



AN ANALYSIS OF TOURISM STATUS, POTENTIALITIES AND CHALLENGES IN SIBSAGAR DISTRICTS, ASSAM.

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Abstract

Globally, one of the industries that is rapidly expanding is tourism. In India, its effects have been just as pronounced. Because of its amazing natural beauty, historical sites, verdant tea gardens, colorful fairs and festivals, and exotic wildlife, Assam plays a significant role in the tourism industry. Ahom sites, artificial lakes, ancient temples, religious and cultural festivals, and many other attractions make Sivsagar district one of the most popular tourist destinations in Assam. Despite these potentials, the district faces numerous issues that impede the growth of this industry. This work attempts to provide an overview of the state of the development of the tourism sector in Sibsagar by analyzing the opportunities and difficulties facing the industry through the use of secondary resources and observational methods. Additionally, this paper offers some suggestions for enhancing this industry.

Keywords : Tourism status, historical monuments, Ahom kings, potentialities , challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been considered as a largest service sector industry in the world. Assam is a beautiful state in North East India and it is a vast scope for tourist attraction because it offers spectacular nature and scenery, rich culture, colorful cultural festivals, historical monuments, lush green tea garden, scope for adventure sports, diverse history, mighty river, rich flora and fauna, ethnic diversity, and opportunities for relaxation in peaceful environment. The recorded history tells that Assam used to attract people since the days of Hiuen Tsang, the great Chinese traveler, who visit Assam in (642-43 AD) during the reign of Bhaskaravarman. After independence also development and promotion o tourism took a significant place in county's regional economic policy and planning. In Assam Tourism Development Program was initiated since 1958 by establishing separate tourism department. Among the various tourist place Sibsagar district is consider as the one of the important tourist destination. Attraction point for tourist is mainly for its historical, ecological and great heritage as the seat of power for three century during the Ahom era. Besides that seasonally in various occasions like in Sivratri, Sawan month (between July – August), Bihu and so on it is able to attract a number of crowd in the city.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sona J.(1991) arranged a case study in the Sibsagar district and provided a clear explanation of the historical prospects for Assamese and Indian tourism. He made an effort to draw attention to Sibsagar's many historical sites as well as their significance and potential as tourist destinationsIn

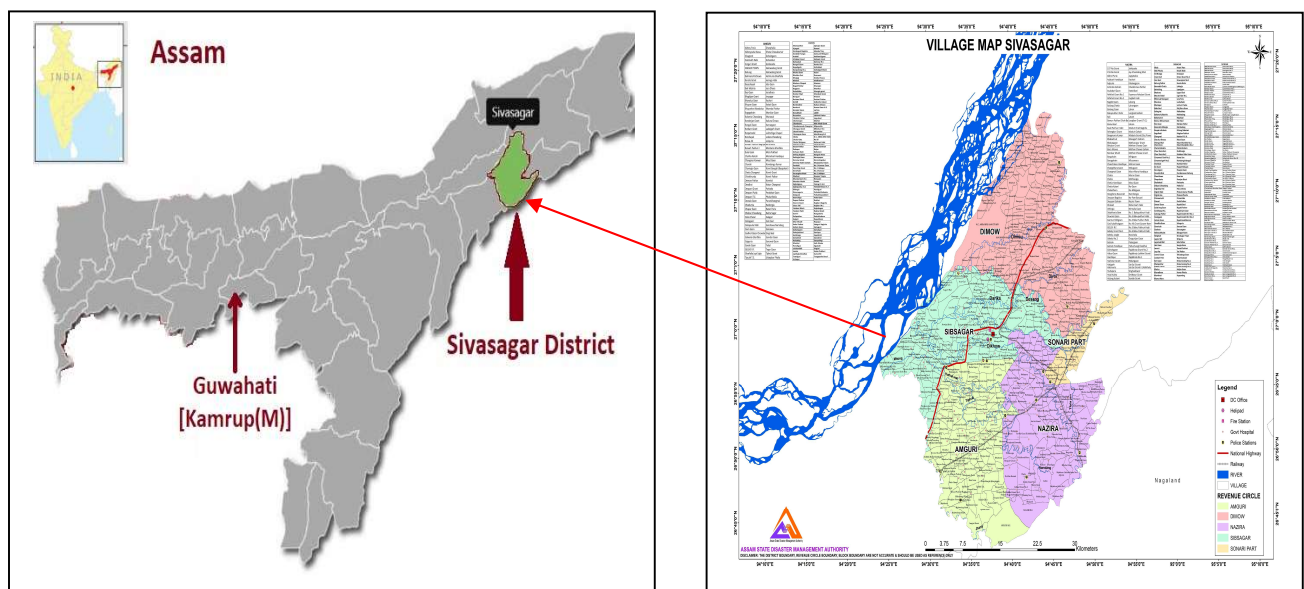
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their composition, Gogoi, P., & Borman, R. (2017) endeavour to explore visitors' general contentment at a few cultural heritage sites in the Sivasagar district. Three primary destination points provided samples for this paper. In her study, Biswas K. (2018) attempts to investigate the potentialities in the Sivasagar district of Assam's tourism industry. She also identifies particular difficulties facing Sivasagar's tourism. Saikia, M. (2020) attempts to investigate the issues and future potential of Assamese tourism in her research. Kaziranga, Manas, Majuli, Kamakhya, and Sivasagar are the five state tourist destinations that are included in the study. A brief summary of the opportunities and difficulties facing the tourism industry in Sivasagar District are provided by Panging, K. (2020) in his paper. To review earlier research, this has primarily focused on the opportunities and difficulties facing Assam's tourism industry. The importance, potential, and challenges of the Sivasagar tourism sector are rarely discussed in literature, which is what this paper will attempt to highlight.

AREA OF STUDY

Sivasagar -- the historical city of Assam is situated 363 K.M. east of Guwahati (The capital of Assam). Geographical Location of Sivasagar lies between 26.45°N and 27.15°N latitudes and 94.25°E and 95.25°E longitudes. The district is located on the upper Brahmaputra Valley. It is known for its historic monuments and temples built during the reign of the Ahom Dynasty. Sivasagar today is also an important centre for the tea and oil industries.



Source: Government of Assam . <https://sivasagar.assam.gov.in/about-us>.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To make an analysis the tourism attraction status of Sivasagar district.
- To give illustrate potentialities and challenges of tourism sector.
- To provide recommendation to improve tourist sector in this district.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. To fulfill the objective of the study data will collect from different secondary sources like Statistical Handbook of Assam , India Tourism Statistics , journals, newspapers, books and other published and unpublished records. In the case of primary data, observation method use by visiting the tourist location for collects information about challenges and potentialities of Sivsagar tourism.

STATUS AND PATTERN OF TOURISM SECTOR

Table – 1 Tourist visited during the year

	Tourist	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
India	Domestic	1657546152	1854933384	2321982663	610216157	677632981	17310.135 (in lakhs)
	Foreign	26886684	28872384	31408666	7171769	1054642	85.876 (in lakhs)
Assam	Domestic	6052667	5856282	5447805	1266898	1409161	83.820 (in lakhs)
	Foreign	21760	36846	26878	7285	536	0.090 (in lakhs)
Sivsagar	Domestic	417720	448125	395609	268763	109992	145206
	Foreign	1845	1930	2835	1516	0	36

Source: 1. Statistical Handbook of Assam, Directorate of Tourism, Assam
2. India Tourism Statistics, Government of India.

According to the table above, over 168.4 crores tourists travelled throughout India; of these, roughly 0.6 crore tourists travelled to Assam. It is worth noting that Assam attracts a very small percentage of tourists—just 0.35 percent. Similarly, of all the tourists in India, only 419,565 visited Sivsagar, or 0.023 percent of the country's total visitors in 2016–17. In 2017–18 and 2017–18, there is a noticeable rise in this number.

However, since the COVID-19 pandemic struck in late 2019, the tourism industry has seen a sharp decline in performance. This decline will also be felt in India in the years 2019–20 and 2020–21. In 2020–21, there were no foreign visitors to Sivsagar and just 536 foreign visitors in Assam. That being said, as time went on and things stabilized, this industry began to recover. Additionally, as shown in table-1, a growing number of tourists began to arrive.

Table-2 : Number of tourists visited to the popular tourist places/centrally protected monuments in the Sivsagar district.

Name of Tourist Places	Tourist	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
	Domestic	114438	76079	45248	18988	32121

Ahom Raja's Palace, Sivasagar	Foreign	579	545	180	0	4
Karangghar Palace, Sivasagar	Domestic	44813	91294	133832	46289	41530
	Foreign	193	654	639	0	15
Rang ghar Pavilion, Sivasagar	Domestic	124429	121726	84483	27653	36137
	Foreign	612	872	665	0	15
Vishnu Dol, Joysagar	Domestic	89625	60863	8012	2454	2587
	Foreign	386	436	41	0	2
Group of Maidan, Charaideu	Domestic	54820	45647	16520	14615	32831
	Foreign	160	328	70	0	0

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, Directorate of Tourism, Assam.

Sivasagar is well-known for a wide range of tourism activities, but among them all, historical monuments rank among the main draws for visitors from around the globe. Four significant historical locations in Sivasagar are included in Table 2: Ahom Raja's Palace, Karang ghar Palace, Rang ghar Pavilion, Vishnu Dol, Joysagar, Maidan Group, and Charaideu visitor data. As we can see, there was an increase in tourists visiting these locations in 2017–18 and 2018–19. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a decline in this sector in 2019–20 and 2020–21. However, 2021–2022 saw yet another increase in the number.

The Ministry of Tourism launched the Swadesh Darshan - Integrated Development of Theme Based Tourist Circuits scheme in 2014–15 to promote the nation's tourism infrastructure development. For the purpose of developing the Tezpur, Majuli, and Sivasagar Heritage Circuit in Assam, the Government of India has allocated 98.35 Cr and released 19.95 (Source: India Tourism Statistics, 2019).

The National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) is a programme that the Indian government's Ministry of Tourism launched in 2014–15 to develop and enhance the nation's major pilgrimage sites. The goals and objectives were to increase the number of domestic tourists drawn to the nation by religious beliefs and to improve the infrastructure for tourism at the nation's many pilgrimage sites. In accordance with this plan, 22.03 crores was released to Assam in 2014–15, 2015–16, 2016–17, 2017–18, and 2018–19 out of 30.71 crores that was sanctioned.

POTENTIALITIES

Sivasagar is the one of the beautiful district of Assam. It attracts tourist from various places with its beautiful scenery and historical monuments. As Sivasagar was once the capital of Ahoms and that is why the Ahom rulers built most of the historical monuments and temples at that time. Many

tourist visit this historical place to see the ancient ruins of the Ahom kings. In addition, Sivasagar is rich in biodiversity and natural resources which are also a tourist attraction. As this study base on observation method, noticed that the number of tourists visiting to Sivasagar is increasing every year due to its immense potential. The potentiality of tourism in Sivasagar can be categorized into -

Historical Tourism: Sivasagar is one of the most holistic towns located on the banks of the Brahmaputra River and east of Jorhat. It is known as historical place for its historical monuments and temples. It has played an important role in Indian history, and is a major historical tourism destination. Some of the most important monuments and temples of Sivasagar are Rangghar, Karengghar, Talatal Ghar, Shiv Dol, Vishnu Dol, Joy Dol, Namdang Rock Bridge, Gola Ghar etc. These are famous tourist attractions in this district.

Cultural Tourism: Cultural tourism is a type of tourism that allows the tourist to participate in local cultural activities like festivals and rituals. Sivasagar has a potential of growth through cultural tourism because we observed that many ethnic and religious communities preferably coexisting for long period. Each having unique traditions in the socio-cultural life including customs, language, believe, dress, way of life, festivals etc. Some of the major festivals and fairs are (Rongali Bihu, Magh Bihu, Kati Bihu, Ali-Aye Ligang, Desang festival, MahaShivratri, Id-ul-fitter, Id-ul-juhaetc. Mahashivratri is one of the greatest festivals celebrated with great pomp every year at Shividol. Every year during Mahashivratri a international mela (or fair) is organized over a few days and attracts both domestic and foreign tourist. During these days most of the foreign tourist stay in Sivasagar. But good accommodation for the tourist is very limited in Sivasagar.

Wildlife Tourism: Sivasagar has rich biodiversity which offers a great opportunity for sustainable wildlife tourism. Some of the important wildlife sanctuaries and reserve forests located in the observed area are Panidihing Wildlife Sanctuary, Abhaypur, Dilli, Geleky reserve forests etc. These wildlife sanctuary and reserve forests attract foreign tourists, academicians and researchers from different places. The district is also rich in animals. Some of the rare and endangered mammals found in the reserve forests are tigers, sun bears, sambars and hulk gibbons.

Tea tourism: Tea tourism is a wonderful recreational experience for tourists. Currently, the tea tourism sector has grown significantly due to the growth of the tea industry in Assam. These tea industries not only provide employment opportunities for the people for tea plantations and cultivation, but also attract foreign tourists to visit the tea plantations. There are several beautiful tea plantations in Sivasagar which are a tourist's attraction. It is noteworthy that tea tourists visit the town to experience the process of tea picking, cultural festivals of the tea tribes, staying in luxury tea bungalows.

CHALLENGES

Although, this study observed huge tourism potentialities in this district. However, despite this potential, it was noticed that tourists visiting this city face various problems. If this problem can be solved, Sivasagar can become a hub of tourist destination.

Poor infrastructure: One of the major problems observed in this district is the lack of proper infrastructure facilities. These include unavailability of quality roads connected to tourist destinations, inadequate lodging and access to telecommunications. To attract the tourist, availability of good infrastructural facilities is very essential.

Lack of information about the tourist spot: Another important problem observed in this district which is hindering its growth potential is the lack of information about tourist destinations by the people. The reason for insufficient information about tourist destinations is that there is no proper marketing strategy to promote Sivasagar as a place to visit for domestic and foreign tourists.

Poor accommodation facilities: Suitable accommodation facilities for tourists are very important because to travel to different areas in this city, tourists need somewhere to stay, rest, sleep and unwind. But good accommodation for the tourist is very limited in Sivasagar. Most of the hotels in our district provided very low quality food and other accommodation facilities. Therefore, tourists aren't interested to visit in our city.

Absence of trained tourist guide: Trained tourist guides are very important requirement of tourist spots because in order to share information with the tourists, tour guides requires sufficient knowledge of historical sites, museums, geographic locations, culture and heritage etc. But Sivasagar virtually doesn't have any trained tourist guides. As a result, tourists arrive in our district but there is hardly anyone to satisfy the inquisitiveness of the tourist.

Lack of development fund: Adequate funding is needed to develop tourist sites. However, we noticed that this district lacks sufficient funds to develop the tourist destinations which hamper its growth potential.

RECOMMENDATION & CONCLUSIONS

This study recommended the following measures which helpful in promoting the tourism industry in Sivasagar-

- The first and the foremost measures to develop all infrastructures related to the tourist destination so that it can attract more tourists in this city.
- To attract foreign tourists, the government has to provide adequate funds for the development of tourist sites.
- Advertisement of the tourism is very important on the part of the government to increase the inflow of tourist in Sivasagar.
- Tourism is one sector which cannot grow to its true potential with government efforts alone. It requires private initiatives for investment and promotion. Therefore, the government may offer fiscal and other incentives to the private entrepreneurs so that they can attract foreign tourists in this district by providing tourist related services such as transport, accommodation, restaurant etc.
- Local people involvement in tourism should be encouraged so that they benefit from this development.

Based on current data, we discovered that Sivasagar has enormous potential for tourism and can draw visitors from all over the world due to its abundance of natural resources, diverse

culture, historical monuments, and other features. Notwithstanding these opportunities, the city faces numerous obstacles that impede its ability to grow through the tourism sector. It is necessary to enhance the sector's infrastructure, lodging options, qualified tour guides, and other aspects in order to guarantee the industry's overall growth. To address this issue, the government should concentrate on developing a tourism-based economic strategy that will help to increase employment and strengthen the local economy.

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