

TOURISM IN ASSAM- A MACRO LEVEL STUDY

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Objectives

1. To see the trend of tourist inflow and revenue collection in Assam
2. To examine the status of tourism in Assam with other tourism developed top 10 states of India.
3. To see the status of some determining factors of tourism development in Assam.
4. To give some policy measures on the basis of the findings of the study.

Data and Methodology

Secondary data have been used to fulfill the objectives of this paper. The secondary data is collected from different sources like, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, Tourism Statistics India, 2010, Domestic Tourism Statistics for Assam, different government and individuals research articles and publications etc. The paper is descriptive in nature.

Discussion and Findings

Assam, the most prominent state of North East India is said to be the hotspot for tourists for its natural beauty and favourable climate. This state is surrounded by Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Assam also shares its border with Bhutan and Bangladesh. The state is spread across an area of 78,438 sq km which represents 2.39 % of the Indian landmass. (Economic Survey, Assam, 2010-11) The whole state is divided into two distinct natural regions, viz, the plain and the hills. The plain region comprises of the Brahmaputra and Barak valley. The hill region consists of two hills namely the Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar hills. The state is the gateway to the north eastern region and is allied to India by a narrow strip in West Bengal called the Siliguri corridor or the Chicken

Neck of India. Thus, Assam is in isolation from the rest of the country; yet she is famous for her unique physiological beauty with flora and fauna, historical monuments, pilgrim centres, tea gardens and her colourful cultural festivals which are considered as her tourism resources. Assam is rich in natural resources. About 35% of the state is covered with forests. There are five national parks, seventeen wildlife and bird sanctuaries and 2 biosphere reserves (Devi, 2012).

Though Assam has been hospitable to visitors from an ancient era, yet tourism started flourishing only after the establishment of the Directorate of Tourism of Assam in 1959. Over the years, since 1959, this department has made considerable progress in this sector (Devi, 2012). The following table shows the trend of domestic and foreign tourists to Assam and their percentage change over the period. From this table it is observed that in comparison to domestic tourists the number of foreign tourists to Assam is very low. During 1997 the number of domestic tourist to Assam was 8, 42,656 which was very high as compared to foreign tourist i.e. only 4,194. The table-1 also shows that there is variation of percentage change in domestic tourist as well as foreign tourist over the period.

Table-1

Inflow of Domestic and Foreign Tourist

Sl. No.	Tourists Visit			
Year	Domestic	% Change in Domestic Tourist	Foreign	% Change in Foreign Tourist
1997	842656		4194	
1998	939721	11.5	3843	-8.36
1999	964939	2.68	5218	35.77
2000	1001577	3.79	5959	14.20
2001	1010651	.90	6171	3.55
2002	1953915	93	6409	3.85
2003	2156675	10.3	6610	3.14
2004	2288093	6.09	7285	10.21
2005	2467652	7.84	10782	48.00
2006	2768824	12.20	10374	-3.78
2007	3436833	24.12	12899	24.34

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Government of Assam. (Column three and five are calculated by the authors)

From table-1, we have observed that there is some sort of fluctuation of tourist inflow to Assam. Therefore, in this context it is necessary to have a look in the trend of revenue from tourist over the period. The Table-2 indicates that there is some sort of fluctuation, both in the number of tourists and the revenue collected there from. As can be seen, in 1998-99, there was a decrease in the number of tourists; but there was an increase of 16.03% in the revenue collected. On the other hand, in 2006-07, there was an increase in the number of tourists, but it led to a decrease of 6.67% in the revenue collection. However, since 2007-09, Assam has been witnessing an increase, both in the number of tourists and the revenue collected. Of course, the rise in revenue collection does not have much gradual tendency, yet it can be termed encouraging.

Table-2

Tourist Inflow and Revenue Collection from Tourism in Assam

Year	No. of Tourists	Revenue (in Rs.)	% change in Revenue
1	2	3	4
1996-97	7,43,545	36,87,958.00	
1997-98	8,97,110	37,72,396.00	+2.28
1998-99	7,75,889	40,56,888.00	+16.03
1999-00	9,88,329	41,72,666.00	+2.85
2000-01	9,68,444	35,87,224.00	+13.06
2001-02	16,95,882	38,88,841.00	+8.40
2002-03	20,09,483	41,03,051.00	+5.50
2003-04	20,09,483	41,03,051.00	+5.50
2004-05	20,36,952	60,44,642.00	+47.37
2005-06	21,95,605	69,02,443.00	+14.19
2006-07	34,93,527	81,29,651.00	-6.67
2007-08	35,03,613	94,99,820.00	+16.85
2008-09	37,13,239	1,03,91,516.00	+9.38
2009-10	39,10,224	1,31,63,299.00	+26.67
2010-2011	41,43,080	1,43,60,969.00	+9.09

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Government of Assam (Figures in Column 4 are calculated by the author)

Although Assam has been progressing in tourism, yet it was not there in the list of the top ten states of India in respect of domestic as well as foreign tourists in 2010. It was even not having 2.5% share, which was the lowest, enjoyed by Gujarat in respect of domestic tourists and Goa, in respect of foreign tourists. Further, it was known from the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, that Assam had only 0.6% of India's total domestic tourists and only 0.1% of the foreign tourists in 2009. In the year 2009, Assam stood at the 18th position among the states of India, in respect of tourist inflow. In the following discussion, it is tried to compare the status of tourism based on domestic and foreign tourist inflow in Assam with other top 10 states in tourism of India during 2010.

Table-3 and table-4 shows that Assam had only 0.5% of India's total domestic tourists and only 0.1% of the foreign tourists in 2010. In the year 2010, Assam stood at the 20th position among the top tourism developed states of India, in respect of domestic tourist inflow and stood 24th position in respect of foreign tourist.

Table-3

States	Domestic Tourists	Percentage Share	Rank
Andhra Pradesh	155789584	21.0	1
Gujarat	18861296	2.5	10
Karnataka	38202077	5.2	5
Madhya Pradesh	38079595	5.1	6
Maharashtra	48465492	6.54	4
Rajasthan	25543877	3.5	8
Tamil Nadu	111637104	15.1	3
Uttar Pradesh	144754977	19.6	2
Uttarakhand	30206030	4.1	7
West Bengal	21072324	2.8	9
Assam	4050924	0.5	20

Comparison with percentage shares and rank of top 10 states in domestic tourist visits, during 2010

States	Foreign Tourists	Percentage Share	Rank
Bihar	635722	3.6	8
Delhi	1893650	10.6	3
Goa	441053	2.47	10
Himachal Pradesh	453616	2.5	9
Kerala	659265	3.7	7
Maharashtra	5083126	28.5	1
Rajasthan	1278523	7.2	5
Tamil Nadu	2804687	15.7	2
Uttar Pradesh	1675123	9.4	4
West Bengal	1192187	6.7	6
Assam	15157	0.1	24

Table-4

Comparison with percentage shares and rank of top 10 states in foreign tourist visits, during 2010

From the discussions and findings, it has been observed that Assam's Position or status in tourism is not satisfactory as compared to the other tourism-developed states in India. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the cause of backwardness of the tourism sector in Assam. Meena Kumari Devi, 2012 in her study point out some factors which are responsible for the backwardness of tourism in Assam, they are Insufficient transport and communication facilities, Unavailability of average standard accommodation, Inadequate public services like PCOs, ATM systems etc, Frequent power cut-offs, Communication gaps between tourists and people, Flash floods, heavy rainfall, waterlogged roads etc, Insurgency problems of the state etc. However, according to Indias Tourism Statistics, 2010 there are some determining factors of tourism development. Therefore, in this study attempt has been made to see their status in Assam in comparison to other selected states of India.

Table-5

Distribution of Hotel Rooms during 2010

States		5star delux	5star	4star	3star	2star	1star
Bihar	No. of Hotels	-	-	4	4	-	-
	No. of Rooms	-	-	214	196	-	-
Delhi	No. of Hotels	31	6	14	18	9	8
	No. of Rooms	9999	860	1134	570	308	196
Goa	No. of Hotels	21	13	4	13	13	1
	No. of Rooms	3572	1662	480	847	737	26
Himachal Pradesh	No. of Hotels	3	3	1	7	5	-
	No. of Rooms	137	213	41	207	135	-
Kerala	No. of Hotels	4	14	31	305	98	8
	No. of Rooms	512	1184	1793	7480	1888	273
Maharashtra	No. of Hotels	32	30	27	55	38	8
	No. of Rooms	10417	3626	2210	3009	1274	249
Rajasthan	No. of Hotels	13	18	3	30	16	1
	No. of Rooms	1461	1685	138	1528	639	19
Tamil Nadu	No. of Hotels	7	10	12	37	14	18
	No. of Rooms	1264	1291	1525	2459	554	804
Uttar Pradesh	No. of Hotels	9	13	5	35	6	2
	No. of Rooms	1371	1919	270	1321	240	76

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West Bengal	No. of Hotels	6	3	5	11	5	-
	No. of Rooms	1320 -	349	411	433	135	-
Assam	No. of Hotels			2	-	8	
	No. of Rooms			148	720	225	

Source: Tourism Statistics India, 2010

Table-5 shows that as compared to other tourism developed states of India Assam do not possess any number of 5star deluxe or 5 star hotels. Besides Assam do not possesses sufficient number of 4 star, 3 star and 2 star hotels as well as rooms. This may have some bad impacts of the tourist inflow in Assam.

In order to provide quality services to tourists, the Ministry of Tourism grants recognition to inbound tour operators, travel agents, tourist transport operators, domestic tour operators, and adventure tour operators in the country (Tourism Statistics, 2010). As on 31st December 2011, 600 inbound tour operators, 467 travel agencies, 213 tourist transport operators, 67 domestic tour operators and 33 adventure tour operators were registered with the Ministry. The selected State-wise distributions of these units are given in Table 6. It may be seen from this table that out of 600 recognized inbound tour operators in the country, 344 are from Delhi, followed by 48 from Maharashtra, and 31 from Kerala. Maximum No. of recognized Inbound tour operators, travel agencies, tourist transport operators, adventure tour operators and domestic tour operators are from Delhi. Out of the 33 registered adventure tour operators, 23 are from Delhi followed by 3 from Tamil Nadu, and two each from Himachal Pradesh. Regarding Inbound Tour Operator Assam possesses only 8, Travel Agencies 1 and domestic tour operator only two.

Table-6

Selected State-wise Number of Recognized Inbound Tour Operators, Travel Agencies, Tourist Transport Operators, Adventure tour Operators & Domestic tour operators in 2010

Source: Tourism Statistics India, 2010

The Govt. aims at positioning tourism as a major engine of economic growth and harnessing its direct and multiplier effects for employment and poverty eradication in an environmentally sustainable manner. The Plan Schemes of the Ministry of Tourism essentially relate to the following:–

- (i) Tourism Product/Infrastructure Development
- (ii) Human Resource Development
- (iii) Promotion and Marketing
- (iv) Market Research including 20 years Perspective Plan and
- (v) Computerization and Information Technology

States	Inbound Tour Operators	Travel Agencies	Tourist Transport Operators	Adventure tour Operators	Domestic tour operators
Bihar	3	4	-	-	1
Delhi	344	152	93	23	29
Goa	15	4	-	-	-
Himachal Pradesh	-	-	-	2	1
Kerala	31	8	26	-	5
Maharashtra	48	105	21	1	9
Rajasthan	21	6	1	-	-
Tamil Nadu	30	57	30	3	6
Uttar Pradesh	17	15	3	-	-
West Bengal	6	20	4	1	4
Assam	8	1	-	-	2

Since most of the infrastructure components and delivery systems are within the purview of the State Governments or private sector, the infrastructure for tourism is mainly being developed by providing financial assistance to State/UT Governments, and by providing various incentives to private entrepreneurs. The following table shows some selected state-wise number of projects and amount sanctioned during 2008-09, 2009-10 & 2010-11.

Table-7

Selected state-wise number of projects and amount sanctioned during 2008-09, 2009-10 & 2010-11.

Source: Tourism Statistics India, 2010

From the table-7, it is observed that during the period from 2008-09 to 2010-11 Assam do not get good numbers of projects as well as amount sanctioned as compared to the other tourism-developed states of India. Therefore, it may have some bad impacts on the tourism sector of Assam.

States	2008-09		2009-10		2010-11	
	No of Sanctioned Projects	Amount Sanctioned(In crores)	No of Sanctioned Projects	Amount Sanctioned(In crores)	No of Sanctioned Projects	Amount Sanctioned(In crores)
Bihar	10	25.05	3	6.99	1	3.60
Delhi	1	0.15	9	44.91	5	9.75
Goa	2	43.14	23	17	3	12.78
Himachal Pradesh	10	34.58	6	23.95	12	34.98
Kerala	12	42.68	7	12.98	3	42.87
Maharashtra	3	41.10	2	5.01	3	11.30
Rajasthan	9	44.31	7	19.74	7	31.32
Tamil Nadu	16	36.14	10	16.28	6	60.00
Uttar Pradesh	6	38.40	6	21.90	14	27.85
West Bengal	10	37.94	7	28.37	8	22.02
Assam	4	21.08	7	22.76	4	23.55