

TOURISM: PROSPECTS AND POTENTIALITIES (A CASE STUDY)

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Abstract: Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries of the world. Tourism today is a great economic force. Its status as a major economic activity has been well established by almost all the nations of the world. Now a day's tourism is considered as the second largest industry in the world with an enormous potential for future growth and the countries have laid emphasis on this sector of industry. No East India's glorious tradition and rich cultural heritage are closely linked with the development of tourism. The wealth and cultural traditions, natural surroundings are the architectural masterpieces of North –East India, apart from its colourful festivals, music, dance, customs, languages etc. Which is added the flames, all these go to make North-East India a tourist paradise. Under this background the paper on the tourist prospects and potentialities cause to examine itself in Tinsukia District of Assam.

Keywords: Architectural, Diversity, Employment generation, Geographic, Industry, Social-cultural, Tourism, Travel.

Introduction

Tourism is a path of discovery from time immemorial man has been discovering new geographic locations and natural phenomena, besides discovering new fact about human civilisation. Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries of the world. Tourism today is a great economic force. Its status as a major economic activity has been well established by almost all the nations of the world. It is with an enormous potential for further growth. According to Schulerd V. Hermarn Tourism is an economic exchange which takes place as a result of a tourist visit to another city or country, one is board and loading as well as his travel in and around the city or the country which one visit (Shiela & Bora M.C.).

Tourism refers to all visitor activities including those of both over night and same day visits, the UNO given innovation in transport technology, some day travel is becoming increasing important at wilding spatial scales an exemplification of geographic, space, time, compression (Lew A. Alen & Michael Hall C.). The concept of tourism is not a new one, the present concept of tourism emerged after the world war-II and through gradual development. It becomes an industry in the 21st century. Tourism was made a priority sector for foreign direct investment in 1991 making it, eligible for automatic approval up to 51 percent of the equity (Chaudhuary Prabhat). During the 1960's tourism came to be recognized as a source of foreign exchange a catalyst of development and a security against uncertain fluctuation of commodity prices,

In present day context, the term tourism includes the totality of relationship and phenomena arising from travel and temporary stay of strangers, the rapid urbanization, rising standard of living, detachment of persons from the country side environment and increasing leisure time have cause for the development of tourism all over the world. India is the second most populous and seventh largest country in terms of area in the world; it has an important place in global cultural fabric. The Government of India set up the tourism development council in 1958.

The tourism attains second place in term of foreign exchange earning in India from 1991-2001. In the period earning fom tourism represents about 12 percent of total export earning of the country. Tourism was granted export house status in 1998 making hotels travel agents, tour operators and tourist transport operator eligible for such recognition entitling them to various incentives. A new tourism policy of government led

private sector driven and community welfare oriented was announced by the government of India in May 2002. The benchmark for the sector is that more than 5 million annual foreign tourist arrivals and generating valuable foreign exchange. The foreign tourist arrivals in India in 2008 were 6.29 million with a growth of 8.9 percent as compared to the foreign tourist arrivals of 5.78 million with a growth of 11.8 percent during the year 2010. (Assam Tribune)

The development of tourism in the North-East India is a fascinating subject. North-East India's glorious tradition and rich cultural heritage are closely linked with the development of tourism. The wealth and cultural traditions, natural surroundings are the masterpieces besides its colourful festivals, music, dance, customs, languages etc. All these go to make North-East India a tourist paradise which needs a careful study since it is not problem free so as spots are concerned.

Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of the present study are-

1. To analyse the Socio-economic and cultural status prevalent in Tinsukia district and
2. To study the present state of affairs of prospecting Tourist spots in Tinsukia District.

Methodology:

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected through observation, interview schedules and conversation with the people and discussion with the departmental experience person about the tourism.

Secondary data is collected from official's records and documents, published and unpublished materials related to the study, printed books and magazines, news papers, internet etc. In addition data have been analysis through the stander statistical method.

Social and Demographic characteristics of the study area:

The present study mainly concentrated tourist sports and the potential of the Tinsukia District in Assam as a tourist place. Assam is the gateway of the North-East, the beauty of the state is blessed with scenic beauty and diversity. Assam, remote, exotic and extravaganza of land scrape scenery lies in the extreme north-east corner of India located at the foothills of the mighty Himalayas. The state is linked to the rest of the country by the shamus winding its way among Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Assam is relatively cooler than other parts of the country where clouds float at feet, hills emerge from it bosom and soar high like a chorus and panorama changes with unbelievable frequency. Assam is a place where a visitor feels the pristine freshness of nature.

The destinations of tourist in Assam are five national parks i.e.i) Kaziranga, Manas, Dibru-saikhowa and Orrang, ii) Wild life sanctuary, protected areas, historical monuments situated in Sibsagarh, Tezpur, Tinsukia, Guwahati, iii) The largest river island in the world Majuli bearing the centuries of vaishnave culture being itself a district. iv) Religious place, like Kamakhya and other temples and shrines are situated in Guwahati and others parts of the state. The tourists are always attracted towards various flora and fauna composing one-horned Rhino, Elephant, Tiger, Buffaloes and different kind of birds, flower, plants, orchids and beautiful greeneries etc.

Tinsukia is one of the twenty three administrative Districts in the state of Assam in India. The ancient name of Tinsukia was Bangmara. It was the capital of the Muttack kingdom. Sarbananda Singha established his capital at Rangarah situated on the Bank of river Guijan in 1791 A.D, he transferred his capital to the city of Bangmara. Bangmara was built by King: Sarbananda Singha with the help of his Minister Gopinath Borbaruah. The city was built in middle of the present city of Tinsukia. It was declared as the 23rd District of Assam on 1st

October 1989. There are three Sub-division i.e. Tinsukia, Margherita and Sadiya.

The district geographical boundary is covered by the Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh on the East, the Brahmaputra, the Dibang and Dhemaji District on the West, the Slops of hilly tract of Arunachal Pradesh on the North and Dibrugarh district and Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh on the South. Tinsukia district covers a total area of 3790 Sq.K.ms.

The total population of the district is 1316948 out of which 675986 (51.32 percent) are male and 640962 (48.67 percent) female as per 2011 census. Thus, out of the total population of the district 10,53956 (80.03percent) live in rural area of which 543210(51.54 percent) are male and 515746 (48.46 percent) female while the population density was 347 persons per sq km. The Sex ratio of the district is 948 females per 1000 males. The literacy rate in the district is 933979(70.92 percent). The district population growth rate over the decade 2001-2011 was 14.5 percent. The district has 7 Development Block, 1162 Villages, 88 Gaon panchayats and 3 Anchalik Pranchayats. The major town of the district is Digboi, Mergherita, Doom-dooma, Makum, Chapakhowa and Tinsukia. The major rivers in the district are the Brahmaputra, Lohit, Buri-Dehing, Dibru, Kundil, Na-Dehing, Dibang, Doom-Dooma etc.(Field study)

Tinsukia district is a principal commercial centre in Assam. It is an industrial district. Some industries of this district are IOC (AOD) at Digboi. Coal field at Ledo and Makum, Oil field at Digboi, Hindustan Unic Liver Private Ltd at Doom-Dooma. The district has produce generous amount of oranges, ginger, other citrus fruits and paddy etc. The major tourist spots in Tinsukia District are as below

Dibru-Saikhowa National Park:

Dibru-Saikhowa National Park is one of the prominent bio-diversity hot spots of the world. It is located at a distance of 13 k.ms. On the North side of the Tinsukia Town. The Park encircled by rivers Brahmaputra and Chiang in the top of Lohit, Dibang, Dangri rivers, spread over an area of 765 Sq.k.ms with a core area of about 340 Sq k.ms. The Dibru-Saikhowa is partly wetland, partly grassland and dense forest. Its eco-system is home to a wide range of animals including mammals' amphibians, fishes, butterflies and insets. The park is inhabited by 35 species of mammals, 502 species of birds, 105 species of butterflies and 680 species of plants, 12 species of mammals recorded by the Indian wild life protection Act 1972. Among them are the Tiger, Elephant, Asific wild buffalo, a safe for extremely rare while winged wood duck and many migratory birds. Its wild Horses, cattle feral horses are precisely sufficient to make the visitor wild. In 1999 Tinsukia district become home to Dibru-Saikhowa Park declared as National Park. Lodging facilities are available outside the park at Guijan forest I.B. whereas waiting and restaurant facilities are available at Tinsukia Town at a very reasonable rate.

Digboi :

Digboi is an important industrial town of upper Assam, located at a distance of about 30 k.ms. on the South-East of Tinsukia Town. It has the oldest petroleum in Asia. Where Oil well was drilled commercially in September 1889. A refinery was commissioned in December 1901, first of its kind in Asia and it was only refinery till India achieved independence and now it is the oldest operating oil refinery in the world: Digboi also has the distinction of establishing the first oil museum in India, the 18 whole golf courses is an added attraction in Digboi close to upper Dehing Reserve Forest. This Golf course is known for its Scenic beauty. A visit to the nearby war Cemetery and the Centenary Park can offer a unique experience (Bhattacharya P.)

War Cemetery:

The most dramatic event in Digboi's history took place during the World War II, when the belligerent Japanese came close to within three days marching distance of Digboi. These images come back as one kneels at the headstone at the Digboi War Cemetery.

Margherita :

Margherita is one of the sub-division of Tinsukia district. The District is an important industrial Town and the Coal Queen of Assam. Margherita at a distance of 16 kms to the South of Digboi has the oldest plywood factory in the whole of Eastern India. Margherita has the centre of tea gardens, Coal, Mines with many picnic spots dotting the sandy banks of the river Dihing Cool misty and away from the mainland, breathing in the corner of fresh tea leaves is an experience, both rare and heartwarming. The tea gardens here are perhaps the best in the world. The Coal Heritage Museum beside the National Highway 38 in Margherita town is another attraction of the tourist which is a remarkable effort of Coal India Limited to know the history of coal mining in the area (Field Study).

Ledo :

Ledo located about 56 kms. On the South-East of Tinsukia town. It has some of oldest coal mining areas of India. The hilly terrain along the Arunachal Pradesh border, the Buri-Dehing plain along with the forest and the tea gardens add to the natural beauty of the area. Reserve forest like upper Dehing, BuriDehing and Tinga-Pani are ideal for exploring rivers flora and fauna in the rainforest. The Buri-Dehing can provide ample scope for picnic and adventure activities such as boating and rafting. The area also has scope for cycling and trekking venture on National Highway 38. Known as Stilwell road is located at a distance of 55 km from Digboi. It may attract tourist especially Chinese and Japanese in near future.

Dehing Patkai Wild-Life Sanctuary:

The Dehing Patkai wild life sanctuary is among the tropical wet evergreen forest of Assam. The sanctuary covers an area of around 111.19 Sq km and sheltered numbers of animals such as Tiger, Elephant, Hornbill, Pig-Tailed Macaque and hoolock Gibben. It is the home to a number of Beautiful and rare birds. Recently, introduced Dehing-Patkai annual festival at Ledo area attracts more than thousands of tourists were every year.

Sadiya:

Sadiya as a Sub-division of Tinsukia district, lies in the extreme North-Eastern corner of Assam, bordered by Arunachal Pradesh, The area is rich in scenic and natural beauty, especially the riverfronts of Dibang, Kundil and Lohit. There are ample scopes for water-borne adventures in these rivers. Besides, the Sadiya area is also an important gateway to the famous pilgrimage site Parashuram Kundaand, Maiodia of Arunachal Pradesh. Parashuram and Maiodio are located at 48 km. East and 65 kms. north of the Chapakhowa Town. Kasaikhaiti Temple, Bura-Buri Than, Boiragi Baba temple are some other important pilgrimage in Sadiya. Kasaikhaiti temple located at 25 kms. East from Chapakhowa town. There was a tradition of Human Sacrifice in this temple during the regime of Chutia's. Bura-Buri temple is located at a distance of 5 km. on the South-East of Chapakhowa Town. There was a tradition of Animal Sacrifice in this temple. The Boiragi-Baba temple also located at 7 km. to West-South of Chapakhowa town. The area also ideal for cycle tours for exploring the charm of being natives like and culture of the country side. Accessibility to the area is rather difficult due to transport bottleneck. The area can enjoy comparatively a short tourist season of five month from October to February. The area has a moderate potential for tourism promotion. The foreign tourist is regularly visiting Sadiya (Field Study).

Bordubi Tilinga Mandir :

It is famous for the Tilinga(Bell) that is hanged in the temple. It is located at a distance of about 12 km. from the Tinsukia Town. It is believed that if you have a wish and pray to Lord Shiva for fulfilling the wish, the wish will be granted that one has to donate a Bell tied on a: Pipale tree. Believers hang the Bell to the branches of the Pipale trees. Usually people prefer to visit the temple of Bell in Monday. But every day people

offer their prayer with Bell or without bell to Lord Shiva which is fasten with a red thread to the Pipale trees.

Na-Pukhuri :

The Sarbananda Singha, the Muttack king has dug 24 tanks at various places in his kingdom. NaPukhuri which was dug in 1792 A.D. is the largest among these tanks; it is situated in Tinsukia Town. Its total area is 23.80 acres. Owing to its location scenario and aesthetic potential. Tinsukia District administration decided to turn the ancient monument in to an ideal park or amusement sport or even a tourist spot of the North _East. It was also through that apart from its glorious cultural and historical background, the attraction of the place can be enhanced considerably by adding modern facilities like Swimming, Water Sports or Luxury Boating for tourists etc. (Field Study)

Borjan Padumoni Wildlife:

The Padumoni Wild life is at a distance of about 6 km from Tinsukia town. It is famous for different species of mammals including Osprey, Kingfisher, India Pied, Hornbill, Limited Barbet, Wood Packer, Derange, Common Mynati, Bulbul, Magpie Robin, Wagtail and varieties of wood, land, birds etc.

Rukmini Island:

A Beach island is covering an area of 3.25 Sq km. and situated in the midst of the river Brahmaputra. It is a safe haven for many indigenous and migratory birds. The best attraction is the long sandy beaches, sand banks for sun paths and parasailing. The place is ideal for holidays that bring one away from the madding crowd of the modern life.

The Shiva Dham:

The Shiv Dham, a big temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is famous for a pond located within its premises. It is situated at the 1 Km. to East of the Tinsukia Town.

The rich culture which adds to Tinsukia vibrant history comprises of numerous ancient festivals such as shopawang yawing manau, Poi, Bihu, Ali-Aye-ligang, tuluni and Saghi which are celebrated with great Zeal. Shopawang yawng manau Poi is known to be the most famous Falk dance festival is held on the 14th February every year. Assamese, Bengali, Hindi are the major languages spoken in the District.

Almost all the types of Indian cuisine is available in the district of Tinsukia is which has cosmopolitan culture and people from all other Indian states can be found here. Here the food available is relatively less spicy. Tinsukia District is a commercial town. One can find lot of shopping option i.e. handicraft, Assam Silk, artifacts, local tea and allied products. One can also visit cottage industries and buy produce from that place itself. Some beautiful handmade products may be the rare collection item is available here.

Major Findings:

Findings: Tinsukia District being a commercial town, one can find lot of shopping interest here in handicraft, Silk forest products, fruits and vegetables, tea etc. The District has great potential for promoting its tourist culture. It can be made as a tourist destination and can provide a spot for world excitement and contents. Every place has something celestial and unique diversity to offer rural tourism facilities. Policy is taken by the government to support the small entrepreneurs. Dimension of tourism sector has tremendous prospect in the district and could bring new vistas to states and regional economy. Some of holy place and religious institutions and other historical monuments has already highlighted above. The paper under scrutiny reveals the following findings.

1) The road and transport communication system in Sadiya block are not satisfactory and it is pitiable in the Block, in particular. The connecting roads of the block are narrow and the bridges are also narrow. The Sadiya Block is still beyond the railway network. Therefore, the travelers are yet to be made popular among the

tourist in this area.

2) Water transport and tourist operation related to water still at their infant stage. The vast potential of the river Brahmaputra as well as its navigable tributaries have been left untapped so far water recreation is concern.

3) The district has tremendous potentiality of ecotourism and adventure tourism. But efforts are not being made as yet in this direction.

4) Till now large scale attention of tourist could not be made due to lack of professionalism and publicity only.

Suggestion: Considering the above findings s crucial problems the paper suggests a few important suggestions to be taken seriously for urgent solution, these are as noted below:

1) The district administration should immediately declare the River Brahmaputra as a tourist resource of the district. The schemes should be undertaken to introduce cruise vessel or hover craft far providing river cruising facilities to tourist along the Brahmaputra by connecting destinations like Dibru-Saikhowa, Dhala-Sadiya, DhalaAmarpur etc Specially October to November.

2) Tour package should be creative enough to attract tourist and to get long term benefit to the local areas. As for example, while complaining for a monument, apart from starting its history and local significance, attempt should be made to project. It is uniqueness in terms of architecture, beauty, sculpture etc that make it distinct from other monuments of the world.

3) Tourism promotional activities of the district should be parallel supported by promotional venture of potential tourism products like indigenous craft, folk art, performing art, music, oral literature, sports and other cultural component. The government and NGO's can play important role in this regards.

4) As natural and wildlife attractions are the mainstay of tourism industry of Assam. Hence forest policy of the district should have provision for promotion and management of national Park and sanctuaries by using tourism as a supporting means in the district with active participation of local people.

5) Facilities of long and short-terms training programme should be provided by the tourism department to the staff of tourist lodges, hostel, travel agencies etc. Similarly special programmes should be arranged by the department to provide training of tourist guides to local unemployed youth in different tourist' sport of the district.

Conclusion:

The district administration should be entrusted to prepare and execute micro-level tourism plans at the spot level. They can act as a catalyst between the tourist department and the local tour promoters can perform accordingly. This role as a promoting unit for developing small scale and local level tourism deserve attention of the governments both centre and the state level.

The district has shown its potential to become the tourist centre of Assam. Required urgency to promote tourism as a major industry in the district while considering the socio-cultural aspect as study above, but unfortunately the district is yet to wake up to its potential and harness it in sustainable manner.

Despite the fact that the district is endowed with immense natural wealth, and while being a border state with unique cultural heritage, something that ought to have been given by now a tourism status, is lacking in all. Notwithstanding the state government off repeated proclamations about the district being a paradise for visitors, in reality the district tourism is continues to be at a nascent stage even after the river bridge of Asia inaugurated, particularly for absence of adequate facilities in tourist spots and insufficient publicity. Most beautiful part of the country that also home to the most hospitable people is missing something to become the

most attractive tourist centre of India.

In view of the Act East Policy, The District of Tinsukia shall be seen as second gateway to the people of ASEAN countries particularly for tea tourism, medical tourism, wildlife tourism, river tourism, cultural tourism mostly Inauguration of AMAR ALOHI (Our Guest) scheme only recently by the Chief Minister of Assam on the eve of world Tourism Day on 28th Sept. can transform Tinsukia district into a tourist point provided implementation happens.

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2. President and Secretary of the Selected Tourist spots committees.
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