



A study on creating awareness on environmental issues with special reference to tourism sector of Assam

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ABSTRACT

The tourism sector all over the world has topped the list of service sector industries with the maximum potential to earn profit. Its impact has equally overshadowed India and is contributing a threefold increase in its national income. Assam is also a major contributor in the tourism sector. Its rich natural beauty has added to increase the number of tourists in the region. With the rise in tourists, the responsibility of the common man towards environment has increased. The factors like conservation & preservation of environment holds prime importance in such a scene. The residents, government & tourists must be made aware of the pros and cons of conserving the environment. The present study will throw light on creating awareness of the general public to conserve, preserve and keep the environment clean so as to have a sustainable development and as a result attract more tourists in the future.

KEYWORDS

Conservation, Environment, Tourist, Sustainable Development

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries. Besides, tourism is also a major social phenomenon of the modern society with definite economic, social and environmental consequences. It's a well known established fact that, tourism based activities play a major role in economy of any state, and similarly have direct and indirect correlations with all the other sectoral activities. The influence of tourism on the life-style of local people are-

- Employment generation, per capita income, per capita spending, health & education, entrepreneurship, comment on values & moralities
- Impacts on traditional culture & heritage of Assam, local skills, condition of old buildings, change in housing pattern
- Slumification, housing quality, crime rate
- Change in land value around the tourist places
- Information on hawkers/informal sector
- Environmental Impact-
- Influence of tourism on the ecology & environment
- Riverine ecosystem, forests, land-water interface areas, rural areas, urban
- Change in land use

Assam lies beneath the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas sharing boundaries with all other north – eastern states of India, with the sacred Brahmaputra River flowing right through its heart. Assam is bordered in the north and east by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. Along the south lies Nagaland, Manipur and to the extreme south is Mizoram. Meghalaya lies to the south west and West Bengal to the west of Assam. It occupies a very important position in the political map of India by virtue of its geographical situation. It is the gateway to the north-eastern region. It provides the focal points of transport and communication to its neighbouring states.

Places of interest in Assam:

Assam is blessed with abundance of scenic grandeur. A wealth of rarest and near extinct species of wildlife, verdant forests, somber hills, undulating green plains and mighty water ways are its main attractions. The species of wild life like the one horned Asiatic Rhino, the Golden Langur, the Pigmy Hog, have made Assam their home. Guwahati has a numerous tourist places. These places include Kamakhya and Bhubaneswari Temple, Nabagraha Temple, Balaji temple, Basistha Ashram, Gita Temple, Somnath Temple, Umananda Temple, Ugratara Temple among the temples. Other places include Majuli, Sualkuchi, Hajo, Sibsagar, Kaziranga, Manas, Orang,

Tezpur, Bhalunkpung etc., to name a few. Each place has its own significance and beauty to see. The major schemes of the Department of Tourism (DOT) relate to tourism development which include promotion and publicity of tourism, central assistance for the development of tourism infrastructure. The DOT provides funds to State Government for either supplementing the existing tourism infrastructure or creating and developing new assets.

Methodology:

The study comprises both primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected with the help of questionnaire. The sample size is 100 (male is 62% and female is 38%) in the sample surveyed.

The respondents comprise of both male and female residing in the city of Guwahati was selected randomly for the study. The collected data was analysed by using charts and diagrams wherever necessary.

Secondary data was collected from Journals, government policy manuals and websites.

Analysis:

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strength

- No other state like Assam has variety and colour in its natural scenery
- A green paradise, Assam offers picturesque landscape, beautiful mountain and seven rivers.
- Flora and fauna of world famous wild life sanctuaries like Kaziranga National Park, Manas National Park, Orang National Park.
- Pilgrimage destinations such as Kamakhya, Hajo, Vasistha Ashram, Nabagraha Temple and others. The historical city with important archaeological remains and monuments such as Sivasagar, speak of a glorious past of high architectural achievements.

Weakness

In the present scenario of Tourism in the State the following weakness have been

identified:

- Lack of comprehensive policy framework of the state government for long term development of tourism, despite having the potential for tourism development.

- ii. Lack of awareness, education and publicity amongst local residents regarding economic, social and cultural benefits of tourism.
- iii. Lack of co-ordination among tourism administrators, owners of the hotel industry, travel and tourism association, other constituents of government like Town Planning Department, Civil Aviation, PWD, Environment, Railway, etc.
- iv. Deficiencies in infrastructures like poor road conditions or non-accessibility, poor solid waste management system.

Opportunities

- i. Natural features (inland, topography, flora & fauna)
- ii. Cultural features (heritage, monuments, events, are, music and dance)
- iii. Infrastructure and amenities (transportation, communication, shopping, comfort amenities)
- iv. Effective service (training in technical, linguistic and social skills)

Threats

Despite being a unique tourist destination, Assam has some challenges as well, which directly and indirectly curb the growth of tourism. These are:

- i. Other states are posing as a stiff competitor for Assam, by providing better tourism based infrastructures, developing the resources and by marketing aggressively about themselves as a grand tourist destination.
- ii. Tourists have to cover long distances to access Assam and its districts. The poor transportation system, conditions of roads and poor tourist facilities is a major threat.
- iii. Social problems like causes of insurgency etc. should be resolved and provisions should be made to give complete security to the tourists.
- iv. Infrastructures specially roads, solid waste management, power and accommodation, create major hindrances in the development of tourism in Assam

A. Analysis from primary survey

Table 1.a. Level of education

Level of education	In numbers	In percentage
Below 10	20	20%
Graduate	44	44%
Post Graduate	34	34%
Others	2	2%

According to the above table the percentage of respondents in the others category is 2% followed by below 10 as 20%, graduates as 44% which is the highest and post graduate is 34%.

Table 1. b.Occupation

Occupation	In nos.	In %
Service	40	40%
Business	19	19%
Housewife	9	9%
Student	32	32%

According to the above table, the service holders are the highest with 40% and housewives consist only 9%.

Table 2.Respondents opinion about their knowledge on the income from tourism sector

Option	In nos.	In %
Yes	25	25%
No	34	34%
May be	41	41%

According to the above table, 25% of the respondents said that they are aware about the income of the state from the tourism sector whereas 34% said they are not aware. While 41% said that they are in a confused state of mind and can-

not say exactly.

Table 3.Response of general public about the number of national parks in Assam

Option	In nos.	In %
Yes	55	55%
No	21	21%
May be	24	24%

According to the above table, 55% of the respondents are aware of the number of national parks in Assam and 24% respondents were not able to say the number correctly.

Table 4.Respondents awareness about the growth of medical tourism in Assam

Option	In nos.	In %
Yes	45	45%
No	26	26%
May be	29	29%

According to the above table, 45% of the respondents are aware of the scope and growth of medical tourism in Assam.

Table 5.Respondents awareness about the growth of cultural tourism in Assam

Option	In nos.	In %
Yes	65	65%
No	10	10%
May be	25	25%

According to the above table, 65% respondents are aware of the scope and growth of cultural tourism in Assam.

Table 6.Response of general public about keeping the environment clean for tourism promotion

Option	In nos.	In %
Yes	85	85%
No	5	5%
May be	10	10%

According to the above table, we see that 85% of the respondents are aware that keeping the environment clean is an important criteria for tourism promotion.

Table 7.Response of the general public about their initiative for tourism promotion in Assam

Options	In nos.	In %
Yes	10	10%
No	86	86%
May be	4	4%

According to the above table, 86% respondents said that they have not taken any initiative for tourism promotion and development from their end while a mere 4% say that they have undertaken small activities like guiding the tourists if they meet them on the way, communicating properly with them etc.

Recommendation & Conclusion:

Tourism sector all over the world is growing by leaps and bounds. New places are discovered, new cultures are explored and experiences are treasured but the harm that is being made to the environment indirectly is an issue which is discussed widely now. The equal growth of tourism sector and environment is a sustainable development which is also desirable in the present day context. Only giving an eye on a single aspect of unveiling various stratas of tourism is not worth enough. A growth approach should be taken which may be called as an balanced growth approach.

The common people should be made aware of the various

government policies for tourism, the earnings from it and the benefits the common man would get from it. This will help to create a sense of willingness in the common men to work hand in hand with the government to develop this sector.

The initiative on the part of the government will not be successful without the help of common men. So, every single individual should be involved in the process of flourishing tourism in Assam. Starting from the taxi driver in the airport to the smallest roadside vendor should be trained on dealing with tourists.

The tag line which the government of India has utilised to create awareness among Indians regarding tourists and tourism the same should also be adopted by the government of Assam if it wants success in the long run.

Advertising holds a very important position in the aspect of promoting tourism because Assam has a lot of potential in various aspects like water, land, historical monuments, rich culture, national parks and sanctuaries etc. These factors will be known only when advertising is strong. The rate of tourists has increased as a result of it, now the common men should be alerted on how to make it grow more by protecting the environment ie, sustainable growth. The degraded condition of the environment is harming the state.

The items made by local artisans, traditional food shops etc should be easily available so that the tourists get an idea of the local flavour.

The above factors should be taken into consideration along with some factors like more initiative and awareness camps should be organised in the grass root level ie at the schools so that they learn theoretically on what is sustainable growth, cultural tourism, medical tourism etc. This learned knowledge can be explored more practically when the person grows in age and if she/he is interested.

The present study has tried to throw light on the factors which can create awareness about the sustainable growth of tourism sector in the state of Assam. Further study can be done on the affect of industrial sector on the tourism's growth and development. Thus, the utmost important supporting factor in creating awareness in the sustainable growth of tourism sector is the strong support from the Government and the common man which can bring transition in the present scenario of Assam.

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