



Versatility in Hospitality Industry around the Globe A Case Study on Modernisation and Modification of Bhutan

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Abstract: *The Kingdom of Bhutan is well known for its distinct national and cultural identity based on Vajrayana Buddhism (Shrotryia, 2006). Many elements of governmental policy, such as the principle of Gross National Happiness and a cautious approach to tourism development, are rooted in Buddhist values (Ura et al., 2012). In the quest to preserve its culture and safeguard against some of the negative effects of tourism, policy makers in Bhutan have tightly controlled the way tourism operates in the country (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010). Tourism is essentially a people-to-people business, and the success of the tourism experience and the impacts on the host community depend on the host-guest relationship (Smith, 2012). The scope of this work will cover food and beverage purchasing decisions, human resources, transportation and souvenir sales in the tourism and hospitality industry in Bhutan. To achieve these research objectives, 19 in-depth interviews were conducted with hotel general managers in the main tourism areas of Thimphu and Paro. Our findings reveal that, while the controlled nature of tourism in Bhutan certainly protects its residents from the negative excesses of global tourism, numerous policies also impede tourism and hospitality from spreading their benefits more widely. Founded on the principle of Gross National Happiness (GNH), Bhutan's tourism policy embarks significantly on equitable socio-economic development, environmental conservation, promotion of culture and good governance – the four pillars of GNH. Significant transition took place in 1952 during the reign of 3rd King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck following the introduction of land reform and establishment of the National Assembly in 1953, which marked the beginning of modernization of the country. Until the mid- 1960s, Bhutan was a non monetized economy, operating in isolation from the rest of the world. The birth of the tourism industry in 1974 marked another significant era where tourists/visitors from outside the country were allowed for the first time in the country. Bhutan now generates a significant amount of its national revenue from the tourism industry. The present paper attempts to synthesise the tourism development process in the country by the unique Bhutanese development model and its contribution to the country's economy. [1].*

Keywords: Tourism, Cuisine, Industry, Culture

I. INTRODUCTION

Excavations and ruins suggest Bhutan was settled as long as 4,000 years ago, although the written history of the area begins around the time Buddhism was introduced to the central region of Bumthang, in the 7th century. Legend states the great Tibetan lama Guru Rinpoche visited Bhutan in the 8th century. Influenced first by neighboring Tibet and in the 14th century by Yuan Dynasty China and its Mongol rulers, the country's political development has been strongly affected by its religious history.

Previously divided into warring fiefdoms, Bhutan was finally unified in the 17th century by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, a military leader and Tibetan lama who escaped persecution by fleeing Tibet. Shabdrung was responsible for the series of defensive fortresses still visible today and initiated a legal code to bring the local rulers under central control. Both moves were instrumental in protecting Bhutan from raids by the warlike Tibetans.

During Shabdrung's rule, Bhutan was visited by Portuguese Jesuit explorers on their way to Tibet, which was the first contact the country had with Europeans. After Shabdrung's death in 1651, which was kept secret for an astonishing 54



years, Bhutan again returned to internal conflict and, in 1711, began a war with the powerful Mughal Empire. This unwise move led to an unsuccessful attack by the Tibetans in 1744 and chaos in the country.

By 1772, Bhutanese forces had captured the nearby state of Cooch Behar, whose ruler appealed to the British East India Company for assistance. In 1774, having driven the Bhutanese forces out of the occupied state, the British East India Company attacked Bhutan itself. A peace treaty forced the country back behind its earlier borders, and conflict with British forces continued for 100 years until the Duar War in 1864, which was won by the British. [1]

Civil war raged on in Bhutan from the late 19th century to 1907, and the establishment of the monarchy did little to bring peace. When India won independence from British rule in 1947, Bhutan was the first country to recognize the sub-continent as an independent country, and, in 1953, the third Bhutanese king, JigmeDorjiWangchuck, formed a national assembly followed by a cabinet in 1964. Hindu Bhutanese originally from Nepal were forced out of the country in the 1990's in an effort to strengthen the country's Tibetan Mahayana Buddhist identity and culture

Bhutan's culture is strongly based on its Tibetan form of Mahayana Buddhism, which contains a sprinkling of Tibet's ancient Bon shamanism religion. The country's rich heritage, protected by Bhutan's isolation from the modern world until the 1960's, is still very much in evidence. For most visitors to the country, Bhutan's traditions and uniqueness are the main attractions, just ahead of its spectacular and mostly unspoiled natural beauty.

Bhutanese national dress is still worn across the country, and its design is tightly linked to class and social status. Men wear a belted, knee-length robe and women wear ankle length dresses, again belted at the waist. The texture of the fabric, its colors, its embroideries, and its woven decorations all determine the wearer's class, as do the colors of the scarves and shawls carried by women. In Bhutan, traditionally a feudal society, status plays a strong part in human interaction.

The Bhutanese pride themselves on a sustainable approach to tourism in line with the philosophy of Gross National Happiness. Foreign visitors famously pay a minimum tariff of US\$250 per day, making it seem one of the world's more expensive destinations. However, this fee is all-inclusive – accommodation, food, transport and an official guide are all provided, so it's not a bad deal. You don't have to travel in a large group and you can arrange your own itinerary. What you won't find is budget independent travel. [1]

Bhutanese law requires the wearing of the national costume in all public places, especially during the many religious festivals. These occasions see women in their finest, bedecked with heavy jewelry which is ornamented with coral and uncut turquoise stones. Family life revolves around the temples, and inheritance passes through the female line. Arranged marriages are common in rural areas and, occasionally, polygamy is an accepted state.

Etiquette here is important, with a government ministry responsible for maintaining the standards and prerequisites of clothing, eating, speech, and respect to officials and the Buddhist clergy. The long-protected indigenous forms of the Buddha's teachings are preserved by a charitable institution set up in 2002. The two main languages of Bhutan, Sharchop and Dzongkha, are closely related to the Tibetan language, while Bhutanese art with its innumerable divine beings is closely related to Tibetan art.

The Bhutanese national sports of archery and digor, which involves the throwing of horseshoes and metal balls, are firmly rooted in the cultural heritage of the country. Archery contests are regularly held, and involve as much a social element as competition. Dancing, music, food, and drink are part of the riotous challenges between villages, with local supporters doing their best to distract the rival team. Another popular team sport involves throwing heavy wooden darts at a target between 30 and 60 feet away.

The most distinctive characteristic of Bhutanese cuisine is its spiciness. Chillis are an essential part of nearly every dish and are considered so important that most Bhutanese people would not enjoy a meal that was not spicy.

Rice forms the main body of most Bhutanese meals. It is accompanied by one or two side dishes consisting of meat or vegetables. Pork, beef and chicken are the meats that are eaten most often. Vegetables commonly eaten include Spinach, pumpkins, turnips, radishes, tomatoes, river weed, onions and green beans. Grains such as rice, buckwheat and barley are also cultivated in various regions of the country depending on the local climate. [1]

The following is a list of some of the most popular Bhutanese dishes:



Ema Datshi

This is the National Dish of Bhutan. A spicy mix of chillies and thedelicious local cheese known as Datshi. This dish is a staple ofnearly every meal and can be found throughout the country.Variations on EmaDatshi include adding green beans, ferns,potatoes, mushrooms or swapping the regular cheese for yakcheese .



Momos

These Tibetan-style dumplings are stuffed with pork, beef or.cabbages and cheese. Traditionally eaten during specialoccasions, these tasty treats are a Bhutanese favourite.



PhakshaPaa

Pork cooked with spicy red chillies. This dish can also include .Radishes or Spinach. A popular variation uses sun-dried (knownas Sicaam). Hoentoe: Aromatic buckwheat dumplings stuffed withturnip greens, datshi (cheese), spinach and other ingredients.





YashaMaru

Spicy minced chicken, tomatoes and other ingredients that is usually served with rice.



Red Rice

This rice is similar to brown rice and is extremely nutritious and filling. When cooked it is pale



Goep (Tripe)

Though the popularity of tripe has diminished in many countriesit is still enjoyed in Bhutan. Like most other meat dishes, it iscooked with plenty of spicy chillies and chilli powder.



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Development of the tourism industry in Bhutan is of recent phenomenon tracing back to the event of coronation of the 4th King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, however, the country is now well recognized in the tourist map of the world. Bhutan has been recently listed as one of the top tourist destinations for 2013 in few popular magazines, such as Forbes, the travelers magazine of National Geographic, and New York Times travel magazine (Kuensel, 2013). Bhutan was also among the top three finalists for tourism for “Tomorrow’s Destination Stewardship Award, 2013”, among 133 applications from 46 countries, by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) in London. This award is given to organisations that have implemented a sustainable tourism programme at a destination level, while incorporating social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits, as well as engagement amongst multiple stakeholders (WTTC, 2013).

[1]

Bhutan is like nowhere else. This is a country where the rice is red and where chillies aren't just a seasoning but the main ingredient. It's also a deeply Buddhist land, where monks check their smartphones after performing a divination, and where giant protective penises are painted at the entrance to many houses. Yet while it proudly prioritises its Buddhist traditions, Bhutan is not a land frozen in time. You will find the Bhutanese well educated, fun loving and very well informed about the world around them. It's this blending of the ancient and modern that makes Bhutan endlessly fascinating. [1]

II. SUMMARY

This third issue focuses on the topic “Bhutan and Modernity: Responding to Change.” We have previously looked at national identity and at the institutions of the State in the context of Bhutan. In this issue, we look at how Bhutan is responding to change, the only constant, brought about by modernity. Bhutan takes pride in the claim that, as we deal with the inevitability of change, we have been able to preserve what is most important to a small nation in a large world: our distinct national identity. This is largely a fact, visible in our political and socioeconomic systems and in our cultural heritage as they exist today. The blend of good fortune and wise leadership has indeed distinguished our country for its successes in keeping the undesirable aspects of modernisation at bay. Yet the challenges persist, and will continue to do so. And it is also a fact that the impact of change on Bhutan is taking its toll. We see new problems that are a direct result of the process that we, with more than a little irony, call the process of development. We see a traditional society breaking down, the pains of political evolution, an economy that tugs us in the direction most countries are being pulled, the invasion on a culture that is forced to evolve, and the other side of a lifestyle which is changing rapidly. Governance has seen dramatic initiatives in Bhutan as political power that was submitted by the people to a hereditary Monarchy was returned after exactly one century. Culture, the essence of the Bhutanese identity, is under pressure from globalisation that comes from an aerial threat with the onslaught of the international media. As the interdependent existence of Bhutanese communities succumbs to the more independent existence of individuals, we look to new laws for social stability. Youth are forced to deal with the risks that come with generational change and new needs that come with disparities in economic affluence. How are we responding to these changes? How are we dealing with the new realities that emerge almost by the day? Are we driving change or is change driving us? This phenomenon called modernisation—is it really westernisation? This collection of articles takes a serious look at these issues. And we hope that they will stimulate debate and discussion so that we will reach a deeper understanding of the challenges that come with the new times. The Druk Journal is a nonpartisan publication. Our purpose is to serve the national interest through the development of serious conversation about policy from every possible constructive point of view. We have no editorial position of our own. We believe that our stated objectives and the means we will use to achieve them are the best way in which we can serve our country and His Majesty the King. [1]

III. CONCLUSION

Tourism has undoubtedly become a major source of employment and global economic forces. Paradigm shift in the theoretical construct of tourism, widening the scope and concept of understanding, has taken its praxis to more complex form and logical discussion embarking on spatial relationship among different spatial features including mankind. The scope of tourism has thus become broader in the process, defining no longer within the concept of leisure and travelling for pleasure but stress on the wider issue of economic viability, employability and potentialities to generate benefits to the communities as a whole. Imaging the tourism industry under such a holistic perspective, one can see the complexity of the global–local nexus – and how its economic, cultural and environmental elements interact to create local development outcomes (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). Placing Bhutan’s tourism development history into such a theoretical perspective, it is apparent that the community-based approach buttressed by the development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) remains central to the success of the tourism industry in the country. The effective and insightful plan policy of tourism guided by its unique principle of “high value low volume” has earned the country one of the most successful countries in the tourism sector in the world. Effective monitoring of cross-border and in-country travels are important measures to prevent spread of COVID-19. Stringent border control with containment protocol has prevented direct entry and widespread transmission of COVID-19 in Bhutan. However, with pandemic-fatigue setting in, people’s compliance to and enforcement of standard protocols in the field needs to be monitored. Other LLDCs could adopt similar border-control policies to prevent entry of and mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

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