accommodation	4.6	0.494	3.3	0.646	1.3
9. Friendliness of local people	4.7	0.462	4.4	0.670	0.3
10. Local transportation services	4.5	0.505	3.8	0.755	0.7
11. Offer of local cuisine	4.6	0.433	2.6	0.670	2
12. Possibilities for shopping	4.4	0.494	3	0.782	1.4
13. Night life & entertainment	4.6	0.670	1.7	0.646	2.9
14. Opportunity for rest	4.1	0.707	3	0.903	1.1
15. Availability of sports facilities & recreational activities	4	0.782	2.7	0.735	1.3
16. Scope of adventure activity (rock climbing, tracking etc.)	4.5	0.505	2.5	0.677	2
17. Offer of local cultural events and shows	4.6	0.494	2.1	0.543	2.5

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18. Performance/ attitude/ behaviour of people working in tourist establishments.	4.7	0.462	2.8	0.606	1.9
19. Signage & directions	4.5	0.505	3.2	0.755	1.3
20. Scope for academic and research activities	2.9	1.147	3.6	0.808	-0.7

Source: Survey Data

**TABLE 1: SHOWING TOURIST EXPECTATION GAP FOR THE SELECTED PARAMETERS**

The above table reveals that there is tourist expectation gap in 19 parameters out of the total 20 parameters selected in this study. The only parameter where the present status is better than the expectation of tourists is “Scope for academic and research activities” (Tourist Expectation Gap Value: - 0.7).

Considering the Tourist Expectation Gap values, we can categorize the parameters of this study into three categories. Small Expectation Gap (Tourist Expectation Gap Value 0 – 0.9), Medium Expectation Gap (Tourist Expectation Gap Value: 1- 1.9) and Large Expectation Gap (Tourist Expectation Gap Value: 2 and above). The following table shows these three categories of expectation gap with respect to Tawang as a tourist spot.

Parameters under Small Expectation Gap	Parameters under Medium Expectation Gap	Parameters under Large Expectation Gap
Personal safety & security	Ease of travel to this destination	Accessibility of tourist information centers/office/agencies
Overall cleanliness	Quality of accommodation	Diversity of attractions (architecture, culture, landscape, adventure etc.)
Unspoiled nature	Possibilities for shopping	Offer of local cuisine
Climate conditions	Opportunity for rest	Night life & entertainment
Friendliness of local people	Availability of sports facilities & recreational activities	Scope of adventure activity (rock climbing, tracking etc.)
Local transportation services	Performance/ attitude/ behaviour of people working in tourist establishments	Offer of local cultural events and shows
	Signage & directions	

**TABLE 2: SHOWING THREE CATEGORIES OF TOURIST EXPECTATION GAP**

## VI. DISCUSSION

From the above analysis it is clear that there exist considerable tourist expectation gaps with respect to the selected parameters. Expectation gap is not same for all the parameters. Some gaps are large, some gaps are medium and some are small (Ref. Table 2). Keeping in mind the size of the expectation gaps, the govt. as well as other concerned parties should prioritize measures to remove the expectation gaps. In order to make Tawang a popular tourist destination, adequate measures will have to be taken to bridge the expectation gaps. In this regard, the following approaches can be considered,

### 1. Developing and Promoting Concept Based Tourism

Tourism now-a-days has become highly concept based. For example, adventure tourism, rural tourism, medical tourism, wildlife tourism etc. Concept based tourism development and marketing help in attracting a particular target group of tourists. Such concept based tourism is lacking in Arunachal Pradesh particularly in the Bomdila-Tawang tourist circuit. This has been indicated by the findings in the study that there is gap in the expectation of tourists with respect to diversity of attractions. Therefore, a variety of well thought out concepts of tourism activities, their planned

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development and marketing will bridge such expectation gap. Considering the tourist spot Tawang, a number of tourism concepts can be developed and offered to tourists. For instance, Tawang has the large, Tawang Monastery based on which Religious Tourism can be developed. Developing required infrastructure to offer activities such as mountaineering, trekking, paragliding etc. to tourists will give a chance to promote and market Adventure Tourism. Again, providing adequate facilities to visit nearby wildlife sanctuaries will give an opportunity for Wildlife Tourism. Steps towards developing and promoting concept based tourism will also help to bridge the expectation gap relating to scope and facilities for adventure, sports and recreational activities.

## 2. Communication

Communication is a vital element of success in terms of marketing and promoting a product or service. In the study, tourists have highlighted that there is lack of reliable source of information about Tawang tourism. Moreover, they have also said that it is very difficult to travel to the destination mainly because of the poor road condition. There is no rail and air connectivity to Tawang. The expectation gap for ease of travel to the destination is 1.8 and that of accessibility to tourist information center / offices etc. is 2 (Refer Table 1) which are quite high. This shows that a huge expectation gap exists in the area of information and communication with respect to the tourist spot Tawang. Adequate number of active tourist information centers should be set up at places where prospective tourists are expected to visit. Having tourist information centers at railway stations, airports will give access to information to prospective tourists. Govt. Tourism Department website should possess all relevant information for tourists and these information (address of hotels, telephone numbers etc.) should be regularly updated. Regular meetings of govt. officials and people from tourist establishments, travel agencies etc. should be held to have a collective effort in promoting Tawang tourism. The condition of the road to Tawang is poor. Immediate action should be taken to improve the road condition up to the expectation of tourists.

## 3. Accommodation

The quality and type of accommodation is a critical factor for the success of tourism business. It has been seen that the respondents in this study has shown a higher level of expectation gap (Expectation Gap 1.3, Refer Table1) for quality of accommodation. This is mainly due to limited and quality wise substandard level of accommodation facilities (Hotels etc.) available in Tawang. Tourists have the opinion that the tariffs for accommodation is quite high compared to the service delivered. Moreover, different type of tourists such as groups, single tourist, business tourist, leisure tourist, special interest tourist need different type of accommodation facilities and related services. Therefore, a variety of accommodation facilities should be developed based on the type of tourists and their interests to cater to the needs of all types of tourists. Authorities should make policies so that hotels, resorts etc. either recruit well trained competent people or make arrangements of proper training to the existing staff so that tourists can be served efficiently to give them a lovely memorable experience of staying in this tourist spot. Such initiatives will also bridge the tourist expectation gap related to Performance/ attitude/ behaviour of people working in tourist establishments.

## 4. Ancillary Services and Facilities

There are certain services and facilities that support and complement tourist attractions in a tourist destination. A tourist, apart from visiting the important attractions of a tourist spot, wants to experience the local art, culture, cuisines etc. In the study, it has been seen that there exist significant expectation gap in the opportunities for experiencing these. There is no night life in Tawang. People close their establishments and markets very early in the evening. There is hardly any show to display local culture, dance etc. Govt. should give a serious thought in these matters by creating arrangements for showcasing the local art forms, culture and traditions through evening shows, developing tourist friendly places for experiencing local as well as other cuisines, improving scope for shopping unique local items etc. If we have to see growth of tourism in this area, Govt. will have to take proper steps to develop ancillary services and facilities for tourists.

## 5. Community Participation

Without the participation of local people, tourism cannot grow. All organizations working for the growth and development of tourism in this area should take steps for the involvement and participation of local community in tourism activities. Local community should be made aware about the benefits that they are going to have with the



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growth and development of tourism in their area. Local people should be encouraged with proper training and support to develop tourism related business enterprises. This will also create a lot of employment opportunities for the locals. Community participation will improve the behaviour and attitude of locals towards tourists and the tourists will also feel safe and comfortable in that area.

## 6. Focus on Sustainable Tourism Development

There is a broad consensus among the people thinking and working in the field of tourism development that tourism development should be sustainable in nature (<https://en.wikipedia.org>). Arunachal Pradesh is a nature's paradise, which is undisturbed and untouched. Therefore, tourism developments in this area should be sustainable developments. Sustainable tourism development should be based on encouraging value based tourism by developing tourism businesses that focus on conserving cultural heritage and traditional values. Informing tourists in advance about what is expected from them, fostering environment friendly tourism activities, minimum utilization of non-renewable resources and respecting local expectations and assumptions should get priorities in developing tourism in this area.

## 7. Effective Promotion and Marketing

Tourism is the biggest industry in the world and therefore we see presence of great number of tourist destinations and tourism service providers. As a result, the competition in this industry is tough. In order to make Tawang and Arunachal Pradesh in general, a prominent tourist destination, a well thought out, practical and result oriented promotional and marketing strategy and its proper implementation is required. Creating a destination brand with a focus on special tourism activities along with elements of differentiation will help to attract tourists to this destination. The brand and the tourism propositions must resonate with the expectations of tourists to encourage them to come and visit the place, Ivo Mulec (2010).

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