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GOSPODARKA I INNOWACJE

LABORATORIUM WIEDZY Artur Borcuch

Volume: 64 | 2025

Economy and Innovation
ISSN: 2545-0573

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EXPLORING THE TOURISM POTENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEAST INDIA

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ARTICLEINFO.

Keywords: North East India, Flora Fauna, Heritage, Cultural, Ethnic.

Abstract

North East India is blessed with natural beauty, pleasant weather, flora and fauna, incredible biodiversity, cultural and ethnic heritage which offers a tremendous possibility towards exploring tourism industry. North East region of India has immense useful resource ability to develop the tourism industry. It has a rich ethnic and cultural heritage that makes it a great vacationer destination. Tourism has the greater potential for generating income and employment possibilities in North East India because North East India is not only characterised by the blending of flora and fauna but it is also home to many wildlife sanctuaries. The scenic beauty of north east India attracts tourist not only from India but also from abroad which makes a great tourist spot. This paper basically makes an attempt to explore the prospect and growth of tourism industry in North East India.

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INTRODUCTION:

Tourism refers to travelling to places of natural beauty, staying with the places of nature for few days to enjoy the Mother Nature to the fullest extent. Tourism is one of the fastest service sector industry in the world. Tourism sector helps in providing employment opportunities, foreign exchange reserves, enhancing infrastructure facilities thereby helps in developing economic growth of a country. North east India comprises of eight states which includes Assam, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh. The north east region has giant potential for tourism development as it has the beauty of nature, ethnicity, ancient monuments, tea tourism and its rich cultural diversity. A number of domestic tourist as well as foreign tourist visits these places every year which additionally become a source of income for the local people. The blue hills, green forests, mesmerizing rivers are the basis which attracts the tourists to visit North East India. The months starting from March to June are considered to be the pleasant time to visit North East as those are the blooming days perfect for exploring the tribes, trails and teas of the dazzling region which pulls the tourist to travel North East India.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study the potentialities of North East India Tourism.
- To study the benefits provided by the tourism sector in developing economic growth
- To study the problems of North East India tourism.

Research Methodology:

- **Nature and source of data:**

The study has been carried out systematically on the basis of secondary data. The secondary data has been collected from various published literature like text books, magazines, newspapers, journals and internet.

- **Type of research:**

The type of research undertaken is a Descriptive Research.

Review of Literature:

(Milton Redman, William R.Eadington*, 1990)The paper surveys programs of monetary analysis to tourism. The economic angle on tourism provides insights into the types of decisions in which consumers, private sector suppliers, government agencies, and policymakers make. It additionally provides a shape for figuring out which types of data should be gathered, organized, and interpreted for purposes of better understanding tourism markets, building forecasts, and assisting in policy choices related resource allocation.

(Asokan Rajamani and Dr. Praveen Rizal, 2013) According to them the North-eastern region of India is still place of least visited in India Despite of so many unique and natural beauties. The paper examines the tourism in North-eastern states of India. Major findings of the study was the inflows of tourists are higher in Assam state and lower in Nagaland. Tourism sectors percentage in Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is excessive in Assam.

(Supriya Dam, 2013)North Eastern Region (NER) of India has giant useful resource potential to broaden tourism. The study reveals that Assam is the leading state in terms of overall influx of tourists' in the region while Sikkim proves to be favoured vacation spot destination of overseas tourists among North Eastern States. The paper makes an attempt to discover the motives for Sikkim's popularity among foreign tourists visiting North Eastern States and the impact of increased influx of visitors on tourism sustainability in the region.

(Miss Ananya Borgohain et al. 2020) tourism is now-a-days considered as an important industry which has vast scope for the generation of income and employment and one of the fastest growing industries. The paper mainly focussed on the problems and prospects of tourism in Assam and also the development of tourism during the globalization period has also been analysed.

Potentialities of Tourism Industry in North-East India:

NE India has the finest potentiality to develop the area right into a amazing force through tourism industry. Tourism is one of the significant service sector industries in India with its contribution of 6.23 percentage to national GDP and 8.78 percentage of total employment, witness more than five million annual foreign travellers arrivals and 562 million home travellers. North East India is properly blessed by the natural beauty and it lays on the centre of one of the world's richest bio-geographic areas. It has a wealthy cultural and ethnic history which can easily make it a tourist-hub. Tourism has the finest ability for producing earnings and employment possibilities in North-East Indian states because NE India isn't always simply characterised by the blending of aquatic flora and fauna but it's also noticeably rich in bio-diversity. Moreover the wildlife sanctuaries at diverse locations of North-East India can attract the

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travellers everywhere in the world.Kaziranga wildlife sanctuary situated in Golaghat district of Assam Is a heavenly region for the travellers due to its global famous one-horned rhinoceros. Moreover, the golden languor pygmy hog and different endangered species can simply enchant the minds of the travellers. Besides the animals and the birds of numerous types roaming and singing song. The north eastern region has many ornamental fishes, uncommon plants, and medicinal herbs. It has many tranquil lagoons and reverie places like Bhalukpung, Loktak, etc. for angling and boating which can effortlessly attract tourists and have the great potentiality of turning north east region into a tourist spot.

Must Visit Places in North East India:

ASSAM:

- **Kaziranga National Park:**

The undisturbed acres long stretch of forests and marshlands is located within the coronary heart of Assam and is visited by hordes of vacationers every year and it is one of the well-known places to visit in North East India. The sanctuary is well known for its one-horned rhinoceros is a World Heritage Site. Other than that Elephants, wild water buffaloes and Swamp Deers can also be visible on a safari.

- **Majuli Island:**

Majuli is the largest river island of the river Brahmaputra which spans over an area of 1250 sq. km. the rich aquatic flora, fauna and cultural heritage makes it an important tourist hub.

- **Kamakhya Temple:**

Kamakhya temple is one of the historical and highly worshipped temples of Northeast. Set atop Nilachal hills, this unique temple has identified and celebrated the biological process of menstruation in women since forever and is one of the 51 Shakti Peethas.

- **Dibrugarh:**

Dibrugarh is the largest tea generating district located on the upper Assam area, right on the banks of river Brahmaputra. The lush green tea gardens and the vastness of Brahmaputra attract hordes of vacationers to Dibrugarh every year.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH:

- **Tawang:**

Tawang located at an elevation of 3048 mt. in north-western part of Arunachal Pradesh, it is home to the Tawang Monastery that isthe second largest and oldest in Asia. The monastery is 3talesexcessive and is enclosed through a 282 mt. lengthy compound wall. There are many differentlocations of hobby like Sela Pass, Jang Waterfalls, etc.

- **Ziro:**

A picturesque city in Lower Subansiri district, it is home to the Apatani tribe. Famous for mild pine clad hills and rice fields it additionally hosts the famous Ziro Music Festival in September each year.

- **Mechuka**:

Additionallyreferred to as Menchukha, is a small picturesque city nestled at 1829 mt. in West Siang District. Menchukha is located in a forested valley, surrounded through pine trees and thorn bushes with the river Yargyapchu flowing through the valley.

- **Pasighat**:

Is the oldest city of Arunachal Pradesh based in 1911 A.D.The Brahmaputra emerges from the foothills of Pasighat beneath the name of Dihang or Siang.

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MEGHALAYA:

- **Shillong**

The State Capital of Meghalaya is likewise referred to as the "Scotland of the East" due to the rolling hills throughout the city. Shillong has progressively grown in length since it became the civil station of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills in 1864 by the British. Shillong remained the capital of undivided Assam till the introduction of the new state of Meghalaya on 21 January 1972. In 2016 it was voted "India's Favourite Hill Station" by HolidayIQ.com.

- **Cherrapunji :**

The anciental call Sohra is now more commonly used. It is credited as being the wettest vicinity on Earth. Cherrapunji nevertheless holds the best-ever record for the maximum rainfall in a calendar month and in a year.

- **Mawlynnong :**

It **i**s a village within side the East Khasi Hills district approximately ninety km/s from Shillong and is well-known for its cleanliness and natural attraction. Mawlynnong was awarded the tag of 'Cleanest Village in Asia' in 2003 by Discover India Magazine.

- **Dawki** :

A border metropolis with Bangladesh, it has the lovely Umngot River as a prime tourist attraction.

- **Mawphlang Sacred Grove:**

One of the well-known sacred forests preserved by traditional religious sanction approximately 25 kilometres from Shillong. The sacred grove has a splendid existence in the shape of plants, flowering trees, orchids and butterflies. A perfect vacation spot for nature lovers.

MANIPUR:

- **Loktak Lake, Manipur:**

This lake is famous for its numerous small floating islands which are locally famous as 'Phumdis.' Loktak Lake is one of the largest freshwater lakes in North East India and is home to the world's only floating National park- Keibul Lamjao National Park and it is one of the best place to visit North East India.

- **Moirang** :

Situated close to the Loktak Lake, this metropolis is one of the predominant centres of early Meitei peoples lifestyle and has a unique vicinity in the history of the Indian Freedom struggle as it was at Moirang that the flag of the Indian National Army became first unfurled on April 14, 1944 under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.and has an INA Museum containing letters, photographs, badges of ranks and different memorabilia of the sacrifices made by the INA.

SIKKIM:

- **Gangtok:**

The distinguished capital city of Sikkim, is a Buddhist haven. In sync with the Zen philosophy that divinity can simplest make its way through clean and smooth surroundings, Gangtok is an epitome of neatness and is one of the few such locations in India. The lovely panoramic perspectives of the snow-capped Mount Kanchenjunga, add to the Gangtokian environs. Offering the nice vacationer locations in Gangtok, this place is well-known for its wonderful cuisine, of which Momos and Kinema, are a remarkable example.

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- **Tsomgo Lake:**

The winding roads which make a 37 km lengthy adventure from Gangtok to reach an altitude of 12,400. feet are ethereally stunning and it is one of the excellent locations to go to in North East India.

- **Nathula Pass:**

The vintage silk street that after utilized by traders and buyers is at an elevation of 14450 ft. above sea level at the Indo-Tibetan border. The temperature at Nathula is constantly freezing no matter the season and the whole area is wealthy in Himalayan flowers and fauna. It is one of the well-known locations to go to in North East India can be easily travelled from the capital city Gangtok.

- **Goechala trek:**

Goechala trek is nestled at a height of 16,207 ft., with a closer look at the third-highest peak-Mt. Kanchenjunga. It is a dream and desire for hundreds of adventure lovers. Bounded by the mesmerizing flora and fauna, which are so vibrant and colourful to cheer up one's mood.

- **Kanchenjunga :**

It is one of the well-known peaks within side the Himalayan belt and trekking to its base camp is similarly an adventure. The Kanchenjunga base camp is positioned at an elevation of 28169 ft. above sea level.

MIZORAM

- **Aizawl :**

The country capital, is located at approximately 1132 mt/s. above sea level and is a bustling town set on ridges of steep hills. It is connected by air flights from Kolkata and Guwahati. It is likewise linked to Imphal by air and is convenient from Shillong, Guwahati and Silchar by road.

- **Thenzawl:**

A village placed at a distance of 43 km/s from Aizawl. The Tropic of Cancer runs via this picturesque village. It is an integral centre of conventional Mizo handloom enterpriseand producewealthy and colourfulstyles of handlooms.

- **Hmuifang :**

With an elevation of 1619 metres, is included with virgin forests reserved since the days of the Mizo chiefs.

- **Vantawng Falls :**

Positioned at a distance of approximately 137 km/s from Aizawl, it's farthe very best and fantastic of all of the waterfalls in Mizoram.

NAGALAND:

- **Mokokchung :**

Mokokchung is a prominent district which is also a home to Ao Naga. The charming mountain villages with vibrantly unique human beings of their attires and traditions following their everyday routine can be loved and witnessed on this offbeat location. Mokokchung is called as the “intellectual and cultural capital of Nagaland.” The fine time to go to is Christmas because the complete population of Ao Naga have taken up Christianity as their religion.

- **Khonoma Green Village:**

It is a famous site to witness a number of the precise agricultural strategies that encompass terraced farming. It is located approximately half an hour from the city of Kohima and is wealthy in forestlands

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utilized by rare species of vegetation and animals.

- **Mon:**

Mon is home of Konyak Nagas who are famous as the headhunting tribe in Nagaland, however they are friendly though. The tribe with tattooed face and blackened teeth people can be found in Mon village. Mon is a very interesting village in the far eastern nook of Nagaland and has such a lot of stories of their ancestors and their lifestyle that one might end up capturing a documentary film with them.

- **Wokha** :

Home of the Lotha tribes is a land of stunning mountain degrees and rivers and is thought for its colourful dances and folks songs. Wokha actually means Census in Lotha.

TRIPURA:

- **Tripura Sundari Temple:**

This vintage Hindu shrine is located round 56 km from Agartala town and is stated to be one of the fifty one Shakti Peethas. Sundari Temple is one of the interesting and best tourist locations in North East India. The outer upper edifice is a dome shape wherein the rectangular kind sanctum is worshipped. Flocks of travellers and locals go to this temple in lakhs throughout Diwali each year. It is one of the religious places to go to in North East India and one of the few temples of Goddess Kali in India.

- **Rudrasagar Lake:**

About fifty five km far from Agartala close to Melaghar its miles a 5.3 sq. km. water area. In the centre of the lake is the well-known lake palace "Neermahal". The lake witnesses a huge wide variety of migratory birds each winter.

- **UjjayantaPalace**:

The whole metropolis of Agartala unfurls round this lavishly designed architectural wonder of the North-eastern part of India. Ujjayanta Palace dates back to the year 1901 and from the general public halls to the reception hall, from the library to the Chinese rooms; each aspect offers a real feel of royalty. The lush greenery of substantial gardens is properly complemented with a rippling lake. It serves as a beautiful museum to the visitors who come to Tripura from their homes.

Role of tourism industry in North East Region:

The tourism industry is essential for the advantages it brings and because of its role as a commercial activity that creates demand and growth for many more industries. North East tourism not only contributes towards more economic activities but also provides generation of employment, revenues and play a significant role in growth and development. Some of the major role played by North Eastern region of tourism are discussed below:

- **Employment Generation:**

Employment generation is a possible advantage of tourism in any country. In North Eastern region, tourism has created many new jobs and has provided much needed employment for people. Local people of North East India have started their own businesses in the tourism spot such as establishment of shops, hotels and motels, small restaurants, transportation activities and so on which require staffing and they try to hire locally which gives bread and butter to a number of human beings.

- **Development of Infrastructure**

The appearance and standing of a place change when it is declared a traveller's place. Actually, tourism aids and encourages infrastructure improvement by making way for dams, roads, connectivity, airport improvements, and any other activity that enables a tourist in travelling a place in a miles higher way.

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- **Cultural Heritage**

The North East India is blessed with the scenic beauty, flora and fauna, artwork, ancient monuments, temples and rich cultural heritage of the tourist place. Different people travelling any tourist destination takes stunning cultural ideas along with them and unfold those ideas to others at the same time while travelling different destinations. Similarly, the skills, artwork, culture, ethnicity, languages of locals get huge exposure through tourism.

- **Foreign Exchange Earnings:**

The significance of tourism industry is demonstrated through foreign exchange earnings. The expenditures in tourism generates income to the host country. The country which makes money from tourism sector can then be reinvested in the economic development of the country. Some destination spot in North Eastern region may spend the money on growing their tourism industry while some may spend the money on public services and so forth.

PROBLEMS OF NORTH EAST TOURISM INDUSTRY:

- **Seasonal Fluctuations:**

Tourism jobs are in most cases seasonal and has no job security as there is no extra benefits associated with it such as pensions, sick pay or healthcare. Tourist spots can be seen flooded with traffic during peak times in North East India and then virtually evacuated for plenty of months. This results in seasonal unemployment of the local people residing in North East region.

- **Lack of Marketing and Promotion:**

Marketing and promotion of tourist destination is a critical factor for the North East Region to reap its future prospect. Lack of proper delegate for promoting North East India tourism and inadequate financial support for promotion and marketing, compared with competing tourist destination, is a major reason for lagging behind as a tourist spot in North East India. Therefore, due to the lack of promotion and publicity, a number of tourists from different parts of India as well as foreign tourists are unable to know about the various tourist's spots of North East India.

- **Restricted Area Permit :**

The Restricted Area Permit (RAP) to the North Eastern region was introduced in the year 1955, under which a foreigner who wants to visit North East had to undergo a long arduous procedure for obtaining permission from the Home Ministry. RAP was in force till May 18, 1999 but the ghost of RAP still continues to loom large and create false apprehension in the mind of the foreign tourists.

- **Lack of Infrastructure:**

Lack of infrastructure such as unavailability of quality hotels and accommodation, lack of proper food and beverage arrangements, lack of proper transportation facilities to the tourist spots, unavailability of rail connectivity to all the tourist destinations are also predominant problems associated with the North East tourism. Most of the site of tourist attraction are not by the side of national highways and the roads linked to such destinations are in bad conditions.

- **Insurgency:**

The north east region has been experiencing a violent movements in some tourist spots over the years. The foreign and domestic tourists considers it risky to visit this part of the country. Due to insurgent activities, tourists hesitates to visit north east India as the general impression has been that any foreign or domestic tourists could be a soft target of the insurgents.

- **Absence of tourist guide**:

Many parts of North East region does not have any trained tourist guides available in important tourist

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destination. However as the tourists arrive at such places there is hardly anyone to satisfy their curiosity of the spot.

SUGESSTIONS:

- The State Government shouldput in place a regulatory mechanism to promote sustainable development of the tourism industry and to prevent growth of tourism related activities.
- Government should encourage private sector investment in tourism related projects and cooperate with other departments in order to enhance the infrastructure facilities.
- Wayside amenities such as information kiosks, souvenir shops, public toilets, and dhabas on tourism routes and at tourism destinations should be developed.
- Government should promote investment in transport services to places which are difficult to access such as riverine islands, hillocks and hills. Such services could be ropeways, helicopters, hovercrafts and so on.
- Tourism department should ban the use of disposable plastic bags, plates etc. completely at tourist places.
- Enhancement of the role of media and delegates in promoting North East tourism.

CONCLUSION:

Tourism sector offers direct benefits to the local people and businesses. It has a multiplier impact on other economic activities, offering jobs and earnings to the ones serving tourists. The North East region is endowed with various tourist attractions and each state has its own distinct features. Though North East Region has wide potential for improvement of tourism industry, it can be successful only upon the proper formulation of its policies. The Government should make massive investments mutually with private ventures to broaden the infrastructure and integrate the north east region through cross border marketplace entrance. Government should initiate effective policies and guidelines for making sustainable development of tourism zone and make the North East region a hotspot tourism resort with successful connection and ties with neighbouring countries.

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