
**Possibilism in Sustainable Cultural Tourism:
Working Model for Khiring Khiring Baithow Mandir of Dangari, Tinsukia
District**

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1.0 Introduction

Cultural tourism has emerged as a generator of income. It is one of the world fastest growing industries as well as a major source of foreign exchange earnings, providing employment to many. Cultural and heritage sites have had to meet the challenges of being open to entrepreneurial approach while continuing to meet their heritage preservation and survival, educational and religious mandates (to perform and celebrate their regular rituals and ceremonies at different point of times of the year). The challenging economic times have compelled cultural and heritages sites to explore ways and means to increase attendance levels and self generated revenues and to control its operating expenditure.

Culture and creative industries are increasingly being used to promote destinations and enhance their competitiveness and attractiveness. Many locations are now actively developing their tangible (i.e. cultural attractions, like museums and heritage centers, etc) and intangible (i.e. promoting cultural events and festivals and selling “atmosphere”) cultural asset as a means of developing comparative advantage in an increasingly comparative tourism market, and to create local distinctiveness in the face of globalization. In this tough time of the all the stakeholders of tourism industry like hotels, tours companies, amusement attraction, retailers and others more receptive to new ideas and approaches.

2.0 Concepts of Cultural Tourism

Motivation of visitors to experience the ‘culture’ in some way or the other is what separate cultural tourism from other forms of tourism. There are lots of different definitions of cultural definition but we define cultural tourism as visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, heritage, artistic, scientific or lifestyle offering of a community, region, group or institutions.

3.0 Tourism Development in Assam

Among the Northeastern states of India, Assam took the pioneering step to recognize tourism as a sector of economy in as back as 1958. However, tourism as an industry is of recent origin in north east India and despite a long history of hosting both international and domestic tourism, tourism sector is still in infancy, witnessing merely 0.9% and 0.2 % of domestic and foreign tourist arrival respectively of the country. Therefore the planners should consider the basic issue, local socio-economic, cultural, institutional and environmental context while planning for sustainable tourism development. In “religious tourism”, people visit places

sacred to their religion and preference for this segment stands at 53 % and 18 % of domestic and foreign respectively.

Assam possesses great physical and cultural diversities. It is a zone of converse of diverse ethnic population; the region is undoubtedly a showcase of cultural diversity, to project it as one of the potential areas of the country in respect of tourism promotion.

4.0 Objectives

Considering the significance of tourism sector as a catalyst for regional development, an attempt has been made in this article

- To visualize and focus the need for adaption of a sustainable tourism development;
- To assess the resource concerning cultural tourism development in study area;
- To examine the growing relationship between tourism and culture and became major drives of destination of attractiveness, competitiveness and invest in;
- To propose a workable model of Baithoi Mandir as a Cultural and Religious Tourism Hub.

5.0 Methodology

The study will be carried out with the help of primary data collected directly from the study area. Field data will be collected by the researcher personally to assess the ground reality. The entire village in and around the temple will be taken as respondent. Group discussion with various religious leader and cultural active people will be held.

6.0 Specific character of the Tourist Need

Visit to cultural sites and historical sites are influenced by many factors including peculiarities of interests of tourists, culture and historical heritage, financial opportunities, psychological perceptions of their religion, custom and ways of life, etc. Of the great importance is the degree of completion of infrastructure around the immovable cultural and historical sites and their public utilities. This form of tourism is among the most popular within the short-term travelling; weekend 'gateway' from city and mountains with day tours to interesting cultural and historical sites.

It requires active local community involvement and which help ultimately to improve the quality of life in the community as a whole and its economic condition, manage their own trade-off can affect either the conservation of the cultural values or enhancement of market appeal and their own identity.

7.0 Need of Planning

Cultural heritage tourism has been the subject of growing interest by peak global organization (WTO, 1995; ICOMOS, 1998b; UNESCO, 1999) and many governments. Planning is the key issue and we must encourage some structure and ethics in cultural heritage tourism development. Lack of effective tourism planning includes market appeal, economic factors and conservation policies or assessment. Bathow Mandir require commoditization to enhance the visitors experience and actualize the tourism potentials.

8.0 Working Model of Baithow Mandir as Cultural Tourism Hub

It is becoming increasingly important that for the survival as well as the conservation of Bathow Mandir, a Working Model is necessary. The main objective for sustainable heritage tourism planning is to manage Baithow Mandir for sustainability. Ideally this should occur in a balanced way by which we can conserve the cultural significance of the heritage place (Bathow Mandir) so that future generation has access to such non renewable resources. The Khiring Khiring Baithow Mandir situated in Barpathar village of Dangari is the heart and soul of Sonowal Kachari Tribe. The essence of Sonowal Kachari religious and cultural centered and originated from this sacred and holy shrine.

Cultural products of Sonowal Kachari include the visual and performing arts, crafts, traditional ceremonies and costumes, fair and festivals, oral literature, life and lifestyle, dietary habits, etc. In terms of these all these components Sonowal Kachari is rich enough with greater spatial diversity. However gradual intrusion of market economy, even in these interior parts of the region distorts such uniqueness. Adaption of a “supply oriented approach” in Baithow Mandir expansion strategy may go a long way in reevaluating and preserving its unique cultural components with necessary value addition as cultural tourism starts with commoditization of culture.

Ideally, cultural heritage of Baithow Mandir should bring economic benefits to the Sonowal Kachari communities and provide a significant means and motivation for them to manage their cultural heritage and continuing traditions. That is, an industry that supports the production of cultural heritage for the future generations of the Sonowal Kachari and visitors.

Furthermore, the close relationship between identity and cultural tourism is the current issue of globalization along with loosened social ties, decline in traditional family norms and structure and individualism.

Cultural Indeed, in many instance, lack of balance between short term commercial and long term goals of sustainability has caused a heritage place’s cultural significance to be altered or ignored. The cultural significance of a place for a community is evoked by its tangible and intangible cultural value and we must pay utmost care to develop it. The heritage place under pressure from heavy visitation, with little attention to its conservation management, will suffer physical damage to its tangible cultural values.

08.1.1 Cultural Values

Cultural values are specific prerequisite for the development of cultural tourism and can be grouped under the three heading; (i) Cultural and historical monuments and museums and sites – archaeological sites, ethnographic monuments and monuments and others (ii) works of arts – movable tangible cultural value: a collection of art objects , works of painting , sculpture, folk crafts, embroidery, costume, cult objects, masterpieces of cinema and literature. (iii) periodic and episodic events – festivals, shows congresses, fairs, celebrations and more. The Sonowal Kachari tribe has all the characteristic of these and a plan way to materialize it.

8.1.2 Potential of Indigenous Culture of Sonowal Kachari

The population of the Tinsukia district composed of diverse ethnic, culture and linguistic. The indigenous Sonowal Kachari people are quite different from any other societies of Assam. They have a rich and diverse cultural heritage. The Sonowal Kachari has their own culture and tradition, many types of fairs and festivals are held in the district. The culture of Sonowal Kachari as depicted in its festivals, dresses, costumes, handicrafts etc may itself be an attraction for the tourist. The festivals and ceremonies practices of the Sonowal Kachari are mostly connected with agriculture and celebrated with ritualistic gaiety either to God for His providence or to pray for a bumper harvest etc. the Sonowal Kachari tribe celebrate various feasible of their own which are purely secular and partly socio-religious in nature

8.1.3 Cultural Tourism forming activity

Development and supply of cultural historical heritage “dressed” in an attractive package of tourist consumption must be balanced with responsibility and necessary seriousness against history and traditional values. The global nature of tourism creates a series of challenges for many communities. With the increasing unification of hotel architectures, chain restaurants, street furniture, and other communities, need to preserve local identity and at the same time meet the expectation of tourists in terms of quality and standards. It is important not to make compromise with the preservation of culture values and to balance the socio-economic needs and economic benefits.

8.1.4 The Folk Dance and Music

The Folk dance and music of Sonowal Kachari are also as rich and colorful itself. The vibrant, colorful attire and wonderful music used while performing the folk dance of Sonowal Kachari create musical ambience. Certain dances have religious significance while other are performed for mere entertainment. Some of these dances are Haidang Geet, Bahuwa Nitya, Hugra Nitya, Lacheri Geet etc and of course Bihu as a whole of Assamese society. To depict various mythological stories, dances are performed in various Nitya.

8.1.5 Indigenous Art and Craft

Indigenous cultural industries, particularly arts and crafts, are very popular with the tourists. Recent survey indicates that tourists regularly buy indigenous art and craft and the value of these far exceeds the current value of cultural tourism. The class and elegance of Sonowal Kachari handicrafts hold a magnetic charm which can win anybody's heart and mind once for all.

Cane and bamboo products like dhara (mats), Khorai (small basket), Japi (Headgear), Bisoni (Hand Fan), Paloh, Jakoi etc. from the backbone of Sonowal Kachari as well as Assam handicraft are most sought after items both in the domestic as well as Global market. The replica of famous Baithow Mandir of Borpather, Keshai Kheti Than or Haal. These two replicas along with white horse of Dibru Shikhowa National Park and handloom weaving is the beauty of very Sonowal Kachari tribal society. Every woman creates colorful attire of their own.

8.1.6 Seasonality of Tourism venture

Seasonality has an important role to play in the pattern of use of available tourist base of the area. It is more important in case of Assam, as almost all the tourist products of the region are meant for out-door tourism activity. Cultural fronts too, ceremonies and festivals are closely associated with the climate calendar of essentially agrarian society of the region. This models attempts to focus on alternative seasonal priorities for the yearlong alternative activities with active participation of local community, specially Sonowal Kachari through "small-scale" tourism venture. Emphasis is laid on (i) marketing of local tourism products through small scale tourism venture managed by local community, (ii) prioritizing on non fixed roof accommodation unlike like traditional focus accommodation on fixed accommodation like hotel, guest house, tourist lodge, etc, (iii) adopt local knowledge base, introduction and reevaluation of local available food/ dietary habits, etc.

The pre monsoon and monsoon season in the region is characterized by comparatively high temperature and heavy downpour that results in a very feeble flow of tourists. This is the season of wet paddy cultivation and may be termed as phase of agricultural activity. Apart from the traditional practice of paddy cultivation, this phase may can be also be fruitfully designed for indoor activity like craft promotion, both decorative and utilitarian to meet the need of local and tourism market for forthcoming tourism phase.

8.1.7 Enhancement of tourist facilities and services

Consumer perception of service products, i.e., accommodation, quality of food and beverage, transport facilities and behavior of the staff of tourism organization reveals a clear picture and needs proper supervision. Local community must be trained rigorously and make them aware of the need of the tourism industry

8.1.8 Public Health and Safety

Northeastern part of India is environmentally hygiene but urban islands are gradually suffering from increasing stress and strain in this regards. . So there is urgent need of to give priority to these areas by maintaining at least a standard for health and sanitation and public facilities, not only for tourist but also for residents.

8.1.9 Community Involvement in Tourism

Community involvement is one of the key area for attaining sustainability in tourism operation. Community involvement is particularly important in towns, villages and rural areas in order to bring benefits of tourism to local residents and gain their understanding and support for this sector (WTO 1999). Hence, structural flexibility of tourism administration is an urgent need to make tourism ‘people friendly’ and participatory” in nature.

8.1.10 Tourist Product

Cultural tourism is characterized by a specific tourist product which is defined as a set (package) of material goods and services offered to culturally motivated tourists, on total price from the moment they left their home until they return home. It is meant to satisfy the needs of cultural bound tourists.

Festivals through tourism can be extremely reliable tool not only for the mutual understanding and cooperation between Indian people but for the socio-economic growth of the region s also. Due to its specific, the festivals create a natural environment and deployment of various initiatives in the overall socio-economic profile of the region and life quality improvement.

Worldwide museum are the main tourist sites- Museum of Music, museum of Arts and Crafts, museum of traditional sports, museum of individual and others. And any specific museum can attract a specific target group. So, there is need to develop such museum in and around the Baithow Mandir temple.

8.1.11 Cultural Tourism Products

By cultural tourism products we like to refer to institutions, lifestyle, heritage opportunities and events which are generally inter - linked. Better the cultural products the greater the likelihood of tourist to spent money in the region or country. But what is more important is the ability of the cultural products of Sonowal Kachari or and Bathow Mandir to attract or increase the length of stay of long haul tourists so they bring new money to the region of Dangari.

However, if tourists from out of the province or out of the country, we must pay attention to develop the heritage site or festivals, the community must be willing to export or showcase its products (including cultural products) and earning foreign currency for the community and the province or country.

8.1.12 Cultural Tourism Markets

Just as not very cultural products are willing, ready or able to attract tourist, not all persons is interested in culture and there is need for consumer motivation for cultural tourism. A key element in our cultural tourism strategy is therefore to move more cultural products, if they so wish in the right direction bringing 'export willing' to 'export ready' to 'export able'.

Continuation or "power of ability to attract "of cultural products has very much close links with the points listed below:

- perceived quality of the of the products;
- awareness;
- customer services attitude;
- sustainability;
- extend to which products is perceived to be unique or special;
- convenience;
- community support and involvement;
- management commitment and capability.

8.1.13 Cultural Tourism Destination

A cultural tourism designation may be created by understanding the great variety of travel motivations and personal interests of tourists. Cultural facilities and events may therefore capitalize on opportunities to attract the numerous people who are not greatly motivated by culture but who have some level of interest. They may not be particularly interested in culture but would attend if made aware of the opportunities if it were convenient and offered good value for time and money spent.

The concept of packing, partnership, marketing, and collaboration to create cultural and non cultural opportunities in one place or at one time is crucial to creating a cultural tourism destination. We need to capatilize other tourist attraction places in and around such as Kesai Khati Than, Parashuram Kunda etc.

8.1.14 Packaging Arrangements

A key part of successful cultural tourism is packaging, joint marketing and partnership among cultural products of the same type, among cultural products of different types and most importantly with non-cultural tourism partners such as hotels, such as bus tour operators, retailers etc. There are mainly three types of partnerships and packaging opportunities.

(i) Cultural products of the same type: Only a small percentage of tourists are interested in visiting the same type of products in the area or in a trip. The reality is that most people are seeking variety when they travel. So arrangement can be made for Dibru- Saikhowa National Park.

(ii) Cultural products of different types: These include may include festivals, events which concentrate cultural products in a period of time and arts districts which concentrate products in a particular place.

(iii) Partnering and packaging cultural and non-cultural products: Packaging among the cultural and non cultural tourism products such as hotels, resorts, retails, arts, sports and outdoor recreations, bus tour, amusements attractions etc. So, we must establish we well informed link with Tinsukia and Dibrugarh town for a comfortable and safe stay.

8.1.15 Need for Management

It is impossible to discuss cultural heritage tourism planning without mentioning cultural heritage management. We must have a very good local committee and Governing committee from among the local community involving as much as possible. Most countries encourage the preservation of heritage as asset for all the community. It will evoke a sense of continuity of culture, enrichment of people's lives, as a link with the past and to allow society to make sense of the present. Understanding cultural heritage can be fundamental to the lives of present and future generations.

9.0 Conclusion:

Baithow Mandir is the heart and soul of the Sonowal Kachari. The all around development of Sonowal Kachari religiously, socially and economically greatly sought by everybody. Working Model of the Khiring Khiring Baithow Mandir for Cultural Tourism will be a great source of upliftment of the community and generator of income for the local community.

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