

North-Eastern States Tourism: Exploring the Unexplored On Earth

*John Mang Muan Lian Zou¹, Dr. G.P Prasain²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Manipur University

²Professor, Department of Commerce, Manipur University

Corresponding Author: John Mang Muan Lian Zou

ABSTRACT: This paper highlights the various tourism destinations in the northeastern states of India and tries to bring out the various measures and strategies taken up in order to attract more tourists in the regions. Hence, the title “EXPLORING THE UNEXPLORED ON EARTH”. Northeast India is generally considered one of the most challenging regions of the country to govern because of various factors. It has been the site of different ethnic groups among the tribal populations, Northeast India constitutes about 8% of India's size; roughly three quarters the size of the state of Maharashtra. Its population is approximately 40 million (2011 census), 3.1% of the total Indian population; roughly equal to that of Odisha. Union tourism ministry has started promoting Northeast India in big way. The brand entity of “Paradise Unexplored ” designed for Northeast India is marketed in international arena. To market the eight states of Northeast India and neighbouring West Bengal the ministry along with tourism departments of the respective states has organized various events and promotions programmes. The Ministry has set a target of increasing the share of India, regarded as the Diversity capital, with its old history and cultural richness, which actually can harness the growth of tourism in the country. Slowly but finally the government seems to have realized this and has made concrete efforts to seal the loopholes plaguing the tourism industry. The “Incredible India” campaign; The National Tourism Policy of 2002; Mega Tourism Projects involving both the central and state government with the Ministry of Railways, Civil Aviation, Road and Transport and Urban Development and the Tourism Department to bring about convergence and synergy in solving the issues; the Visa on Arrival policy are some of the few steps that has been taken in this regard. Located in the lap of the easternmost Himalayan range, the pristine beauty of North East India has remained unexplored for a long time. Be it for the decades of Militancy, the lack of Infrastructure development, the limited connectivity with the rest of the country or a culture and tradition that is distinct from the rest of India. However recent truce between the government and various militant groups and the “Look East” policy of the government has made the scenario a lot more optimistic now. And it is this opportunity that the North East should capitalize on.

Keywords: Tourism, Northeast India, Unexplored, Government, Opportunities.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Located in the easternmost Himalayan range, the pristine beauty of Northeastern state of India has remained unexplored for a very long time. Be it for the decades of Militancy, the lack of Infrastructure development, the limited connectivity with the rest of the country or a culture and tradition that is distinct from the rest of India. However, recent truce between the government and various militant groups and the “Look East” policy of the government has made the scenario a lot more optimistic now. And it is this opportunity that the North East should capitalize on.

Northeast India is the eastern-most region of India. It is connected to East India via a narrow corridor squeezed between independent nations of Bhutan and Bangladesh. It comprises the contiguous Seven Sister States (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura), and the Himalayan state of Sikkim. Except for the Goalpara region of Assam, the rest did not become part of political India until the 19th century and later. The Brahmaputra valley area of Assam became a part of British India in 1824, with the hill regions annexed later. Sikkim was annexed to the Indian union through a referendum in 1975; it was recognized as part of Northeast India in the 1990s.

Northeast India is generally considered one of the most challenging regions of the country to govern. It has been the site of separatist movements among the tribal peoples, Northeast India constitutes about 8% of India's size; roughly three quarters the size of the state of Maharashtra. Its population is approximately 40 million (2011 census), 3.1% of the total Indian population; roughly equal to that of Odisha.

GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF NORTHEAST INDIA



SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

India has a very old history and culturally very richness which also has diversity state in nature. So it can harness the growth of tourism Industries. Slowly and steadily the government of India seems to have realized this and has made concrete efforts to seal the loopholes plaguing the industry. The “Incredible India” campaign; The National Tourism Policy of 2002; Mega Tourism Projects involving both the central and state government with the Ministry of Railways, Civil Aviation, Road and Transport and Urban Development and the Tourism Department to bring about convergence and synergy in solving the issues; the Visa on Arrival policy are some of the few steps that has been taken in this regard. Hence, it is very much important to bring the various tourism spot and develop the tourism industry in the Northeastern states of India for economic growth and prosperity of the region as well as the country.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the various tourism opportunities and destinations in the Northeastern state of India.
2. To find various strategies for the growth and development of tourism in Northeastern state of India.
3. To find out the various problems faced by tourism industry in the region.
4. To find solution and give appropriate suggestions for the problems face by this industries.

METHODOLOGY

The data required for the present study has been collected from various sources and mainly based on secondary data available. The Secondary data are collected from various published sources such i.e. magazines, newspapers, journals, books, and various other publications. Moreover, some important information is also collect from relevant websites. The present study is descriptive in nature.

II. LITERATURES REVIEW

Research on tourism in the North-Eastern States of India for the economy and social development is quite low compare with other develop countries. There are few literatures review on whether it actually produces any significant economic growth or not. Emerging countries like India, the empirical researches and evidences are very less compare to other countries. Here are few reviews worth mentioning as follows:

Geoffrey I. Crouch, J.R. Brent Ritchie (1995), The study finds that tourism enterprises, particularly entrepreneurship, new venture developments and small businesses contribute to destination development and competitiveness in a number of ways like they help in having a co-operative competitive environment, increase specialization in tourism sector by allowing each firm to concentrate on its core competencies, provide an ideal mechanism for the identification and development of new ideas, help to disperse the economic benefits of tourism development etc. Despite these numerous contributions several problems and challenges are also evident. Khan et al, 1995 Lee and Kwon, 1995, Lim 1997 and Oh 2005, the study discussed the development of tourism has usually been considered a positive contribution to economic growth is Indian economy.

Balaguer & Contavella-Jorda (2002), examined the role of tourism sector is the long run economic development of the country. The hypothesis of tourism led economic growth was confirmed by applying co-integration and causality tests.

Ernie Heath (2002), the research work finds that from an African perspective appropriate tourism development could become the engine of growth that can improve the quality of life of millions. The continent has the tourism resources and the market potential certainly exists. Possibly the biggest constraints facing Africa in terms of achieving its true tourism potential lies with the people of the continent.

Marin & Taberner (2006), This paper illustrates that tourists evaluate the attributes of a destination differently depending on whether the survey elicits an opinion relating to a dimension of satisfaction or whether it focuses on a dimension of dissatisfaction. The statistical analysis performed shows a marked lack of concordance between the two types of evaluations. The discrepancies detected between the tourists' positive and negative evaluations point to the need for further research so as to better understand the reasons why people assess things differently according to how the question is posed. The estimated model reveals that the negative situations are highly important in explaining the tourists' intention not to return.

Motiram (2007), "Globalization: Potentials and Prospects of Mass Tourism in India" described the impact of globalization on mass tourism in India that is, Beach Tourism, Mountain Tourism, and Religious Tourism. The study highlights that due to globalization, the tourism industry has generated more employment, and more foreign exchange earnings. Further, it facilitated infrastructure development in the country.

Cagil Hale Kayar, NazmiKozak (2008), the research paper evaluates the thirteen factors that affect destination competitiveness and compares the competitiveness levels of European Union countries. Findings of this study strongly emphasize that Australia, Germany, UK, Denmark, France, Finland, Sweden form a unique cluster and show superior performance in terms of the most effective factors of competitiveness which are air transport, infrastructure, natural and cultural resources, ground transport infrastructure and health and hygiene.

Saurabh Kumar Dixit (2014) in his article entitled, "Community Attitude towards Tourism Development: Study of Meghalaya, India" has said that the impacts of tourism have been reasonably well researched, particularly from the environmental and economic perspectives. More recently, attention has turned to exploring the social impacts of tourism and important research is emerging in this area

DIFFERENT TYPES OF TOURISM AVAILABLE IN THE NORTHEASTERN STATE OF INDIA

Tourism can be view in different ways according to ones likes and dislikes. Some kinds of tourism undertaken by different people were discussed below:

- 1) **Adventurist Tourist for the thrill of exploring the unexplored:** The north-eastern part of India is largely an unexplored land. With handful of population and several remote regions, the seven states of the north-east haven't really caught travelers' fancy. However, if you are ready to explore, there is a world of surprises waiting for you in this part of the country. From fantastic treks to lush jungles, natural caves and much more, there is so much to do and experience in the north-east. Some of the important adventurist tourism can be heightened as follows:
 - a) Adventure Tour of Jeep/elephant/photo safari in Kaziranga in Assam.
 - b) Trekking, camping and picnic at Dzikuo valley border between Manipur and Nagaland.
 - c) Wild spotting/elephant ride at the Nameri National Park.
 - d) Tawang Monastery, River Rafting in Siang, Subansiri Rafting, Goecha La Trek, etc., at Arunachal Pradesh.
 - e) Japfu Peak at Nagaland
 - f) Living Root Bridge in Meghalaya, etc.
- 2) **Eco-tourism for finding the richness in flora and fauna:** Eco tourism provides a value to the cultural, biodiversity and historical heritage of the region. Northeastern state of India provides abundance of such tourism in the country. Some well-known destinations are as follow:
 - a) Tribal Homestay with the Missings - Majuli Island, Assam
 - b) Community based Eco-tourism initiative - Mawlynnong, Meghalaya
 - c) Community based Eco-tourism initiative - Manas National Park, Assam.
 - d) Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve, Sikkim
 - e) Jotsoma village in Kohima, Nagaland
 - f) Namdhapa National Park, Arunachal Pradesh
 - g) KeibulLamjao National Park is an abode of the rare and endangered species of brow antlered deer. This ecosystem contains 17 rare species of mammals. It is the only floating national park of the world.
- 3) **Economic tourism:** North east as a whole has not seen much of Industrial development. The lifestyle is majorly rural in most regions and the per capita income is also low. Neither are there any bombastic salaries as existing in the metros nor is there any extraordinary demand for real estate, consumer goods etc. This being the fact the cost of living is low in most places. The economic traveler can enjoy North East to a much greater extent than any other region without having to scratch deep inside the pocket. For an economic package of around Rs 5000, a person can enjoy a 4N/5D travel and stay across the major tourist places (as per a travel portal). Compare this with an average of around Rs 800 per day in average hotels across rest of India.

- 4) **Business Tourism for Northeastern region is the gateway of India:** Globalization as an era has forced people to seek out for business opportunities across countries to be in competition. The North East India surrounded by China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan can act as the nerve centre for trade and commerce with these countries. The credence for this has been lately recognized by the Government of India and a huge thrust has been given for Infrastructure development in the region. Also a proposal has been considered amongst these nations for road and railway connections to create more trade opportunities. The woolen clothes and spices from Bhutan or the jute for Bangladesh or the gems and jewelry and food items from Myanmar have a great scope in India. For a trader looking for long term trade growth and benefits the North East India is the next big place.

Apart from the above points noted, Tourism can also be religious tourism, leisure tourism, honey mood tourism, festival tourism, cultural tourism, food tourism, etc. Especially a country like India tourism can be view in different ways because of her uniqueness in customs, traditions, religious, etc. India being a diverse united states where religious, socio-cultural are distinct from one state to another states, tourism has huge potential and scope for socio economic development in the country.

TOURISM ATTRACTIONS AND ITS DESTINATION IN NORTHEAST INDIA

NATIONAL PARK IN NORTHEAST INDIA

- a) Namdapha National Park
- b) Kaziranga National Park
- c) Orang National Park
- d) Manas National Park
- e) Dibru-Saikhowa National Park
- f) Nameri National Park
- g) Balphakram National Park
- h) Nokrek National Park

WATERFALLS

- a) MEGHALAYA: Nohkalikai Falls; 1,120 ftCherapunjee, Nohsngithiang Falls; 1,033 ft.,Langshiang Falls – 1,106 ft., Kynrem Falls – 1,001 ft., Elephant Falls, Bishop Falls
- b) ASSAM: Panimur Falls, ChmapawatiKunda, Akashiganga Falls, Sivakunda Falls
- c) MIZORAM: Vantawng Falls – 751 ft(Mizoram)
- d) ARUNACHAL PRADESH: NuranangFallsTawang
- e) MANIPUR: SaduChiru waterfall at Leimaram, Telly/khayang waterfall in ukhrul district.

RESERVED FOREST

- a) Kakoijana reserved forest
- b) Mawphlang Reserved forest in East Khasi Hills in Meghalaya

HILLS

- 1) Kangchenjunga Hills
- 2) Naga Hills
- 3) Patkai Hills
- 4) Khasi Hills
- 5) Lushai Hills
- 6) Assam Himalaya
- 7) Garo Hills
- 8) Sela Pass

HILLS STATIONS

- 1) Tawang
- 2) Majuli
- 3) Umananda Island
- 4) Cherrapunji
- 5) Darjeeling
- 6) Kalimpong

MONASTERIES

- 1) Pemayangtse Monastery
- 2) Tawang Monastery
- 3) ZangDhokPalriPhodang
- 4) Rumtek Monastery
- 5) Enchey Monastery
- 6) Tashiding Monastery
- 7) Dubdi Monastery

8) Ralang Monastery

LAKES

- 1) Khecheopalri Lake
- 2) Gurudongmar Lake
- 3) Lake Tsongmo
- 4) Loktak Lake
- 5) Lake Shilloi
- 6) Umiam Lake

MONUMENTS AND OTHER TOURIST SPOTS

- 1) Living root bridges
- 2) MadanKamdev
- 3) Meghalaya Caves

OTHER NATIONAL PARKS

- Mouling National Park is in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.
- KeibulLamjao National Park is the Bishnupur district of the state of Manipur.
- Sirohi National Park is located in the state of Manipur.
- Murlen National Park is in the Champhai district Mizoram.
- Ntangki National Park is in Peren district of Nagaland.
- Phawngpui is the Blue Mountain of Mizoram, a highly revered peak, considered to be the abode of the gods. Phawngpui peak is the highest mountain peak in Mizoram.[11]
- Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is a wildlife reserve in the Marigaon district of the state of Assam.
- Sipahijola Wildlife Sanctuary is a wildlife sanctuary in Tripura.

III. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

In any business, Advertising and Marketing strategies hold well as long as the product is able to maintained standard as per the promises. Tourism potential of Northeast India needs to tap that potential and huge amount of background work needs to be done. Some of the points are outlined below.

- 1) Awareness amongst the local population about the livelihood or source of income through tourism directly or indirectly by organizing various seminars and advertising through media and newspaper.
- 2) The media needs to plays an important role in portraying the right image of a region. In case of North East focus has been more on the militancy rather than its untapped potential of its natural beauty.
- 3) Hospitality, honesty and respect has to be inculcated in the minds of the local people for the tourists especially the foreigners.
- 4) Proper verification and recognition of the tour operators and the service they provide. The tour operators may be provided incentives if they are able to publicize the tourist potential of North East and bring forward attractive packages to attract the tourist.
- 5) Incentives and reduction in tariffs for hotels situated in remote locations.
- 6) Churning out more professional courses on tourism to the local people as well the people as a whole in the regions.
- 7) Public-Private-Partnership in regions where Government Investment is not enough like building of roads, bridges, lodges
- 8) Attempt has to be made to remove the entry restrictions and barriers that are prevalent in interstate transportation in certain states like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram.
- 9) Awards and accolades for the best service to be given to the deserving states.
- 10) Lastly but not the least, Ministry of tourism should organized tourism fest for the whole region.

To conclude with, the government should realize the urgency and importance of promoting tourism in Northeast. The intermingling of the tourist, specially the internal tourist, with the local populace will go a long way in reducing the perennial complaints of isolation raised by the people. This will also help in removing the perturbing perceptions that people have on the region and one day they will themselves venture out to explore and find out why Meghalaya is called “Abode of Clouds” or Manipur is called “The Jewel of India”.

II. CONCLUSION

Thus, the development of tourism industry in North-East Indian states largely depend upon the formulation of a proper tourism development policy and people’s co-operation and consciousness. The High Powered Shukla Commission has recommended for establishing a North-East Tourist Development Corporation to develop tourism in the region. It has also recommended to issue Inner-Line Permits relax the Restricted Area Permits as well as to introduce Charter Flights for NE Package tours etc. Moreover, an honest and

strong will of the government coupled with people's hearty co-operation will definitely boost up tourism industry in North-East Indian states in near future. Despite having a comparatively long history of tourism most of the tourism authorities in Northeast India have not yet gained much experience in planning, developing and managing tourism sector. Consequently, in most cases their efforts in tourism promotion are misdirect and waste valuable resources of the region. Amidst political quarters, local tourism promoters and managers in some parts of the region, image of tourism development is attraction centric rather than based on a sound and organized developmental perspective. As a result, the region is not yet in a position to offer better experience to tourists. Successful development and operation of tourism sector in this region requires better management at the local government level to guide, facilitate and coordinate the process, so that tourism ventures can sustain in local socio-economic situation and contribute meaningfully in the areas concerned. Creation of a band of promoters and policy-makers is also the need of the hour. It can be done by extending need-based tourism education and short and long-term tourism manpower development strategies which will help in emerging an organized tourism sector in the region capable of giving the fruit of tourism to the tourists as also the locals. Hence, adoption of a sustainable tourism strategy is an urgent need to utilize the tourism potential of the northeastern region of India. There are number of tourism research reports available on the website of Ministry of tourism, Government of India. These reports provide the information about tourism in India and approaches of Government towards tourism. India has huge potential for conventional businesses to take off in the coming future. Recent initiatives from the Finance Ministry to propose the Viability Gap funding is an acknowledgement of the fact that, investment is required in this sector and this has been lauded as a positive step, which can contribute to the growth of the nation. Similar measures have been taken by Ministry of External Affairs to issue Multiple Entry Business Visas as well as the Ministry of Tourism proposing the setting up Bed and Breakfast.

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