

Examining The Role Of Political Stability As Key Driver In Shaping Manipur Tourism Destination Image

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study is to examine the role of political stability in shaping the positive image of tourism industry in Manipur. Descriptive analysis is done using SPSS to achieve the goal of this study. The findings show that political unrest leads to broader socioeconomic issues such as price changes and low performance in tourism-related companies. Respondents also highlighted the importance of proactive steps taken by tourism officials, particularly in policy-driven stability programs and strategic marketing.

Keywords: Tourism, Political stability, Destination image, Manipur.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing sectors in the world. It plays a key role in economic growth, cultural exchange, and regional integration. A destination's appeal to potential tourists is mainly shaped by its image, which is a complex mix of perceptions, experiences, media portrayals, and word-of-mouth. The image of a tourism destination significantly affects the likelihood of tourist visits, as well as the competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism industry in that area. Among the many factors that influence a destination's image, political stability is especially important. Tourists naturally look for safety, security, and predictability when selecting travel spots. Political stability provides assurance of these factors, fostering an environment that supports travel, investment, and infrastructure development.

Political unrest, conflicts, or governance failures can seriously harm a destination's image. This can discourage potential visitors, even if the location has natural beauty or cultural richness. In this context, political stability means more than just the absence of conflict. It also involves effective governance, consistent policies, and public trust in institutions. These factors help create a positive and trustworthy image for tourists. For destinations in developing or conflict-sensitive areas, where tourism presents both hope and challenges, understanding the link between political stability and image building is crucial for long-term planning and sustainable tourism growth. This study aims to investigate the impact of political stability on tourism destination image building. It will look at how political conditions shape tourists' perceptions and what this means for destination branding and promotion. The results show a common belief that political unrest significantly affects broader socioeconomic issues, like price fluctuations and poor performance in tourism-related industries. Participants emphasized the urgent need for tourism officials to get involved, particularly in strategic marketing and policy-driven stabilization efforts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The tourism industry contributes to a country's economic growth and enhances its image as a desirable destination. Nevertheless, tourism demand is affected by various factors, particularly the political stability of the destination country (Shaikh et al, 2022).

The development of the tourism industry firmly supports the theory of tourism-led growth, driving economic progress and enhancing overall well-being. In contrast, population growth and political instability have a detrimental effect on well-being. Furthermore, the degree of political stability plays a significant role in shaping tourism activities (Ashif Khan, 2021).

The current political landscape—encompassing international, regional, national, and local dimensions—has resulted in instability that adversely impacts markets and tourist destinations. Such instability has significant implications for the tourism industry. Factors including armed conflict, terrorism, escalating insecurity, stringent border controls, and rigorous visa regulations, coupled with ideological conflicts between nations, contribute to ongoing political instability and security challenges. These elements serve as substantial barriers to tourism development in various countries and are likely to remain influential in the foreseeable future. Despite these challenges, we are witnessing a gradual growth in international tourism overall. However, certain nations have

experienced considerable setbacks in their tourism sectors, leading to a marked decline in their share of the global tourism market. Conversely, other countries are beginning to capture a larger portion of this market (R. Heydari C et al, 2014).

It is crucial to concentrate on a few crucial policies in order to promote ecotourism in China. These include maintaining political stability (Shang, 2024). Tourism is severely hampered by issues with road safety and socio-political instability, such as terrorism and the refugee crisis (Kuri et al, 2024). In the short term, political instability reduces tourism (Tomczewska-Popowycz, 2021). Terrorist incidents and political instability significantly influence the perception of risk, thereby impacting tourism inflows in the short term. It is crucial for governments to prioritize security measures and enhance tourism safety. Failure to address these concerns may adversely affect tourism demand, ultimately hindering long-term economic growth (Aloui et al, 2020). High levels of corruption, political instability, and violence represent substantial obstacles to realizing the positive economic impacts of tourism. Institutional challenges, particularly in developing nations, often impede the ability of countries to leverage tourism effectively for their economic benefit (Sharma, 2023). Regional conflicts separates the communities in Manipur. Similarly, in the study conducted by (Causevic and Lynch, 2013) found that failure to foster cooperation across separated communities, the administration and governance put in place to handle political strife in Bosnia and Herzegovina need to be re-examine. The social and economic recovery is hampered by this failure.

The absence of conflict clearly demands the establishment of a society rooted in social justice, characterized by equal opportunities, a fair distribution of power and resources, and equal protection under the law, enforced impartially. Above all, it necessitates mutual cultural understanding and respect. Therefore, we reject the pessimistic views of classical realists who argue that conflict is an inherent part of human nature. Instead, we firmly assert that peace requires a robust architecture built on specific foundations, including widespread education for peace and the active promotion of intercultural dialogue. Fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding among diverse communities is a practice that offers significant benefits. It not only enhances ethical relationships but also serves as a vital mechanism for promoting socio-economic development, as well as contributing to global security and stability (F, 2017).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the role of political stability in shaping the image of tourism destinations from the perspective of the local community. A descriptive approach is appropriate for gaining an in-depth understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and observed relationships based on empirical data.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study comprises members of the local community residing in the selected tourism destinations. These individuals are important participants in tourism development and image formation. This is especially true in politically sensitive or developing areas. We used a specific sampling method to make sure that respondents were well aware of local tourism and social-political conditions. We decided on the sample size based on practicality, population size, and the need for statistical reliability.

Data Collection Method

Data was collected through a structured questionnaire specifically designed to capture the local community's perceptions across several critical areas:

1. The current image of the destination,
2. The impact of political stability on shaping this image,
3. Trust levels in local governance and institutions, and
4. Safety and security issues related to tourism.

This questionnaire comprised closed-ended items that were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." To ensure the instrument's effectiveness, it was pre-tested for clarity and reliability through a pilot study involving a targeted subset of the population.

Data Analysis Techniques

We analysed the collected data using robust descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency distribution, mean scores, and standard deviation. This analysis definitively identified patterns and summarized community responses, providing clear insights into the perception of political stability and its crucial role in developing a positive tourism image.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.760	.766	9

We computed Cronbach's alpha to assess the scale's internal consistency in this investigation. Based on nine factors, the result was 0.760, with a higher normalized value of 0.786. For social science, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or above is considered appropriate. As a result, the instrument's alpha of 0.760 indicates that it has strong internal consistency and is a trustworthy indicator of how people perceive political stability and how it affects travel. This reliability indicates that the scale's items effectively measure a common underlying construct and can be used for further statistical analyses.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	208	1.00	2.00	1.3125	.46463
Age	208	1.00	5.00	2.4663	1.12022
Political instability has a negative impact on tourism development.	208	3.00	5.00	4.4087	.61489
Political unrest makes a place less desirable to visit	208	3.00	5.00	4.3317	.62982
sPolitical stability is the key to building a long-term positive tourism destination image.	208	1.00	5.00	4.3173	.64851
The socioeconomic situation is negatively impacted by a decline in tourism	208	3.00	5.00	4.0721	.60560
The hospitality industry, including lodging and dining establishments, was also impacted by the drop in tourism.	208	1.00	5.00	4.2308	.66275
Price fluctuations may arise from a sustained decline in tourism	208	3.00	5.00	3.8990	.63276
Tourism officials must mitigate the impact of political instability by giving more effort to marketing.	208	1.00	5.00	3.8798	.68099
Tourism officials must mitigate the impact of political instability by decreasing prices	208	1.00	5.00	3.6683	.73593
Without peace and political stability, any efforts to attract tourists would be largely in vain	208	3.00	5.00	4.3606	.62150
Valid N (listwise)	208				

The descriptive statistics give a clear picture of the sample's demographic makeup and what participants think about political stability and its impact on tourism development. A total of 208 people took part in the study. Looking at the gender distribution, the average score is 1.3125 (SD = 0.46463), with males coded as 1 and females as 2. This suggests there are more male respondents in the mix. For age, the average is 2.4663 (SD = 1.12022), which likely means most of the participants are younger, probably in the 18 to 34 age range, depending on how the age groups were categorized. When it comes to how political factors influence tourism, the responses show a lot of agreement. The statement "Political instability has a negative impact on tourism development" scored an average of 4.4087 (SD = 0.61489), indicating strong agreement. The statement "Political unrest makes a place less appealing to visit" had an average score of 4.3317 (SD = 0.62982), and "Political stability is key to building a positive tourism destination image over the long term" scored 4.3173 (SD = 0.64851). These findings suggest that respondents strongly believe political stability is a vital factor for making tourist destinations attractive and sustainable.

Furthermore, there is substantial agreement among responders, as evidenced by the low standard deviations for these claims. This highlights how crucial political stability is to traveler choices and destination perceptions.

"The socioeconomic situation is negatively impacted by a decline in tourism," had a mean score of 4.0721 (SD = 0.60560). This suggests that most respondents are aware of the substantial negative economic impacts associated with a decline in visitor numbers.

"The hospitality industry, including lodging and dining establishments, has also been impacted by the decline in tourism," was another item that had a somewhat higher mean of 4.2308 (SD = 0.86275). This finding demonstrates broad consensus regarding the hotel industry's susceptibility to shifts in traveler demand. Responses to the statement, "Price fluctuations may arise from a sustained decline in tourism," yielded a mean score of 3.8990 (SD = 0.83278). This result indicates moderate to strong agreement, with some variability, regarding the potential inflationary or deflationary effects on market prices resulting from persistent downturns in tourism. The statement, "Tourism officials must reduce the impact of political instability by improving marketing efforts," obtained a mean score of 3.8798 (SD = 0.88099) when it came to possible mitigation techniques. This implies that there is widespread consensus regarding the necessity of unambiguous branding and communication in order to handle political unpredictability. Conversely, the related statement, "Tourism officials must address the impact of political instability by reducing prices," was rated slightly lower (M = 3.6863, SD = 0.73593), indicating a more moderate level of support for price reduction as a potential response strategy.

Finally, "Without peace and political stability, any efforts to attract tourists would be largely in vain," was given a mean score of 4.3060 (SD = 0.82150). This demonstrates that the majority of respondents concur that political stability is necessary for efficient marketing and growth of the tourism industry.

During periods of political unrest, respondents perceive the economic risk for industries reliant on tourism.

Proactive actions, like as marketing campaigns, are strongly supported, while there is somewhat less consensus regarding price-cutting tactics.

According to the statistics, political stability is essential for environmentally friendly travel. Without it, industry efforts are unlikely to be successful.

DISCUSSION

The data analysis highlights a clear and consistent view among respondents about the important role of political stability in tourism and related sectors. Most participants, mainly young men, strongly agreed with the claims that political unrest leads to negative effects on tourism. These effects include a drop in destination appeal, economic decline, and disruptions in the hospitality industry.

The findings show a common view that political instability leads to wider socioeconomic problems, such as price swings and lower performance in tourism-dependent industries. Respondents also emphasized the need for active efforts by tourism officials, especially in strategic marketing and policy-driven stabilization measures. However, there was less support for price reduction as a long-term solution. In summary, the data highlights the important role of political peace and stability in creating a strong and appealing environment for tourism. Without political stability, efforts to boost tourism, regardless of pricing strategies or marketing efforts, are seen as inadequate or unproductive. These findings stress the need for governments and stakeholders to focus on political stability as a key part of long-term tourism planning and destination management.

Recommendation

Several important suggestions are made in light of the study's findings to strengthen the tourism industry's sustainability and resilience in politically delicate settings:

- **Approach governance and policy to advance political stability.**

As the foundation for the growth of tourism, governments should prioritize efforts to resolve conflicts, promote peace, and practice good governance. Given its critical significance in drawing both local and foreign tourists, political stability should be a part of national tourism plans.

- **Strengthen Crisis Communication and Strategic Marketing.**

Authorities in charge of tourism should invest on successful advertising programs that reassure prospective tourists about robustness, safety, and reliability. Clear and proactive communication is essential, particularly during or following periods of political unpredictability.

- ***Support the Hospitality Industry During Periods of Instability.**

Supporting hotel, dining, and other hospitality businesses that are negatively impacted by tourism losses may require financial aid, tax breaks, or stimulus packages. These support networks can shield these companies from long-term financial risk.

***Develop Dynamic Pricing Strategies.**

Demand fluctuations can be managed with the aid of adaptable pricing techniques. This guarantees the hospitality industry's sustainability and competitiveness even during difficult times. Price reductions as a primary tactic were not strongly supported by respondents; nonetheless, in order to remain competitive during periods of political unrest, it is prudent to consider flexible pricing. This strategy should strike a balance between the requirement for direct discounts and value-added services.

***Foster Interagency Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement.**

An effective approach to political instability requires cooperation from community organizations, corporate sector stakeholders, and government agencies. Collaborative approaches can improve resilience-building efforts and result in more comprehensive recovery strategies.

***Invest in Destination Image Management.**

In order to restore the perception of safety and desirability following episodes of unrest, it is imperative to implement long-term branding and image repair strategies. These strategies may include partnerships with influencers, engaging social media storytelling, and comprehensive destination rebranding efforts.

***Encourage Sustainable and Community-Based Tourism.**

Promoting sustainable tourism models that actively involve local communities can contribute to grassroots resilience. When communities derive economic and social benefits from tourism, they become invested stakeholders in fostering peace and stability.

Limitation

While the study provides valuable insights into the perceived relationship between political stability and tourism development, several limitations must be acknowledged such as the data were collected at a single point in time, the study cannot account for changes in perception over time or in response to evolving political circumstances. A longitudinal approach would provide deeper insights into how perceptions shift with real-time political events. Limited Scope of Variables. The study primarily focused on perceptions of political stability and its impact on tourism. Other relevant variables—such as economic conditions, health crises (e.g., pandemics), or environmental factors—were not considered, which may have also influenced respondents' views.

CONCLUSION

This paper aims to study the role of good governance and political stability as a key driver in developing tourism in Manipur. The findings of the study shows that political unrest not only exacerbates broader socioeconomic challenges, like pricing fluctuations and underwhelming performance in tourism-related businesses, but it also underscores the urgent need for decisive action. Respondents passionately emphasized the critical role of tourism officials in spearheading proactive initiatives, particularly through the implementation of policy-driven stability programs and dynamic strategic marketing efforts. Such measures are essential for fostering resilience and revitalizing the tourism industry in times of uncertainty.

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