

1

Introduction

1.1: India-A Tourist Destination

India, an Incredible country from tourism perspective and being one of the oldest civilisations has a gamut of tourism delights from the heritage of sights, rich diverse culture and tradition and the range of terrain which gives it a distinctive geographic uniqueness. As being the 7th largest country in the world in geographical area, India has a towering stature in the tourism global scenario, spread over an area of about 32,87,263 sq.km, located at Latitude 21.7679 degree north and Longitude 78.8718-degree east. As a country, India is surrounded by waterbodies namely the Indian ocean, Bay of Bengal, and Arabian sea in the south, west and east respectively. Six countries share their borders with India namely Bangladesh and Myanmar in the east, Pakistan in the west, China, Nepal, and Bhutan in the north.¹ India since early times attracted many foreign invasions due to its rich natural & other resources, socio cultural heritage and its strategic location in the southeast Asian region, as it was part of many trade routes. After the British regime of 200 years, India became an independent country in 1947, following a democratic form of governance, comprising of states and union territories.

India is the most diverse countries in the planet earth from the coldest places in Kashmir to the hottest and the driest places in Rajasthan to the wettest place with the

¹ India Yearbook.p.1

highest rainfall in the northeast to the spectacular beaches in the west & east coastlines. With hundreds and thousands of historically important monuments, museums, abundance pool of wildlife reserves, extensive flora and fauna and coupled with a rich diversified cultural fabric that makes India an incredibly unique and diverse tourism destination.

India in context to travel and tourism industry can be regarded as a complete package as a tourism destination as it has a multiple variety of tourism attraction ranging from wildlife safaris, desert safaris, natural landscapes, cascading majestic waterfalls, adventure sports, activities, spiritual places, cultural diversity, and historical places. In-fact each state of India has some unique tourism resources to offer, which makes the tourist experiences enriching and satisfying.

India ,the land of myths and bundles of tourism resources is continuously systematically developing its tourism sector, so that it can enchant more and more tourist at the domestic and international front and with the advent of technology and social network platforms ,it has become easy to market India’s tourism resources at global level, so that it allows tourists to have an insight of the hidden treasures of India and also so that they may choose India as their next holiday destination [1] .

Globally, it has been observed that the travel and tourism industry has been an engine for economic development and is growing at a fast pace and is contributing immensely to employment opportunities, foreign exchange earnings and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figure-1.1.

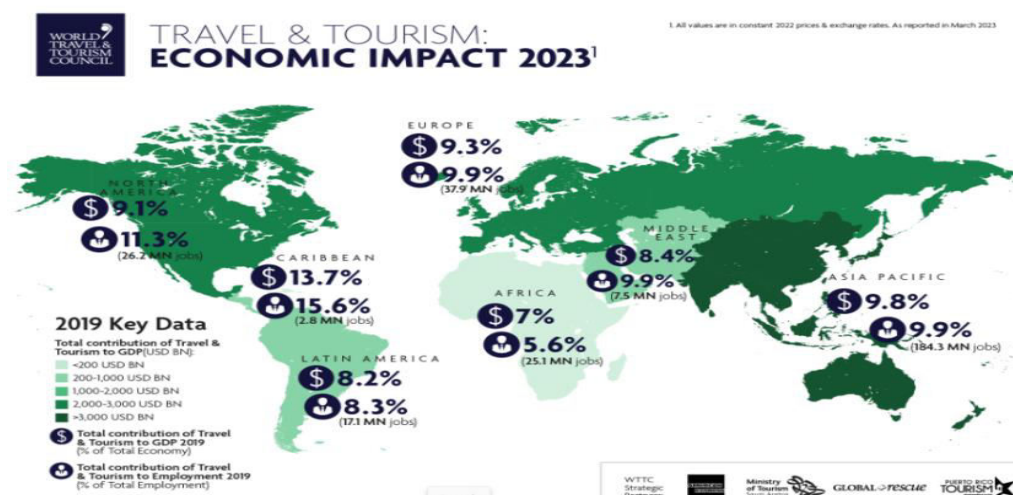


Figure 1.1: - Travel and Tourism economic impact 2023.

Source:<https://wttc.org/research/economic-impact>

Globally the tourism sector has proved that it is growing at a very fast pace, as per the statistics quoted by the World Travel and Tourism Council(WTTC) ,2017 ² “*the travel and tourism sector’s income stands at 7.6 trillion US dollars ,which is about 10.2 percent of the global Domestic Product(GDP) and supported 292 million jobs in the year 2016, which equates to in every 10 jobs ,1 job is created by the travel and tourism sector*”. In the global context, the travel and tourism sector has become a phenomenon in both developed as well as in the developing regions endowed with significant tourism resources and in regions with less tourism appeal.

There has been numerous research in tourism in various aspects, namely economic[2], [3] social, [4] , [5] , environmental [6] and cultural [7].

“*In Indian context , the tourism industry has emerged as one of the key drivers of growth among the services sector*”[8] . India being a vast diverse nation, with abundant tourism resources, has managed the travel and tourism sector to be very lucrative, and the tourism sector has stimulated growth to the other sectors of the economy. In the 21st century, the travel and tourism sector has the potential to stimulate economic, socio-cultural development and environmental preservation at both the urban as well as the rural areas; apart from creating employment opportunities, foreign exchange earnings and infrastructure development.

Since the travel and tourism sector demands a high personalised service; hence this sector is vastly labour centric and has the potential to create a basket of employment opportunities for all categories with varying levels of skills and traits and for the marginalised segment like women. “*Women make up 70% of the labour force in the tourism sector and half of all tourism workers are 25 years or under*” (ILO)³.

“*In Indian context, the travel and tourism industry generated Rs 16.91 lakh crore and created 42.673 lakh jobs in 2018 that is about 9.2 percent of India’s GDP and 8.1 percent of its total employment, and it is estimated by 2028, it would generate about Rs 32.05 lakh crore at an annual growth rate of 6.9 percent*”(WTTC-2018)⁴.The total foreign tourist arrival and the percentage change in India since 1997 to 2018 is explained in a tabular format in the Table 1.1.

² The economic impact of Travel and Tourism, March 2017, WTTC.pdf.

³ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_221967/lang--en/index.htm

⁴ The economic impact of Travel and Tourism, March 2018, WTTC.pdf.

Table 1.1: - Foreign Tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India, from 1997 to 2018

YEAR	FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVALS (In Millions)	PERCENTAGE OF CHANGE
1997	2.37	3.8
1998	2.36	-0.7
1999	2.48	5.2
2000	2.65	6.7
2001	2.54	-4.2
2002	2.38	-6.0
2003	2.73	14.3
2004	3.46	26.8
2005	3.92	13.3
2006	4.45	13.5
2007	5.08	14.3
2008	5.28	4.0
2009	5.17	-2.2
2010	5.78	11.8
2011	6.31	9.2
2012	6.58	4.3
2013	6.97	5.9
2014	7.68	10.2
2015	8.03	4.5
2016	8.80	9.7
2017	10.04	14
2018	10.56	5.2

Source: The Bureau of Immigration, the Government of India.

Since the tourism sector contributes immensely to economic development especially for developing nations like India, hence this sector is given due importance so that economic gains could be maximised. In the table 1.2, the tourism earnings from the tourism sector since 1997 to 2018 is depicted in a tabular format.

Table 1.2: - Tourism Receipts from tourism in India (1997–2018)

YEAR	EARNINGS (US\$ Millions)	PERCENTAGE CHANGE
1997	2889	2.0
1998	2948	2.0
1999	3009	2.1
2000	3460	15
2001	3198	-7.6
2002	3103	-3.0
2003	4463	43.8
2004	6170	38.2
2005	7493	21.4
2006	8634	15.2
2007	10729	24.3
2008	11832	10.3
2009	11136	-5.9
2010	14193	27.5
2011	16564	16.7
2012	17737	7.1
2013	18445	4.0
2014	20236	9.7
2015	21071	4.1
2016	22923	9.1
2017	27310	19.1
2018	28585	4.7

Source: (i). Ministry of Tourism (MOT), the Government of India.

(ii). The Reserve Bank of India.

As per United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) statistics “international tourist arrivals rose from 25 million in 1950 to 1.4 billion in 2018, which is about 56-fold increase in about 68 years”.⁵

Table 1.3: - Global International Tourists Arrival from 1950 to 2018

DATE	INTERNATIONAL TOURIST ARRIVAL
1950	25 MILLION
1960	69 MILLION
1970	166 MILLION
1980	286 MILLION
1990	435 MILLION
2000	680 MILLION
2010	952 MILLION
2018	1409MILLION

Source: World Trade Organization, World Tourism Organisation

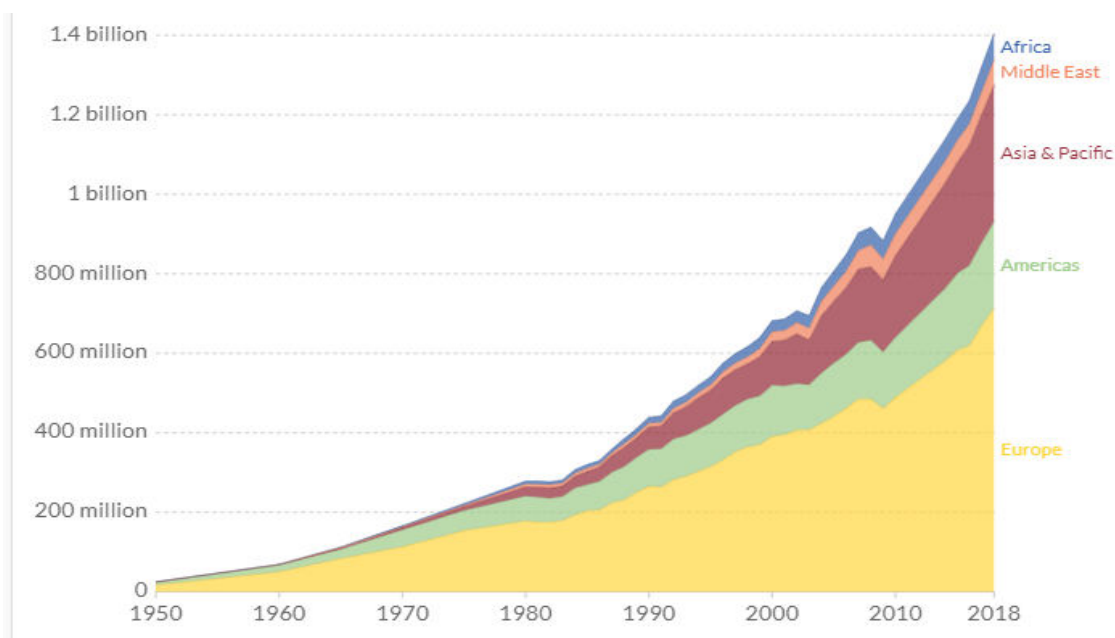


Figure 1.2: - International tourist Arrival Region Wise.

Source: -UNWTO-World Tourism Barometer (2019)⁶

To facilitate easy & hassle-free travel to India, the visa policy of India has been enhanced from time to time. Tourist and business travellers can also avail e-tourist visa through online portal, citizens of 75 countries can avail this facility. Apart from e-tourist visa, the tourist coming to India can avail facilities of visa on arrival at 28 international airports and 5 seaports.⁷

⁵ <https://ourworldindata.org/tourism>

⁶ Our World in Data.org/tourism/

⁷ <https://www.mea.gov.in/visa-facility-for-india-nationals-menu.htm>

The Ministry of tourism formed in 1967 is a nodal agency, with primary function for growth and expansion of tourism in India. It formulates national policies and programs and coordinates and supplements the initiatives of the various state & union territory governments, encouraging investment from private stakeholders, initiating marketing and promotional strategies and in creating skill-based workforce resources. The ministry has 20 domestic field offices to promote tourism effectively throughout the country and to monitor and coordinate tourism developmental projects sanctioned by the Ministry. Along with domestic offices, the ministry to have global presence operates 14 overseas India tourism offices, primarily to promote the tourism destinations of India in the global forums.⁸

1.2: - Tourism Meaning & Definition

Since the evolution of human civilization, humans have been travelling to fulfil its needs. Though the word tourism was first coined in the early 19th century, but people were travelling since early times to primarily for exploration, gaining knowledge, trading & religious purposes. The invention of the wheel and money in the earlier centuries facilitated furthermore travel. Today people travel around the globe for leisure, pleasure, political, medical, business, religious, visiting friends, relatives, etc.

It was however observed, post the industrial revolution in the 16th century, large masses of people undertook travelling away from their homes for leisure and pleasure activities. This growth of travelling of the masses over the last couple of centuries has given rise to the gigantic tourism industry, which has become the global phenomenon today.

It has been observed the real impetus of tourism development was initiated after Thomas Cook, grand journeys in 1845 and after the world wars.

In Sanskrit literature, there are three terms for tourism with suffix “Atana” meaning going or leaving for some other place seeking knowledge (Paryatana), economic gains (Desatana) and religious salvation (Tirthatana)[9].The word tour is derived from a Latin word ‘Tornos’ meaning a tool used in describing a circle.⁹ The word tour signifies a circular trip originating and coming back to the initial point and the person undertaking such a tour is termed as a tourist. There is also a theory that the word tour

⁸ (www.tourism.gov.in/organisation)

⁹ "Online Etymology Dictionary". *etymonline.com*. Retrieved 2 December 2021

is a derivative of a Hebrew word 'Torah' which relates to learning, studying, and searching.¹⁰ The word tour literally means to find out about a destination the traveller visits.

“The Tourism is an amalgamated industry with numerous processes and activities arising from the interactions of tourist with service providers, host communities, local governments etc, in fact tourism industry is a multi-faceted industry that encompasses many industries under its broad umbrella like the transportation, accommodation, food & beverage services, recreation, amusement etc” [10]. Post the World War II, globally the travel and tourism sector which started as a nascent industry has developed in gigantic proportions to contribute and strengthen the global economic dimensions and is often termed as a global phenomenon.

Many academicians and scholars have tried to define tourism in their own context to suit their own specific purposes. However, there is no commonly accepted definition of tourism because of the diverse, interlinked, and interdependent nature of the tourism industry with other sectors.

Some of the definitions of tourism coined by academicians and scholars are: -

- In 1905, Guyer Feuler, defined tourism, *“A phenomenon unique to modern time which is dependent on the people’s increasing need for a change and relaxing, the wish of recognising the beauties of nature and art and the belief that nature gives happiness to human beings and which helps nations and communities approaching to each other thanks to the developments in commerce and industry and the communication and transportation tools becoming excellent”*¹¹
- In 1910, Hermann. V. Schullard, defined tourism, *“The sum total of operators mainly of an economic nature, which directly relate to the entry, stay and movement of foreigners inside and outside a certain country, city or region”*¹²
- In 1942, Hunziker and Krapf, defined tourism, *“The totality of the relationship and phenomenon arising from the travel and stay of strangers, provided that the*

¹⁰ <https://prezi.com/bejt0i4uzx0m/history-of-tourism/>. Retrieved 2 December 2021

¹¹ <https://cecevy.wordpress.com/2015/03/14/definition-of-tourism/> searched on 18-03-22, time: 06:11 pm

¹² <https://www.geographynotes.com/india/international-tourism/international-tourism-in-india-introduction-history-trends-opportunities-and-future/8372> searched on 18/03/2022, time: 06:39 pm

stay does not imply the establishment of a permanent residence and is not connected with a remunerative activity”.¹³

- In 1974, Burkat and Medlik, defined tourism , *“tourism destination is a geographical unit visited by tourists being a self-contained centre”*.^[11]
- In 1982, Matheison and Wall, defined tourism, *“The temporary movement of people to destination outside the normal places of work and residence, activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations and the facilities creates to cater for their needs”*.¹⁴
- In 1986, Macintosh and Goeldner, defined tourism, *“Tourism is the sum of phenomenon and relationships arising from the interaction of tourism business suppliers, host and governments and host-communication in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors”*.¹⁵
- In 1995, the UNWTO, defined tourism *“As comprising the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes”*.¹⁶

From the above definitions by some academicians and scholars , it is seen that the definition of the term tourism varies from person to person, but we can sum up by stating that tourism is a gamut of activities, industries and services which provide holistic experiences to the tourist travelling away from home, in collaboration with amalgamation of sectors such as transportation , fooding and lodging, retail shops, amusement parks, entertainment businesses, travel tour companies, etc .

1.3: -Background of study

Post-World War II , globally the tourism sector has evolved as the largest service industry with the assimilation of other sectors like transportation, accommodation, entertainment , catering , amusement, etc and because of this exponential growth, the tourism sector has been able to encourage many scholars to conduct research on the

¹³ <https://www.coursehero.com/file/p4jkr5nn/In-1941-Hunziker-and-Krapf-defined-tourism-as-people-who-travel-the-sum-of-the/> searched on 18/03/2022, time: 07:39 pm

¹⁴ <http://www.prm.nau.edu/prm300/what-is-tourism-lesson.htm/> searched on 18/03/2022, time: 07:50 pm

¹⁵ <http://www.prm.nau.edu/prm300/what-is-tourism-lesson.htm/> searched on 18/03/2022, time: 07:50 pm

¹⁶ <https://www.tugberkugurlu.com/archive/definintion-of-tourism-unwto-definition-of-tourism-what-is-tourism/>searched on 19/03/2022, time:07:06 am

various aspects of the sector from economic , socio-cultural, environmental, and sustainable impacts of the tourism industry[12]. However, in the recent past it is seen that due to the rampant development of the tourism industry has triggered various negative impacts on the environment, hence many scholars are looking at areas of research on sustainable development and alternative forms of tourism which has limited impacts on the environment and the socio-cultural beliefs and practices of the host communities. Due to the global boom of the tourism sector , the rural folks are also involving actively in tourism related activities in rural areas, so that alternative sources of livelihood options are developed in the rural areas since the last half century [13]. Since agriculture is the primary source of livelihood in rural belts, however, it has not been able to support the rural societies due to various reasons, which has resulted in the migration of rural folks to urban areas in search of better livelihood opportunities. But in some rural areas, due to the development of the rural tourism activities, there has been a significant reduction of migration to urban areas and the creation of multiple livelihood opportunities has reinforced the rural economies and conservation and preservation of natural resources and the socio-cultural heritage of rural communities.

Meghalaya a small, picturesque state, nestled strategically in the north-eastern part of India, sharing international boundaries with Bangladesh, has tremendous scope for tourism initiatives. Though the state known as the “Abode of Clouds” has been recognized as one of the major tourist centres of the north-eastern region, but it has not been able to attract as many tourists it had perceived with the abundance of natural tourism resources and the rich cultural heritage of the tribal Indigenous inhabitants. Ri-Bhoi district, one of the prominent districts of Meghalaya bounded in the north by Kamrup and on the East by the Karbi Anglong districts of Assam. The district has 4 blocks and 649villages with headquarters in Nongpoh, which is only 40 km away from Guwahati city and 50 km from Shillong.¹⁷ The district is connected with national highway 40 and is the main entry point to the state. This research study is based on 4 blocks of Ri-Bhoi district to understand the pros and cons of the opportunities and challenges of rural tourism and its impact to sustain the socio-cultural and biodiversity of the Ri-Bhoi district. Since the topography and the social set up of the rural areas in the district vary from village to village and developmental initiatives for rural tourism

¹⁷ <https://ribhoi.gov.in/>

will also vary from situation to situation ,therefore extensive research inputs are required so that the final outcomes of empirical data can be arrived at so the policy makers could use such information’s for development of sustainable rural tourism in rural belts of Ri-Bhoi districts and enhance their livelihoods . The location of the study area is shown in map figure 1.3 and 1.4.



Figure 1.3: Districts of the state of Meghalaya

Source: Government of Meghalaya

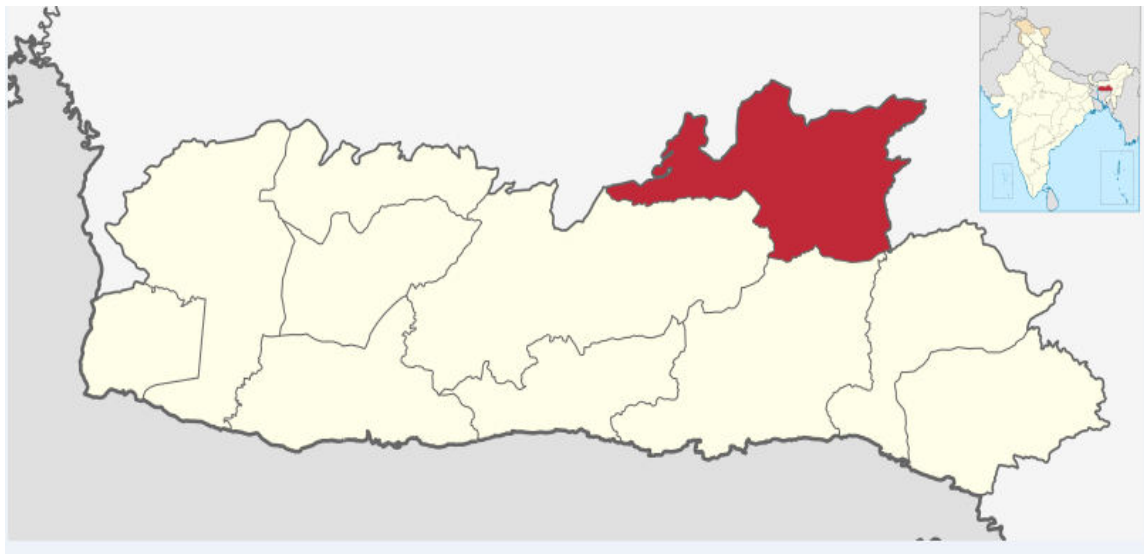


Figure 1.4: Ri-Bhoi district of the state of Meghalaya

Source: Wikipedia amp of Ri-Bhoi district in Indian map

1.4: - Types of Tourism

People undertake travel according to their needs and wants. Types of tourism has evolved from early times to the present day and there is a significant degree of variations among them. The very purpose of travel regulates the form of travel and tourism. Hence some of the typologies of tourism are:

- Archaeological Tourism or Archaeotourism or Heritage tourism is a form of cultural tourism. This form of tourism is about travelling with the purpose of exploring the history and heritage of a place. This form of tourism encompasses sites and monuments of historical importance, museums, archives centres, etc. This form of tourism being a recent inclusion in the typology was primarily initiated to promote the rich archaeological history and to create a visitor's interest. One of the ardent reasons is to also conserve these centuries old historical sites. When historically important sites are opened for tourist purposes and managed by the tourism stake holders, it does have some adverse effects on these monuments, because the primary motive is revenue generation rather than conservation.[14].
- Cultural Tourism is a form of tourism concerned with the cultural heritage of a geographical location and observing the lifestyles of people dwelling in these locations. As per WTO, cultural tourism is defined as the movement of people for primarily cultural motivations, which comprises of cultural tours, study tours, performing arts, visits to festivals, fairs, historical sites and monuments, folklore, etc. WTO; [15]. Rich cultural heritages are important pull factors for tourists to visit the places and have an enriching experience and due to this cultural tourism phenomenon, there has been considerable efforts from various communities to preserve and sustain their rich cultural heritage so that it can be passed down generations and highlighted for tourism purposes.
- Pilgrimage Tourism commonly referred as Religious or Faith tourism. It is the oldest form of tourism, pilgrimage was the primary reason for people's travel which dates to thousands of years ago;[16]. Pilgrims visit religious shrines to achieve spiritual bliss. Though travelling for religious practices was an ancient

phenomenon, but the present-day pilgrimage tourism is a trillion-dollar industry and is growing at a phenomenal rate.

- Adventure Tourism is a niche tourism activity that comprises travelling to distant places and destinations previously undiscovered and experiencing all the perils and constraints. Adventure tourism is gaining popularity over the last two decades and is growing exponentially globally and is one of the biggest churners of foreign exchange in the days to come. Adventure Tourism is a thrill based, where the tourist is ready to face different variance of challenges and the activities can be classified in to three forms, namely land, air and water based. Land based activity includes bungee jumping, jeep safari, mountaineering, skiing, etc, water-based activity includes rafting, scuba diving, snorkelling etc and air-based activity includes hot air ballooning, para gliding, para sailing etc¹⁸.
- Medical tourism also referred as Health tourism involves of patients travelling from developed nations and underdeveloped nations to developing nations where healthcare facilities are well equipped, less waiting period, easy travelling formalities and most importantly less expensive. Medical tourism is one of the fastest growing health care industries in the world due to ageing population and increasing health ailments of the people primarily due to unhealthy lifestyles. In comparison to developed countries, some of the developing nations like Thailand,, India, Malaysia and Singapore in the Asian circuit has been able to attract more medical tourist due to the state-of-the-art health care facilities, trained and experienced health care professionals , easy accessibility and primarily due to less medical expenses in surgeries and treatment. [17].
- Rural Tourism or village tourism is a tourism activity primarily predominant in rural areas or the countryside. With the further segmentation of the tourism market, rural tourism is becoming a popular form of tourism in the global context. The main objective of rural tourism is to benefit the rural local community economically and socially. Rural tourism can be defined “*as the form of tourism that showcases rural lifestyles, art, culture and heritage at rural places and*

¹⁸<http://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/Indian%20Adventure%20Tourism%20Guidelines%20Oct%20202.pdf>

thereby helping the local communities as well as enabling interaction between tourist and the locals for a mutually inspiring and enriching experience”. [18].

- Wildlife Tourism today is a million-dollar industry and countries having wildlife resources are experiencing many tourists in this segment. Wildlife tourism is about interacting with wild animals in their natural habitats. Wildlife tourism activities are often located in pristine settings of high conservation value, and are generally claimed to be ecologically and socially sustainable [19]. Wildlife tourism generate a substantial amount of revenues from the tourist, and in many cases are crucial for the conservation of the rare and endangered species, however due to rampant interventions of tourists in the habitats of the animals causes negative impacts on the behavioural patterns of these wild animals and on the biodiversity.

1.5: - Rural Tourism in Global Context

Though the concept of rural tourism was conceived in the late eighteenth century, but it slowly gained momentum and flourished around the nineteenth century around 1970's onwards [20].

Today's tourism business has undergone a paradigm shift, with improved infrastructure, updated modern facilities and skilled manpower. Tourism trends has transformed from Conventional tourism forms to Alternative tourism forms like Eco-tourism, Wellness tourism, culinary tourism, MICE, Rural tourism etc. The real impetus for this transformation is also due to the upgradation of e-commerce and other technological automation advancement in the tourism sector.

In tourism context, both urban and rural sectors are target markets. However, over the last two decades there seems to be a steady rise for the demand for the rural sectors, primarily due to the rurality factor and the rural life's association with agriculture and allied farm activities and due to proximity and coherence with nature and natural environment. Though urban colossal sectors do attract a sizeable amount of tourist flow, but latest trends show that majority and certain segments of tourist prefer quiet and isolated places for their holiday vacation, away from the hustle and bustle of urban centres.

This new niche tourism form called Rural Tourism was first established in Western Europe, then moving towards North America, then to Australia and New Zealand and to Asia (Japan) and finally to Western Europe [20]. The beauty of the rural areas is glorified in literary works, arts, music, etc which inspire a lot of people to travel to rural areas and have opportunities to directly experience rural agricultural lifestyles and natural environments and be able to break the urban mundane [21];[20].Industrialization, urbanisation and improvement in transportation in western societies have motivated people to travel to rural areas in pursuit of different experiences [22]. Post-World War II, there has been an increase of allocentric travellers who are curious and explorers and want to have an enriching experience [20].Rural tourism initiatives are advantageous to both the tourist and the host community as more and more visitors residing in urban areas are seeking relaxation and leisure in rural areas and the host communities residing in rural areas are having alternative sources of earning, rural tourism is an effective initiative that can provide rural growth and development [23].

The development of roadways and railways in the nineteenth century around the continents of Europe ,America and other parts of the globe have propelled the development of rural tourism[20]. Post-World War II, people residing in urban areas with high disposal income began travelling to prominent rural destinations and lesser-known rural areas. It has been observed that due to rise in disposal incomes in urban areas and reduced profit abilities in agriculture and allied activities have stimulated development of rural tourism [24].

The concept of rural tourism is not simply confined to farm-based activity only ,under the umbrella of rural tourism niche tourism forms exist like eco-tourism, agritourism, village tourism, food and wine tourism etc [25]. Infact, rural tourism has helped to better the social and economic conditions for the rural areas [26].

Most of the research literature on rural tourism predominantly emphasizes on dual aspects, the first being the enriching experience to the tourist in terms of natural & cultural heritage and the second aspect harping on providing economic opportunities for the declining rural economies and local communities[27].

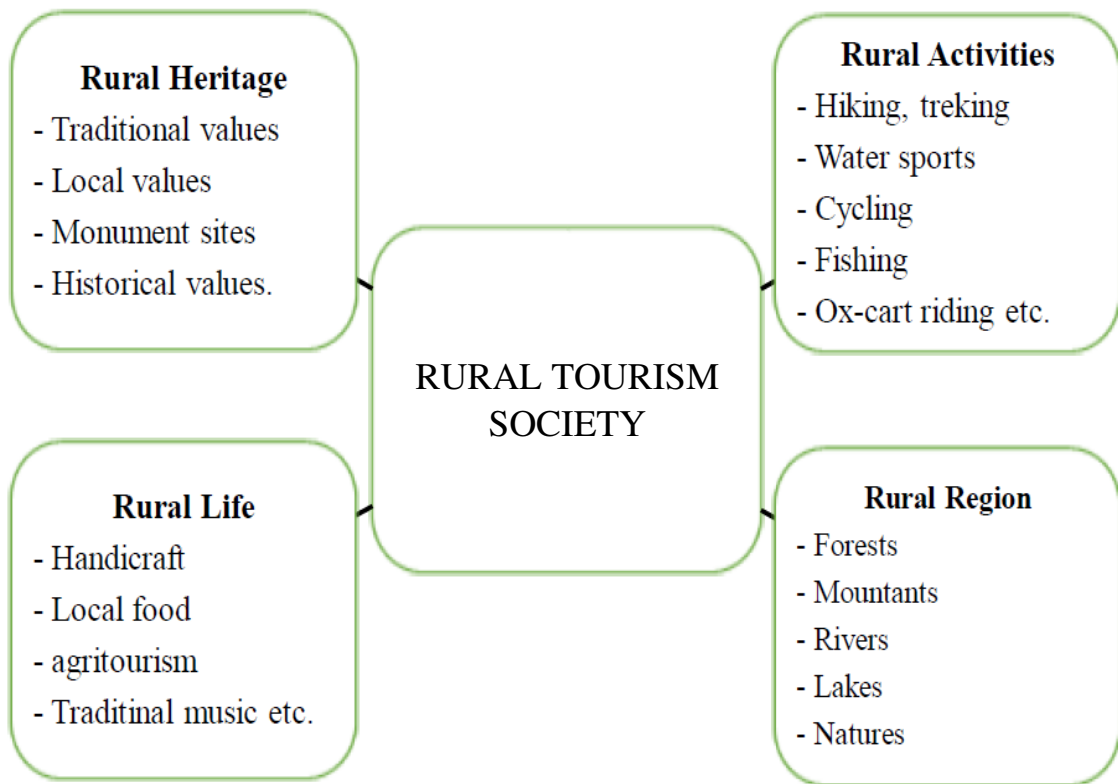


Figure 1.5: - Determinants of rural tourism society

Source: Ö. Özdemir and S. Akyürek [28].

1.6: - Rural Tourism in India

In the Indian context with 65.074 percent (World Bank data)¹⁹ of the population residing in the 6,49,481 villages (2011 Census) rural tourism initiatives is recognised as a pivotal tool to catalyst the development of the rural community and the rural economy. Though agriculture and allied activities are the main sources of livelihood, but recent trends have indicated that this sector is not yielding the expected benefits due to various issues, hence rural tourism initiatives can be an alternate source of livelihood for most of the tourist centric rural areas.

Rural tourism initiatives were cited for the first time in the Tenth Five-Year Plan of India (2002-2007) with an objective to provide local rural communities employment and economic gains and to provide an enriching experience for the tourists visiting the tourist centric rural areas. The real impetus for rural tourism development was initiated in India during the tenth five-year plan. It is during this plan period the objectives and

¹⁹ www.data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=in. searched 10-02-22, 11.24 am

the dynamics of rural tourism initiatives was identified and likewise Ministry of Tourism (MOT) along with other Ministries initiated the process of promoting rural tourism initiatives in some selected villages all over India. During the tenth five-year plan in 2004, MOT with association with United Nations Development Project (UNDP) had initiated the Endogenous Tourism Project (ETP). The main objective of ETP during the tenth five-year plan was to promote the village lifestyle, culture, and its serene pristine natural resources to both domestic and overseas tourists and also the approach adopted during the collaboration was Community Based tourism (CBT) and capacity building of the rural folks in tourism context so as to enable maximum benefit towards the local community and the local economy.

Successive Five-Year plans, especially the 11th and 12th (2007-2017) saw real impetus in rural tourism development, in the 11th Five-Year Plan, villages were identified on the basis of tourism potentials and basic tourism related infrastructure developed through village and self-help committees headed by the District Collector (DC), likewise in the 12th Five-Year Plan rural tourism initiatives were further developed in the rural areas through Rural Tourism Cluster Approach (RTCA) ,were collectively a group of villages were put together in a cluster and rural tourism initiatives were planned and subsequently developed. The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) in India is working towards the development of rural India through various schemes to alleviate poverty by increasing livelihood opportunities and developing rural infrastructure is an important stake holder for the development of rural tourism.

India being a country of diverse and vibrant cultural fabric, makes many rural areas as hotspot for rural tourism. There have been sincere efforts from different Ministries and other stakeholders to initiate rural tourism initiatives in the rural circuits so that the rural economy and the rural communities could be benefitted through employment opportunities, income opportunities, entrepreneurial opportunities, promotion of rural handicrafts and handloom products, infrastructure development opportunities and creating awareness about importance of preservation of environment and heritage.

To further thrust rural tourism initiatives, along with famous “Incredible India” brand also sub-brand called “Explore Rural India” has been successfully launched and implemented.

1.7: - Tourism in Meghalaya

Meghalaya-the abode of clouds is a picturesque tiny state in the north-eastern region of India. Tourism has tremendous potential in this region, and it is the most sought-after destination of the North -Eastern region. Meghalaya is bestowed with abundant natural resources such as cascading crystal-clear water bodies and waterfalls, deep gorges and canyons, diverse flora and fauna, high cliffs and gentle valleys, gigantic rocks, sacred groves, etc. [29] .

It is also home to the two wettest places in the world, namely Cherapunjee and Mawsynram. Meghalaya does not have the inner line permit and the state is peaceful and does not have insurgency problems, hence it is conducive to tourism. Meghalaya, a tribal state is full of vibrant culture, tradition, scenic beauty & tranquillity has been able to pull in a lot of domestic and international tourist. Meghalaya as a tourist destination with almost all the tourist spots being nature based or eco-tourist spots and there being tremendous concern about the well-being of the place by the host communities²⁰, the state has been witnessing both mass tourism and alternative tourism forms resulting in both high volume low value and high value low volume tourism segments.

About 79.92 percent of Meghalaya’s population resides in the rural areas in the 6026 villages ²¹and majority of the rural local community’s residing in these villages have poor financial conditions, hence there is tremendous scope for rural tourism initiatives in the state which could result in improving the economic conditions of the marginalised local communities and holistic development of the rural areas and local communities.

²⁰ Meghalaya Tourism Policy-Tourism Department Government of Meghalaya,2011

²¹ https://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2-vol2/data_files/Meghalaya/CHAPTER_II.pdf.searched on 18-02-22, time 10.56am

Statistical Data of Domestic and International Tourist Arrivals in Meghalaya

Table 1.4: - Tourist Arrivals in Meghalaya (2000 to 2017)

Year	Domestic	International	Total
2000	169929	2327	172256
2001	178697	2390	181087
2002	268529	3191	271720
2003	371953	6304	378257
2004	433495	12407	445902
2005	375911	5099	381010
2006	400287	4259	404546
2007	457685	5267	462952
2008	549954	4919	554873
2009	591398	4522	595920
2010	652756	4177	656933
2011	667504	4803	672307
2012	680254	5313	685567
2013	691269	6773	698042
2014	717789	8664	726453
2015	751165	8027	759192
2016	830887	8476	839363
2017	990856	12051	1002907

Source: The Shillong Times²²

1.7.1: - Geographical Setting of Meghalaya

Meghalaya became an independent state of the Indian union on January 21st, 1972. The total area of the state is about 22,429 square kilometres, with a population of 29.67 lakhs (2011 census). The name Meghalaya is derived from Sanskrit meaning “Abode of the Clouds” and is a prominent state of the North-eastern region, it lies between the 25° 10' to 26° 50' North latitude and 89° 45' to 92° 47' east longitude. The state extends length wise to about 300 km and about 100km in width. The state of Meghalaya shares its borders in the south and west with Bangladesh and in the north and east with the state of Assam. In the table 1.5 the districts of Meghalaya along with district head quarter, total area and population is depicted in a tabular format.

Table 1.5: Districts of Meghalaya, District Head Quarter, Area & Population

Sl. No	District Name	District Head Quarter	Area (Sq. Km)	Population
1	East Garo Hills	Williamnagar	1,490 Sq.km	132257
2	East Jaintia Hills	Khliehriat	2,115 Sq.km	1,22,436
3	East Khasi Hills	Shillong	2,748 Sq.km	824,059
4	North Garo Hills	Resubelpara	1,113 Sq.km	118325
5	Ri-Bhoi	Nongpoh	2,378 Sq.km	258840
6	South Garo Hills	Baghmara	1,887 Sq.km	1,42,574
7	Southwest Garo Hills	Ampati	822 Sq.km	1,72,495
8	Southwest Khasi Hills	Mawkyrwat	1,401 Sq.km	99,171
9	West Garo Hills	Tura	3,714 Sq.km	5,18,390
10	West Jaintia Hills	Jowai	1,693 Sq.km	2,70352
11	West Khasi Hills	Nongstoin	3,846 Sq.km	2,94,115
12	Eastern West Khasi Hills	Mairang	3,846 Sq.km	2,84,290

Source: - http://meghalaya.gov.in/megportal/district_details

²² <https://theshillongtimes.com/2018/05/29/number-of-tourists-visiting-meghalaya-on-the-rise/searched> on 18-02-22, Time- 3:40 pm

The state of Meghalaya is comprised of mountainous terrains, valleys and highland plateaus and rich deposits of minerals. Physically, Meghalaya is a Table land, a plateau which is emerged out of the plains of Assam millions of years ago.[30]. The state is broadly segregated into three hill sections namely: -

- Khasi Hills in the middle
- Garo Hills in the west
- Jaintia Hills in the east

The central and eastern part of Meghalaya comprising of the Khasi and Jaintia hills is an imposing plateau with rolling grassland, hills, and river valleys, however the southern part of the plateau comprising of Garo hills has deep gorges and abrupt slopes. The height of the central plateau of the Khasi hills is around 1500 metres with Shillong peak at 1965 metres is the highest point in the plateau. “*The plateau consists mainly of Archean rock²³ configurations ,containing rich deposits of valuable minerals like, coal, limestone, uranium , sillimanite*”. [31].The second highest peak in the state of Meghalaya ,situated in the Garo hills is the Nokrek peak standing at about 1457 metres [32].

The total forest area in Meghalaya is about 30 percent of the land area i.e., about 8,510 square kilometres. The State Government machinery has jurisdiction to control about just about 11 percent of the total state’s forest cover. i.e., about 993square kilometres and the rest is under the direct jurisdiction of different districts councils, and private tribal clans. Some of the common forest products are timber, bamboo, reed, broomstick, cane, medicinal herbs & plants, cinnamon & thatch grass. The state of Meghalaya experiences mixed climatic conditions, in the higher altitude it experiences cooler climate, whereas, in the lower plain belts, the temperatures are relatively high. The temperature in the state varies from about 27 degrees centigrade in the summers to sub-zero temperatures during the winter season.

1.7.2: - History of Meghalaya

In the year 1970, the state of Meghalaya become an autonomous state comprising of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills and subsequently after two years on 21st January 1972, it

²³ Archean rocks are the oldest rocks formed about 4 billion years ago. These rocks were formed due to the solidification of molten magma. These rocks are commonly referred as “Basement Complex,” as they are the oldest and forms the base for new layers.

was conferred full-fledged statehood. The state is inhabited by 2 dominant tribal groups, the Khasi's, and the Garo's. The Khasis and the Garo's are from the *Mon-Khmer* and the *Tibeto-Burman* race in origin. The Khasis are further divided into groups based on geographical location rather than race. The inhabitants of the Khasi Hills in the central plateau are called the *Khasis*. The inhabitants of the Jaintia Hills in the eastern part are called *Jaintias* or *Pnars*. The inhabitants of the Bhoi areas in the northern part are called the *Bhois* and finally the inhabitants of the southern steep slopes are known as the *Wars* [33].

Though the origin of the Khasis is controversial and mysterious, due to lack of recorded history, but research studies have brought through many facts that the Khasis were from Southeast Asia. There is a theory suggesting that the Khasi's originally from the north migrated to Sylhet present day Bangladesh, however, due to extreme climatic conditions and rampant floods they relocated to the present habitat Khasi Hills [34].

There is also another theory stating that the Khasis came from Myanmar (Burma). The Khasi people were believed to be one of the earliest races to migrate to the Northeast of India. They entered the fertile valley of the Brahmaputra through the Patkai hills [35].

As for the Garos, they are categorised into five clans called *Chatchi*. Originally there were only two clans namely *Sangma* and *Marak*, later *Momin*, *Areng* and *Shira* have been evolved [32]. The Garos were originally from Tibet and after staying in North Bengal and the Brahmaputra valley, they finally settled down in Garo Hills.

1.8: - Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is a compilation of research on study area on prospects and challenges on rural tourism in the Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya. This thesis is an original and sincere effort to find out the prospects and challenges of rural tourism and to benefit the host communities, stakeholders, and tourists for an enriching experience. The thesis is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter on Introduction gives a general view of the tourism phenomenon and states the background of the study area. It also highlights the definitions and types of

tourism along with rural tourism in global and Indian context. This chapter also discusses about the history and geographical aspects of the study area.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter on Review of Literature reviews the literature based on the concepts of tourism, impacts of tourism, alternative tourism forms, origin, forms of rural tourism and benefits and challenges of rural tourism on local community development. This chapter also highlights the research gaps identified during the review of literature.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter on Research Methodology encompasses the research design and highlights the important aspects like the need of study, scope of the study, objectives of the study, research hypothesis, types of research design, sample size and selection, data collection procedure, tools for data collection, pilot test results, validity and reliability testing, and techniques used for data analysis.

Chapter 4: Tourism in Meghalaya and Prospects of Rural Tourism in Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya.

This chapter highlights the status of tourism in the state of Meghalaya and in particular the study area Ri-Bhoi district. This chapter explains the concept of rural tourism. It also gives a brief description of the study area i.e., Ri-Bhoi district and analyses the resources available for the development and growth of rural tourism initiatives in the district. This chapter gives the profile of the respondents involved in the research study. The respondents in the research are the local community inhabitant of the district. The study also elaborates the tourist destinations in Ri-Bhoi districts and lastly in the chapter a content and swot analysis were done on rural tourism prospects in Ri-Bhoi district.

Chapter 5: Exploring the effects of Rural Tourism on Local Community Development.

This chapter highlights the interpretation of the local community respondents towards the effect of rural tourism development. The effects are categorised into three aspects, namely economic impact, socio-cultural impact, and environmental impact. To access the accurate effects of rural tourism initiatives, the resident schedule has been subjected to reliability analysis and factor analysis of the three impacts i.e., economic,

socio-cultural, and environmental has been carried out, along with hypothesis testing using appropriate tests.

Chapter 6: Challenges and Obstacles for the development of Rural Tourism in Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya

This chapter tries to explain the challenges related to the development of rural tourism in the study area and the opinions of the respondents and the stakeholders in this regard. To access the key challenges of rural tourism development, the resident schedule has been subjected to reliability analysis and factor analysis has been carried out, along with hypothesis testing using appropriate tests.

Chapter 7: Findings, Recommendations, Conclusion and Scope of further study

This chapter features the research studies major findings, pertinent recommendations, and the factual conclusion drawn. This chapter summarizes the entire research undertaken and highlights the inferences derived from the study and the findings from the study will enable the scope for future research.