

Tourism Products in Assam -- A Study with Special Reference to Kaziranga National Park

Abstract

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. The key reasons for encouraging tourism development include employment generation, business receipts and government revenues. It is the economic benefit of tourism that propels each destination world wide into a competitive edge. The importance of a tourist destination is the outcome of several factors like scenic beauty, flora and fauna, rich cultural heritage, glorious history, archaeological remains, fairs and customs. Many countries which are still developing tourism industry are using of their historical past as their major tourists' destination. This paper examines the impact of tourism of the service sector in the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) and studies the quality of the existing tourism products and its improvement in order to attain the national and international standards.

Keywords: Purpose of Visit, Tourist information, Travel Agencies and Pleasure /Excursion.

Introduction

The concept of tourism is not a new one. Now-a-days 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 sect of industry. The key reasons for encouraging tourism development include employment generation, business receipts and government revenues. It is the economic benefit of tourism that propels each destination world wide into a competitive edge. The importance of a tourist destination is the outcome of several factors like scenic beauty, flora and fauna, rich traditional cultural heritage, glorious history, archaeological remains, fairs and customs. Many countries which are still developing tourism industry are using of their historical past as their major tourists' destination.

Tourism Product is a package tour which comprise an air seat, accommodation at the place to be visited, local transportation, sightseeing, entertainment, meals, shopping, etc. the product is composite in nature and includes everything a visitor purchases, sees, experiences and feels from the time he/she leaves home until the time he/she returns. The tourist product can be brought as a package as indicated above or separately. Airlines' seat and hotel rooms are tourist products which can be bought separately.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of numerous factors listed about the development of tourism, there are some factors that act as a barrier to travel. These falls into the following categories:-

Cost

People are subjected to monetary restraints and cannot afford the expense of airlines holiday travel due to high costs.

Time

This characteristic of those who are not in a position to leave their business or profession to take time off from work.

Health

Many persons, especially old people, cannot travel due to poor health and physical limitations.

Family

Parents of small children are not in a position to travel due to the family responsibilities and inconveniences of travel.

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Lack of Interest

Ignorance and lack of information about other places and other people can be major barriers to travel.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the impact of tourism in the Kaziranga National Park (KNP).
2. To study the quality of the existing tourism products and its improvement in order to touch the national and international standards.
3. To offer some valid suggestion in order to improve its marketing strategies.

Review of Literature

Taking into account of Assam, tourism sector has immense potential which cannot be overlooked in any manner. The studies on this area have been somewhat new and seem to be in an infant shape. (Jacob: 2000): says that the whole of Northeastern region is a home to one of the richest varieties of flora and fauna on the globe. (Kalisch 2001): extends an overview of issues in international trade and tourism and provides NGOs with suggestions that could lead towards more sustainable and equitable tourism planning. (Bezbaruah 2001): says that the inflow of foreign visitors in India has registered a 6% growth in fiscal 2000-01. Foreign tourism fetched \$3 billion to the union exchequer making tourism the second highest net foreign exchange earned in the country. (Ray 2005): speaks out that a comprehensive answer has to be found out to the question why tourism has not developed in north eastern states in spite of its huge natural resources. He observed that there is a vital need for an integrated marketing to resolve the problem of tourism development as an important input for economic acceleration of the region.

The modern concept of leisure and tourism is essentially a product of western world. The importance of studies on recreation has been rapidly increasing in the western world. In this context, one can turn his attention to the work of Murry (1930), where he discussed the significance of recreational land used in northern Michigan. He pointed out the types of land useful for hunters and fishermen and stressed on the contributions that geographers may make to this field.

Brown (1935) discussed the phenomenon of tourism and suggested several techniques for measuring its magnitude, pattern and economic value. Later on, prophet (1947) stressed on the need of adequate statistics on the development of research procedures. Several studies have been completed in specific areas after Murry's work. These studies pointed out the general charter of recreation, its form and economic importance in different study areas. The contribution of Deasy (1949) in New England, Zierer (1952) in western United States and Foscue (1949) and Prophet (1945) in Michigan,, Greely (1942) in New England, Zierer (1952) in western United States and Foscue (1949) in the Rockies and in Mexico are important in this regard.

Hedrick (1934) made a pioneering attempt in the field of systematic survey of recreational forms and values. He tried to produce maps of various items of recreation and described the environmental features that hold significance in the distribution of tourist's spots. His work primarily based on the inputs as per the questionnaires sent to township assessors in the state of Michigan.

The works of Jone (1933), Booth (1948) and Walfe (1951) were intended to depict the character and distribution of the phenomena connected with recreational land use. Jones compared the features of recreational regions of Canadian Rockies with a town in British Columbia. Booth analyzed the lakeshore characteristics and nature of lakeshore characteristics and nature of lakes themselves in terms of recreational values in the state of Washington. The study deals with the application of techniques in recreational mapping. Wolfe, on the other hand, studied the source areas of the occupants of summer cottages in Ontario, based on home addresses secured from local postmasters. Other two important studies in the line are that by Carlson (1938) and Hodges (1945), which deal with recreational districts of New Hampshire. The former deals with the financial contribution of recreational activities of local and state government. The work of Hodges deals with the classification of recreational facilities and expenditures incurred by the tourists in those districts. The work was based on field interview.

Research Methodology

The research will be based on primary data and secondary data. It will be basically primarily based on primary data. Secondary information will also be collected from journals, periodical, mass media etc. In addition to that, collection of materials from internet will also be availed. Data will be collected by putting direct questions to the targeted respondents. Personal interview will be conducted wherever possible. Questionnaire with both close and open and ended question will be framed in advance and will be circulated among the respondents for carrying out the research work. Logical sequence will be maintained and personal and intimate questions would be left to the end. Close ended questions will be either dichotomous or multiple choice. Direct personal investigation will be followed to collect the information personally from the concerned sources. It will be in a structure form and for this purpose definite and pre-determined questions will be framed. Across the table discussion may be followed to know the views of the respondents. Scheduled will be prepared and will be filled up by making face to face contact.

Size of Sample

100 numbers of respondents of each tourist spots are selected on a purposive stratified sample basis.

Statistical Tools

Data so arrived are analyzed by different statistical units like Chi-Square Test has been incorporate.

Motivating Factor

One of the important aspects of the study is to find out how tourist becomes motivated to undertake a travel trip to Assam

| Motivating Factors | Domestic Tourist | | Foreign Tourist | |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | No of tourist | % | No. of tourist | % |
| Tourist information | 30 | 30 | 25 | 25 |
| Travel Agencies | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Friends and relatives | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 |
| own experience | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 |
| Any other(Internet) | 05 | 05 | 10 | 10 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey

In case of domestic tourists, 30% got motivated by the tourist information bureaus established by the state and central governments, while 10% were motivated by the travel agencies (Table 1.3).As the travel agencies are generally interested in handling foreign tourists for more profit, they make only limited effort to motivate the domestic tourists. A sizeable proportion 40% of the domestic tourists are motivated by their friends and relatives, and 15% of them visited the state on the basis of own experiences in the state.Only marginal portion of the domestic tourists (5%) were motivated by other motivating factors.

Among the foreign tourists, 25% were motivated to visit the state by tourist information bureau and 10 % by travel agencies. However, friends and relatives had an important role in motivating 40% of the foreign tourists to visit the state.As many as 15% of the foreign tourists continue to get motivated by own experiences on the state and 10% of them were motivated by other sources i.e. travel literature and other related publications.It was found that the bulk of the foreign tourists were motivated by the guide book Lonely Planet, published by a UK-based publication agency, which generally emphasized on least known tourist destinations of the world.An observation on the tourist motivating factors reveals that the functioning of the tourist information bureaus and travel agencies has left much to be desired. Though especially after lifting of Restricted Area Permit (RAP), the role of travel agencies is increasing in motivating foreign tourists to visit Assam, their role in the case of domestic tourists as motivator is not yet significant.For the development of the sector, travel agencies should concentrate on motivating both international as well as domestic tourists.

Purpose of Visit

The purpose of visit varies from person to person.Hence a study of the purposes of visit of the tourists is essential to identify their expectations and reorient the nature of tourist amenities and service as per demand.

| Factors | Domestic Tourist | | Foreign tourist | |
|---------------------|------------------|----|-----------------|----|
| | No of Tourist | % | No of Tourist | % |
| Pleasure /Excursion | 72 | 72 | 64 | 64 |
| Business | 6 | 6 | 16 | 16 |
| Official work | 10 | 10 | 02 | 02 |
| Academic Interest | 7 | 7 | 12 | 12 |
| Any Other | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 |

Source: Field Study Fig: 3.2

The table reveals that majority of the domestic 72% and foreign tourists 64% belong to pleasure seeking category.Hence tourism promotional activities in Assam should be oriented towards creating more facilities to generate fun and pleasure excursion. As a matter of fact, the present day tourism is the result of modern technological civilization, where tourists prefer to travel for leisure and pleasure to get rid of the stress and strain of daily work and humdrum of the urban situation.Apart from pleasure excursionists, it is found that only around 6% domestic and 16% of the foreign tourists visited for business purposes.Around 10% of the domestic and 2% of foreign tourists came for official work.Around 7% of the domestic and 12% of the foreign tourists came for academic purposes i.e.(to study

wildlife, environmental status, native culture, visit to tea garden etc).Besides,5% of the domestic and 6% of the foreign tourists came for special purposes, such as assigned photographic project, visiting friends and relatives, attending seminars etc. it is observed that foreign business travelers came to the state mainly for business transactions of tea and oil industries.Apart from that, after the lifting of the RAP(Restricted Area Permit), a class of foreign business tourists have started coming to the state in relation to travel industry i.e. tour organizers, translators and tour leaders.

Major Findings of the Study

30% got motivated by the tourist information bureaus established by the state and central governments, while 10% were motivated by the travel agencies.

40% of the domestic tourists are motivated by their friends and relatives, and 15% of them visited the state on the basis of own experiences in the state. Only marginal portion of the domestic tourists (5%) were motivated by other motivating factors.

Among the foreign tourists, 25% were motivated to visit the state by tourist information bureau and 10 % by travel agencies.

Friends and relatives had an important role in motivating 40% of the foreign tourists to visit the state.

15% of the foreign tourists continue to get motivated by own experiences on the state and 10% of them were motivated by other sources i.e. travel literature and other related publications.

Majority of the domestic 72% and foreign tourists 64% belong to pleasure seeking category.

Major Suggestions of the Study

1. The Indian Tourism Development Corporation along with the Ministry of Tourism Govt. of Assam should take initiative to establish the tourist Information centres in various towns and cities in Assam.
2. The Ministry of Tourism, Govt of Assam should establish more travelling agency for the foreign and domestic tourist so that they can travel effectively and reach the tourist destination easily.
3. Poaching of Rhinoceros must be stopped.
4. Non utilization of sanctioned amount to improve tourism in the Kaziranga forest is a matter of regret.
5. Hospitality sector is very poor in the study area.
6. Rail and road transport must be improved and organized.
7. Bogorizeng airfield which was used in war time could be improved and used for the tourism.
8. Tea tourism can be promoted in different tea estates in the study areas..

Conclusion

Tourism sector in Assam has tremendous potentiality.A proper checked out design and plan to entire tourist is the need of the hour.All the existing policies of tourism aims to lure the rich and affluent elite group of tourist thus so far neglecting the tourist of lower and upper middle class which forms the major sunk of total tourist.A plan should also be formulated for this group of tourist to attract a total of tourism at affordable price.One of the favoured and mostly favorite tourist spot in Assam is without any shadow of doubt is Kaziranga National Park.

That's why, t's a time to rethink, plan, manage and then act.“Even a five thousand mile journey must start with the first step”, quotes an old Chinese proverb.

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It is yet again right saying that “One will have to go out and sell, instead of waiting for customers to come and buy” in a market with stiff competition. As such, a beginning has to be made soon, and together we could envisage in ushering in a new tourism era not only for the untouched eastern paradise Assam, but the entire country as well. Let us all strive together to realize this dream, let us wait for the visitors with infinite resources to satisfy them, let us welcome them with a Golden Heart’.....

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