



Potentiality of Cultural Tourism: A Case Study of Machkhowa Development Block of Dhemaji District of Assam

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1.1 Introduction

Tourism makes the globe a small village. It is a business and lucrative avocation with great deal of satisfaction from all ends. It is not a mere source of livelihood but pillar of unity among diversity, constant source of inspiration, exploration, communication and profession. Rural tourism is a recent model of development that has grown up to be potential business in its own space. This nature base tourism uncovers the rural life, culture, art and heritage at rural location. It favouring the local communities and become the hidden gems for rural development. Rural tourism has developed its various wings – Agricultural Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Nature Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Food Routes, Community Tourism and Ethno-Tourism. The current study is an effort to create understanding of rural tourism from different angles and its importance especially in Machkhowa Development Block of Dhemaji district. It is noticed that there are ample scopes of rural tourism development in this area. However need attention of the government to overcome the barriers.

Machkhowa Development Block located in south-west corner of Dhemaji District with the latitude of 27.34° and longitudes of 94.54° . Weather of the region is very pleasant with the range of 14° - 29° C in summer and 6° - 18° C in winter surrounded by the river Brahmaputra, Laipuliya and Kornha give a island like structure of the area. People are very sober and calm with great deal of hospitability having no ethnic conflict. The green coverage with rich flora and fauna, wet land with full of fish, local and steam boating, diverse culture fooding and drinking nature, handloom and handicrafts, sericulture, agriculture , small tea growers and garden reflects the great potentiality of the rural tourism in the region.

Despite having tremendous potentiality of rural tourism why this industry has not yet been flourish much in the locality? What are the reasons behind the underdevelopment nature of the rural tourism are major research question?

2.1 Objectives

Under this backdrop the paper aim at to set the following objectives

- (i) To observe the Potentiality of rural tourism in the Machkhowa Development block
- (ii) To observe the problems associated with the rural tourism.
- (iii) To make policy prescription for the development of the industry.

2.2 Hypothesis: The hypothesis to be tested were as follows

- (i) People living in remote rural area have good deal of Hospitability than people living in the urban and advance area.
- (ii) Eco-friendly and eco healthy environment exist in rural area.

2.3 Methodology of the study: This paper is basically empirical one based on primary and secondary data. Primary data were generated through the field survey of fifty household of different community living in the surveyed area. The surveyed households and their livelihood, community wetlands, rivers, cultural programmes, Sericultural activities, small tea gardens, handlooms activities, fishing practise, Village medicine plant for treatment, fooding and drinking behaviour were from the units of the univers of the study. For the depth of the data participatory observation method was also adopted. Secondary data were collected from the published and unpublished sources of the government departments, Nwes paper, books and journals and data available in internet. Data so collected were processed in computer by utilising few simple statistics for final use of data.

3.1 Literature review: Available literature supports the view of rural tourism to uplift the rural economy. It is recent offshoot of tourism sector that has grown up to be potential. Madhura Roy writes in Kurukshetra that, Rural tourism is *“experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is pre-dominantly in natural environment, it meshes with and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and tradition.”* In an exclusive article Bhardwaj and Singh (2010) observed that tourism is currently the fastest growing sector in Indian economy and a major contributor to foreign exchange earnings and will become the engine of development if foreign tourism incorporate with rural tourism might fulfil the dream of becoming developed country by 2020. Gadad, SB Kamashetty (2014) observed the strength of rural tourism considering marketing possibilities of rural life and culture and environment. Dr Arvind Kumar Dubey of Indira Gandhi National Institute of Open Learning has highlighted importance of rural tourism and with how agricultural sector can improve the economic condition of rural India in Kurukshetra. UNWATO observed that **Rural tourism** has a high potential to stimulate local economic growth and social change because of its complementary with other economic activities, its contribution to GDP and job creation, and its capacity to promote the dispersal of demand in time (fight seasonality) and along a wider territory.

4.1 Observation and Findings: It is observed that Macau has the highest share in GDP(72%) from tourism sector followed by Maldives and Seychelly (i.e 66.1 and 62.6%) Indias Share of the sector to the GDP is only 9.4% in 2019 which was 14,1 Percent in 2000 with 89 rank. (Table-1). This shows a decreasing share to GDP. Interestingly According to Reserve Bank of India. The income of tourism sector has been rising continuously in India i.e from \$30092.1billion in 2000 to \$108656.6 billion shows overall 3.6 times increase. Income from rural tourism in India to the total of tourism sector is only 13.78 percent shows an 8.2 hike during the same period)

There are about 74 thousand population in greater Machkhowa with Diverse Community Missing, Anhom, Konch , Chutia,Kalita, Koibotra,Gorkha,Brahmin and Tea Garden labourer are living together. Among them Missing , Ahom and Konch rajbansing are dominant(Figure—1). People are very friendly, sober and honest with great deal of hospitability. Crime rate among them is very low i,e 4.5 in 1000 in case of big crime, 24.5 in thousand in minor crime. Fooding behaviour also different in major communities. Missing and Ahom Prepare Local Vodka- Apung, Chi Apung is special kind of vodka prepared by Missing which is unique to them. All most all community is Non-vegetarian with the availability of natural fishes ,Local Chicken,duck, Pig and goat. The Cooking pattern also different among tribal and general community. Maximum food items are very Testy and delicious. Almost all community maintain good Hygien and missing community living with very natural condition. More than 80 percent population have space to keep guest with them. Figure-2 shows space availability for keeping guest. It is also observed that tourist can stay in the villages with very homely safe and Secured condition. It is also seen that there is no town committee in entire Surveyed area. Carbon emission is very low and Oxygen level in air is very high. Climate is subtropical with pleasant weather.

Figure-1

Community wise Distribution of Population

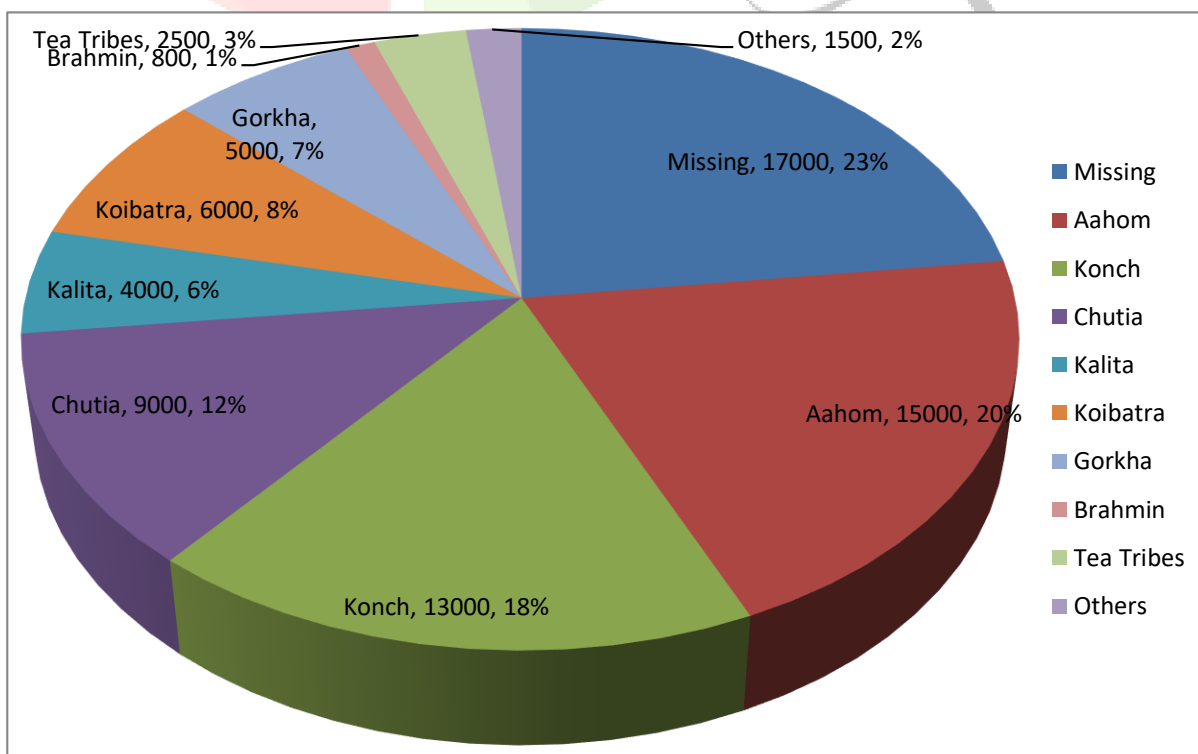
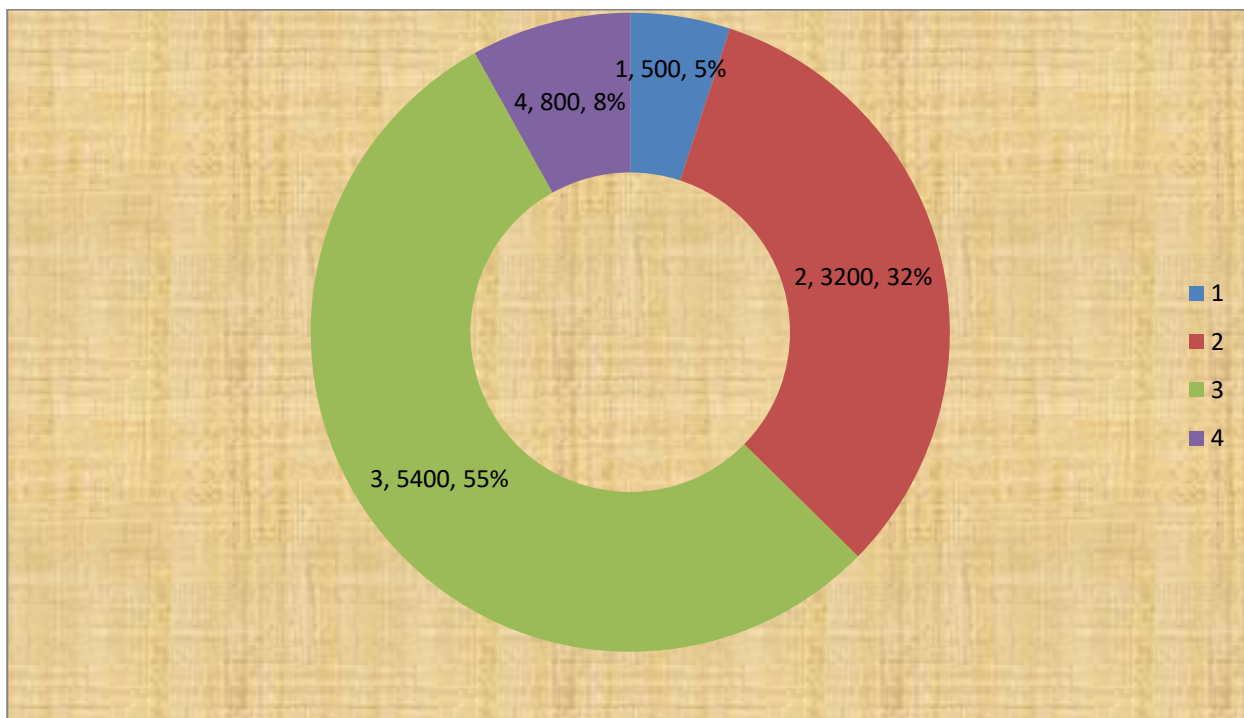


Figure:- 2**Guest staying capacity of Surveyed area**

It is observed that 68 percent population directly or indirectly depend on agriculture and allied activities. Rest of other population depend on either in business or govt and non govt services. It is seen that Agriculture tourism, Ethno tourism, Cultural Tourism, Nature Tourism, Adventure Tourism is the potential area of the region. Non mulberry silk products, handloom products, Bamboo and cane product, Small tea gardens, rich Flora and funa as package to attract tourist to the places. It is observed that in a one week river festival in 2019 at Ghrinai Chapori organised by Buragohain Echo tourism and Multifarious farm 1995 tourist from different districts of the state and 15 from other states of India and five from foreign including Myanmar, Jarman and Italy were gathered. Many of them were participated in fish Catching, Local boating, wild vegetable plucking, Local vodka preparing and Cocking and about 237 participants were stayed at temporary hut build for them at a minimum cost. There are two bird Village in the area Namely Bilatia and Choukham where thousands of migrant birds assemble during summer and villager give full protection to them and stay with them together without preaching..

4.2 : **Tourism is a Host and Gust game** where both the party will get benefit and none will lost. Here tourist is the guest and rural people will host. In city there is no natural life so those people wishes to live a natural life for few days they will come to stay in the villages. They can also get the experience of togetherness in rural life.

As host rural people get benefits for selling their services. This infect will be the hidden gem in rural tourism. It need less investment and villagers will get an opportunity to utilise their home spaces and food items as good products for selling and their unfold behaviour for leading and guiding.

4.3: Rural tourism is a new concept to the villager and they have very low skill in tourist treatment. Even they will dislike to taking money for hosting tourist. There is no proper mediator for tourist management for the works like daily information about the availability of seat, food items, and works to participate, cultural and ritual programmes etc. Like setting sun there is no world wide publication about the villages and their life styles and how a tourist can live a natural life with togetherness.

4.3 Points to the Ponder: Development of Rural tourism will uplift the economic condition of the rural people and the dream to be a developed nation by 2030 could be realised. However web-portals, web-sites need to develop linking the rural community with their life and practices. In order to attract the tourist both home and aboard govt should take initiation how homely and friendly tourist can stay, why the villages are the home of nature, how with a minimum cost they can complete a tour? Government should also mapping the places for easy reach of the tourist in the form guide maps. Target specific Training for rural youth should be arranged with tourist expert for attraction and management of tourist. Campaign should be launce with strong slogan like Rural life is the Home of Heaven. Frequent rural Fare with calculative cultural program may also effective for rural tourism.

1.9 Area not Covered: Mainly economic viability in details and are not covered in the paper.

4.5: Conclusion: The diverse terrain of India allows its tourism to be diverse. One very distinct and lucrative form of tourism among these multiple forms of traveling modules is Rural Tourism. Madhura Roy writes in Kurukshetra that, Rural tourism is, *“experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is experience oriented, the locations are sparsely populated, it is pre-dominantly in natural environment, it meshes with and local events and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and tradition.”*

Since 1991, the idea of Rural Tourism has steadily made its way in India— starting from West Sikkim in the form of a demo project by Help Tourism. Initially, a system was developed out of the resident families of the village whereby they catered to the lodging and food requirement of the tourists. Over the years the system has been replicated in several other areas of North-East. Farther places like Chettinad of Tamil Nadu and a number of zones in Rajasthan have also developed several systems in this direction, especially from the private sector. Agricultural Tourism is a way of getting in direct touch with the processes involved in agricultural industry. If we look at this logically, then this kind of a sector has a lot of scope in India, since India is primarily an agricultural country. The variable topography of the country allows the usage of a variety of farming methods and that is precisely what acts in favor of the expansion of this kind of an industry. These places of tourism not only allow an insight into farming activities but also into bird watching, local walks, fishing, hiking, boating, folk shows, educational activities, camping, excursion and so on. Thus it can be said that development of rural tourism will complementary to develop other activities in the rural area. It needs some government attention to build tourism infrastructure and training to make a layman into a professional businessman.

Table-1

Share of Tourism to the GDP in different Country

Name of the Country	Share to GDP 2019	2000	Rank
1 Macau	72.0	47.3	1
2 Maldives	66.1	44.8	2
3 Seychelles	65.8	54.6	3
Italy	13.3	113.2	52
France	9.6	11.6	55
China	10.9	10.7	71
G Britain	10.9	14.4	72
India	9.3	14.2	89
German	8.6	11.1	101
Pupa New guinea	1.6	3.4	175

Source: World Bank

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