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# CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	<b>A STUDY ON THE RISK CULTURE IN BANKING SECTOR</b> <i>FRANK MTAKI &amp; DR. B. GANESH</i>	1
2.	<b>INDIANISM AND INDIAN MANAGEMENT: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY</b> <i>DR. RAVI.T.S</i>	5
3.	<b>RESEARCH IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS</b> <i>DR. SOU. PARVATI BHAGWAN PATIL</i>	9
4.	<b>A STUDY ON THE INVESTORS PERCEPTION TOWARDS INVESTMENT IN STOCK MARKET IS LUCRATIVE</b> <i>DR. P. RAMAN</i>	12
5.	<b>INDIA EXPORTS TO LATIN AMERICA: A STUDY IN REFERENCE TO DOING BUSINESS WITH ARGENTINA</b> <i>DR. JAYANT SONWALKAR &amp; CHANDAN MAHESHKAR</i>	17
6.	<b>A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CUSTOMER'S PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BANKS IN RAIPUR CITY (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SBI AND ICICI)</b> <i>DR. SALEEM AQUIL &amp; NAZHAT TAHSEEN</i>	22
7.	<b>ISLAMIC BANKING: INDIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b> <i>DR. SHAKIR SHAIK &amp; DR. SAMEERA</i>	27
8.	<b>IMPACT OF ECONOMIC RECESSION ON THE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF SELECT PRIVATE SECTOR CEMENT COMPANIES IN TAMIL NADU</b> <i>DR. V. MOHANRAJ &amp; DR. N. DEEPA</i>	30
9.	<b>ROLE OF EMPLOYEE TRAINING IN CREATING A BEST PLACE TO WORK AND RETAIN THE BEST TALENT IN THE ORGANISATION</b> <i>DR. J. K. RAJU &amp; NAVEEN. G. NAIK</i>	33
10.	<b>AGRO BASED INDUSTRIES IN INDIA: GROWTH, STATUS AND PROSPECTUS</b> <i>DR. R. M. YALLATTI &amp; A. K. JAYAPPANAVAR</i>	39
11.	<b>A STUDY ON EXPORT PERFORMANCE OF LEATHER PRODUCTS IN INDIA</b> <i>DR. A. MUTHUSAMY &amp; S. KARPAGALAKSHMI</i>	42
12.	<b>FISCAL EXPANSION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN MANIPUR</b> <i>HUIDROM IMOBI SINGH</i>	45
13.	<b>THE IMPACT OF NON-PERFORMING LOANS ON NET INCOME OF JORDANIAN BANKING SECTOR THROUGH 2003-2013</b> <i>DR. AHMAD SALEM ALKHAZALI</i>	56
14.	<b>GLOBALIZATION: IS IT A HOLISTIC MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT?</b> <i>DR. SYED HASAN QAYED</i>	62
15.	<b>THE IMPACT OF INFLATION ON LIVING STANDARD OF HOUSEHOLDS IN HAWASSA CITY, ETHIOPIA</b> <i>DR. P. NANDEESWARA RAO &amp; TASSEW DUFERA TOLCHA</i>	66
16.	<b>IMPACT OF MICROFINANCE BANKS ON POVERTY ALLEVIATION: THE CASE OF AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, MICROFINANCE BANK</b> <i>AMINU Y. USMAN &amp; DANRAKA, N. DARI</i>	73
17.	<b>IMPORT DEMAND, CAPITAL INFLOWS AND DUTCH DISEASE IN GHANA: THE CASE OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS (FDIS)</b> <i>MUSTAPHA IMMURANA, KWAKU BOATENG &amp; DANIEL MALIK ACHALA</i>	77
18.	<b>PRIMARY EDUCATION IN ANDHRA PRADESH: A CASE STUDY OF GUNTUR DISTRICT</b> <i>A.J. BHAGYA LATHA &amp; DR. SHAIK AMEER</i>	86
19.	<b>A COMPARATIVE EVALUATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS LENDING IN INDIA</b> <i>SOMESHWAR PRIYA D.</i>	95
20.	<b>HISTORY OF TOURISM IN HIMACHAL PRADESH</b> <i>VINAY NEGI</i>	99
	<b>REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK &amp; DISCLAIMER</b>	102

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**HISTORY OF TOURISM IN HIMACHAL PRADESH**

**VINAY NEGI**  
**RESEARCH SCHOLAR**  
**UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL**  
**H. P. UNIVERSITY**  
**SHIMLA**

**ABSTRACT**

*The present paper analyses the History of Tourism in the state of Himachal Pradesh. From times pre historic the state has seen many visitors. Right from puranic times to the time when the first foreigner set foot on this soil everyone was and still is fascinated by its natural beauty. The various stages of the development of tourism till the present day are critically discussed. The formation of Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) its functions, objectives and its role in the promotion of tourism in Himachal Pradesh have not only had a positive impact on the tourist inflow but have also successfully provided visitors with world class facilities away from their homes, bringing a smile on their faces creating memories in the process which they will cherish for a lifetime.*

**KEYWORDS**

history of tourism, hill stations, modern tourism, hptdc, health sanatoriums of the britishers, tourism promotion techniques, tourist inflow.

**INTRODUCTION**

The state of Himachal Pradesh lies in the lap of the Western Himalayas, this ancient land abounds the myth and legends that date back to the Puranic times. The pandavas travelled extensively in this region during their exile the proof of which are the numerous temples dedicated to them along the Pabbar valley which are in existence even today. The pandavas travelled extensively and spent their last years of exile in the Kullu valley; they remained undiscovered from the world and preferred to spend their time in the remote areas such as the Sangla valley (Kinnaur). History is proof that there was a lot of travelling going on in Himachal from the prehistoric time, Tattapani, Nirath and Nirmand are associated with the legendary saint Parshuram. Manali is named after Rishi Manu, present day Bilaspur is has the association with Rishi Vyas who is believed to have lived here and similarly Renuka in Nahan is named after goddess Renuka mother of Parshuram. All this come out to show that even ancient travelers covered this land extensively.

There are evidences of pre-historic humans existing in this region. It is also believed that a large number of people inhabiting this region had actually migrated from Central Asia Region as well as the Indian plains from time to time. The very first race to enter the region was the Proto-Australoid, followed by the Mongoloid, and then the Aryan's started coming in. There is mention in the Rig Veda of Dasyus and Nishads living in this very region and also of their powerful king Shambra who is said to have had 99 forts. The Aryans, were superior in war tactics, defeated the local tribes and settled in the region permanently. This period also saw the establishment of small *Janpadas* (republics) in Himachal. They had a good relationship with the Mauryans, which insured that they remained independent for a long time. Their independence lost only with the rise of the Guptas in the North Gangetic plains. There came a time which lead to the decline of the Guptas after which several small kingdoms came to rule this hilly state establishing their power in its different regions. They continuously fought with each other from time to time and the history of Himachal Pradesh is full of the stories and legends related to these kingdoms.

Traveling for pleasure to the hills was a tradition started by the Mughals. The Britishers followed this tradition and Thomas Coryal is considered as the first European to have visited the state. He visited Nagarkot in present day Kangra and then Jwalamukhi in the year 1916 AD. Foster was a civil officer with the East India Company and travelled through the hills of Nahan to Jammu via Bilaspur, Hamirpur and Nurpur in the year 1783. Although the Britishers came to India during the 16<sup>th</sup> century their influence was felt after the Anglo Gurkha war. It was after their victory in the war against the Gurkhas in the year 1814 – 15 the British under the treaty of Sugauli annexed parts of the present day Himachal east of the river Satluej.

In the year 1846 the British took over the control of Kullu from the Sikhs. Consequently, the whole state of Himachal Pradesh came under the control of the British which lead to several transformations, major amongst them was the development of transportation, communication and the introduction of cash crops like, tea, temperate fruits, potatoes etc. Another introduction was the idea of hill stations which was perhaps the most important of all. After the Anglo Gurkha war the first European traveler to travel deep into the hills of Himachal Pradesh was James Bajllie Frazer. He started off from Delhi and reached Nahan with the British army, during his travel he gave a vivid description of the geography of the state as it appeared before the impact of the British rule. His further journey took him through Sirmour, Jubbal, Rohru, Narkanda and across the Satluej river. On his way back he visited Theog and entered Utrakhand by crossing the river Pabbar.

Captain Alexander Gerard was another important traveler who travelled for three months in the year 1821 from a place called Sabathu covering majority of the northern parts of the state and then ended up at Kotgarh. During his journey he covered the rugged and remote terrain of the state. He travelled through the Pabbar valley and entered Sangla in Kinnaur. From Sangla he travelled further north exploring the interiors of Kinnaur along the Satluj River. He even visited the remote villages of Nako, Nangia, Leo and Shipki on the Tibetan border, on his return journey Gerard again traveled along the Satluej to Rampur Bushahr and ended his journey at Kotgarh.

In the year 1847 Thomas Thomson along with Captain Henry Stracy and Major Cunningham of the Bengal Engineers started their journey from Shimla. They sat out to explore Tibet and the Great Himalayas. They followed the route on the Hindustan Tibet road and entered Kinnaur via Nichar and Wangtu. After exploring the region, they moved westwards into the Spiti valley and they finally into the Lahaul valley documenting everything on the way and ending their journey on the banks of the river Indus. The first Englishmen to enter the Kullu valley were Moorcroft and Trebech who reached central Asia through Kangra, Kullu and Lahaul. The accounts made by these travelers contributed greatly to the geographical knowledge of the state which was pretty low at that point of time. This was also an inspiration for others to explore the Himalayas.

The idea of hill stations was developed from the favorable climatic change the British Soldiers experienced in the hills during the Anglo – Gurkha war, hill stations became the answer to many of the health problems of the British living in India. Hence their number grew rapidly across various locations in the hills. Many important hill towns of today in Himachal namely Shimla, Chail, Kasauli, Solan, Dharamsala, Dalhousie, Dagshai etc. emerged during this period on the other hand the pre-existing towns such as Chamba and Kullu experienced development and gained popularity as well. Numerous health sanatoriums were built during this period at various Hill Stations across the state. The reason behind the British developing numerous Hill Stations was to protect themselves from the extreme heat and dust of the northern plains in the summer. Shimla became the summer capital of India and saw heavy tourist inflow to the city since it was discovered as a summer retreat. Even today, many old houses and buildings across hill towns in Himachal tell the story of the English grandeur.

Efforts were also made for the development of transport during this period because prior to the coming of the British there were very few roads in the state. It was during this era that the construction of the Hindustan Tibet road started at a place called Kalka in the year 1850 so as to fulfill the desire of Lord Dalhousie who had a vision and a grand design of a road which would provide for good communication and transportation right up to the border at Tibet.

The Hindustan Tibet road made Shimla easily accessible from the plains, this in turn lead to a rapid expansion of the town with all the amenities and hence became the "summer capital" of the British Empire. Similarly, roads from the plains connected Kullu and the whole Kullu valley started developing. Apart from roads, emphasis was also given on connecting the Hill stations with rail lines. Shimla was connected with a rail line in the year 1905. Another railway line built during the year 1926 - 1929 was in the Kangra valley which connects Jogindernagar to Pathankot. After India gained independence in the year 1947, numerous princely hilly states were integrated into a single unit to be administered by the Government of India through a Chief Commissioner. As a result of which Himachal Pradesh came into being as a state of the India Union on April 15, 1948. This was done by the integration of 31 big and small hill states of the region. In 1956 saw the



conversion of the state of Himachal Pradesh to a Union Territory as per the recommendations of the State Reorganization Commission. Subsequently, a few more hilly areas of the erstwhile state of Punjab were added to the Union Territory of Himachal and this led to its conversion into a full-fledged state in the year 1971, a status it enjoys till date.

### MODERN TOURISM

Tourism in the modern sense started to develop in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the British administrators were followed closely by travelers, explorers, missionary workers and vacationers. This was also the period when the perception of mountains changed from a fearsome place to an attractive place. In the initial years of the British Raj the retreat to the hill stations during the summer months was confined to the elite class. It is only in the recent 30-40 years that the retreat to the hills has gathered pace and become popular amongst the foreigners and the Indian masses. Transport and communication network is the backbone of all developmental work. After the Sino Indian conflict, a vast network of roads has been built for strategic interest and developmental activities in the state. This in turn has paved way of modern mass tourism in the state.

### TOURISM PROMOTION

The government of has been taking up initiatives for the promotion of tourism in the state. The strategies have been changing from time to time and are in accordance to the modern day tourist demands. The facilities that the tourists avail in the state are also as per international standards. Some of the initiatives taken up by the government over the passage of time are mentioned below.

- Government's active participation in the tourism industry and efforts to exploit the tourism potential of the state goes back to the year 1955 when a tourist information centre was established at Shimla.
- Soon after Shimla, other centers such as Chamba, Nahan, Bilaspur and Mandi followed as the tourist inflow to Himachal was on the rise.
- A Golf Club at Nalderah and a winter sports club at Kufri were set up by the government in the year 1958-59.
- Initially during the period of the 1<sup>st</sup> five year plan the tourism cell was headed by a deputy director, who worked in close coordination with the Public Relations Department.
- During the reorganization of the state of Punjab a separate directorate of tourism was established in the state. Post 1972 when Himachal gained full statehood the HPTDC (Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation) was formed by converting a part of the Directorate of Tourism into a limited company.

### HIMACHAL PRADESH TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (HPTDC)

The HPTDC was created to play the role of a pioneer in developing and organizing new vistas and horizons for tourism as well as providing healthy competition to the private sector. Its role also includes providing technical and consultancy services in both the promotional and the commercial capacity to the hotel industry. HPTDC today has multiple functions so as to provide facilities in the field of accommodation, transport, promoting fairs and festivals, adventure sports and the overall publicity of tourism in the state.

#### HPTDC - OBJECTIVES, FUNCTIONS AND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) was formed in September, 1972 as an undertaking of the government of Himachal Pradesh under the company act of 1956. HPTDC is a government run premier organization of Himachal Pradesh operating in tourism sector. The corporation is running hotels and restaurants at various locations for tourists, besides providing transport facilities. In addition to all this the corporation is also engaged in the production, distribution and sales of literature which helps in tourism publicity and is also providing entertainment and duty free shopping facilities to the tourists.

### OBJECTIVES

1. The main aim of the company is to establish, develop, promote, execute, operate and otherwise carry on projects, schemes and other activities including running and maintenance of tourist vehicles to facilitate or accelerate the development of the tourism within the state.
2. Construct run and maintain tourist information centers and main centers in and outside the state.
3. Publish and sell different types of material for the purpose of gaining publicity for tourism not only amongst Indians but also amongst the foreigners.
4. Construct, lease out, take on lease, run and maintain tourist bungalows, tourist inns, youth hostels, hotels and cafeterias.
5. To promote culture, fairs, temples, tourist attractions, cuisines of the state.

### FUNCTIONS

1. To promote Himachal Tourism in the regional, national, international markets.
2. Establish hotels, restaurants & resorts at major and minor tourist destinations.
3. To provide good transportation facilities to tourist visiting the state.
4. Maintenance of various heritage and historical sites of the state.
5. Development of various tourism sites or destinations in Himachal Pradesh.
6. Developing fine infrastructure like TOP's ROP's BTE's etc.
7. Establish various theme parks, eco-parks in different parts of state.
8. Organize various exhibitions and meeting related to promotion of tourism.
9. Organize various cultural events, fairs, exhibitions and trade fairs with the help of the local community

### TOURISM PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

With the passage of time the requirements of the tourists also change. In the early days of tourism to the state, tourists were satisfied with a simple visit to a hill station. Now the scenario is such that tourists are moving towards the rural parts of the state where there is peace, fresh air, water and where he can get away from all the hustle and bustle of the crowded city life. They want to enjoy nature and get a feel of rural farm life. This not only provides a much needed change in the daily routine of the tourist but also proves a much needed stress buster. Providing the basic amenities at these rural locations has been a task for the HPTDC but with the collective efforts of the locals and the corporation tourism in these areas seems to have a bright future. Some of the promotional schemes are as under.

#### HOME STAY SCHEME

This scheme was launched in 2008 by the government of Himachal Pradesh with the aim of providing clean, comfortable and affordable supplementary accommodation to tourists in rural areas in the vicinity of famous tourist destinations when hotel and guest houses are packed to capacity. The scheme was intended to broaden the stakeholder's base for tourism in the state by including the rural and interior areas of the state in providing tourism accommodation infrastructure and at the same time this helped in decongesting the urban areas, which was running full to capacity in terms of tourist traffic during the peak season. The scheme proved to be highly successful for the Himachal Pradesh Government with home stay unit evoking overwhelming response in Kullu, Manali, Shimla, Dharamshala, Palampur and Dalhousie Regions. A Total of 891 rooms in 332 units were registered as home stay units by the end of February 2011.

#### HAR GAON KI KAHANI

This was an initiative started by the Himachal Government in the year 2010. One village from each of the twelve districts of the state was selected, fascinating tales, folklore and anecdotes related to these villages are used to lure tourists. This scheme aimed at developing villages of historic importance as tourism villages by providing basic amenities and making sure that the tourists get a deep insight of the rural life in the hill state. The state has also won the award for most innovative marketing technique.

**TOURISM PROMOTION TECHNIQUE**

HPTDC is using the print media to promote tourism in the state and in the national and international tourism market as well. This includes advertisements in newspapers and publishing books such as "Unforgettable Himachal" and other printed handouts. The department has also used TV channels, primarily news channels to advertise tourism. The department also participates in various national level tourist festivals across the countries and also conducts road shows to draw attention of the tourist towards the state. For promoting tourism in Himachal Pradesh (HPTDC) introduced various new strategies in the recent past. One of these services is the *Swiss Cottage Tents*. At present these tents are available only at two destinations in Himachal Pradesh i.e. at Hamta Huts (Manali) and Hotel Bhagsu (Mcloadgunj).

**TABLE 1: COUNTRY WISE FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVALS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH**

Country	Year and Tourists			
	2011		2012	
	Number	%	Number	%
United Kingdom	75176	15.32	78322	15.66
France	32295	6.67	26853	5.37
Italy	10768	2.22	10427	2.08
Canada	13824	2.85	13883	2.78
USA	32897	6.79	36481	7.29
Germany	20738	4.28	23851	4.77
Malaysia	8201	1.69	7650	1.53
Australia	19616	4.05	19524	3.90
Japan	9621	1.99	8258	1.65
Sri Lanka	15800	0.33	2275	0.45
Switzerland	4727	0.97	6745	1.35
Others	255075	52.64	266015	53.17
Total (H.P.)	484518	100.00	500284	100.00

**TABLE 2: MONTH-WISE INDIAN AND FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVALS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH**

Month	Tourists arrivals (2013)			
	Indian		Foreign	
	No.	Share (%)	No.	Share (%)
January	808598	5.49	21272	5.14
February	850026	5.78	19585	4.73
March	1088760	7.39	32932	7.95
April	1784266	12.13	37707	9.10
May	1756065	11.93	48443	11.69
June	1289768	8.77	38356	9.26
July	1030959	7.01	31851	7.69
August	1185420	8.06	33099	7.99
September	1276631	8.68	37100	8.96
October	1565026	10.63	45134	10.89
November	969053	6.58	31488	7.60
December	1111014	7.55	37282	9.0
Total (H.P.)	14715586	100.00	414249	100.00

**SOME TOURISM PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS ORGANIZED BY HPTDC**

- HPTDC organizes various events from time to time like the summer festival at Shimla and the winter carnival at Manali where many national level singers share the stage with local folk artists creating a musical fusion which is a treat to the ears. HPTDC also organizes events from time to time such as a classical fusion music night which was recently held at its property Holiday Home in Shimla.
- Special Offers for women: HPTDC is offering a 10% additional discount on accommodation to women par and above the normal discounts at its properties across the state.
- Special "Karva Chauth Packages" launched for tourists on this festival.
- Various cultural activities are organized at the Gaiety Theater from time to time to keep the tourists and locals entertained.
- HPTDC also takes part in various exhibitions held all across the length and breadth of the nation in the hope of promoting tourism to Himachal.

**CONCLUSION**

It is concluded that from times pre historic the state has seen many visitors. Right from puranic times to the time when the first foreigner set foot on this soil everyone was and still is fascinated by its natural beauty. The various stages of the development of tourism till the present day are critically discussed. The formation of Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) its functions, objectives and its role in the promotion of tourism in Himachal Pradesh have not only had a positive impact on the tourist inflow but have also successfully provided visitors with world class facilities away from their homes, bringing a smile on their faces creating memories in the process which they will cherish for a lifetime.

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