



Tourism Industry of Assam: Prospects and Problems

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Abstract : The paper aims to study about the prospects of tourism industry in Assam. The state of Assam has plenty of socio-cultural and natural resources. The paper explores the geography, ethnicity and diversity of cultural identity in Assam and focuses on some key elements such as festivals, rituals, arts form etc. emphasizing the traditional practices and contemporary challenges. The tourism industry is a promising sector in Assam; the state is soon converting itself into a tourist hub. Government has launched initiative fostering the tourism sector promoting the rich cultural heritage and identity of the state and boosting the natural as well as wildlife resources and in the process creating employment opportunities.

Keywords: Tourism, Assam, Cultural heritage, Employability

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is one among the largest global industries in the modern world. Tourism provides greater cultural exchange, economic development opportunity and increase of employability. The state of Assam lying in the north-eastern region of India is abundant in natural beauty and rich in cultural identities. Assam is home to several UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Kaziranga National Park is renowned for its high density of one-horned rhinoceroses and diverse wildlife. The Manas National Park is another wildlife habitat situated near the Bhutan border known for its diverse flora and fauna. The Moidams of Charaideo, an ancient mound-burial systems of the Ahom dynasty, is a unique cultural heritage site is the 43rd World Heritage Site in India recognized by UNESCO. The state of Assam is inhabited by diverse ethnic tribes and communities who contributes to the cultural diversity of the region and plays an important role in the socio-cultural scenario of the state. The traditional handicrafts of Assam mostly practised by these tribes presently have world-wide appeal. Eri, Pat and Muga are the most popular silk from Assam. The traditional folk dances of Assam like *Satriya Nritya*, *Jhumur*, *Deodhani* bears the legacy of rich cultural tradition.

Review of Literature:

The essay *Culture and Heritage of Assam: An Analysis (2021)* by Rumi Kalita Das discusses about various historical places of Assam. The essay discusses about different ethnic tribes of Assam; their customs, traditions and ways of living. The essay also discussed the significance of tourism industry for the economic development of the state and enhancement of employability.

The paper *An Analytical Study on Cultural Tourism Potentiality of Assam State (2022)* by K.V.S. Narendar projected tourism industry as a source of major economic development. The study especially focused on the art of weaving in Assam traditional food habits, dresses and customs and recognized Assam as one of the tourist hot spots in North- East India.

The essay entitled *Tourism Sector in Assam: Its Economic Contribution and Challenges (2017)* by Purabi Gogoi discusses the contribution of tourism industry to the economic development of Assam. The essay further discusses various tourist spots of Assam, the prospects of the industry and the challenges faced by it like the lack of infrastructure, lack of coordinated efforts and problem related to finance etc.

Objectives:

- The present study aims to focus on the growth of tourism as an important industry in Assam.
- The study also focuses on an in-depth enquiry of the cultural elements which has social significance from the point of view of tourism

Methodology: The research paper is prepared based on secondary data. Sources are collected from various books, journals, e-journals and government documents. The paper applies both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis and follows a critical research methodology.

Discussions:

- **An over-view of the major tourist places of Assam**
 - a) **The National Parks:** The state of Assam nourishes seven national parks two among them are included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Kaziranga National Park is famous for the one-horned rhinoceros and another Mans National Park is noted for its biodiversity and ecological richness, serves as a sanctuary for tigers, elephants, and various bird species. The National Parks contributes a bigger proportion to the revenue collection of the state as sites of tourist visit.

b) **The Places of Historical Importance:** The state of Assam possesses a rich historical legacy since time immemorial. The architectural monuments of Assam like Rang-Ghar, Kareng-Ghar, Talatal-Ghar, the institutions of religious importance like Vaishnava monasteries called *Satras*, various sacred places of religions like Hindus, Muslims and Christians, Majuli the largest river island are some of the prominent places from Assam which earns heavy tourist attraction.

- **The Areas of Tourist Attraction:**

a) **Fairs and Festivals:** Bihu, Ali-Aye-Ligang, Baishagu, Me-Dam-Me-Phi are a few vibrant festivals celebrated by various ethnic communities of Assam. The celebration of these festivals foster unity and pride in the Assamese society and promote cultural diversity. Ambubachi Mela, Chandubi Festival and Jonbeel Mela are annual fairs that draws world-wide tourist attraction.

- **Growth of Tourism Industry in Assam:**

The tourism industry in Assam perceives significant growth in recent years, driven by the state's rich biodiversity, cultural heritage, and strategic government initiatives. Below is an overview of the growth of Assam's tourism sector based on available data and trends. Tourism is a significant contributor to Assam's economy, with the sector generating employment and supporting local businesses. The state's tourism industry is projected to contribute to India's tourism GDP, expected to reach USD 254.8 billion in 2024 and USD 521.1 billion by 2034, supporting nearly 63 million jobs nationwide. Assam faces varied challenges in the growth of tourism sector. The infrastructural gaps, poor road connectivity in rural areas, limitation in high-quality accommodation, geographical isolation, security Concerns, limited funding, need of more marketing awareness are a few constraints in the growth of tourism industry in Assam.

Table 1: Number of Domestic and Foreign Tourists to Assam.

Tourist arrival Year	Domestic	International
2014-15	46,84,527	17,638
2015-16	48,35,492	21,725
2016-17	54,91,507	24,673
2017-18	56,42,950	26,320
2018-19	60,27,002	41,209
2019-20	51,46,307	18,549
2020-21	13,51,690	347
2021-22	17,01,701	1,231
2022-23	98,12,195	18,946
2023-24	70,41,206	26,129

Source: Directorate of Tourism

Table 2: Revenue collection by the Tourist Lodges in Assam (In Rs.)

Sl. No.	Lodge/Year	2021-22	2022-23
	A	B	C
1.	Kaziranga	1,15,00,376	11,82,100
2.	Sivasagar	3,82,842	9,50,189
3.	Bhalukpong	72,600	1,33,800
4.	Chandubi	2,35,700	5,11,200
5.	Barpeta	90,400	1,21,800
6.	Guwahati	20,97,624	34,81,695
7.	Jorhat	8,13,890	14,71,311
8.	Tezpur	22,61,292	45,71,810
9.	Nagaon	6,76,264	24,04,210
Total		1,81,30,988	1,48,28,115

Source: Directorate of Tourism of Assam.

Table 3: Share in job creation in both direct and indirect.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Share in jobs (in %)	14.78	14.87	15.34
Direct (%)	6.44	6.48	6.69
Indirect (%)	8.34	8.39	8.69
Direct Indirect jobs due to Tourism (in millions)	72.69	75.85	79.86

Source: Annual report 2020-21. Directorate of Tourism Assam.

The above table indicates the number of tourists in Assam are gradually increasing. While, domestic tourism saw a major boost, international tourism remained relatively stable with moderate growth in 2022-23 and 2023-24. Government has tried to promote and develop tourism in the state gradually. Recently the tourism sector Assam in Assam has collected huge amount of revenues. The tourism industry contributed to the economic sector and created job opportunities. Kaziranga National Park has collected highest amount of revenue in 2022-23 amounting to Rs. 1,15,00,376.

Findings: Assam tourism's industry can be considered as one among most vibrant of the eight states of north-east India. Assam's cultural identity is renowned to the world. More investment is needed in this sector Assam's tourism sector contributes state GDP to 5.5%. Assam tourism industry needs a proper roadmap for huge journey. Assam's tourism industry requires a proper roadmap for efficient journey; proper infrastructure good transportation system, communication and enough accommodation for tourists.

Conclusion: Assam's tourism industry is on a robust growth trajectory, with over 1 crore tourists in 2023-24 and significant increase in both domestic and foreign visitors. Government policies, improved infrastructure offering unique experience to the tourists contribute to the contiguous development of the above discussed sector.

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