EXAMINING THE ROLE OF KEY TOURISM DRIVERS CONTRIBUTING TO DESTINATION BRANDING AND MARKETING IN MANIPUR, INDIA

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Abstracts

This study aims to examine the pivotal tourism drivers crucial for branding and marketing tourism in Manipur from the perspective of the local community. The study used both primary and secondary data and surveyed residents with a structured questionnaire. The data was analysed using the fourth version of Smart PLS. the key findings underscored the considerable significance of all attractions and accessibility attributes, highlighting their direct impact on travel motivation. The study asserted that the appropriate upkeep of tourist sites, the introduction of entertainment programs and events, and the enhancement of service quality and infrastructure facilities would significantly influence the branding and marketing of Manipur tourism. It is anticipated that this study will aid service providers in effectively branding and marketing Manipur as a tourist destination. Furthermore, the study recommends that policymakers to focus on creating long-term destination planning and development, with a special emphasis on critical tourism drivers. It further emphasises the importance of concentrating on key aspects of tourism as well as the systematic process of branding and marketing. Finally, the research concludes that eco-tourism represents the optimal approach for the branding of Manipur tourism.

Keywords: Tourism Drivers, Destination branding, Marketing, Community perception, Manipur Tourism.

Introduction

The tourism industry is becoming increasingly competitive, so it's crucial to conduct research on tourism resources and identify effective strategies to promote destinations. Manipur's tourism industry is still in its early stages and has yet to fully showcase its abundant tourism resources. However, it is crucial to explore its potential to identify promising resources (Asunciòn Beerli, 2004), (Enright, 2004), (Mohsin, 2004), (Madhavan et.al., 2011) In order to gain a better understanding of how visitors feel about a destination, it's important to pinpoint and analyse the factors that play a role in managing tourism destinations and providing tourism services. India's hills and valleys, stunning landscape, freshwater lakes, rivers, waterfalls, caves, and diverse communities, each with its own unique culture, artefacts, and cuisine, offer great potential for tourism planning and development as an emerging destination. (Khwairakpam, 2018) suggests that Manipur has potential for tourism in various areas, such as rural tourism, adventure travel, rich culture, business, and religious sites. To delve deeper into this potential, the study aims to understand the community's perspective and find answers to the following research questions:

a) Does the potency of attractions impact travel motivation?
b) Does the potency of accessibility impact travel motivation?
c) What types of tourism best describe Manipur?
d) What are the key drivers' roles in branding and marketing Manipur tourism?

One of the fastest-growing industries worldwide is tourism, which provides employment opportunities, financial assistance, and foreign exchange earnings for the destination. (Marco Cucculelli, 2016). Thus, the growth of tourism could enhance the living standard of host community (Paul V. Mathew, 2017). (Grosspietsch, 2005) Tourism has the potential to promote sustainable economic growth in both developed and developing countries. This is due to the vast human potential and availability of national resources, as well as the positive effects it has on other sectors and industries. Tourism can act as a catalyst for economic development, leading to overall national development (Imali N, 2012). It is crucial to identify potential resources and undertake suitable product development and tourism planning to establish Manipur as a popular tourist destination. In the global tourism industry, many attractions are striving to highlight their unique branding (Mahadzirah Mohamad, 2012). The global tourism industry is facing significant challenges and a highly competitive environment. To better understand the attractiveness of destinations, it is essential to comprehend how people perceive them. Travelling is often motivated by different reasons, which can be represented on a pyramid similar to Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs." In this context, the forces that drive people to travel are known as travel motivations, and they are briefly discussed below (Gliha, 2023), as shown in Figure 1.
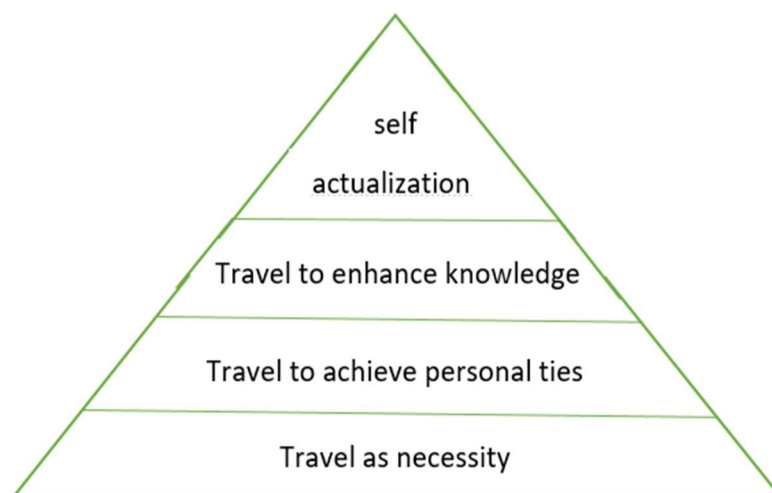

Figure 1. Motivation for travel is presented in the form of Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid.
Source: Author.

Travel has always been an essential aspect of human life. In the past, people had to move from one place to another to find food and shelter. Nowadays, individuals travel for various reasons such as pursuing employment, education, or escaping from natural disasters or danger. This need for travel falls under the safety needs category in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The next level of Maslow's pyramid highlights the importance of travel in connecting with more people, forming friendships, and learning about different cultures and traditions. This level is known as love and belongingness.The next level is esteem, which involves traveling to advance one's status and maintain one's prestige. Finally, the goal of self-actualization, or "being your best self," also applies to travel, such as traveling for the sake of drifting.In light of the above statement, the types of tourism may be laid out as follows in Table 1.

Table 1. Travel motivation and types of tourism

Travel Motivation	Types of tourism
Travel as necessity	a) Educational tourism b) Medical tourism
Travel to achieve personal ties.	c) Cultural tourism d) Rural tourism e) Religious tourism
Travel to enhance knowledge.	f) MICE tourism g) Adventure tourism h) Sport tourism i) Agri-tourism j) Eco-tourism k) Food tourism
Self-actualization	l) Explorer/drifter m) Pleasure tourism

Source: Author.

In order to create a successful brand of a destination, it is important to identify the main tourism products that best represent a particular destination in the minds of potential tourists. Although the author mentions different types of tourism, they focus on a select few in the table that are particularly relevant to the research region in order to achieve greater effectiveness (Sarma, 2003). In order to promote tourism in Manipur, it is important to examine and analyse the different types of tourism products that are available. This will help in understanding the challenges faced in destination branding and offering appropriate tourism options in the region. The study focuses on analysing existing tourism products through the use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected through questionnaires, which consist of different attributes such as attraction, accessibility, and motivation. These statements are marked on a Likert scale of one to five, and answers have been obtained from various communities in Manipur. The data in this study was analysed using Partial Least Squares (PLS) version 4 and the Structural Equation Model (SEM). A factor analysis was conducted to identify the most appropriate variable among the variables. The study's findings highlight the critical potential drivers that could contribute to enhancing destination marketing in Manipur. The data was collected through a survey conducted on the local community's perceptions regarding tourism and its overall services in Manipur. The results revealed that the potency of attractions and accessibility directly impact travel motivation. The major travel motivating factor in Manipur is seeing scenic beauty, which includes natural landscapes, flora, and fauna. Furthermore, the study found that "eco-tourism" is the most suitable branding strategy for Manipur in the tourism market, followed by sports tourism, adventure tourism, and fairs and festivals. This is because Manipur is a powerhouse of sports and has a rich natural landscape that can be used to promote eco-tourism. This study highlights that despite having potential resources, Manipur fails to attract a significant number of foreign tourists due to a lack of tourism product development and promotion, as well as inadequate transportation and other tourism services. To address the issue, it is essential to identify the most suitable tourism branding elements that align with Manipur's description as a destination. Thus, this research study aims to determine the most effective tourism drivers for branding Manipur tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism destination competition: It is commonly acknowledged that the top factors affecting a destination's competitiveness are its tourist attractions. To remain competitive, destinations face immense pressure to revamp and improve their attractions in the fiercely competitive tourism industry (Krešić, 2011). A person's perception of a place's suitability for their holiday needs is based on their feelings, beliefs, and opinions (Ritchie, 1993). Tourists' expectations of destination qualities and the nature of destination management are interconnected in this regard (Crouch, 2010), (Dwyer et. al, 2014) for instance, the favorable perception of a location (Crompton, 1979), (Gartner, 2007), (Pike S. , 2002).

Tourism destination attractiveness: The attractiveness of a destination to tourists is directly correlated with its ability to accommodate their needs. Therefore, the attractiveness of a destination that it exerts on tourists is its primary advantage (Vengesayi et. al, 2009). While selecting one location over another, specific destination features and amenities may be necessary. Destination-specific factors include the climatic conditions, possibilities for recreational activities, sightseeing, and information about the destination. (Saiful Islam1, 2017), (Madhavan, 2011), (McIntosh, 1990). Nonetheless, effective branding through the provision of the most significant tourism product, highlighting the description of the specific area, is the key to a successful tourism business, as is providing visitors with the promised service, which enhances the destination's attractiveness.

Key tourism drivers in destination branding: The travel and tourism industry plays a significant role in the economies of many developing countries. Governments often support these sectors by expanding and diversifying their offerings in an effort to attract both domestic and international travelers. When a destination has a wide range of tourism attractions, it creates better opportunities for repeat visits, benefiting both the tourism industry and the area as a whole (Khairi and Didit, 2021). (Pike S. , 2002) His review paper discusses a wide range of destination attractiveness attributes such as the influence of visits, segmentation and differences in images between groups, influence, The outcome of being proximate to the destination, the intermediaries, induced pictures, decision-making patterns and top-of-mind awareness (ToMA), tradition, spatial image evolution, unfavorable images, the result of familiarity, lesser-developed regions, and longevity of visit (LOS), the effect of the event, scale validity, value, creation of an image, as well as a single paper keen to fundamental image, tourism in the countryside, climate, trustworthiness of travelers, spontaneous making decisions, and travel scenario, and impediments to travel, location, personal vacation images, inspiration preconceptions, cheap travelers, and intent to visit as well as a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) regulation. Marketing is a managerial sector or function that needs to be executed carefully using the right tools and techniques and the suitable approaches (Sotiriadis, 2020). Customer retention is crucial to maintaining brand loyalty. Loyal customers believe that a brand prioritizes their needs (Menidjel et al., 2017) ; (Veloutsou, 2015); (Maduretno and Junaedi, 2022). Fulfilling service commitments is crucial in destination branding.

Tourism business decision: The World Economic Forum evaluated the competitive performance of 124 countries using the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index. (TTCI) and (WEF, 2007) highlighted that "cross-country analysis of the drivers of competitiveness in travel and tourism provides additional value to governments wishing to improve their travel and tourism environment and valuable comparative information for making business decisions".

Tourism in Manipur: According to the record of the (CEIC, 2021), According to recent data, the number of foreign tourists visiting Manipur in 2021 decreased significantly compared to the previous

year. In 2020, there were a record of 3,139,000 foreign tourists, whereas in 2021, only 648,000 tourists visited. However, the number of tourist arrivals in 2022 increased to 139,500,000. It is believed that the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown may have contributed to the decline in visitor arrivals. Furthermore, destination branding and marketing competition have become more intense following the pandemic. (Sunildro Akoijam, 2017) The author's study vividly showcases the abundance of resources in Manipur, such as its breathtaking green landscapes, caves, waterfalls, Loktak Lake, floating national park, hills, monuments, flora and fauna, unique and diverse culture, and cuisine. To attract more tourists in the coming years, it is essential to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 on tourist arrivals as soon as possible by implementing a suitable strategy for branding and marketing tourism products. Therefore, the author has formulated the following hypotheses:

H1: The potency of attractions has a significant impact on travel motivation.
H0: The potency of attractions does not have a significant impact on travel motivation.
H2: The potency of accessibility has a significant impact on travel motivation.
H0: The potency of accessibility does not have a significant impact on travel motivation.

METHODOLOGY
Gathering data and population sampling
The statistics were collected from the local community of Manipur, a northeastern state of India that shares a border with Myanmar. Manipur is one of the seven sister states of India and is known as the jewel of Incredible India. The author utilized quantitative research to obtain reliable results from the study. Quantitative research involves gathering and analyzing numerical data, which is perfect for identifying patterns and averages, formulating hypotheses, testing correlations, and extrapolating findings to encompass a vast population (Fleetwood, 2023). The study utilizes survey questionnaires to collect primary data in addition to secondary data.

Sample size
Local community
Solvent Formula: $n=N/(1+Ne^2)$
N= Total population (3,501,897)
e = Error Margin
n = Number of Samples (390)

Sampling procedure: The present study aimed to obtain a total population figure through the 2021 census. To define the sample size, a stratified random sampling method was employed. The survey questionnaire was circulated after assessing the reliability and validity of the items using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. The feasibility of research instruments was determined based on fifty replies. From May to July 2023, a total of 402 responses were collected. The study was conducted using a standardized approach, where all respondents were subjected to the same set of questions (Li, 2000). It opens with demographic profiles like gender and age that assist in better understanding various perspectives as per gender and age differences. Furthermore, to answer the first objective of the study, ten attraction traits are enumerated and ranked on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating extreme agreement. While for the second objective, eleven attributes of accessibility are used. The collected data are conducted reliability and validity tests using Cronbach's alpha value from Smart PLS software version 0.4. Followed by Exploratory Factor Analysis.

RESULTS
Analysis of data
For this investigation, the data was analyzed using Version 4 of the Smart PLS-SEM programme. PLS-

SEM is made up of two models: the outer model, or the measurement model, and the inner model, or the structural model. The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The respondent's demographic profile

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	278	69.2
Female	124	30.8
Total	402	
Age		
Up to 21	45	11.4
22 to 34	242	60.2
35 to 49	88	21.9
50 to 64	24	6.2
65 and above	3	1
Total	402	

Source: Author

In Table 2, it is indicated that out of a total of 402 respondents, 278 are male and 124 are female. The age group of 22 to 34 has the highest number of participants in the survey, followed by the age group of 35 to 49. The least number of participants are from the age group of 65 and above.

Measurement Model

Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha are used to evaluate the reliability and validity of the elements. According to the results, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.911 to 0.930, and the composite reliability scores exceeded the 0.70 criterion for the specified dimensions. This range indicates satisfactory consistency and reliability for the construct. The outcomes are presented in Table 3 below. All dimensions have an average variance extracted (AVE) score above 0.5, which meets the convergent validity requirement. However, for outer loading, items 4 and 7 of accessibility and item 9 of attraction fall below the threshold value of 0.70, while all other items show significant loading on corresponding factors. To demonstrate discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker (F-L) criterion was used, which revealed that the correlation between the diagonal scores had a higher coefficient than the correlation between the other constructs. The Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) matrix also showed a correlation value under 0.85, which validates the discriminant validity, as seen in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 3. Construct reliability and validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Construct Reliability (Rho_a)	Construct Reliability (Rho_c)	Average variance extraction (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha
Attraction (AT)	AT1	0.823	0.930	0.940	0.580	0.930
	AT2	0.834				
	AT3	0.825				
	AT4	0.668				

	AT5	0.848				
	AT6	0.786				
	AT7	0.818				
	AT8	0.840				
	AT9	0.390				
	AT10	0.663				
Accessibil-ity (AC)	AC1	0.778	0.938	0.925	0.538	0.928
	AC2	0.821				
	AC3	0.739				
	AC4	0.459				
	AC5	0.661				
	AC6	0.835				
	AC7	0.410				
	AC8	0.612				
	AC9	0.835				
	AC10	0.410				
	AC11	0.672				
Motivation (MT)	MT1	0.653	0.911	0.912	0.533	0.9111
	MT2	0.759				
	MT3	0.714				
	MT4	0.786				
	MT5	0.715				
	MT6	0.744				
	MT7	0.778				
	MT8	0.720				
	MT9	0.691				

Source: Author.

Table.4.The Fornell–Larcker (F–L) Criterion provides discriminant validity.

	AC	AT	MT
Accessibility (AC)	0.734		
Attraction (AT)	0.746	0.762	
Motivation (MT)	0.705	0.776	0.730

Source: Author.

Table.5. Discriminant validity Heterotrait-monotrait ratio.

Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) – List	Ratio (HTMT) list
AT <-> AC	0.752
MT <-> AC	0.689
MT <-> AT	0.769

Source: Author.

The study examined the multicollinearity of the construct by using the variance inflation factor (VIF). It was observed that the values of each construct were well below the minimum point of 3.33, indicating that there was no multicollinearity issue present.

To evaluate the impact of one variable on another, we utilised bootstrapping to assess the path and significance of the relationship between attraction (AT) and motivation to travel (MT). In this study, accessibility (AC) and motivation to travel (MT) were found to be highly significant, as indicated by their respective T statistics of 3.75 and 6.556. Since both of these values were greater than the threshold value of 1.96. The T value of AC MT = 3.75 and AT MT = 6.556. Attractions and accessibility have a great impact on travel motivation as two T values are greater than 1.96.

If the P values are less than 0.05, it means that the hypotheses are accepted. In this specific study, both P values are 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, both hypotheses 1 and 2 are accepted. Additionally, the total effects are examined to determine whether one variable has a direct impact on another variable without the involvement of any mediator. For the specific indirect effect AC AT MT = 0.000 (P values), AC's impact on MT has AT as its mediator. As AC passes through AT, it plays a role in impacting MT. The results of this data analysis indicate that AT has a considerable impact on MT. AC on MT is significant as well, as AC on AT is also significant since their P values are 0.000, which is less than 0.05. To determine the fit's quality. In this study, the effect square ($f2$) and coefficient determination ($R2$) are evaluated. For the present study, the value of $R2 = 0.638$, which is close to 1, meaning the model is a good fit. And $f2$; AC -> MT= 0.098 and AT -> MT= 0.390 as shown in below table 6.

Table 6: Summary of model fit

Model	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.086	0.086
d-ULS	3.476	3.476
d-G	0.987	0.987
Chi-Square	2246.358	2246.358
NFI	0.762	0.762

Source: Author.

SRMR, Standardized root mean square residual are used to measure fit; a figure that is below 0.01 or 0.08 (Hu, 1999) It is projected to be a good fit. The current study's SRMR value is 0.086, indicating a satisfactory fit with the study model.

The subsequent section analyses the structural model; Figure 2 and Table 7 present the findings. As shown in Figure 2 and Table 7, the bootstrapping approach was used to analyze the relevance of all paths, and the findings validated the research hypothesis.

Table 7: Hypotheses testing (P≤ 0.05)

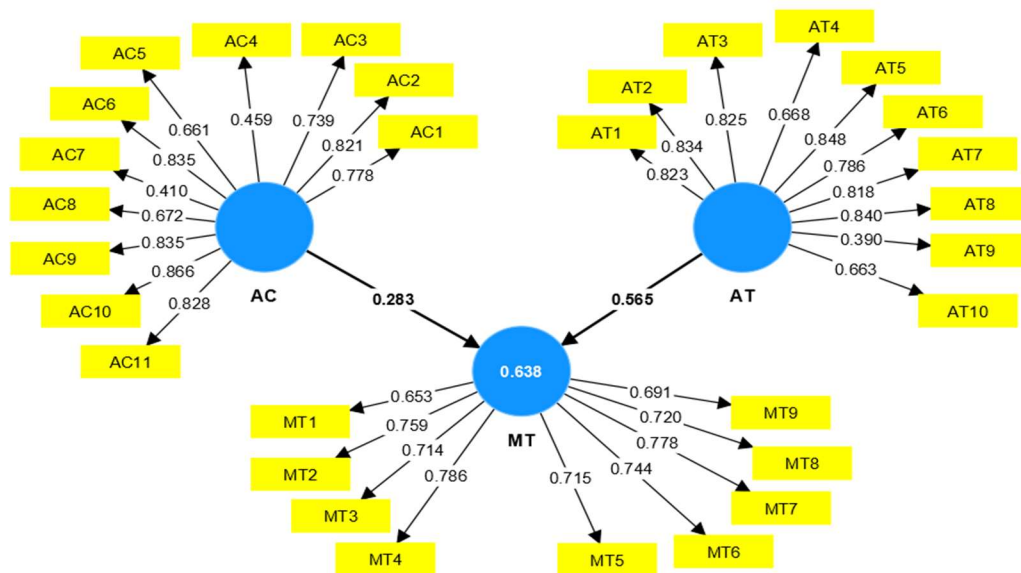| Hypotheses	Relationship	Path coefficient	T statistics	P values	Results
H1	Attraction (AT) motivation (MT)	0.565	6.56	0.000	Accepted
H2	Accessibility (AC) motivation (MT)	0.283	3.75	0.000	Accepted

Source: Author

Figure: 2. Structural model
Source: Author.

The proposed hypothesis (H1) indicates (Path coefficient= 0.565, t statistics= 6.566, P< 0.05), which means attractions (AT) were found statistically significant on travel motivation (MT). The second proposed hypothesis of the study (Path coefficient= 0.283, t statistics= 3.75, P< 0.05) was also found statistically significant. According to the research, tourists prefer destinations that offer a range of sightseeing options, activities, easy accessibility, and hassle-free travel booking. Hence, proper management of tourism destinations and appropriate promotional measures are crucial to creating a positive brand image in the minds of tourists. Accomplishing these tasks will ultimately encourage people to visit Manipur, thereby increasing the number of visitors and boosting Manipur's appeal as a top travel destination in the travel industry.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to determine the best way to promote tourism in Manipur as well as to explore the importance of key tourism drivers in destination branding and marketing. Although Manipur has the potential to become a major tourist hub, it has not yet identified the key drivers that could attract visitors. Therefore, this study is crucial to helping Manipur compete in the tourism market. To determine the most appropriate tourism branding product and identify the major drivers that encourage people to visit Manipur, this study used partial least squares factor analysis. According to the literature review, tourism marketing heavily relies on the perception that visitors have of a destination. Therefore, it is essential to address customer wants and determine a destination's potential attributes before embarking on destination marketing. The findings of the study suggest that the combination of attraction and accessibility significantly impacts travel motivation. Therefore, to increase destination attractiveness, it is crucial to upgrade the weaker sections of tourist destinations, such as by increasing the variety of sightseeing, shopping, activities, nightlife, tourist services, and good hospitality. Additionally, connectivity with other countries must be expanded by air or land transport. To attract visitors to Manipur, it is crucial to make it easy for them to obtain a visa, exchange foreign currency, book taxis, identify landmarks on a Google map, and read signboards.

Attraction: A recent study suggests that Manipur's tourism can be best described as eco-tourism or nature-based travel. It is essential to investigate and carry out sustainable development of the natural landscape, flora, and fauna. Furthermore, sports tourism is a potential driver of tourism in Manipur. The region is known for producing several sports players who have represented the country in various international championships. If sports complexes and stadiums are adequately renovated and constructed with high-quality infrastructural facilities, it will pave the way for hosting both national and international-level mega-sports events and increase the tourism phenomenon. Additionally, adventure tourism holds significant potential as a tourism driver. Majestic landforms such as mountains, lakes, rivers, caves, and waterfalls need to be utilized effectively and profitably. Therefore, several tourist activities such as hiking, camping, cable car rides, paragliding, parasailing, boating, swimming, fishing, floating homestays, river rafting, and exploring the caves could be conducted in Manipur to make the region an appealing destination. According to the study, MICE, medical, education, and leisure tourism are examples of niche tourism that require specific attention to be treated as key tourist drivers in Manipur.

Accessibility: Manipur can be accessed by air and road transportation, while railway transportation is still developing. The airport and bus terminal infrastructure require improvements in terms of high-quality amenities, such as safety and security measures, ATMs, medical emergency helplines, fire services, proper waste disposal, hygienic toilets, food cafeterias, nearby hotel accommodations, information kiosks, and waiting areas. Developing more railway stations with appropriate facilities is crucial to facilitating better travel experiences and quicker and more cost-effective transit while creating a travel circuit with the rest of the Indian state. Improving the accuracy of information provided on websites by various travel agents and tour operators on social media regarding tourist facilities, travel packages, destination information, and services will enhance Manipur's attractiveness as a readily available and convenient travel destination. Promoting Manipur as a premier tourist destination can attract visitors from all over the world and boost the local economy.

In light of the study's conclusions with those from the prior studies conducted by various researchers, the following recommendations are made;

Recommendation 1: To survey and understand the topography of Manipur in order to prepare for future investments and the establishment of prospective tourist sites. The plan is to create diversified tourist

sites that cater to the needs of visitors, including the amenities and services required when visiting a destination. The cultural and heritage sites will be enhanced by adding entertaining events such as light and sound shows, water shows, performing arts, folk songs, fusion musical nights, art exhibitions, cultural performances, and nightlife. The scenic beauty and natural landscape will be developed in a sustainable manner to provide visitors with a unique experience of connecting with nature, which is not always possible in other tourist destinations. Manipur is blessed with natural beauty and resources, which can be utilized in a sustainable manner to promote tourism in the region. For instance, sunrise and sunset points can be developed as popular sightseeing spots. The state can also introduce a toy train in hilly areas to boost hill station tourism and connect multiple attractions, thereby creating a tourist circuit. This will encourage tourists to explore more of Manipur, leading to an increase in state revenue. Keibul Lamjao National Park, which is the only floating park in the world, can be further enhanced by adding some innovative sky rope constructions to enhance the adventurous experience. To ensure that visitors have a pleasant vacation, the state should increase the number of modern hotels, resorts, and homestays close to the tourist sites.

Recommendation 2: It is imperative to preserve and protect its rich culture, tradition, natural terrain, flora, and wildlife from both natural and human-caused damage. Additionally, these assets must be showcased authentically through effective marketing platforms.

Recommendation 3: Manipur boasts impressive biodiversity and awe-inspiring natural beauty. To entice visitors seeking an unparalleled encounter with nature, it is imperative to develop and vigorously promote eco-tourism activities such as bird watching, fishing, hiking, river rafting, paragliding, parasailing, swimming, and camping. Nonetheless, it is absolutely critical to enforce stringent garbage disposal management policies to uphold a pristine and pollution-free environment.

Recommendation 4: A diverse group of indigenous people constitutes Manipur, each with unique cuisine, art, dance, music, and festivals. The government can promote cultural tourism by organizing fairs and festivals, creating cultural groups, and highlighting regional products like handloom and handicrafts.

Recommendation 5: To concentrate on enhancing connectivity to the state's remote regions, which have great potential for tourism, such as increasing the availability of local taxi services, Uber bikes, Ola cabs, car rentals, and bike rentals. Improve transportation networks, including airports and roads, to facilitate more accessible access to the state and infrastructural developments for the accommodations in the premises of airports, railway stations, and bus terminals.

Recommendation 6: Approaches to public-private partnerships and measures to increase budget allocation for tourism industry functions should be considered.

Applications of the research
The travel and tourism industry comprises a variety of other business areas, including banking, currency exchange services, shopping, corporate events known as MICE (meeting, incentive, convention, exhibition), education, culture and heritage, health and wellness, yoga, spa, performing arts, sports, and many more. Numerous business sectors contribute in different ways to the tourism phenomenon. Tourism stakeholders and the government must support public-private partnerships to promote Manipur as a top tourist destination and to trade commerce. Policymakers may utilize this research's insights for improving tourism. Tourism marketing will enable the growth and maturity of other business sectors. It will raise destination revenue and create long-term jobs in the public sector and a range of commercial enterprises. To effectively brand a destination and enable it to enter the tourism market, it is imperative to determine a key driver of tourism.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the critical tourism drivers that are crucial in branding and marketing tourism in Manipur, with the aid of the community's perspective evaluation. The results of the factor analysis reveal that the combination of elements of attraction and accessibility significantly impacts travel motivation. The outcomes of the hypothesis testing through partial least squares demonstrate that the potency of attraction has a considerable impact on travel desire, as well as the potency of accessibility. The study's findings are supported by research-based articles on tourism destination image building, destination attractiveness attributes, destination branding, and marketing, which other researchers primarily undertook. The study's findings report that proper maintenance of the tourist site, adding entertaining programs and events, and enhancing service quality and infrastructure facilities will significantly impact the branding and marketing of Manipur tourism. And eco-tourism is the best suitable description of Manipur tourism branding and marketing

LIMITATION

The theoretical and methodological components of this work have certain limitations. First, this study is conducted only based on community perception, perceptions of tourists and tourism stakeholders might be further explored in this study. Secondly, the study elements primarily focus on attractions and accessibility as motivating factors of travel decisions and destination branding. Additional research on this topic is possible when considering other attributes of tourism. Third, the sampling strategies employed to collect the data could not prevent respondents from providing biased responses. Fourth, since this survey only included respondents from the local community of Manipur, its findings cannot be applied to other regions.

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