



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM



SIKKIM TOURISM POLICY, 2010

TOURISM DEPARTMENT

GANGTOK

PLANTING SEEDS OF HOPE FOR A GREENER TOMORROW

TOURISM TOUCHES EVERYONE

“THE LAND OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY”

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Mission Statements and Principles:

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. The dynamic growth of this industry is evident from the fact that globally tourism accounts for more than 11% of the global GDP and 8% of the world trade employment. Nature has bestowed Sikkim with unique beauty, splendour with its lush green and undisturbed valleys, five climatic zones, peaceful, total sanitation, environment friendly, hospitable & smiling people and a rich cultural heritage –which is unparalleled and would be hard put to create and find anywhere else. The most peaceful and crime free in the lap of Himalayas, “The land of Peace & Tranquility” Sikkim itself become its natural and unique USP with global appeal.

The Policy rests upon the following basic principles:

- i. In past years, Sikkim has become one of most sought after Tourists destination. Tourism is an important sector for the prosperity of the Nation and the State. Having realized “Tourism” as a major engine of economic growth, employment generator & poverty alleviator, the State Government has endorsed this sector as the main civil industry of the State. Hence, improvements of the efficiency of the industry for enhance social & economic benefits and consequential increased economic benefits, including increased employment generation. Year 2010 has been declared as “ Year of Tourism”.

- ii. By focusing on quality tourism, the State Government aims at promoting sustainable development of tourism and encouraging the private sectors to develop tourism related infrastructure & services without disturbing ecology and environment.
- iii. Establish and strengthen the Institution of Network of Stakeholders (INS) which is Government led, private sector driven and community welfare oriented. Government shall provide a legislative framework to regulate Tourism Trade and Industry. Ensure safety & security of tourists; create basic infrastructure and health-care facilities. The private sector has to act as main spring of activities and impart dynamism & speed to the process of development as well as conservation. Both the Government and Private sector would be required to safeguard the stability and also the social and economic advancement of the local communities and other issues related to it.
- iv. The deep-rooted relationship of tourism and culture, traditions, monuments, heritage, natural resources, environment, forests, wildlife & ecology will be fully recognized and provided for improvement, enrichment and up gradation and it will be considered as a linchpin of the tourism industry.
- v. Effective linkages and close relationship will be established with interlinked Departments and agencies such as Home, Police, Forest, Environment & wildlife, Transport, Roads, Culture, Rural Management & Development, Urban Development, PHED, Industry, Army, BRO, Railways, Civil Aviation and NGOs etc.
- vi. Conducive environment for public and private sectors collaboration and investments through facilitation, concessions and incentives and other policy related interventions. Also to create effective delivery mechanism for various kinds of incentives, concessions and conveniences to be provided by the Government.
- vii. Sustainability shall serve as the guiding star for the Policy. The development and management strategies will be worked out so as to ensure that tourism largely acts as a pollution free industry and its ecological footprints remain as soft as possible. No one engaged, directly or indirectly in the tourism industry will be allowed to secure short-term gains by resorting to what is called the darker side of the tourism. Neither over-exploitation of natural resources will be permitted nor the carrying capacity of the tourist-sites ignored. The required legislations, Rules and guidelines will be put in place.
- viii. Greater emphasis will be laid on eco-tourism whose parameters will be broader than those of nature tourism alone. It must help in elimination of poverty, ending unemployment, creating new skills, enhancing the status of women, preserving cultural heritage, encouraging tribal and local crafts and in improving overall environment and facilitating growth of a sound and fair social order.
- ix. Special thrust will be imparted to Village/Rural tourism, Home Stay and tourism in small settlements, where sizeable assets of our cultural and natural wealth exist.

- x. Responsible Tourism aimed at involving local community in the development and management of tourist's destinations will be the base.
- xi. "The major constraints are poor connectivity and inadequate tourist facilities. State Tourism Policy needs to address these issues; the State could consider building up tourism infrastructure in a PPP mode. The other aspect to be mindful of in preventing any adverse impact of these activities on the fragile ecology and environment of the State" (Shri Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Dy. Chairman, Planning Commission, Government of India).*
- xii. Due importance will be given to Domestic Tourism, particularly tourism connected to pilgrimage, culture, tradition & heritage, adventure, eco-tourism, wellness Tourism, Peace/mind rejuvenation and it will be so designed that infrastructure created under it will serve as a backbone of international quality product in the time to come.
- xiii. Implementation of policy statements & declarations made at various North-Eastern Council- Sectoral Summits organized by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, Government of India for accelerated development of the North Eastern Region. As per this, the tourism sector holds the highest promise for generating high employment and income-augmentation opportunities.
- xiv. A new class of tourists with marked preferences for adventure, distant destinations, caves, forests, wildlife, lakes, nature lovers, educational, research, etc. is emerging. This class is not looking for luxury accommodations but only for simple and clean places to stay. For this the Premium destinations for country side stay, home stay and camping sites will be encouraged and promoted.
- xv. Bestowed with natural resources, pollution free, green and eco-friendly state, the Wellness tourism will be promoted in its totality along with Akant Vas & Agyat Van Vas as the integrated part of it.
- xvi. To promote organic State and the local organic products and cuisine will be made use of and effectively encouraged.
- xvii. The tourist industry, Hotels and travel agents will be persuaded to evolve and adopt voluntarily a Code of Ethics (CEs) and its infringement will be firmly dealt with by suitable legislation, rules and guidelines.
- xviii. A section of State Police or other force will be earmarked or private security agency will be engage to act as Tourist Police and special training will be imparted to it.
- xix. Promotion, publicity & marketing of Tourism and all tourism products will be taken up in well planned manner at national and international level.
- xx. The civilisational issues as well as issues pertaining to civic administration and good governance will be attended to and made an effective part of the tourism policy.

- xxi. Proper cleanliness and solid waste management and hence, to promote quality tourism
- xxii. In order to increase the duration of stay, special emphasis will be given to open new areas, prime & lesser known destinations, enhance local cultural activities, and to promote the country side.
- xxiii. To break the seasonality factor of tourism and promote all season tourism by having winter tourism, monsoon tourism, Flower festivals, conferences/conventions/seminars, pilgrimage, adventure activities, Tourism related Institutions, Wellness-peace-health rejuvenation months stay etc.
- xxiv. To review the current Tourism Master Plan and follow & implement the new Tourism Master Plan for Sikkim being prepared by Singapore based consultant.
- xxv. Creating a massive people's movement to convert all weaknesses of the Tourism sector in to the Strength of Tourism sector.

Introduction:

Tourism in the State of Sikkim is growing at a rapid pace in a very well thought of and planned manner. Sikkim now has become one of the best sought after hill destinations at the global level . The leadership is very committed and the State Government has been very effective and successful in educating and guiding the people regarding tourism on the basic principle of Sustainable Development. There are certain very strong steps which have been taken up to preserve culture, tradition, heritage and environment /ecology of the State. A number of well planned Programmes are also being taken up to educate the people by organizing capacity building Programmes for the youth and other people engaged in tourism sectors.

The policy document seeks to make tourism sector a main civil industry of State, to enhance employment potential as well as to foster economic integration through developing linkages with other sectors. Broadly the policy paper attempts to:-

- position tourism as a major engine of economic growth
- harness the direct and multiplier effects of tourism for employment generation, economic development and providing impetus to rural/village tourism
- focus on domestic tourism along with international tourism as a major driver for growth
- position Sikkim at global level as eco-tourism destination
- acknowledges the critical role of private sectors with Government working as a pro-active facilitator and catalyst

- create and develop integrated tourism circuits based on different special themes, special tourism products, unique experience tourism products and premium tourism destinations
- ensure that tourist to Sikkim get physically invigorated, mentally rejuvenated, culturally enriched, spiritually elevated and FEEL SIKKIM FROM WITHIN
- The policy document takes into consideration ten (10) key areas that will provide guiding thrust to tourism development. These are: Swagat (Welcome), Soochana (Information), Suvidha (Facilitation), Suraksha (Safety), Sahyog (Cooperation), Samrachana (Infrastructure Development) and Safai (Cleanliness), Paryavaran (Environment), Paristhiki (Ecology) and our great asset SHANTI (Peace).

Sikkim Tourism –Current situation & Analyses:

Sikkim is a hilly State nestled in the Eastern Himalayas. The State takes pride in its natural beauty manifested by the snow clad mountains, landscape dotted with perennial streams & waterfalls, lush green forests, picturesque villages, natives in traditional dresses and indigenous architecture. The crime free society adds to the natural attractions of the state, making it one of the most sought after tourist destination in the country.

Tourism is an important sector in the prosperity of a Nation and the State. It is one of the best and convenient platforms for educating people. Tourism provides an opportunity for cross –cultural communication and eliminates social barriers that impede progress towards understanding and harmony between people and nation. It opens up new areas for promoting national integration and international understanding.

Tourism is one of the priorities and important sector of the State and it is to become the main economy of the State development. It is non-polluting, low cost and high return oriented industry for the State subjective to certain precautions. For this, the State has adopted the Integrated Development for making the Tourism most viable sector.

Some Important Facts about Sikkim Tourism:

- In past years, Sikkim has become one of the most sought after tourist destination
- Tourism is going to be developed as most important sector for contribution of the GDP
- Tourism has created a substantial employment, directly or indirectly
- Number of Domestic tourists in 2003 were about 1, 76,659 while in 2008 were more than 5, 00,000 tourists visited the state and in 2009 the number may be about 6,00,000 tourists
- Number of foreign tourists in 2003 were about 11,966 while in 2008 about 23,000 tourists visited the state and in 2009 we expect about same response due to various global issues.

- State has received more than 15 number of National Awards in Tourism in various fields

Tourism in the State is growing at a rapid pace in a very well thought of and planned manner. Sikkim now has become one of the best hill destinations at the global level. The leadership is very much committed and the Government has been extremely effective and successful in educating and guiding the people regarding tourism on the basic principle of Sustainable Development. Sikkim is now the only organic state of the Country. There are certain strong steps have been taken up to preserve culture, tradition, heritage and environment /ecology of the State. A number of well planned Programmes are also being taken up to educate the people by organizing capacity building Programmes for the youth and other stakeholders engaged in tourism sectors. In order to procure license for registration of travel agents, hotels and lodges & other sectors relevant to it, single window clearance system is being adopted.

The people are encouraged to preserve the old monuments and heritage sites. The Green Mission programme has been launched under which every individual, agency and the Department contributes towards the planting of trees all over the State. Village tourism is encouraged to preserve culture, heritage & handicrafts and to create better economic and employment opportunity in the rural area. Floriculture is being promoted and all the hotels and restaurants have been requested to use natural flowers instead of artificial flowers. Plastic is banned in the State and the Tourists are educated to respect local culture and tradition.

Sikkim is a tourist friendly State in the true sense of the word. During crisis such as natural calamities, mishaps and even during road blocks due to strikes Tourism Department, people and agencies have played a major role in helping the tourists to overcome these problems by co-coordinating with various other agencies for the safety of the tourists.

Sikkim is a land of fairs and festivals. All the ethnic Communities have different and distinct fun-filled festivals, which are celebrated all over the State. Tourism Department is playing a major role in promoting these festivals in order to showcase our culture and heritage to the world.

The State Government in the past years have given top priority and importance to the development of sufficient and required infrastructure & Services for the development of tourism sector in the State. Some of the important steps taken are:

- i. Construction of good network of all weather roads
- ii. A good network of communication, internet, telephone etc
- iii. A good network of transport- private participation
- iv. Helicopter service: Introduction of Helicopter services in 1998 which is being further upgraded, Construction of network of Helipads, more destinations,

- Mountain flights, Joy rides, rescue/ emergency services, approval for Twin engine larger seater Heli service
- v. Sikkim Airport under development
 - vi. A substantial enhancement in accommodation , hotels, guest houses, lodges and Home stay
 - vii. Approval by Government of India for Railway line to Sikkim
 - viii. Double lanning of existing NH-31A and construction of alternate National High Way for Sikkim
 - ix. For power and energy support, networks of Hydro Electric projects are underway.
 - x. Planning-Prepared a Tourism Master plan for 15 years for period 1997-98 to 2011-2012 by Tata Economic Consultancy Service, Sustainable Development plan for 20 years by Horizon Industrial Consultancy Service, Trekking Master plan by INTAC, Prepared guide book for educated unemployed youths, in 2002. The review of previous plans and a new Tourism Master Plan for the State & Uttrey (West Sikkim) is under preparation by Singapore Based consultant (year 2009-10)
 - xi. Action has been initiated on Development of required Human Resources, Safety and security, Regulation of Tourism trade, a good network of travel agents, tour operators and other services providers.
 - xii. Construction and establishment of 135 feet statue of “ Lotus Born” Guru Padmasambhava at Samdruptse (THE WISH FULFILLING HILL), South Sikkim 2003 at the cost of 6.76 Crores.
 - xiii. A network of Tourists Reception-cum- Information Centers (TRICs) created and which are being further strengthened. Touch Screen KIOSKS were installed at 10 TICs. Installation of VPN (Virtual Private Network), Promotion, marketing and publicity at National and International level. Important TICs are: Delhi, Kolkatta, Bagdogra, NJP, Siliguri, Darjeeling, Rangpo, Gangtok, Melli, Jorethang, Namchi, Damthang, Ravangla, Pelling, Mangan & Lachen.
 - xiv. Active and wide participation in Domestic, National and International fairs, festivals Mumbai, Banglore, Kolkata, Delhi and marts like World Tourism Mart(WTM), London, ITB Berlin, TIE, TTFs-----, Meeting with publishers/ Travel Trade Writers/others, Meetings/ seminars with Media /Print /Electronic /Doordarshan /National& International, Meeting with Nepal Travel Agent Association, Hotel Industries and North -Eastern States. Sikkim Week- Kolkata was celebrated on 1-7 December 2001 at Swabhumi Park, salt lake Kolkata. South Asia Regional Conference on Eco-Tourism was held on 22-25 January 2002 at Gangtok, Annual Food & Cultural festival at Gangtok to promote winter tourism, Workshops with Malaysian Tour Operators & delegation from Vietnam,

Organizing International Flower festival 2008 at Sarmsa Garden, Gangtok. A number of Tourism Conferences were organized. A workshop in 2009 was organized by Royal Thai Embassy at Gangtok to promote cultural ties through tourism.

- xv. Development of better communication system, Internet, Computerization, Sikkim Tourism Website: www.sikkimtourism.travel and Email: secy_tourism@yahoo.com. Publication Sikkim Tourism Calendar, brochures, posters and other relevant materials were taken up.
- xvi. Establishment of Tourists suggestions, complaint and grievance cell.
- xvii. Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) was set up in 1990 by Ministry of Tourism, GOI and State Government and the construction of new complex for Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) at Sajong (Rumtek) area 1.6 ha, capacity about 560 numbers in East Sikkim is under progress. A new Food Craft Institute (FCI) has been sanctioned by MoT, GOI in the year 2009 for South District and the work under progress.
- xviii. Adventure Tourism has wide potential in Sikkim and it is being promoted at larger scale. Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure & Eco-Tourism (IHCAE) at Chemchey in South Sikkim has been established and entire State has been selected to be prompted as adventure tourism destination. Necessary facilities, infrastructure, solid-waste management, etc have been planned, created and being created. Necessary regulations for this have been issued.
- xix. For strengthening of service sector, manpower and other interlinked services, better capacity building programme/ Livelihood Schools have been started along with the training at National and International level institutions. The capacity building would be done at recognized institutes by experts & experienced agencies to inculcate the spirit of professionalism and to provide the quality services to the tourists. Capacity building programme in villages in all the 166 Gram Panchayat Units (GPU)-Five persons from each as Guide, Hospitality, Travel Agent etc for village tourism and to meet demand of Tourism sector both for services and products has also been initiated.
- xx. Rope ways: A network of ropeways has been planned and Gangtok ropeway has already been made operational. Namchi-Samdruptse ropeway is under construction and the work on Tsomgo lake ropeway is under process and many other ropeways like Bhalleydhunga (South), Pelling (West) and many other places have been planned.
- xxi. A land bank for tourism development is being created by acquiring land at various places.
- xxii. To strengthen the way side facilities a good network of Development of Way side Amenities at a distance of 10 Km on all roads side has been planned and is under implementation.

- xxiii. Nathula Pass opened for tourists (1999) and for trade(2006) and domestic tourists allowed up to Nathula, No of vehicles have been increased up to 55 Numbers for five days in a week, Basic facilities like Toilet, STD booth, medical facilities, wayside shelters / amenities are being strengthened.
- xxiv. Construction of Yatriniwas / Tourists lodges at Tashiding, Soreng, Lamatar, Chungthang, Choptha, Rangpo, Siniolchu lodge have been completed and more places have been planned.
- xxv. Single Window permit for Nathual, Tsomgo and others from 2001 under Notification 9/Home/2001, dated 5/2/2001. Inner Line Permit (ILP)/RAP have been made more easy-stay period has been extended for a total period of 60 days with an extension of 30 days each. Melli and Darjeeling have been opened for ILP. The procedure to simplify more is under consideration and more areas like Rammam in West and Rhenock / Reshi in East have been proposed for issue of ILP to open up more destinations for international tourists.
- xxvi. More areas have been opened for Eco-tourism & Wildlife; Village Tourism; Adventure Tourism; Wellness, Health, Yoga, Herbal and medical tourism; Religious, culture, Heritage and pilgrimage Tourism Tea Tourism and Hydro Tourism; Conference Tourism; and many more
- xxvii. Single Window Clearance facilitation for Investors in tourism sector has been planned and the Tourism Department would provide necessary initiatives for all the actions required in this respect regarding land, registration, licenses etc.
- xxviii. Tsomgo lake has been developed as eco-tourism destination- car park has been developed and temporary shops have been shifted to new shopping complex (June 2008), basic amenities have been created and the landscaping is under development. Tsomgo Lake Development Committee (Pokhari Samramshhan Samiti) has been constituted for the management of area.
- xxix. Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has provided funds under Centrally Sponsored Schemes for the implementation of various programme/projects like Angling, computerization, wayside amenities, refurbishment of Monasteries, Tourists lodges, lake & waterfall development, trekking routes/trails, basic amenities, development of destinations and circuits, parking, landscaping and gardens, restoration of monuments.
- xxx. Major Tourism Projects such as Chardham at Solophok, Bajhakari fall, Khanchendonzga Tourists Village at Ranka , Buddha Park- ravangla, Skywalk-Bhalleydhunga, Chen-Regi Statue in West, Tenzing Hillary Park at Uttrey, Fossil park in South etc are under development.
- xxxi. Remodeling MG Marg Gangtok completed in April 2008 and Namchi Bazar in 2008 by UDHD and the work for other all towns is under progress.

- xxxii. Cleanliness- Solid waste management at all the tourist's spots /destinations/centers has been given top priority. Garbage bags in all tourists vehicle compulsory and also being put up in all the other vehicles as well.
- xxxiii. State fairs & festivals to promote & preserve culture/tradition/heritage/ handicraft- for domestic and International tourism- Namchi Mahotasava, Mangan Mahotasava
- xxxiv. Revenue- has increased to Rs 217.00 lakhs in year 2008-09 and will be enhanced in coming years at fast rate.
- xxxv. Tourist Police is being created.
- xxxvi. New Tourism Master Plan is under preparation by Singapore based consultant
- xxxvii. Preparation of Village Development Action Plan by Swiss based consultant.

A fully fledged Engineering cell has been created for creation and development of required infrastructure for Tourism sector. It is headed by the Chief Engineer and supported by the Superintendent Engineers, Divisional Engineers, Assistant Engineers, Junior Engineers and supervisors.

Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation(STDC) was established in 1998 for marketing with the management of Siniolchu lodge, Hotel mount pandiam, Rangpo lodge, Blue sheep, Bagdogra guest house, Hotel Mayur, Singhik Tourist lodge, Sikkim House Kolkata. It is also managing the Sikkim heliservice for the Government through the Tourism Department.

Development and Promotion of Eco-tourism:

The main objective of this product is to promote Sikkim as preferred destination for visitors and provides opportunities for Community Based Ecotourism (CBET) particularly using latest approaches of Participatory Management for sustainable development of the resources and thereby generates employment, income and revenue for the State. A harmony is being fostered between people, environment, conservation and development. *The involvement of local communities in the tourism (called 'eco-tourism' herein after) will support their livelihood needs and consequently create their direct stake in conservation of local culture, ecology and environment.* "This concept of 'community based eco-tourism' will go a long way in providing better income generation options to the rural people. This will also mean less dependence upon the natural resources in as far as it amounts to removal of produce from these areas. There will be, moreover, greater incentive in conservation of local traditions, culture, heritage and environs, as these will be seen as aiding in local economy rather than an impediment to it."

For Sustainable Tourism, Organic, Green and Pollution Free State, the Government has taken up a number of initiatives, some important of them are:

- Organic State – no use of chemicals, pesticides & insecticides etc. and only the use of bio-manure shall be encouraged.
- By legislation banned the use of non-biodegradable materials like plastic, poly-bags, Bio-medical / chemical waste in 1997
- Highest Green Protection Index: Sikkim ranks highest on India's Green Protection Index (0.903) by the protection of its natural resources as per *Green Indicators 2004*
- Continue Increase in Forests Cover: In 1987 it was 38.84% and in 2005 it has gone to 46.28% which is the best example of sustainable development in the world.
- As per State Industrial Policy 1996, only eco-friendly, pollution free and Green industries would be encouraged.
- Green Mission Programme
- State Commission on Climate Change
- Systematic collection & disposal of solid waste through SWMP, 'Spit & Litter Free Zone, Garbage bags in all the vehicles.

Village/Rural Tourism- Home Stay:

Village/Rural tourism has emerged as a very new concept in the tourism industry. This concept is fast growing in Sikkim as a responsible and sustainable tourism product with critical social objectives through people's participation. The rural tourism can be a more effective tool in boosting the overall tourism scenario of Sikkim as its rural hinterlands are endowed with fabulous natural beauty, serene environment, heritage sites and unique cultural flavor. The endorsement of rural tourism will ensure the dispersal of tourists from city congestion to the villages so that they can have a glimpse of rural Sikkim, familiarize with unique village culture and heritage so that they are mentally rejuvenated, culturally enriched and spiritually elevated. The objective is therefore to harness vast un-tapped rural tourism potential of Sikkim so that their multiplier benefit reaches out directly to the rural communities. Some of the villages of Sikkim like Kewzing, Hee-Bermoik, Yoksum, Lachen, Tumin, Pastanga, Tinchim, Lunchok, Maniram, Rong, Jaubari, Darap have already taken up lead in home stay facilities for the tourists. However, more professional approach needs to be initiated with optimum government incentives for aggressive promotion of rural tourism market. For this to achieve, the modal approach devised by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India under the hardware and the software programme has been initiated. However, the prevailing CFA slab of Rs. 50.00 lakh only for the hardware component and Rs. 20.00 lakhs for Software component need to be reviewed and revised in order to accommodate widespread necessary hardware activities in the village. Some other programme on this taken up by NGOs and other agencies also will be streamlined by bringing them under the single umbrella for convergence in the development & promotion of well regulated product.

Adventure Tourism / Adventure Sports:

It goes without saying that Sikkim has an immense potential for adventure tourism related activities. Some of the important adventure activities being promoted in the State are: Trekking, Mountain climbing and Mountaineering, Rock climbing, River crossing, Paragliding, Bungee Jumping, White water rafting, Angling and many other types of traditional adventures . Trekking and Mountaineering are by far the most vibrant and visible adventure tourism activities in Sikkim and have much wider marketing prospects along with other adventure activities.

In order to ensure the safety of participants in such activities, there is a need to lay down the minimum acceptable standards in terms of equipment and human resources. The State Government is looking into the matter and the Basic Minimum Standards of safety will be notified at the earliest in consonance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

Promotion and Investment through PPP mode:

The State of Sikkim has already started developing various tourism facilities in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode. Owing to rapid upsurge of tourism industry and its future prospects in Sikkim coupled with political stability, peace and tranquil atmosphere, there is an investor friendly environment in the State. A large number of investors from different parts of the country are now interested to promote tourism, hydro-power projects and other infrastructure projects in PPP mode in Sikkim. Further, the North-East Investment Industrial Policy endorsing the Capital subsidy and Tax free for the N/E region and Sikkim makes it more conducive for the promotion of tourism industry in under PPP mode. Sikkim Tourism will explore all the possibilities of promoting more numbers of commercial tourism projects on PPP mode to boost the overall tourism scenario of the State.

Wellness, Health, Yoga & Herbal Medical Tourism:

The state is bestowed with abundant natural resources. Covering just 0.2% of the geographical area of the country, it has tremendous biodiversity and has been identified as one of the Biodiversity Hot Spots. The Sikkim Himalayas that spread over Sikkim and the hill region of Darjeeling harbours more than 26 % of the flowering plants reported in the country and known to be an important phytogeographical reserve of the country. The Sikkim Himalayas have excellent scope for value added wellness tourism and traditions, the uniqueness in Art, Culture, and Folks dances, and people living in perfect harmony making Sikkim one of the most peaceful states in the country. There is a strong sense of community living with distinct commitment in the people to serve the society. They also have a strong sense of volunteerism.

The Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure & Eco-tourism (IHCAE) at Chemchey, in South Sikkim has come up as an important centre to promote a combination of Adventure-Eco-Wellness tourism under the brand name of 'Feel Good School' beside a holistic institute on Adventure and Eco-Tourism. This will render wellness facilities such

as Meditation, Yoga, Spa, Herbal treatment, Jogging etc amidst the serene environment of Chemchey.

Wellness Tourism and the term Wellness is becoming synonymous with the Indian tourism. It is pursued solely by “healthy” people, their prime aim being prevention. Now a days, it is fastly becoming a worldwide, multibillion dollar industry. To make Sikkim a mega destination of Wellness Tourism, Our Government has decided to brand this centre as “ FEEL GOOD SCHOOL” to promote Wellness in its totality and the centre would have inbuilt component of Wellness Tourism and Eco Friendly Adventure Tourism. The nearby villages of Chemchey and Damthang have been selected for Village Tourism , Home Stay and to make entire population of surrounding areas skilled for various type of services for Wellness and Adventure tourism.

Publicity is the backbone of tourism. Publicity and marketing of the tourism attraction of Sikkim at the national and international level has been inadequate. Aggressive publicity is an essential element in boosting tourism market, Publicity through all medium: prints, electronic, websites, internet etc.

The Capacity Building for the tourism sector has been identified as one of the high priority area. A multi directional programme has been planned to provide the world class facilities, management and services for the sector.

Sikkim is also promoting the concept of Flori-tourism with a view to showcase its enormous variety of flowers, the nature has gifted to this hill station. The State has 4500 odd varieties of flowering plants of which orchids alone contribute over 450 species. In this mission, the International Flori-show was organized in the year 2008 that attracted the interest of large numbers of tourists and the international players on floriculture. A permanent exhibition venue has been created at Saramsa over 7 Acres land with world class facilities including conference and convention centre.

With addition to the new tourism products and infrastructure, there has been steady rise in tourist arrival in the State. We have seen a growth of 86% over the past five years with an average annual increment over 17%. Though there is growth both in the domestic and international tourist but the domestic tourism is much higher. Domestic tourism is the foundation of the industry. Domestic tourism tends to be more focused on rural destinations with the growing interest in culture, lifestyles, cuisine, ceremonies, music, religious beliefs, traditions, customs and history. There is a strong potential to encourage international tourism to rural areas as well.

There is great potential for creating enormous number of new jobs. The employment potential is the highest in the tourism sector as compared to any other sector and in Sikkim the entire economy would be able to take transform once the tourism sector is fully established. The tourism sector has a very strong linkage to socio-economic progress of the State. It has very high revenue capital ratio. It is estimated that an investment of about Rs. 10 Lakhs creates 47 direct jobs and 11 indirect jobs which is surpasses the employment potential from any other sector.

Although, poor connectivity due to non-existence of Air links, rail link and only one poor entry road have been a bottleneck in attracting the elite class or high yield tourists, but this would be addressed with the completion of Aerodrome near Gangtok by 2011, rail link by 2015 and good National High way & alternate road at the earliest. With the efforts, the Sikkim Government is putting up, Sikkim will certainly come to focus as a most premium destination for the international as well as high yield domestic tourists at the global level in coming years.

SWOT (STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS) ANALYSES:

Tourism is emerging as the most Important Civil industry in Sikkim and having realized 'tourism' as a major engine of economic growth, employment generator & poverty alleviator, the Government of Sikkim has endorsed Tourism as "thrust sector" & the year 2010 is being observe as Year of Tourism. A review of the sector's competitive Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats indicates that it has bright future and great potential. The parameters and analyses is as under:

STRENGTHS	Political & Social stability, Committed leadership & Strong Political will & Vision, Peace & Tranquility, Safety & Security, Hospitable society, Rich Natural Resources, Pollution Free environment, Organic State, Rich Biodiversity, Unique Ecology, Rich natural and rural landscape, Integrated Development, Heritage & Modern structure, Cultural diversity, Languages, Cuisine, Traditions, Customs, Music, Dances, Religious practices, Fairs & Festivals, Holistic healing traditions, Art & Craft, Third Highest peak & Mountains, Snow, Investment Friendly, Clean & Green, High literacy, Total sanitation state, Strong plans for urban & rural development both, All climatic zones,
WEAKNESSES	Lack of strong Brand identity/ USP. Poor Connectivity, Only single highway, No Airport, No Railway line, Quality of facilities, Services and inadequate service providers, Quality accommodation, Transport & related infrastructures, Insufficient Financial resources for world class

	<p>infrastructures, facilities & services, Accuracy & reliability of Market data, lack of proper planning, implementation & Monitoring Limited availability of tourists information's in source market and at destination, Insufficient marketing in domestic and international market, Problem of land availability & land acquisition, limited facilities outside urban areas, limited community participation and responsibility, lack of coordination, Poor capabilities, Poor availability of Skilled & trained Human resources, Inner line permit & other restrictions, Limited budget, Problem of forest land utility & conversion</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p>	<p>Himalayan State, Natural resources & all Climatic zones, India's strength as one of the world's largest economies for business, trade, meetings, incentives, events, conventions, and exhibitions based on Tourism, Huge potential of urban domestic populations for rural/village tourism, Rich & diverse heritage, culture and civilisational, Unique location, Mountains, Pilgrimage/Buddhist for International Market, Youth for Adventure, Natural landscape for film industry, Unique Wetland tourism, Adventure World in Sikkim, Wellness Tourism, Peace & tranquility, wilderness Tourism, Strong private sector,</p>
<p>THREATS</p>	<p>Failing to effectively resolve the constraints/ weaknesses identified, Failing to involve the communities in decision-making process, Failure to adopt & implement sustainable development & management principles and practices at</p>

	<p>destinations, sites, circuits, especially in the rural areas and natural tourism sites. Not effectively addressing the high and ever increasing competition in the region (inside & Bordering countries) & other competitive states, High volume & low economic yield, Adverse cultural & environmental impacts, Domestic & International conflicts/disturbances, Pollution, Ills & bad elements, Natural calamities, Carrying capacity, required civic amenities, Haphazard growth & development, Non-vernacular structures, Aggressive competition, Solid/ waste management, Large Volume with low value,</p>
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Sikkim possesses very wide & diverse range of unique cultural, natural and manmade tourism resources & products many of which are of world class quality and most of them are located in rural areas. It has the great potential to attract significantly higher level of domestic and international market provided that sustainable site management practices and principles are adopted and applied in letter & spirit and also the other constraints/weaknesses identified are effectively managed & resolved. Provided that the identified weaknesses/constraints and opportunities are properly addressed and appropriate plans prepared, implemented and monitored, then Sikkim tourism focus should be on:

- i. Substantially increase in tourism in all the products in terms of volume, length of stay & expenditure.*
- ii. Substantially increase the volume of high-yielding domestic and international tourists.*

TOURSIM PRODUCTS AND THRUST AREAS:

The State is naturally gifted having all sorts of destinations and circuits required for the tourists and some of impressive varieties of our Tourism Products are:

- i. Nature & Trekking Tourism,**
- ii. Eco-tourism & Wilderness tourism,**
- iii. Village/Rural & Home stay Tourism,**
- iv. Adventure Tourism,**

- v. **Wellness Tourism: Meditation, Yoga, Spa & Herbal medicine etc,**
- vi. **Pilgrimage & Buddhist Tourism,**
- vii. **Culture & Heritage Tourism,**
- viii. **Conference Tourism (MICE destination),**
- ix. **Tea Tourism,**
- x. **Snow Travel and Hydro Tourism,**
- xi. **Flori-Tourism,**
- xii. **Geo-Tourism (fossil study),**
- xiii. **Fairs-Festivals Tourism,**
- xiv. **Wedding/Honeymoon Tourism**
- xv. **Peace /Health Rejuvenation Tourism**
- xvi. **Heli Tourism**
- xvii. **Monsoon Tourism**
- xviii. **Cave Tourism**
- xix. **Akant Vas & Agyat Van Vas**
- xx. **Developments of lakes & wetlands**
- xxi. **Wayside Amenities-each at 10 Kms distance**
- xxii. **Arts Crafts and Souvenir**
- xxiii. **Premium Destinations**

GOALS-OBJECTIVES – STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS:

Put in a line, tourism sounds simple and nice. But in fact, it is an unbelievably complex and intricate sector. As tourism is a multi-sectoral activity, it requires intervention from every possible Government sphere- Infrastructure, Urban Development, Rural Development, Health, Culture, Transport, Roads, Forests, Environment & Wildlife, Home, Civil aviation, Railways, PHED, Agriculture-Horticulture- Animal Husbandry etc. the agencies of State and Central Government both and the list is endless along with a major role of private sectors as well. To achieve the synergy among the Departments & Agencies and move ahead without making too many compromises is a huge task.

Unlike many other industries, tourism is a composite of several service providers. Most of the service providers are generally in private sectors. It requires a strong cooperation and coordination for it to be developed and expanded to meet the goals of the Government and the People. This industry needs to have the best discipline as it is to provide the services to our customers (Tourists) and hence has to be regulated and well organized.

Uncontrolled tourism growth can damage State's socio-cultural structure, degrade its tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage, and lead to adverse economic impacts. On the other hand, when the industry is properly planned, developed and managed at all levels of Government in partnership with the private sectors, it will certainly strengthen State's socio-economic structure and lead to positive economic impacts including enhanced employment and income opportunities especially in rural areas a major milestone for Responsible Tourism.

The purpose of preparation and implementation of special purpose vehicle first "Comprehensive State Tourism Policy-2010" is for achieving the positive benefits of tourism, mitigating the negative effects and delivering sustainable industry development framework. The overall goal and strategy for development of tourism industry is to ensure that the development is closely tied to the development priorities of the State. The State Government's vision for development of tourism sector is:

"To make tourism main livelihood of the People of Sikkim. Each & Every household & individuals shall become a Skilled Force for tourism industry. Enrichment of Peace & Tranquility, Culture, Tradition, Customs, Art, Natural resources & Environment through tourism, Enhancement of quality of life & happiness Index through tourism and provide the experience to tourists to " FEEL SIKKIM FROM WITHIN." The Minimum Growth Graph (MGG) for future increase proposes is 11-17 % annually with more quality tourists. Tourism Development shall not only benefit the economic growth but it shall bring over all development of the State with high happiness index"

KEY OBJECTIVES – STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS:

Tourism promotion in any State means the integrated development of the State. It compulsorily provides thrusts to all sectors of the State. And hence, it is proposed to constitute a "**Sikkim Tourism Advisory Council**" headed by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim, having Minister Tourism as Vice-Chairperson, Chief Secretary, Addl. Chief Secretary/ Development Commissioner, Principal Secretary Finance, members from interlinked Departments and Key Stake holders, experts from important fields and the Secretary Tourism as Member Secretary. This shall be the highest body to advise the Government on all matters related to tourism for Sikkim. It shall have its own account/fund/budget and shall regularly guide and monitor tourism sector to achieve the desired goals and objectives.

To achieve the desired overall vision of the State for sustainable development of tourism sector, the key objectives and strategies must be followed and implemented by the Government with full participation of all the Stake holders & people's participation are as under:

Positioning Tourism as a State Priority:

The State Government has already made it one of the most important priority sectors in the State's economy and a number of initiatives have already been taken up. There is need to consolidate the efforts made and to take up more initiatives to:

- To provide effective linkages and close coordination amongst Departments of State and Central agencies as well.
- Constitution of a **"Sikkim Tourism Advisory Council"** with experts and key Stake holders as a "THINK TANK".
- Development of scientific data base as baseline for future development.
- Planning and implementation of professionally managed integrated communication, marketing and promotional strategy.
- Branding Sikkim Tourism

Enhancing and Maintaining the Competitiveness of Sikkim as Tourism Destination:

- Disclosure of necessary formalities required for entry and to visit the various tourist sites in professional manner through all means electronics and print.
- Computerization of entire information system by professional and regular updating of entire information system.
- Augmentation and strengthening of Air services from Bagdogra Airport, development of it as a International Airport and connectivity to Sikkim Airport, Pakyong (underdevelopment). More direct flights from major cities of India especially from Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Mumbai, Banglore, Hyderabad, Chennai, Thiruantpuram, Shilling, etc and also direct International flights from Bagdogra to Nepal, Singapore, Thailand, Bhutan, China, Bangladesh needs to be taken up for better connectivity and time saving. This would have significant impacts on Domestic & International Tourists coming to State.
- Provide the better facilities & services at Bagdogra Airport & Pakyong especially best information system, transport & accommodation.
- Creation and establishment of multipurpose special Tourism Police/Security which can provide information, security, safety, courtesy and hospitality.

Improving Existing Tourism Products and Expanding These to Meet the New Market Requirement:

There are different classes of Tourism interests for both in the domestic and International tourism and the competition is very high, we have to catch up the new market and also to sustain the existing market and hence this aspect needs to be given highest priority, professional management along with updating the State of World market for tourism. The strategies & objectives for this will be as under:

- **Culture:** Sikkim has unique cultural heritage. But till now, it could not be projected as such a tourism product. The stake holders in these areas need to be promoted in well planned manner with well defined and professional events/programme so that tourists especially come to get the benefit of it. Entire programme needs to have its own calendar fixed. Monuments, Pilgrimage places, Historical sites and other cultural sites and programme shall be listed as annual events with fixed dates & their themes.
- **Rivers, Streams & lakes:** For special interests tourists important river side's of Teesta, Rangeet and others needs to be developed in well managed forms for water sports, Camping sites, Hydro tourism and many more new concepts. Some of the manmade or natural lake shall be promoted for water sports.

River Front development will be undertaken at select locations by developing embankments, parks, walkways, food & shopping points and open air theatres.

- **Traditional Cuisines:** It has unmatched world market and becoming increasingly popular. There is need to established a “ **Sikkim Culinary Institute**” (SCI) that will research and document ancient culinary traditions, create a highly skilled workforce of culinary professionals that can populate not only hotels and catering establishments in India, but also internationally, serving to promote Sikkim internationally. To promote entrepreneurs to establish restaurants of Sikkim Ethnic Cuisine, the Government may come up with an innovative incentive scheme. This will provide healthy food & employment.
- **Rural/Village Tourism & Home Stay:** This product has a huge potential in Sikkim as all the villages are being well developed to have all basic amenities and have the god gifted landscape which is unmatched. The momentum has already picked up and will be given the right motivation and direction. This will be promoted as Primary Tourism Product to spread tourism and its socio- economic benefits to the masses. It needs to be well regulated with suitable area specific rules and guidelines in place. The people have developed the desire to do it and all the stakeholders and Government will educate them how to do and manage it with the followings:

-The fruits of tourism must percolate down to country side in order to make it sustainable & responsible tourism.

-All such areas will be identified & notified by the Department along with guidelines to regulate it in proper manner. All such areas will be covered by Tourism Development Committee or Village Tourism Development Committee or Cooperative Society or under concerned Panchayat.

-To monitor and regulate, any agency doing any village tourism shall first submit the proposal and obtain the concurrence & approval of the Government through Tourism Department so that there is no duplication and all information are update, authentic and its impacts can be monitored.

-The villages will have traditional architecture only and a MOU shall be signed with Department & Panchayat that this will be maintained along with no unwanted activity or action which will have the negative impact on socio-economic fabric will not be permitted

-The villagers may modify their houses internally with traditional materials supported by modern one but they must maintain their traditional outer façade.

-The schemes of Central or State Government or any other agency will be used for development of roads, streets, drainage, lighting, parking, reception point, water supply, sanitation, rural museum, open air theater, parks, nature trails, handicraft bazaar, culture related, floriculture, organic food, fairs & festivals, capacity building & skill development and some addition / improvements in houses. Grants/loans etc. will be part of the programme.

-In such notified villages incentives/concession like no luxury taxes, commercial rates of electricity/water etc up six rooms may be considered.

-only local village products and organic products will be used except the products which are not available in area and local food will be encouraged.

-Some of the village will be developed, promoted and marketed for theme based handicrafts, cultural troupes and for organic products.

-the procedure for registration and notification of village/home stay tourism would be simplified.

-targeted publicity & marketing will be taken up along with facilities available.

-in rural areas, there are numbers of traditional houses, old kothies, guest houses and other beautiful buildings, efforts will be made to develop them to become important tourist destination, may provide unique accommodation as heritage. On such properties no tax may be levied for first 10 years.

-traditional cardamom farm, ginger farms, orange farms, floriculture farms will be developed as part of rural tourism itinerary and seasonal festivals on all these will be organized in rural areas itself.

- For, there should be no negative impacts of rural tourism and hence, the Government, Panchayat, Society and concerned tourism development committee will regulate and monitor it as per the policies/guidelines of the State Government for different purposes. If any activity found illegal, immediate action will be taken.
- **Forests & Wildlife Tourism:** This is an integral part of eco-tourism. Sikkim has the highest network of National Park, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Biosphere Reserve and the unique Forest areas that perhaps not have been fully explored to its potential for tourism.
 - It needs to be integrated as integral part of Sikkim tourism product in well planned and regulated manner keeping the carrying capacities of each site without any negative impacts. The quality of tourists facilities available will be enhanced, improved with modern visitor information, interpretation centers, safety & security, guides and the entry will be regulated by charging entry charges/fees. The revenue generated shall be ploughed back to the same area for its management and up gradation. For this special eco-tourism guides will be trained & promoted.
 - Tourism Department proposes to work closely & actively with the Forest Department to further development and improvement the areas and other public utility services without any compromise with the conservation programme on the principle of sustainability in well regulated manner.
 - A reasonable fee shall be charged for management and maintenance of these areas.
- **Bio-diversity Tourism:** Sikkim is one of the Hot- Spot of the Biodiversity world and hence, it has a great potential for researcher, educationists, students and nature lovers' types of tourists both domestic and international. Since, this is our rich wealth; it will be well regulated with compulsory guide/interpreters with each group and well watched entry & outlets to check the bio piracy.
- **Unique Adventure:** Sikkim is also a HOT-SPOT for adventure tourism. Entire State being Himalayas is an Adventure State. Though adventure activities are picking up fast but it could not be done in professional manner. It goes without saying that Sikkim has an immense potential for adventure tourism related activities. Some of the important adventure activities being promoted in the State are: Trekking, Mountain climbing and Mountaineering, Rock climbing, River crossing, Paragliding, Bungee Jumping, water sports, White water rafting, Angling, skiing, skating, Aero-sports, Hot air balloon, and many types of traditional adventures. Trekking and Mountaineering are by far the most vibrant and visible adventure tourism activities in Sikkim and have much wider marketing prospects along with other adventure activities.
 - The Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure & Eco-tourism (IHCAE), Chemchey, South has become operational and it will now create a highly skilled manpower for

- all type of Adventure activities. It will also develop field practical points in all the four districts.
- A comprehensive adventure tourism plan will be prepared and will also lay down the regulatory frame work and enforced along with minimum safety & security guidelines.
 - In order to ensure safety of participants in such activities, there is a need to lay down the minimum acceptable standards in terms of equipment and human resources. The State Government is looking into the matter and the Basic Minimum Standards of safety will be notified at the earliest in consonance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.
 - For brand of adventure “**Experience Unique Sikkim Himalaya**” (EUSH) may be used.
 - Skiing facilities will be created & established at Yumethang and Kupuk and in other feasible areas.
 - Annual Adventure festivals based on different adventure themes will be organized in professional way to promote tourism all seasons.
 - Special treks for car rally, mountain bike and marathon will be created, developed and maintained in its natural landscape.
 - For children and students special programme for trekking, rock climbing and skating will planned and implemented.
 - Winter sports, trekking, skiing will be promoted on larger scale for year round tourism.
 - The State government will get the latest technology and equipments along with professional training for its own people, may be in PPP mode as the adventure required these entire first.
 - The traditional adventure has the high market for urban people and hence this will be promoted in all the destinations to provide more employment and income in country side.
 - Sports tourism has been considered as part of Adventure –culture tourism and football, tennis, golf, badminton, car rallies events will be encouraged both at national and international level.
- **Domestic Tourism:** This class mostly prefers recreational pursuits and leisure and its growth is very high. And hence more spot in urban & nearby areas will to be developed and nearby villages of urban areas will be promoted as home Stay to provide this class a unique experience and other products of tourism. Weekend /day tourism will also be promoted for quick weekend retreats, picnic and cultural shows etc.

- **MICE Tourism: Meetings, Incentives, Convention and Exhibition**-For this product of tourism, Sikkim has very wide potential for many obvious reasons. The suitable venues along with all the facilities, transport, and communication will be developed. This will certainly promote the quality tourism and also bring the investment to Sikkim. Steps will be taken to promote corporate tourism and a directory for the same will be prepared. Tourism oriented expositions at land mark venues will also be the part of this activity.
- **Eco-Tourism:** In Sikkim over 82% of the geographical area is under forest land use and more than 42.55 % area is under Protected Area Network i.e. under Wildlife and Biosphere Reserve. The entire state is Eco-Green- Pollution Free. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, in its national conference held at Gangtok on 6th December 2009 has declared Sikkim as “**ECO-TOURISM DESTINATION**”. Sikkim is the most eco-friendly State not only in the country but also in the world and is managing its natural resources in most efficient manner. The State offers a new era of nature enjoyment and learning. It provides visitors an excellent exposure of all climatic zones.
 - All activities will be conducted in a manner that promote awareness & education of the environment and helps to maintain the ecological balance.
 - Environmental awareness, education and information will be a integrated part of tourism campaign.
 - Environmental Management System (EMS), Good Practices Guidelines, Ecolabeling and Certification by adoption of standardized environmental management practices will be the integrated part of Tourism development and management.
 - Necessary measures to minimize the impact of anthropogenic emission on Climate Change have already been taken and will be more strengthened.
 - Air pollution, Water pollution, soil pollution and noise pollution will not be allowed at all and necessary actions will be taken.
 - Forests, Wildlife, Biodiversity, River systems, land degradation, wetlands & mountain ecosystems will be well protected and conserved as part of development programme.
 - The eco-tourism areas predominantly being situated in forest lands and are technically under the Forest, Environment & Wildlife Management Department and hence the entire programme will be taken up in close co-ordination & consultation with Forest Department.
 - The camping sites, Adventure, trekking, wildlife & Biodiversity Tourism, Wilderness Tourism etc will be developed with basic infrastructure facilities and public conveniences services which are also needed for the conservation and management of these resources.

- A reasonable fee will be charged for these and will be used for maintenance and for the conservation of these resources.
- The forest rest houses & related infrastructure will be better managed for eco-tourism to make them economically viable and useful. A single window booking and permit for all forest & wildlife related matters will be established in close co-ordination with Forest Department.
- Wetlands & lakes are integrated part of Eco-tourism. The Government will make special efforts to maintain and enhance their beauty by taking up development in integrated a manner. All concerned Departments will work in integrated manner to protect and conserve our rich water resources.
- The State has a large numbers of Rivers, streams and waterfalls and their conservation and development will be taken up on priority. All these areas need to be given emphasis for better management and no structure will be allowed to come up in the vicinity of the area which will have the negative impact on these resources.
- Hot-springs offer a unique experience and unparallel products. All these areas will to be given emphasis for better management and no structure will be allowed to come up in the vicinity of the area which will have the negative impact on these resources.
- There are a number of caves, which also offer a unique tourism products and a special programme will be prepared and implemented for these.
- Tree plantation as a tourism linked activity will be given special attention. All projects and tourists sites will have a in built component of tree plantation, landscaping and green component in-house also.
- Action will be taken in planned manner to deal with problem of solid-waste, non-bio-degradable waste and intensive compaign on non-use of plastic will be launched by the Government, private sector, NGOs and host communities.
- The use of earthquake resistant technology and techniques in construction of buildings, and use of local materials will be promoted and encouraged.
- Special attention will be given on the aspect of carrying capacity of all destinations and points.
- **Wellness Tourism:** This will be developed and promoted as Sikkim's most unique tourism product. The State being peaceful, environmental friendly, rich in medicinal plants, it will provide the holistic healing and rejuvenation of the people from every dimension- physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. It will certainly capture the essence of the best of Indian philosophy and culture for domestic and international tourist. In doing so, it would render a great service to the humankind making them healthy and efficient.

The Sikkim Himalaya represents extremely unique eco-system rich in medicinal wealth associated with Ayurveda, Folk, Homeopathy, Siddha, Amchi (Tibetan) and Unani system of medicines. High in the land of snows, amidst melting snow-beds, steep scree, and glacial moraines grow some of the most valuable medicinal plants in the state. It is reported to have more than 424 species of various medicinal plants, which have a strong traditional system of medicines. The local inhabitants for treatment of various ailments use numerous herbal remedies. Further, more modern medicines owe to the flora of these mountains. Many species of Himalayan origin have revolutionized the allopathic system of medicine. Many of the medicinal plants, which are threatened and are on the verge of extinction at other places, are still well conserved in Sikkim.

- Areas/locations for this will be identified and managed with experts, NGO and professional agencies. Sikkim has enormous unparalleled wealth of Medicinal plants & Herbs; it may be well used for Wellness of society in a regulated manner.
- Wellness-herbal trail will be developed in consultation and coordination with Forest Department and will be promoted and practiced in its natural form only.
- Resorts and hotels are joining the health spa development craze, although only some resorts are moving into the scope of services currently offered by destination spas. Likewise, a growing number of day spas are adding health and wellness programming options. The increasing demands for this type of activity could be a window of opportunity for potential investors in tourism. The spa industry segment is regarded as the leading player in health and wellness tourism. In searching for health and wellness travel experiences, travelers can find structured and professionally-delivered programmes at several types of spa venues.
- This sector will require a very well planned infrastructure right from the journey-stay- availability of qualified manpower -treatment etc. Our State is blessed with abundant natural herbal wealth and in the rural areas. It has very wide scope and can be made a success story in the short period and hence it is proposed to identify suitable locations in each district and start the consultations with local habitation, Vaidya's, Herbal Experts and the doctors interested in this field and at the same time take the experiences in this field from other States and outside the country. It may also be advisable & appropriate that we shall approach for necessary support, training and guidance for world class skilled manpower for this product.

“What we anticipate in our destinations is not holiness or divine visions, but something even more miraculous – the opportunity to feel different from the way we feel at home. It is as if the act of travelling to a certain place in the world entitles us to feel happier and more alive”

(Chaline 2002: 67)

- **Organic Tourism:** Sikkim has already been declared as Organic State. This will promote the wellness tourism along with traditional cuisines.

The Chief Minister of Sikkim, Shri Pawan Chamling, made a declaration in the Budget session of Sikkim Legislative Assembly in February, 2003 to make Sikkim an Organic State with doing away with the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, plant growth regulators and additives in the state. This decision has been arrived at with the objective to achieve an economically and environmentally sustainable production system of agriculture and to promote soil, plant, animal, human and environmental health and well being. With so many benefits of organic farming, it becomes a policy seeking to promote technically sound, economically viable, environmentally non-degrading, and socially acceptable use of natural resources – land, water and genetic endowment to promote sustainable development of agriculture.

As a matter of fact, Sikkim grows most of its crops more or less in organic conditions. Whether its commercial large cardamom or exquisite orchids, sweet mandarin orange or trenchant cherry pepper, typical buckwheat or unique pulses, all are one hundred per cent organic produce. And with the initiative made by the State Government, Sikkim becomes one among the first states to opt for Organic Farming in the country.

- **Unique Lodging Products:** A varieties of accommodations having different taste & feelings such as Akant Vas & Agyat Van Vas, River side, Hill top, Home Stay, Pilgrimage huts, Tea in Lodge, High Class Camping etc. which have Unique Selling Propositions (USPs) will be created in Government, private & PPP mode.
- **Shopper's Paradise:** The shopping is recognized as an integral part of the tourism experience and a most valuable contributor to employment, income and revenue. The development of dedicated shopping centers for traditional crafts, costumes, jewelry etc. designed on the lines of ethnic village haat, Shilpbusty, will be developed and encouraged with incentives from the Government in the initial stage. The availability of information on where to procure is very important and it will be made available in form of Directory and **"Made in Sikkim"** shall be controlled through regulation and quality control.
- **Arts Crafts and Souvenir:** Arts, crafts & souvenir are the integrated part of tourism industry and it will be developed & promoted on the top priority for generation of employment & income. It may be developed by Government undertakings and private sectors. Along with it, the standardized packing also needs to be taken up as its integral part. The items will be on all aspects of State such as culture, folk, pilgrimage, events, places, nature, landscape, Forests & wildlife, Mountains, monuments, history and many more.
- **Fairs and Festival:** Sikkim is a land of fairs and festivals. In last one decade, its promotional aspect has been very encouraging. Now, there is need to make them more attractive, targeting the tourists on well defined theme and spread over all the seasons. Their time and dates will be fixed, organized in more professional manner

and will be given wide publicity. Its calendar will be prepared with the concurrence of organizers and some of festivals would to be given review and rethought to make them more effective & purposeful. This is a major contribution in National Integration.

- **Pilgrimage Tourism:** Pilgrimage tourism has witnessed a growth of 20-25 % in the year 2008 in India and has very bright future in Sikkim as a major chunk of domestic tourists are pilgrims . Buddhists circuit is coming up very well with Guru Padama Sambhava Statue, Buddha Park, Chen-Regi Statue and a high network of world famous monasteries. New unique destinations like Chardham, many temples and other pilgrimage places, sacred lakes, sacred rocks & caves etc. offer a wide range of pilgrimages in Sikkim and will be developed to:
 - The pilgrimage tourism will be well managed by having its complete directory, All information on electronics media & print form, skilled pilgrimage guides and guidelines for does & don't will be put in place.
 - Tourism, Ecclesiastical and Culture Departments will work together and prepared the authentic directory and literature of all pilgrimage places.
 - Pilgrimage walk around the urban areas and villages will also be developed and promoted.
 - The State Government has already planned to develop the basic amenities all around these places and it will be done with quality and management in place.
 - Bodhgaya and Sarnath where the State government has its land/properties will also be developed with all facilities including accommodation.
 - Special festivals on pilgrimage will be well planned, listed and to be organized in professional way to attract national and international tourist in all the seasons.
- **Premium Tourists Destinations:** This is a new area of tourism product and the clean, fresh, peaceful, unpolluted & invigorating environment offer Premium Tourists destination for Sikkim, a preferred destination to relax & unwind. Under this, it is to propose that undiscovered spots/areas that are worth to visit for quiet holidays spent amidst the splendour of nature away from the crowds will be developed and promoted in its natural form. The State Government will identify such areas; make a special effort to develop such destination as premium destination subject to the followings:
 - Allow the limited construction well in line with landscape, local architect, basic minimum amenities and 90% green component.
 - Tourists shall enjoy the quality and difference of experience
 - Traditional local material houses and tented accommodation will only be allowed.

- A special local group in coordination with professional agency shall manage and maintain it.
- This will be allowed only for high end tourists with limited numbers and minimum stay of one week.
- A reasonably high services fee will be charged for this and nobody will be allowed to visit such locations free of cost.
- Some of the such areas proposed are: Memeinchhu Lake, Kupuk Lake, Maenum Hill, Bhalleydhunga, Singlila/Chiyabhanjang area, Baresy Sanctuary, Area beyond Dzungri, Gorudongmar Lake, Chholamoa Lake, Green Lake, Akant Vas & Agyat Van Vas etc.
- **Package Tours, Rates & Pre-Paid Taxi:** With the objective of boosting tourist traffic and enriching experience, quality and content of tourism products, attractive package tours will be developed and promoted with the help of STDC, private sector, tours operators and travel agencies. For prime destinations special package would be considered. A list of the accredited tour operators and travel agencies will be prepared as per the Act/Rules and procedure will be simplified for better response from private sectors.

Transport rates. Service charges and miscellaneous expenditure for all important circuits & destinations will be notified. Pre-paid taxi system and other modern facilities on-line booking & telephone call services will be introduced on priority and will be well supervised and monitored.

- **Services and Human Resources Development (Capacity Building and Skill Development):** In the area of tourism services, the private sector will be expected to play a key role in running the businesses of travel and tour operators, hospitality, guides, tourism equipments providers, transport services, taxis, consultancy, event management, educational institutions and many more. Being a highly competitive industry, these services should be of high standard and to ensure hassle free services to the tourists, they have to be regulated properly. In high class tourism areas such as adventure tourism, wellness tourism etc. appropriate training backed by certificate obtained from the reputed organization will be compulsory/ mandatory.

The demand for manpower in the tourism sector has been exceeding supply. The tourism industry needs professional qualified and trained personnel at all levels whether managerial, supervisory and supportive staff to manage and maintain the facilities and services of international standard.

This area is very important and entire local employment and income opportunities for local people depend on the success of it. The State Government is totally committed for this and has already established "State Capacity Building Institute" and have also started a network of "Livelihood Schools" in each constituency for various types of Capacity building & skill developments programme. At present there is one Institute of Hotel Management (IHM), Rumtek, Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure & Eco-

Tourism (IHCAE), Chemchey and one Food Craft Institute (FCI) is under development at Kichudumra. Along with other infrastructures, the State Government will establish more & more institutes for service providers in Government & private sectors both to make Sikkim a total professional state for providing services of highest order in Sikkim and outside as well. This will make the Sikkim, a world class service provider State like IT sector in India. All trained and skilled manpower will be accredited by giving them licenses/permits/certificate as needed and only such certified services would be utilized.

- **Involvement of Gram Panchayats & Municipalities:** Local bodies will play crucial role in planning, developments, implementation and management of tourism products in their areas as they are directly implementing many programmes for the development of their areas. The Sikkim Tourism Department is also providing fund directly/indirectly, which shall be used for the development and promotion of tourism.
- **Hygiene- Solid- Waste Management:** The State Government has already taken up action on this front and more concrete actions have been planned. The severe penalties will be imposed on violators. The “**Total Sanitation of Sikkim**” is the goal of the Government by ensuring healthy sanitary conditions and safe drinking water for entire State, not only for tourist destinations. Effective management and supervision in this regard will be provided by local offices of Government with the help and involvement of NGOs, Tourism Development Committees, Stakeholders, Hotels, Industries and citizens/tourists as well.
- **Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation (STDC):** This is an important organization of Tourism Department. At present the STDC could not contributed much to the sector and needs to strengthen its efforts. It should widen its areas of marketing, generate resources, developed professionalism and also have the better co-ordination with all the sectors. It should have a strong data base on all aspect of tourism along with the followings:
 - To prepare its master plan & strategies for tourism activities for five years & ten years in the line with the policy and vision of the State.
 - To have better information system and online reservation system managed itself or in PPP mode.
 - Participate in leading national and international events, trade fairs & mart.
 - Publish and update tourism related literature and ensure its adequate availability.
 - It should monitor the status of employment of local persons both in formal as well as informal sector.
 - It should generate its own resources & revenue through the services provided by it.

- **Heli Tourism:** The Helicopter service in Sikkim dates way back in 1987 when Westland 30, the 18 seater twin engine helicopter landed in the State. Later it was discontinued and again in October 1998 the Bell206, 5 seater helicopter landed at Gangtok. The Sikkim Government is in the need of a twin engine helicopter service having the sitting capacity about 14 to 20 numbers. It may be in PPP mode and operated by the helicopter operators on their own cost. The State Government of Sikkim may provide the logistic support like helipads and security with minimum charges required for the maintenance of the same. In addition to the increasing tourism a number of Public Private Projects in the field of infrastructure development, hydro power, tourism and others are coming up in the state, this will further provide the market for the helicopter service operators.

At present there about 11 nos. of helipads/heliports and many more to come up in near future. The twin engine heliservice has been approved by Government of India. The Heli service will extend the reach of higher end tourists to the delights of naturally and geographically rich hinterland. The promotion of the Heli service Tourism for remote areas, Heli Rural Darshan, Heli-Adventure, Fairs & Festivals etc. etc. will be started.

- **Development and Beautification of Urban Areas:** Remodeling of MG Marg, Gangtok and Namchi Bazar has already been done and it is being followed in other Bazars & towns of Sikkim. Mall roads, Branded shopping streets and malls in all the urban towns have been planned and are under implementation.
- **Tourist Police, Safety & Security and Rescue:** The State Government has already decided for the creation and establishment of multipurpose special Tourism Police/Security which can provide information, security, safety, courtesy, guidance and hospitality. They will be provided with special uniform/ distinguishing mark and will assist the tourist. They will be specially selected and trained for working at tourist destinations. They will be provided necessary equipments for communication & transport. At all the tourist destinations at least one room with attached toilet and at major destinations sufficient accommodation will be created as a part of project cost.

Necessary signages, warning & cautions and help line information will be in place at all key locations and points.

Adequate facilities will be developed to provide high level rescue system for adventure sports and other tourism related activities. This will include provision for various rescue equipments like recovery vans, repling, piten, jumar, walkie-talkie sets, medical etc. Rescue Co-ordination Committees at State & local level will also be set up having key players as its members. Registered organizations and clubs connected with this will also be involved and encouraged along with State, Central and defence forces. A separate set of guidelines/rules in respect will be framed and notified.

- **Complaints, Grievance and Suggestions:** Tourists some time face harassment from taxi drivers, hotel owners, shopkeepers, vendors and others during their visit to various destinations. In order to ensure the confidence in system, the Government has established a strong complaint, grievance and suggestion cell within the Tourism Department. It will be further strengthened with the help of interlinked Departments and service providers. Immediate redressal of problem will be taken up, with on-line approach.
- **Private Sector Investment & Single window clearances:** The private investment in infrastructure development and service sectors will not only welcomed be but also facilitated. The priority areas will be: setting up of hill station, spas, resort, luxury & budget accommodations, Heli services, tourists centres, multiplexes, parking areas, wayside amenities, entertainment centres, amusement parks, ropeways, golf course, skiing, adventure sports, skywalk, Tourism related Institutions, transport, wellness tourism, hospitality & services, Information System and other feasible activities as may be decided by the Government time to time. At present, a number of agencies are involved to complete the various formalities and hence, it is time consuming & discouraging. The government will create a single window clearance system with simplified procedure. Land availability is another area which is also discouraging at present and hence for integrated development, the State Government would like to create a sufficient “Land Bank” and provide the land to investors as per the State Government norms.
- **Incentives and Concession:** The return in the tourism sector is not regular and immediate. To promote and encourage the entrepreneurs and to provide self-employment opportunities to local residents, encourage maximum participation of host communities in tourism sectors, it is propose to provide some concessions and incentives in the tourism sectors such as:
 - Tourism should be declared as the INDUSTRY in the State, making tourism eligible for all the benefits available to the industry and same should be requested to Government of India also.
 - concession in the areas of luxury tax, service tax, service charges, electricity & water charges, land cost, State road tax and in any other form may be provided for small industries, Village Tourism & Home Stay, Adventure, Eco-tourism, Wellness tourism, Transport, Publicity, promotion and Marketing etc.
 - a new scheme “ **Sikkim Tourism Development Scheme**” may be implemented under which a financial assistance up to some % of project’s capital cost may be provided for fast food centres, Local handicrafts, plying buses & taxis, provision of equipments for adventure sports, Wayside amenities, setting up tourism information centre, restaurants, tented accommodation, safety/security & rescue, Village Tourism/Home stay & related activities.

- The benefits of North-Eastern Industrial and Investment Promotion Policy, 2007 should be extended to Tourism Sectors and the Government of India may be requested to widen its area, cover more tourism sectors and simplify the procedure.
- The number of approval required from different Departments for establishment of tourism related business is very large, which puts the entrepreneurs to great inconvenience and it is discouraging. A committee under the chairmanship of Addl. Chief Secretary-cum- Development Commissioner has been constituted in the matters and after the analyses; recommendation will be made for single window clearance system in simplified form.
- **Awards & Appreciations:** To promote and encourage the excellence in the tourism sector, the Government will institute monetary and non-monetary awards & appreciations for all the sectors of tourism including Tourist police/security & others for their outstanding contribution. This will be administered by a committee headed by the Minister of Tourism. The different fields proposed are: Best Tourist Guide, Best trekking guide, Best hotel in star category, Best eco-friendly resort, Best village resort, Best international tour operator, Best Tour Operator, Best adventure tour operator, Best Village Tourism Development Committee, Best Tourist police, Best driver, Best student of IHM, Local media, Best managed tourist spot, Tourism department officials (2), Other Departments/ Government agencies (2) and any other field as may be required from time to time.
- **Legal Support and Effective regulations:** Appropriate legislation and rules will be formulated & enforced to implement the policy so that the entire tourism industry is properly regulated to have the better managed infrastructures and services in place. The Sikkim Registration of Tourist Trade Act, 1998 and The Sikkim Registration of Tourist Trade Rules, 2008 are already enforced and are being implemented along with the other relevant Acts & Rules of the State Government. There should be regular inspection and checking of all tourism related business such as Hotels, Travel & Tour operators, Establishments Government or Private. If needed necessary power should be delegated to concerned Associations as well.

For Management of Casino, the Sikkim Casino Games (Control and Tax) Act, 2002 and the Sikkim Casino Games (Control and Tax) Rules, 2007 have been notified and area being implemented. This may also invite the social ills and other problems and hence, necessary steps are being taken and will be taken to control such problems and ills by keeping regular watch on this sector.

- **Revenue & Financial Resources:** This is the first need for the success of any industry or sector, to provide better services, to provide better facilities and perks to employees and to sustain the development, its management & maintenances. It is proposed to introduce Single Window development charges/fee on all tourists coming to the State and for area specific like Nathula fee, for prime destinations /other important areas, the specific fee/charges either in the form of environmental Fee or Green fee or Premium destination or Trekking fee or Forest and Wildlife Fee

or Sanitation charges etc or in other suitable form may be levied but this should be done in better managed way so that there is no harassment of any type. And the revenue should be ploughed back to specific area for specific purpose. The contribution to State GDP has to be enhanced to service the tourism sector. Sufficient funds/budget under State Plan and Non-Plan should be provided for management, maintenance, publicity, marketing, promotion and other establishment costs.

CREATION AND MANGEMENT OF WORLD CLASS INFRASTRUCTURE:

Infrastructure is first foundation of any industry, and in case of tourism, it is not only the infrastructure but also the quality & services of is the essence of tourism, if it has to grow as we are providing services, pleasure, entertainment, leisure, recreation, comforts and many more amenities from the tourism. Efforts will be made to seek the financial assistance from World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other international agencies for the projects ranging from entry point to mode of transport to the destinations. In this respect, the following actions will be taken up:

Development of Integrated Infrastructure:

The State has already adopted the policy of integrated development to strengthen and provide the international standard infrastructure for tourism sector. The action needs better cooperation and coordination from the Tourism Department and will take pro-active measures. All destinations and circuits will be well planned and gaps will be filled in with necessary services in place, signages, directions, instructions and does & don't, warning/cautions and other required for specific site. The emphasis will be on converging of all resources and expertise for the development to provide the world class infrastructure and facilities so that the Sikkim remains as the most sought after tourist destination in the world. All tourism projects may be placed before the Investment committed headed by the Hon'ble Chief Minister on the line of Industrial projects. Clean Development Technologies and Innovations will be adopted to minimize the generation of waste and utilize the waste from consumption goods and production processes, rather treating the waste after generation.

Roads:

The well maintained road network is very vital for the tourism as in case of Sikkim most of the tourists destinations, sites, points entirely depends upon roads only. The present approach & vision of the State Government to double lane the existing NH 31 A, Alternate NH, a good network of inter-districts State highways and the rural roads will directly support this objective and strategy. At the same time, there is urgent need to complete this task and also to maintain all roads in good condition.

The BRO, SPWD (Roads), RMDD, Army, UDHD and Tourism Department have to work in close coordination as more than 90% of the tourists are travelling to Sikkim by road and inside Sikkim almost 99.9%, roads are the only mode of communication.

Railways:

At present Sikkim is not connected by direct rail network directly. Recently in November 2009, the foundation stone for railway line up Rangpo was laid down and target is to complete by 2015 and in the next phase, it may be up to Gangtok and then to Nathula. But, even now, the NJP/ Siliguri railway services needs to be upgraded modernised & provided with as under:

- Special tourist's trains from South, West, Central and other parts of country shall be introduced with better services, safety and security.
- More luxury trains, Rajdhani, Satabdi and well serviced trains shall be introduced.
- NJP railway station shall be upgraded to international standard.
- A Railway Yatri Niwas of 100 rooms shall urgently be established at NJP.

Airport:

The Sikkim (Pakyong) Airport shall be completed as per schedule and process for having flights from desired places shall be started and all formalities should be completed by the time of airport become operational. At the airport, five stars Hotels, Parks, Guest House, Travel & Transport facilities, Improvement of Pakyong-Gangtok & other roads, and other infrastructure shall be completed in time. Sikkim Government has taken up the matter to upgrade Bagdogra as International Airport and increase of more affordable flights. The Sikkim Air port shall also be planned for bigger planes now only.

Transport:

The State Government will also introduce Safe, economical and reliable transport within State as well as across the adjoining State. The luxury modern buses, small buses, Taxies and highly sophisticated means of transport will be encouraged in Government and private sector both. For many areas, a network of ropeways has been planned, where the Government is already working in a major way to make it a common mode of transport and to save the forest and environment. Ropeways will be encouraged to facilitate the movement of tourists as well as to give them opportunity to enjoy the scenery of attractive locations. The Charges & taxes system for this will be simplified. The entire transport system will be developed in a combination of Government, Private and PPP mode.

Accommodation:

This is the most important priority area. Special efforts have already been initiated to develop and upgrade tourism accommodation in uniform manner at all tourist destinations keeping in view the requirement and income levels of different categories of tourists. Apart from the State Government, Hotels, private, PPP mode, Guest houses, Lodges and Village tourism/ Home stay has been planned and being implemented. It will be promoted and encouraged by facilitating and providing some incentives. Along with the old establishments, all new hotels and other accommodation/establishments will have the architecture which blends with the local environment and the followings:

- Local Architecture and water harvesting structure will be mandatory.
- Parking, proper garbage disposal and sewerage disposal will be mandatory.
- Green component: plants & flowers will be mandatory.
- All establishments shall comply with the pollution control standards.
- To setup 4/5 Star Hotels, resorts in all the leading destinations.
- To have more & more 2/3 Star Hotels and budget accommodation in all the destinations.
- To create and establish more Yatri Niwas, Guest houses and lodges in interior areas.
- Suitable camping sites both in Government and Private will be identified and will be developed with appropriate toilet, sewage and garbage disposal arrangements in place.
- To classify and categorize all accommodations & restaurants in the State with services available.
- Implementation and enforcement of all safety and security measures.

Modern Wayside Amenities- Washrooms-Motels:

To make road journeys more pleasant, safe & secure, composite highway stopover or way side facilities will be developed and encouraged to be constructed on all highways. The State Government has already decided to create and establish modern wayside amenities/ washrooms/ motels at a distance of 10 km on the road side of each road. Such 63 locations have already been identified and approved. The land acquisition of about 2 acres at each location has already been started and works are being started. It will have all the modern amenities, restaurant, souvenir shop, information counter, public conveniences, park, lounge with all facilities, disabled facilities, retiring rooms, Police control room, vehicle repairing centre,

local handicrafts/costumes/jewelry shop and local food shops etc. They will be developed by Government, private and PPP mode.

Tourism Administration and Management:

The existing Tourism Department administration needs a major reforms keeping in mind the vision and goal that tourism is going to be the main economy of the State. In doing so, it will be most essential to provide & place the officials and staffs who have the aptitude & attitude for tourism, hospitable. Specialists, experts and professionals. The existing permanent cadre of tourism service must upgrade their skills to have all aspect of modern & traditional tourism management. A good team of experts & professionals in the fields of publicity, marketing, project planning & formulation, hospitality sector, adventure; pilgrimage, wellness and eco-tourism etc in Government and private sectors should lead the management. All Institutions & Centres of tourism like Institute of Hotel Management (IHM), Food Craft Institute (FCI), Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation (STDC) and all Centres of Excellence should be headed by experts and professionals only. At present, there is no well define office and manpower of tourism at District and sub-divisional levels. It will be done immediately with fund and facilities like offices, vehicles and budget. Construction of a new modern building "Tourism Complex' at Gangtok is under progress. A Tourism Mall along with modern information system with E-restaurant, Parking, Local cuisines, Local souvenir, Roof top & revolving restaurant & under Single Roof Facilitation System for permit, foreigner registration, ILP/PAP, Forest & Wildlife permits, Police check post permit etc is being planned at the present site of Tourism office at MG Marg. The development of Tourism complexes in all four districts will be taken up on priority. All major tourist spots like Chardham Solophok, Buddha Park Ravangla, Nathula side, Samdruptse, Yumethang, Yoksum, and Uttrey etc will have tourism site office.

To create and maintain the world class infrastructure the Strengthening & Modernization of Engineering Wing of the Tourism Department will be done on priority as it is very much required for sustainable creation and management of tourism infrastructures. The wing will be headed by Principal Chief Engineer/Chief Engineer supported Superintendent Engineer having sufficient DEs, AEs & JEs in all the four districts. DE/AE planning and at least Two number of experienced architects should be part of this team. Sufficient fund for creation, management and maintenance should be provided.

At all the State entry points like Rangpo, Melli, Reshi and Police check post points like Nathula axis, Yumethang axis etc. sufficient accommodation/facilities will be created for District Administration and Police to handle the emergent situation as a part of tourism administration and management.

DEVELOPING SUSTAINED AND EFFECTIVE MARKETING PLANS AND PROGRAMME:

Strategies for Effective Marketing:

The current traditional marketing approach will be changed to one that of more aggressive and competitive as the competition for the tourists from source market is fierce. We have to compete in these markets and have to use more modern, professional and targeted market tools and strategies to:

- Differentiate Sikkim from the other competitive destinations, developing unique market position, image and brand that cannot be held by competitor.
- Undertake an extensive qualitative and quantitative market survey, research and analyses programme in the target source markets.
- Identify and develop highly attractive products to the interest of each source market and market them
- Develop and implement all on-going promotional programmes in partnership with key stake holders of the tourism industry in domestic and international market
- Especially tailored marketing for Village/Rural/ Home stay Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Wellness Tourism, Pilgrimage Tourism, Eco-Tourism .
- Assure to represent Sikkim and make presence feel in each National and International Market Show & Travel Trade and organize the road shows, fairs & festivals in different places outside involving opinion makers and have the Brand Ambassador for Sikkim tourism.
- Have most sophisticated, updated web/internet portal, on- line facilities and services/information in various languages, details of products & facilities and it should have the well connected linkage with market experts and traveler as well.
- Printing of new brochures, posters, leaflets, maps, guidebooks and other tourist literature for all tourism products & destinations.
- Developing 10 minutes, 20 minutes and 1 hr tourism films to be telecast in electronic media and also display at TICs, and during the fairs/festivals & marts. Release of advertisements in the electronic and print media with targeted market and season.
- Up gradations and opening of new Tourist Information Centres (TICs) with modern facilities.
- Promotion of leading tour operators & other service providers in regulated manner and their participation in national and international events well planned/listed /decided places along with Government participation.
- International standard signage's to be installed at all key points, locations, destinations in the State and at the Air ports, railway stations and key business centres outside the State.

- Shooting of films, TV serials, documentary and ads for various purposes would be taken up on priority as it serves the multiple purpose benefits. Locations for this purpose would be especially identified and notified along with the guidelines. It may also be done in PPP mode.
- To hold tourism conclave at regular intervals with prospective investors for hand holding exercise, encouragement, knowledge and intensive investments.

Creating Sikkim Tourism Brand Position:

In the national and international market, Sikkim requires a positioning Statement that captures the true essence of State & its image which will become its “BRAND” for tourism industry. Tourism is one of the major industries for many States and Countries stimulating economic development. With the inbound tourism market increasing annually, positioning and brand image is becoming more and more essential to successful branding of a tourist destination. Every tourist destination in the world has a brand image which serves to differentiate a destination from competing destinations. Constantly increasing global tourism competition has improved the importance of destination branding and marketing.

And hence, it is urgent need to market the tourist destinations of Sikkim by creating a Brand Name. Brand Name emanates out of USPs (Unique Selling Points). Suggestions to create brand name (Brand Name Contest) have been invited from Citizens, Intellectuals, Media/ Press, Students, Employees from within the State and outside the state. Marketing Professionals will also be consulted on this point at time of finalization. The development of a powerful positioning image and brand position for Sikkim in its international and domestic markets require an adequate exercise in very professional way. This is under process and would be decided at the earliest.

Market Information & Analyses:

The complete information on the market needs to be made available and it is expected for any important business sector. Information and analyses on pricing, security, health, safety, market for new tourism product, quality & quantity of tourist, behavior of tourists, socio-economic impacts, influence of media & internet and other information systems, revenue, employment, human resources, market competitor, and many more areas will be mandatory and this will be done by the STDC and Publicity wing of the Department. The findings of this will help to guide our plans, programme & strategies for implementation.

In order to ensure the continuing development of the tourism industry, collection of accurate data on tourist arrivals, nationality, length of stay, purpose of visit, area of interest, weaknesses of Sikkim tourism as well as the feedback on the products, conditions and experiences is absolutely necessary. For this the services of a professional local agency will be obtained along with the Departmental collection.

Modern Methods and Digital Technology for Marketing:

Media has become the best means for promotion and marketing of any product. The electronic media such as TV, internet, website, email, on-line booking etc have become a powerful tool of promotion and marketing of tourism. This will be taken up through the professional agencies by the Government, stake holders, and private and in PPP mode as well. The information available for Sikkim on these entire platforms will be cross checked and only authenticated information will be allowed to be used.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM:

Recognising that Responsible Tourism is not a product; it is an approach and which can be used by travellers and holidaymakers, tour operators, accommodation and transport providers, visitor attraction managers, planning authorities, national, regional/provincial and local government. An integrated approach is required, involving many stakeholders in any place or space which attracts tourists.

Recognising that tourism takes place in communities,, natural and cultural heritage sites and environments where people live and work; and that tourism is only one of the activities which needs to be managed in order to ensure sustainable communities.

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Recognising the priority expressed call for action to “to create better places for people to live in and for people to visit.”

Recognising that the currencies of travel and tourism are those of free time and of money and that when people are on holiday or travelling on business they are generally consuming conspicuously; and that this inequality can give rise to conflict. We endorse the aspiration of the language of hosts and guests and the greater degree of equality it implies. While we recognise the role of the industry, we must be conscious that the power relationship generally significantly favours the industry and the visitor.

Recognising that domestic and international tourism often makes visible inequalities between producers and consumers which becomes more apparent

when the consumer travels to the factory to consume the product. Economic inequality does not necessarily have to be compounded by expressions of social superiority evidenced by a lack of respect. The ethic of mutual respect and equity is fundamental to Responsible Tourism.

Aware that tourism reflects the economic and political relationships which empower consumers in our globalised world we recognise that tourism can be managed to have more positive impacts and less negative ones. Recognising that tourism can be a tool to conserve and enhance local natural and cultural heritage.

Recognising the principles of Responsible Tourism as having the following characteristics:

- minimises negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- provides access for physically challenged people; and
- is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

Recognising that each place, each destination will identify and prioritise different issues and that this is something which should be celebrated, reflecting as it does our world's diversity of cultures and environment. Local communities need to be empowered to exercise control over the forms of tourism that they wish to see developed in their communities, and even to their right to say 'no' to tourism.

Recognising that in India, policy on Responsible Tourism is evolving and reflecting on the experience of the Responsible Tourism policies/practices already being implemented. Aware of the need to focus on the contribution of tourism to the local economy and that increases in domestic and international arrivals can contribute to this, recognising that governments need to focus more on locally captured yield and the contribution of tourism as part of a local sustainable development strategy

Recognising the role of government in leading an open and inclusive multi-stakeholder process to ensure economic and social development whilst conserving the environment.

Recognising that although the impacts of travel and tourism need to be managed locally in the destination the form of travel to and fro between home and destination is now of major importance.

Aware that there is a global consensus amongst scientists from a wide range of disciplines that Green House Gases are contributing to climate change which is having serious impacts on our environment and that these negative impacts fall disproportionately on the poor in developing countries, we accept that reducing carbon pollution from the tourism industry is a priority and urge governments, tourism businesses, the airlines and other forms of transport, and consumers to prioritise carbon reduction, reducing the consumption of fossil fuels, increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy.

Aware that most communities face increasing water scarcity, unsustainable waste generation and management, serious energy and fuel constraints and biodiversity loss. Recognising that tourism is increasingly challenged to demonstrate its positive impacts on livelihoods, social and economic development and conservation.

In addition to ensuring that tourism does not cause problems to local communities, increasingly the tourism industry is called upon to respond to critical social problems and to act in the social interest contributing to social justice.

Recognising that in many destinations the consumer and the originating market industry is more powerful than the local community and the local tourism industry and that this can have undesirable consequences with serious negative impacts

Recognising that whilst we need to be aware of the complexity of the interactions of tourism in a destination, stakeholders and local priorities need to be identified, an agenda for change needs to be agreed and implementation needs to be commenced. It is important to begin to manage tourism more sustainably in accord with local priorities; we recognise that not everything that may be desirable can be achieved immediately.

Recognising the experience, knowledge and skills of communities, we can listen and learn from them; there are no blueprints – there are only local solutions although we can learn from the experiences of others.

Aware of the Guiding Principles for economic, social and environmental responsibility focuses on process and approaches to implementation.

Education and Learning : Education is required at all levels, initial, secondary, community and professional - continuing professional development education is more likely to have an immediate impact on the sustainable management of tourism in destinations. Tourism and the ideas of Responsible Tourism should be included in the primary curriculum to foster social inclusion, discourage dependency and enable people to engage in the management of tourism impacts. Use education to build the transferable technical capacity of all stakeholders.

Train guides as interpreters aware of their responsibilities to assist the process of Responsible Tourism management and to maximise the positive contribution and minimize negative impacts while enhancing the visitor experience. Encourage the

development of new tourism experiences which facilitate socially and economically positive host - guest encounters. Undertake learning needs analysis and capacity building for communities, NGOs, the private sector and government staff.

Educate tourists, the intermediaries in the transit route, and generating markets on local socio-cultural, economic and environmental issues in the market and the destination; likewise educating the communities on the cultures of the visitors. Research and resource materials need to be available in each country pursuing Responsible Tourism

Campaigning and Awareness Raising: Businesses need to be encouraged to recognise that they can do well by doing well. There is a business case to be made focused on a number of issues:

- Cost savings
- Enlightened self interest in preserving the product
- Staff motivation and retention
- Responsibility to stakeholders – in particular to employees and communities
- Changes in the investment climate which are moving to favour socially responsible investments in part to ensure the maintenance of brand value.
- License to operate
- Product enhancement through opportunities for meaningful socio-cultural engagement.

Customer expectation, there is increasing consumer demand for “richer” engagement with destinations and the communities who live there and an expectation that the industry will take responsibility for minimising its negative, and maximizing its positive impacts. There is market advantage to be gained through referrals and repeat business. In destinations campaigning may be necessary to raise awareness amongst all stakeholders and encourage change.

Media: We urge the media to exercise more responsibility in the way in which they portray tourism destinations, to avoid raising false expectations and to provide balanced and fair reporting. We urge the media to communicate the ideas of Responsible Tourism and the enhanced visitor experiences, it can provide and to promote Responsible Tourism enterprises. We ask that the media exercise independent critical judgment when reporting on companies and destinations and address the Responsible Tourism agenda.

Empowerment: Recognise the importance of strengthening the role of local communities in decision making about tourism development through their existing civil society structures and local governance processes. Encourage local government scrutiny of joint ventures, co-operatives, and public private sector partnerships, it may be appropriate for local government to assist communities in maintaining some control over the forms of tourism development in their area. Recognise that communities are not homogenous and that equity, power and gender issues need to be addressed.

Taking Responsibility for Sustainable Local Social and Economic Development: Responsible Tourism now has to focus on the economic participation of local people as direct owners in the business of tourism not just as beneficiaries of charity. Tourism has to contribute to socio-economic development by supporting the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. Tourism has to provide opportunities for employment at the community level. Government and tourism enterprises can make a significant contribution by changing their procurement practices and supporting local entrepreneurs to develop the quality and quantity of their goods and services to meet market demands.

Tourism needs to prove its link with poverty reduction rather than relying on the concept of trickle-down. Government and development agencies need to address the challenge of spreading the benefits of tourism geographically and to the poor. Market access for micro and small enterprises through the removal of barriers can achieve immediate results through increasing the discretionary spend by tourists to informal sector traders and micro-enterprises. Access to viable markets is essential for local micro enterprises to flourish, and workers rights need to be addressed. Through their supply chain tourism businesses can increase their linkages to the local economy and to economically poor producers.

Governance: Governance is a major challenge often central to engaging all the stakeholders to achieve change. Local government has overall responsibility to bring together the efforts of destination stakeholders through dialogue in multi-stakeholder forums to establish responsible destinations rather than pockets of responsibility in destinations. “Joined-up government”, a “whole of government approach”, going “beyond the silo” are expressions used in different societies to make the point that the management of tourism cannot be achieved by the tourism department working alone.

Planning control, highways, environmental management, police and a host of other government agencies at the State and local government need to be encouraged to play their role in managing tourism. All relevant departments in State and local government need to exercise their responsibility for ensuring the formulation and implementation of regulations.

Government plays a key role in facilitating the balance of competition and co-operation: businesses need to co-operate to attract tourists to the destination and compete for their bookings and business. Government should support and facilitate the community to engage in tourism services, integrating equity and environmental concerns. Governments in originating countries have a responsibility to issue well founded travel advisories and not unnecessarily to damage local tourism industries. Care needs to be taken to avoid regulation causing corruption or excluding small businesses and communities. State and local governments should implement public health policy programmes in view of the impacts which communicable diseases may have on local communities and tourism.

Multi-Stakeholder Processes: Co-operation and competition between different groups in the informal sector and between the informal and formal sectors is required. Multi-stakeholder processes and co-operation within a shared undertaking to take and exercise responsibility can achieve rapid and significant change. Avoid fragmentation and parallel initiatives, manage and balance co-operation and competition ensure that all stakeholders are engaged. Recognise that different stakeholders have particular but interdependent needs and responsibilities. It is a sign of responsibility that you engage with those who question you. Agree implementation plans - short lists, success in implementation breeds success. The processes of change and management need to be systematised.

Partnerships: Responsible Tourism can only be achieved by government, local communities and businesses cooperating on practical initiatives in destinations through stable local level partnerships. Partnerships need to be based on transparency, mutual respect and shared risk taking, ensure clarity about roles and expectations. Build long term partnerships with clear, fair and realistic expectations on all sides. Patience and persistence are required, proceed with wisdom and hope.

Community-Based Tourism: In considering proposals for community-based tourism development there needs to be more focus on business planning and administration, consumer orientated product development, quality, co-operation with the commercial sector, communication, sales channels, marketing and the management of the interaction between tourists and local people. Robust and transparent financial management systems are needed to empower the community to ensure that earnings are distributed equitably within the community. Communities and individuals need to be empowered to realise a fair price for their goods and services and to have a say in determining how tourism is developed in their community.

Market: There is advantage in developing those market segments which are likely to be resilient and where long term and repeat visiting is likely to result. The experiential trend favours those destinations which are able to facilitate engagement between holiday makers and local communities able to provide the cultural richness. There are increasing opportunities to choose to work with outbound operators, who have a responsible approach. Consider focusing marketing efforts to attract specific groups of tourists predisposed to engage in those activities and pattern of spending which maximise local economic benefit and minimize negative social and environmental impacts.

New online travel agencies in destinations and originating markets are providing opportunities for direct sales to travellers and holidaymakers predisposed to purchase experiences with Responsible Tourism characteristics and with the client feedback mechanisms which can assist in driving referrals. The private sector and government should consider providing marketing support to micro and small enterprises

Disability and Inclusion: Ensure access to built and natural environments and provide information about facilities and access. Provide information and interpretation in ways accessible to those with physical or cognitive disabilities. Create opportunities for employment by those with disabilities in the tourism industry.

Commercial Sustainability: The private sector needs to be actively engaged in developing and sustaining Responsible Tourism in destinations. Institutionalisation and systematisation are essential to sustainability; many projects do not survive the cessation of external financial and technical support. Initiatives need to be mainstreamed and connected to the industry. Responsible Tourism is about changing the way that business is done, recognising that the businesses operate in a competitive market where not all businesses are investing time and other resources in responsible practices. Responsible Tourism businesses can contribute nothing if they are not commercially viable and sustainable. Care should be taken to ensure that communities do not suffer a disproportionate risk given their vulnerability

Environmental Sustainability: Investors in tourism at all levels must build and operate in an ecologically and environmentally sustainable manner. Promote conservation and biodiversity during planning, development and operation of tourism. Adopt a strategic approach to identifying, managing and harvesting natural resources in tourism destinations.

Tourism should recognise how tourism contributes to climate change and should minimize its carbon footprint. Tourism enterprises should adopt environmental management systems.

Monitoring, Measurement and Reporting: Monitoring, verification and reporting on key local social, economic and environmental issues through locally agreed indicators is central to the management of tourism impacts - measure, verify and report. Transparent and auditable reporting is essential to the integrity and credibility of our work and to establishing benchmarks and targets which enable individual consumers and businesses to make informed choices. In determining who are the responsible tourists and what are the responsible forms of tourism we need to rely more on the measurement of impacts rather than the self-declared motivations of the travellers or the companies concerned.

Measurement enables the identification of the specific activities, businesses and tourists who deliver impacts which fulfill the locally defined Responsible Tourism priorities recognising that the tourists who have the lowest environmental impacts may also have low economic yield - choices will need to be made within the framework of local sustainable development priorities. Credible and robust measuring of local impacts assists in ensuring that an holistic assessment is made of the contribution of tourism to sustainable communities and assists in engaging colleagues in local and State government to contribute their expertise and resources to the management of tourism. Local government should establish with all

stakeholders to create the systems and processes to document and report the collective impacts of stakeholder action at local destination level.

Awards: Responsible Tourism Awards assist in identifying and rewarding best practice, it is desirable that there should be a variety of awards relevant to all stakeholders. Create media interest and raise awareness and drive consumer knowledge and expectation. Local awards based on local priorities are as important as national and global awards but avoid too much fragmentation with competing schemes in one destination.

Aware that there is a danger that Responsible Tourism will be undermined by businesses, communities or governments which use the rhetoric but cannot substantiate the claims. We call upon those committed to the aspirations of Responsible Tourism to challenge those who pay only lip service to the cause and we call on those who are making a difference to report their contribution in a transparent, honest and robust way so that Responsible Tourism can be identified by the consumer and expectations can be raised to the benefit of those who practice Responsible Tourism and to the detriment of those who do not.

FORMULATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF POLICY:

The preparation of this first Policy has involved inputs and consultations with diverse Departments, experts, Stakeholders and tourism industry. The Draft was posted on the Government website and also put-up for open discussion, consultation, suggestions and responses from inter-linked Ministries/Departments, experts, Stakeholders and tourism industry. It was also discussed with senior officers in the Department. Detailed responses were complied and the concerns expressed by the respondents were addressed and feasible suggestions have been incorporated in the Policy.

The Tourism Department, Government of Sikkim will be the Nodal Department for Implementation of Sikkim Tourism Policy, 2010. Any policy is only as good as its implementation. It requires the coordinated actions of diverse actors, for the major part organized and stimulated by one or more public agencies.

We live in a rapidly changing global community, in a rapidly developing tourism industry and highly diverse country/ State. Many issues that are salient as of now may evolve over time and new ones may take their place. A prudent course would be to provide for updating every two years in the light of developments. Accordingly, as per the growing needs of tourism industry, the State Government through the "Sikkim Tourism Advisory Council" shall review the Policy implementation & its impacts on annual basis. This would enhance accountability of the different agencies responsible for implementation. It would also reveal practical issues in implementation and necessary corrective measures.

The State Government is hopeful that all inter-linked Government agencies, tourism industry, stakeholders, investors, tourists and the general public will respond

whole-heartedly to the approach and policy of the tourism development in the State and help in bringing about integrated and healthy tourism development in Sikkim.



INSPIRATIONS:

“There is nothing more important than tourism reputation both for the sector and individual”

“Help our youths and, leave their footprints on the tourism of time---”

“Mindful that tourism, as a worldwide phenomenon. Touches the highest and deepest aspirations of all people and is also an important element of socioeconomic and political development”

“Mindful that the resources on which tourism is based are fragile and there is a growing demand for improved environmental quality”

“Considering it a priority to protect and reinforce the human dignity of both local communities and tourists”

“All options for tourism development must serve effectively to improve the quality of life of all people and must influence the socio-culture enrichment of each destination”

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