



Tourism Entrepreneurship: Its Role In Socio-Economic Development Of Western Assam.

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Introduction:

Tourism industry is considered as one of the oldest and is the largest and fastest growing industry in the world. Tourism is a multi dimensional industry which is characterized by the sectors like transportation, communication, tourist guide, hotel and restaurant etc. Among all the service related industries tourism industry is at the top from the job opportunities point of view. There are number of segments in the tourism entrepreneurship, like eco-tourism, green tourism, techno-tourism, agri-tourism, home based tourism (HBT), health tourism, religious tourism, educational tourism, cultural tourism, adventured tourism etc. **The World Tourism Organization** has defined the term **tourists** as people “traveling to and staying in places out side their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.” Tourism is recognized as the fastest growing industry in the world. “Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes” (UNWTO Definition).

The tourism and travel industry in the world has been dominating by the Europe and United State of America (USA). In a study it is found that almost half of the world tourists every year come from these two countries to different tourists’ destinations of the world. Over the years the tourism history proved that prime domination of the reach countries in the tourism industries. The reach countries domination in this area may be due to availability and surplus amount of money of the individual’s, households and the community.

The Tourism entrepreneurship has got higher priority in the development agenda of India after the inclusion of it in the General Agreement on Trade in 1994 (World Trade Organization, 2002). The contribution of travel and tourism industry to the GDP was \$ 121.9 billion in 2020 and it is expected that it would reach \$ 512 billion by 2028. In India, the industry's direct contribution to the GDP is expected to record an annual growth rate of 10.35% between 2019 and 2028.

The transformation process of the Indian economy has already been started from public sector to the private sector and further pro-poor (PPT Participation) to Public Private Participation. As a result of globalization and liberalization of the Indian economy, it has been observed that there are radical changes in the service sector particularly in the tourism sector during the last two decades.

In the North East India, Assam is full of natural beauty and cultural heritage. Assam, one of the constituent states of the north eastern region, an embodiment of the natural beauty and grace, a true representative of the region and has been recognizing as the centre of tourist attraction. The recorded history tells that since the days of Hieu-en Tsang, the great Chinese traveler, who came to Assam during the reign of Kumar Bhaskar Burman (594-650 AD), Assam has been fascinating millions of people by its aura of myths, mystery, music,

mountains, and other gifts of nature. The unbiased blessings of nature have made tourism in Assam essentially nature-centric.

Assam is situated in the north east corner of the country. The state of Assam is the gate way of the entire north eastern states and the South East Asian countries. In the field of human resource, mineral resource and natural resources Assam is one of the richest states of the country. The geographically the state is divided in to three segments like, Upper Assam, Lower Assam and Uttar Assam or north bank of Brahmaputra River. The lower Assam is constituted with 12 districts, the districts are Baska, Bajali, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Chirang, Dhuburi, Goalpara, Kamrup (Rural), Kamrup (Metropolitan), Kokrajhar, Nalbari and South Salmara. The total geographical area of the lower Assam is 22024 square kilometer and according to the 2011 census total population is 1,12,52,365. The Lower Assam or Western Assam is well connected with the other parts of the country as well as the other states of the North Eastern Region. The Government of Assam has decided to establish five industrial zones across the state for the development of industry sector. Moreover, the Logistic and Warehousing policy 2022 is facilitated for establishment of modern and scientific infrastructure in the state. Good connectivity through transportation and communication is inevitable for the development of tourism sector. Today Assam is known globally through tourism sector, again the wildlife tourism of Assam is most attractive in the international level, and the credit for this wildlife tourism goes to Kaziranga National Park, Rajib Gandhi National Park, Manash National Park and Rimona National Park etc.

Review of Literature

A number of literatures have been studied on tourism entrepreneurship at international, national, regional and districts level. Moreover, a number of thought-provoking and mind-stimulating statements and articles studied both as the preview and review of literature. The fundamental notion of framing out a conceptual model was, however, original supported partly by Frederico Neto's emphasis on tourism as one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world and partly by M.K. Bezbarua's observation on establishing the tourists industry as one of the most promising areas. Micro and Small Enterprises in N E India, Problems and Prospects of prof. N.B.Dey and Dr. M.Rahman has considered as an important literature because the micro and small enterprises contribute over 90% of total enterprises in most of the economies and are credited with generating the highest rate of employment opportunities and account for a major share of industrial productions and exports. The later source, namely Tourism: The Global Scenario, Indian Tourism: Beyond the Millennium (1999) reveals the prediction on the part of the World Tourism Organization concerning the possible generation of USD 2,000 billion within the year 2020. The edited book "Entrepreneurship Development in North East India" by R.K.Phukan and R.Baruah'2012 mentioned that the age of globalization and liberalization, the petite ventures definitely have offered a host of trade opportunities. The analysis of the emerging trends and factors supposed to be influential for the future growth pattern of the industry has led to yet another jump into Prasanta Bhattacharya's view as stated in his Tourism in Assam Trend and Potentialities (2011). He mentions that tourism is such a labour intensive hospitality industry that it can provide room for a large number of unemployed youths of the region. Moreover, the idea put forward by International Labour Organization (ILO) (2002) has also come as a means of confirmation to the otherwise haphazard planning of providing with an ideal model. The next step was the delightful discovery of parallelism in terms of thought particularly in between the hypothesis of the paper and the thesis of A General Theory of Entrepreneurship: The Individual Opportunity Nexus written by S.A. Shane (2003) . Entrepreneurship, as defined in this context, is "an activity that involves the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new goods and services, ways of organising markets, processes and raw materials through organizing efforts that previously had not existed." It was then further seen to be illustrated in the definition offered by KY. Koh in his seminal article "The Tourism Entrepreneurial Process: A Conceptualization and Implications for Research and Development" (1996). They commented more on the activities related to creating and operating a legal tourist enterprise, something which will refer to the business operating on a profitable basis and simultaneously satisfying the needs of the tourists and visitors. Their remark on the role of hotels, guest houses, travel agencies and tour operators has opened the avenues to have a look into the National Tourism Policy of 2002. This policy formulated under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India aimed at elevating the position of tourism to that of a major engine of economic growth. In this connection, INDIA 2012 and INDIA 2013, A Reference Annual has been found

useful because of its illustration on the subject of countries GDP and total jobs, respectively 5.92 and 9.24 per cent during 2007-2008.

India the Journey, Published by MRM (Media, Research and Marketing) publisher, edited by Subhash Kulkarni, a Travel Book on India, 2023 edition is a perfect travel guidebook for the tourists in side India. In the book the author has tried to present a detail description about all the states of India. The travel information and tourist maps of all the important cities of India, places of tourists important, route connection, air port, rail stations etc. has been mentioned by the writer very categorically.

Paryatan Vyasthapanat Dakshtaar Vikas - Skill Development for Tourism Management, Published by Mahaveer Publication (2021), edited by Dr. Daisy Rani Chutia, Dr. Mamoni Mahant & 2 More. The authors in this book have critically examined how tourism can become an important source of employment opportunities. The various government and non-government agencies are now working for tourism development of in the region. The book has stressed on converting the mindset of the young generation from job seeker to job giver by imparting skill based training, particularly in the tourism sector.

Bhramanar Bimal Ananda (□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□), (2020), Assamese Edition by Dr. Sunil Kumar Saikia (Author). Dr. Sunil Kumar Saikia has written in this book on his experiences during his visit to some European countries. nice explanation is given by the author about the places he visited. Dr. Saikia is a well-known travel writer in Assamese. So far, he has visited 50 countries and written approximately 20 books about his experiences.

Asomor Poryotontholi (Tourist Spots of Assam) (2022), published by Dapunjibonor.com, is an Assamese Edition by Jitul Borah. In this book the author tried to give descriptive information about various tourist Spots of Assam. In this book the readers will get information about Shiva Daul, Rangghar, Majuli, Forest man Jadav Payang, different Shatras of Assam, Kaziranga National Park, manash National Park, Raimona National Park, Kamakhya Temple, Umananda etc.

Statement of the Problem

The Western Assam, particularly the undivided Goalpara district is full of natural beauty with national park, reserve forest, wildlife sanctuary, hills, rivers, birds and animals. On the other hand this part of the state is economically underdeveloped. The tourism sector of Assam has a great prospect for employment opportunities as well as economic development. Keeping in view the importance of employability and economic development of the state on 19th December, 2022 the Cabinet of Assam Government has accorded the industry status to the tourism sector, which is called as a landmark day in the history of Assam industry. As a result of the decision tourism sector in Assam is to be covered under the Assam Industrial Policy. As a part of the industrial policy the museums, heritage building, hotel, restaurants, amusement parks, adventure parks, rope way, service of the tour operators will be eligible to enjoy the benefits of industrial policy. Moreover, the contribution of the tourism sector in the state GDP is significant and creating huge employment opportunities. Considering the importance of economic conditions and job opportunities, the tourism sector is taken as study area.

Objectives

The basic objectives of the study are as follows,

1. To examine the prospects of tourism entrepreneurship in Assam.
2. To find out the challenges of tourism entrepreneurship in Assam.
3. To study the role of tourism entrepreneurship in solving the unemployment Problem of Western Assam.

Methodology

The present study entitled “Tourism Entrepreneurship and Its Role in Socio-economic Development of Western Assam” is completely based on secondary sources of data. The topic of the study has been selected to know the role of tourism entrepreneurship in socio-economic development of Assam, specially the rural areas of western Assam since 2010 to till date. The secondary data are collected from different books, journals, magazines, news papers, bulletins and websites. In addition to that some annual reports of various government and non-government organizations are also considered as secondary sources. The study area is covered only the main tourist destinations of western Assam.

Analysis of the Topic

The North eastern states of the country have certain special characteristics of its own, from their own culture, tradition, customs and practices. The Shine land of Lord Shiva and Ma Kamakhya is the home of more than 200 tribes. The Prime Minister of India has mentioned that North East, in his ‘Mann Ki Baat’ program as “Asthalaskhmi” The PM Modi in his different lectures has been emphasizing that NE region has great potential for tourism sector. Most of the inhabitants of the hilly states of the north eastern region are tribal community. Their food habit, culture, tradition, dresses, languages etc. are not similar. Though it has number of differences in languages, tradition, culture, food habits etc. the people of the region are very simple and cooperative. The entire north eastern states are full with natural beauty with hills and rivers, flora and fauna, wild animals, different varieties of birds etc. Tripura is famous for historical monuments and bamboo crafts, Nagaland is known for hornbill and festivals, Arunachal is the home of different birds, flora and fauna, Buddhist Monk and Tawang Monastery, Manipur is known for its war commentary and strong cultural and sports activities. Meghalaya is another attraction of the tourists for its natural beauty and Mausingram and Cherapunji where highest amount of rain fall is counted.

Assam is the gate way of the northeastern states. It has rich cultural and traditional heritage. The major tourists attraction destinations of the state are the Kaziranga National Park, the world largest river island Majuli, Manash National Park, Raimona National Park, the Kamakhya Temple, the smallest river island Umananda in river Brahmaputra, the ancient temple and largest ponds of Sivsagar etc. The Kamakhya Temple of Guwahati is one of the main “sakti peeth” of the world, every year thousands of devotees come to visit the temple particularly during “Ambubasi Mela” festival from different states of the country even abroad also. Moreover, the Umananda temple, which is recognized as the smallest river island of the world, located at river Brahmaputra in Guwahati.

Manash National Park

Assam has a number of tourist destinations, where every year thousands of visitors come to see the natural beauty. Manash National Park, which is situated (1990) in the sub Himalayan foothills area of India and it is contiguous with Royal Manash National Park in Bhutan. The Manas National Park was declared as a sanctuary on 1st October 1928. Manash National Park is a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site, project Tiger Reserve, Biosphere reserve and an elephant reserve park. The park is IUCN category II national park and famous for its rare and endangered endemic wildlife such as wild water buffalo, Assam roofed turtle, hispid hare, golden langur, pygmy hog, hornbill etc. We can visit some of the best tourist places within Manash National Park, Tiger and Elephant Reserve, Bansbari Tea plantation, Palace of Bhutan King, Mathanguri, Manas River, Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary (located 142 KM from the Manash National Park towards Udalguri in the foothills of Himalaya), Bogamati (located at the source of Bornadi in the district of Baska, a dense forest area). The tourists can visit the park by Jeep Safari, Elephant Safari and by River Rafting.

Raimona National Park

The Raimona National Park is the sixth National Park of Assam, located in the extreme western part of Assam in the border part of Bharat -Bhutan area of BTR in Kokrajhar district. The Government of Assam has declared the Raimona as a National Park on 9th June 2021, the geographical area of the park 422 square km. covering the northern part of the notified Ripu Reserve Forest. The present Raimona National Park was originally recommended as Ripu-Chirang Wildlife Sanctuary being part of Ripu reserved forest and Chirang reserved forest. Raimona National Park is the most bio-diversity rich forest area of Assam. The Bodoland mascot Golden Langur is the main attraction of the tourists in the Raimona National Park. The endangered species, Golden Langur is found in a good quantity in the park. In addition to the endangered Golden Langur, it has numbers attractive animals like Royal Bengal Tiger, Clouded Leopard, Indian Gaur, Wild Buffalo, Spotted Deer, Hornbill, several species of orchids, more than 150 species of Butterflies, more than 170 species of Birds and around 400 species of plants. The new National park must be a tourist's attractive destination in the geographical map of tourism.

Chakrasila Wildlife Sanctuary

The Chakrasila wildlife Sanctuary is situated in Dhubri district which covers around 455 hectares of forest land. It was declared as a Wildlife Sanctuary by the government in 1994. It has rich biodiversity. It has two wetlands namely the Dheer and Deeplai, both of these wetlands are recognized as the Important Bird Areas (IBAs). This Sanctuary is famous for the migratory birds come from different far areas. The nearby villagers of the sanctuary play an important role for protection of the birds and other animals. During the months of November to February a number of tourists come to see the birds and natural beauty of the sanctuary. The Sanctuary is famous for different types of valuable trees, such as Sal, Sagun, Bansom, Gamari etc. This sanctuary is also known as the land of Golden Langures, which is declared as the endangered non-human primate species. Tourists also visit the Chakrasila to see the colourful butterflies, There are more than 30 species of butterflies and more than 60 species of insects.

Kakoijana Reserve Forest

The Kakoijana is a reserve forest, situated in the Aie Valley Division of Bongaigaon district, which was constituted in 1966 as a reserve forest. The Kakoijana reserve forest is rich diversity in different flora and fauna. The forest is famous for the endangered Golden Languor, a non-human primate species. The Kakoijana reserve forest is playing an important role in maintaining a balance in eco friendly bio-diversity. Different varieties of valuable trees are there in the forest which makes beautiful greenery scenery. It is to be noted that the reserve forest is mainly look after by the villagers. It is seen that a number of incident took place in the national high way where a number of endangered golden languor has lost their lives. According to a survey it is found that there are at present around 60 endangered Golden Languors in the forest. In addition to the endangered Golden Languor there are some other animals like, jungle Fowl, Hornbill, Python, Monitor Lizard, Jungle Cat, Wild Cat etc. The local youth of the area taking initiative for the protection of Languor and other wild animals. At the end it can be said that Kakoijana reserve forest is a good attraction of the tourist in the western Assam.

Hadira Chowki

In the history of Assam there are two famous battles, these two were the Battle of Saraighat (1671) and the Battle of Hadira Choki (21st June 1822). The Battle of Saraighat was fought between Ahom and Mughal, where, Lachit Barphukan was the Commander (Senapati) of the Ahom and Ram Singha was the Commander of Mughal. On the other hand the Hadira Choki battle was fought between Mann and the Ahom on 21st June 1822 at Hadira Choki. Hadira Chowki is a significant place in the history of Assam. Hadira Chowki is a place where the last battle between Mann (Burmese) and Ahom was fought in June 21, 1822. It was the gate way of independent Ahom kingdom. Hadira Chowki is located in the border area of Barpeta and Bongaigaon district. This was the last border point of Ahom kingdom. Hadira Chowki was used by the Ahom King Chandra Kanta Singha as a security or watching point at western border of the Ahom Kingdom.

There are two hills in there namely, Phulera Hill (Phulera Pahar) and Satama Hill (Satama Pahar). In the Hadira Chowki war Ahom was defeated and a lot of Assamese solders lost their lives. Another important feature of the area is that it is a Confluence of the three rivers, Manas, Beki and Aie, which meets at Hadira Chowki. It is a famous or landmark place where hundreds of Assamese solders lost their life fighting against the Burmese Army, which is now remained as unimportant in the tourism history of Assam.. The place has an mythological history that Mahapusush Sri Sri Madabdeb set up a Satra at Baghabar near Hadira Chowki, which is now known as the Bhaghbar Satra. The geographical location of the area is very beautiful, which is situated in the confluence of the three rivers and border area of three districts, namely Barpeta, Bongaigaon and Goalpara. It may be created as a tourist destination through river cruiser, (boat, and ship, rope way.).

There some other tourist destinations are also available in the western part of Assam, such as the Sri Sri Tegh Bahadur Gurudwara of Dhubri. Sri Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Gurudwara of Dhubri is situated on the bank of the River Brahmaputra. The first Sikh Guru, Sri Sri Guru Nanaak Deb visited the place in the year 1505 AD and at the place Guru Nanak Dev met Mahapurush Sri Sri Srimanta Sankardev, when he was returning from Dhaka, Bangladesh to Assam. After almost two hundred years back the 9th Sikh Guru, Sri Sri Tegh Bahadur visited this place and established the famous Gurudwara in 17th Century. This Gurudwara is now become a symbol of peace and harmony in the entire eastern of India. Every year thousands of Sikh and Non-Sikh people of the country visited the Gurudwara every year. Another historical tourist destination of western Assam is the Matiabag Palace or Gauripur Rajbari. The Gauripur Rajbari is located at the bank of river Gadadhar, which is earmark as the residence of Falk Queen of Goalpara Lokageet, Padmashree Partima Barua Pandey. Pratima Barua Pandey was an Indian falk singer from the royal family of Gauripur, Assam. She was the daughter of Praktrish Chandra Barua, who was known as Lalji, and niece of famous filmmaker Pramathesh Barua. Now the residence of this royal family is become a tourist destination, where the entire musical instruments of Pratima Baura Pandey are preserved for the public.

Findings and Conclusions

The tourism entrepreneurship of Assam is not only a source of visual entertainment but also a significant driver of economic growth. The tourism enterprise offers a lots of opportunities to the young generation of the state. This entrepreneurship plays an important role in creating employment opportunities for both the skill and unskilled workers. It is believed by the national leaders that development of NE. region is inevitable for the development of the country. It is rightly understood that N E region has good potential for tourism sector. In order to enhance the tourism potentiality of the region the government needs to take initiative for connectivity of the remotest area. Under the able leadership of the present Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi has made 17 airports operative in the region, moreover, the government has sanctioned Rs. 19,855 crore for laying of 846.7 km of railways tracks in the region from 2014-15 to till date. (*source Assam Tribune, May 20, 2023.*). Apart from the central government initiative for tourism potential the respective state governments of the N E region are also taking necessary steps. The government of Assam has also taking initiative for development of the sector. The tourism sector has witnessed a significant growth in the state during the post Covid period. The sector is able to record significant numbers of domestic and foreign tourists in 2022-23. It is seen that the number of domestic tourists recorded 511 percent growth and 763 percent growth in foreign tourists in 2022 as compared to 2021. (*source Assam Tribune, May 20, 2023*). The tourist flow to Assam has increased to over 98 lakhs in 2022-23 from over 17 lakhs in the previous financial year. During the period 2022-23 the Tourism Department of the state has collected over a sum of Rs.2.64 crore and the total collection in the previous financial year was over 1.69 crore. (*13 September 2023, Assam Tribune*)

The Government of Assam has prepared a New Tourism Policy 2022; The Policy has been emphasized to promote the tourism sector both in the private and Government sectors. In India it is seen that some of the states are not recognizing tourism as industry sector but the Government of Assam has granted the industry status to tourism sector.

The tourism sector has been suffering from a number of challenges. The challenges are poor road, rail and air connectivity to some tourists spots, lack of proper tourist guide, hotel, food security etc., one of the most important drawbacks of the region is the rumor as extremist disturbance area. As a result some domestic and foreign tourists are not interested to visit the beautiful destinations of the western Assam.

At last it can be said that the entire western Assam has ample opportunities for the development of tourism sector. Already the government of Assam has undertaken the New Tourism Policy 2022, which will help to improve the sector in the near future. The Tourism Department has already mentioned that the TATA group is coming forward to set up two five star hotels in Kaziranga National park. It will help to attract more domestic and foreign tourist to the state. The sector is giving more job opportunities both directly and indirectly to the young generation of the state. In future, it is expected that more job will be open in the sector and which will help to solve the burring problem of unemployment in Assam particularly in the western Assam.

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