

A Short Study On Ecotourism Of Assam

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Abstract

This paper presents a review of the study on ecotourism in Assam. Here, it emphasizes on the potentials for ecotourism and the economic impacts of ecotourism in the economic development of the state. Ecotourism helps in environmental protection, wildlife conservation, poverty alleviation and socio-economic development. Inside the context of Assam, this article discusses some important issues related to tourism, particularly ecotourism, and economic development. It starts by going over the various types of tourism and how they benefit the local economy of the tourist destination. The conversation then shifts to ecotourism and its economic benefits and costs. Assam has significant potential for the development of the ecotourism industry, however the state government and the department of tourism have yet to implement an ecotourism policy. The state's ecotourism hotspot is due to its cultural diversity, ethnic mix, and rich flora and wildlife.

Keywords: *Ecotourism, environmental conservation, economic development of Assam*

Date of Submission: 04-12-2025

Date of Acceptance: 14-12-2025

I. Introduction

Tourism is an economic activity that may considerably contribute to any country's or region's economic growth and development. It generates income and employment through a multiplicity of channels. Tourism generates USD 1.5 trillion in total export earnings, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), accounting for ten percent of global GDP, one out of every eleven employment, and seven percent of total global exports, including thirty percent of total services exports (UNWTO 2016). People have found it much simpler to travel thanks to extraordinary developments in transportation and communications throughout the world, which has aided in the promotion of tourism. Travel and tourism have been an important source of revenue and employment for various nations. Tourism cannot be a big economic engine in a vast country like India, but it may play an essential role. The country's history, diversified geography and nature, religious holy sites, diversity of culture and people, and the developing service sector may all entice millions of people to visit India.

Nature tourism is anticipated to be the most popular sort of tourism in Assam, with a lot of potential for economic rewards. When it comes to nature tourism, however, it is critical that people pay close attention to the natural order of everything that belongs to Mother Nature. That is why ecotourism has grown in popularity and relevance. However, the amount of economic gains it delivers is debatable. From a macroeconomic standpoint, it may not be able to make a major contribution to the state's total economic growth. As we know, not only Assam, but also the entire north east region is enriched with diversified tourism potentials and hence, it obviously brings some funds in the economic account of the state. This paper tries to evaluate some of the potentials of the state for the ecotourism industry and emphasize has been given in the benefit-cost analysis for the economic development of the state.

Objectives of the Study:

- To know about some of the potentials of ecotourism in the state of Assam.
- To analyze the economic impact of ecotourism in the state i. e., cost-benefit from ecotourism.
- To Suggest regarding development and promotion of ecotourism in Assam

Methodology:

This paper is based on both quantitative and qualitative research, and descriptive in nature. The data and information were collected from secondary information. Secondary information was collected from books, journals, newspapers, articles, websites etc.

Ecotourism:

Ecotourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the sustainable tourism industry, which focuses on wildlife conservation, environmental protection, poverty alleviation and economic development. In other words, ecotourism is an alternative form of tourism which embraces the biophysical environment in natural areas. It incorporates ecologically sustainable activities, conservation supporting measures and involvement of local communities. It encourages cultural sensitivity in guest-host relations and acts as a catalyst for ecologically sustainable development.

Potentials for Ecotourism in Assam:

In the debate over Assam's growth, tourism is seen as crucial to the state's economic development. Some proponents even argue that tourism might be the cornerstone of Assam's economic growth and prosperity. In contrast, I believe it might be a significant contribution to economic development but not a driver. My argument is founded on the basic premise that for tourism to be a big factor, the state must rely on ordinary visitors who would visit the state and spend lavishly on products and services produced locally.

Despite the fact that the state has considerable resources, only six ecotourism locations have been identified. Kaziranga National Park, Manas National Park, Orang National Park, Nameri National Park, Haflong National Park, and Majuli National Park are among them. However, Assam, the most populous state in North East India, is touted to be a tourism hotspot due to its natural beauty and pleasant environment. Natural resources abound in Assam. There are five national parks, seventeen wildlife and bird refuges, and two biosphere reserves in the country. A brief review of the five national parks and other ecotourism destinations of Assam are given in the next few lines:

Kaziranga National Park:

In Assam, the Kaziranga National Park is the centre of attention. It is located in central Assam, in the Nagaon and Golaghat districts, on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River and at the foot of the Karbi Anglong hills. It plays a vital role in the global ecology. The park as a whole has a lot of water bodies, hilly terrains, marshes, and plains where many species of unique flora and fauna live, ranging from the Great Indian One-horned Rhinoceros to tiny turtles, and where one can have an exhilarating adventure sports experience and an everlasting memory of the awe-inspiring nature.

Manas National Park:

Manas National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a significant tiger project in India, is located on the banks of the Manas River in the northern section of the Barpeta district. The park is around 157 kilometres from the state capital, Guwahati, and has a core area of 360 kilometres. It is known for its golden langur, pigmy hog, hispid hare, wild buffalo, leopard, and other animals. Migratory birds such as river chats, forktails, and cormorants, as well as occasional inhabitants, are frequently seen here. Overall, Manas is a wilderness of endangered and unusual flora and animals that offers tourists rafting and angling opportunities.

Nameri National Park:

Nameri National Park is Assam's third national park, located 216 kilometres from Guwahati. Apart from seeing the flora and wildlife, Nameri's primary tourist attractions are trekking, bird watching, and angling on the Jiaharali. It's worth noting that Nameri has been known for angling for the golden mahseer since the British Raj. The Assam government's Tourism Department has built an ecotourism resort at Bhalukpong, some 21 kilometres from the park. At Potasali, there is also an eco camp that provides both lodging and meals, allowing travelers to be awestruck by nature.

Orang National Park:

Orang National Park is located on the Brahmaputra's northern bank. The park, which covers an area of 78.81 square kilometres, is home to several endangered animal species such as rhinoceros, spot-billed pelicans, and greater adjutant storks. Water sports are available near the park in the Brahmaputra and Dhansiri rivers, as well as sufficient opportunities for cycling and walking in the countryside. As can be seen, the Orang National Park has a lot of ecotourism potential. However, this park's accessibility is restricted. The location has yet to establish popularity among international tourists due to a lack of publicity and essential facilities.

Majuli:

Majuli is a big river island in Assam's Brahmaputra river with a total area of 1,250 square kilometres (483 square miles), however it has been reduced to just 421.65 square kilometres due to erosion. For the last 500 years, Majuli has served as the cultural hub and cradle of Assamese culture. The satras established there conserve antiquities like as swords, utensils, jewellery, and other culturally significant things. Sociologists have

emphasized the need of preserving these distinct peoples, whose culture and dance practices have remained untainted by modernism. The handloom work of these tribes is also internationally famous.

Haflong:

Haflong is the administrative centre of the Dima Hasao district in Assam. It is roughly 325 kilometres from Guwahati and is well served by the NF railway and ASTC buses. It is affectionately referred to as the "Switzerland of the East." Haflong is a charming hill station with amazing views. It is a never-ending narrative of softly running streams and waterfalls, surrounded by hills. Rolling mists and clouds hover within one's fingertips, concealing the hills. Tourists flock to Haflong for the following reasons: Jatinga: Jatinga is about 9 kilometers from Haflong and is known for its bird mysteries (Birds Harakiri). Migratory birds flock here from August to November to commit suicide, making it a popular destination for ornithologists. Some other visitors.

Hajo:

Hajo is about 30 km from Guwahati. It is home to large wetlands where people may go fishing. Hajo's hills and forests offer a wealth of opportunities for eco-friendly adventure activities such as hiking, mountaineering, and rock climbing. It is a famous tourist destination since it is a Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic pilgrimage centre.

Darrang:

Darranga is 45 kilometers north of Rangia, on the Nalbari district's Assam-Bhutan border. Darrang is famous for its yearly fair, the 'Darranga Mela.' The Mela begins in the autumn and lasts into the spring. This is a crossroads for folks from the lowlands and the hills. Tourists will find the people's way of life and culture fascinating. Natural beauty abounds in this area, which is great for riding. Tourists are also drawn to the textiles and Bhutanese items on display, particularly during the Darranga Mela.

Bhairabkunda:

Bhairabkunda is a renowned picnic destination in the Assam state of India's Udalguri district. It lies near the Bhutanese town of Daifam, on the Bhutan-Arunachal Pradesh border. It is regarded as a good ecotourism destination due to the numerous opportunities for trekking along the Jia Dhansiri, which runs through the area.

Apart from the places mentioned above, there are many other places that are yet to be explored and developed from tourism perspectives. Thus it is obvious that the state has a bright future with respect to the tourism industry as a whole and the ecotourism segment in particular. In fact, the large biodiversity, rolling hills, green valleys, virgin forests, the mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries, numerous beels and other wetlands etc- all can make the state a major centre for tourism and ecotourism. In fact, Assam forms a part of global biodiversity hot spot, with a variety of flora and fauna.

Impact of Ecotourism on the Economy of the State:

Ecotourism helps in environmental protection, wildlife conservation, poverty alleviation and socio-economic development. It has both positive and negative impacts on environmental, social and economic aspects of the country. Most destinations choose to invest their time and money into tourism because of the positive economic impacts that they hope to achieve. Due to high rate of beneficial impact, it is helping in the overall financial development of the community as a whole. We can summarize the overall impact of ecotourism in the economic development by citing the following key points:

Positive Impacts:

Ecotourism brings in foreign exchange: One of the most significant advantages of tourism is the possibility to profit from foreign exchange profits. Tourism expenditures bring money into the local economy. The revenue generated by tourism can subsequently be re-invested in the economy. The way a destination manages its finances varies around the world; some destinations may use the money to expand their tourism industry, while others may use it to fund public services such as education or healthcare, and some destinations are riddled with corruption, making it impossible to know where the money goes! Because certain currencies are more valuable than others.

Ecotourism generates employment opportunities:

Ecotourism's tremendous growth has resulted in considerable job development. Tourism provides a wide range of job options, from hotel management to theme park operators to cleaners. Tourism employs around 7% of the world's workforce. There are two types of employment in the tourism industry: direct and indirect. Direct employment includes jobs that are immediately associated with the tourism industry. This might include hotel staff, restaurant staff or taxi drivers, to name a few. Indirect employment includes jobs which are not technically

based in the tourism industry, but are related to the tourism industry. Take a fisherman, for example. He does not have any contact of dealings with tourists. BUT he does sell his fish to the hotel which serves tourists. So he is indirectly employed by the tourism industry, because without the tourists he would not be supplying the fish to the hotel.

Contribution to government revenues:

Tourism can help to raise money that it then invested elsewhere by the Government. There are two main ways that this money is accumulated. Direct contributions are generated by taxes on incomes from tourism employment and tourism businesses and things such as departure taxes. Indirect contributions come from goods and services supplied to tourists which are not directly related to the tourism industry.

Contribution to local economies:

All of the funds generated, whether formally or informally, have the potential to benefit the local economy. Money will be dedicated to locations that will benefit the local community the greatest if sustainable tourism can be proved. Money gained by tourist employees will be spent in the local community, and money earned by the government may be reinvested in public services. The multiplier effect is what it's called. The multiplier effect is when money spent in one area generates economic advantages in another. Tourism can do wonders for a destination in areas that may seem to be completely unrelated to tourism, but which are actually connected somewhere in the economic system.

Development of the private sectors:

The tourist industry's private sector has evolved through time, and having a firm in the private sector may be immensely profitable, resulting in a positive economic effect of tourism. Many of the firms you may encounter are transnational, internationally-owned enterprises that contribute to economic leakage. Many of them are also owned by members of the community. This is especially true in recent years, thanks to the surge in popularity of the sharing economy and companies like Airbnb and Uber, which stimulate the growth of local businesses. Every destination is different with regards to how they manage the development of the private sector in tourism.

Negative impacts:

Leakage:

When money spent on tourism does not stay in the country but instead goes abroad, the economic benefits of tourism to the host place are limited. Multinational and globally held enterprises, all-inclusive vacations, and enclave tourism are the main sources of economic leakage.

Infrastructure cost:

The expense of infrastructure is another negative economic consequence of tourism. Tourism development may be expensive for both the local government and the taxpayers. Tourism may necessitate the government's costly improvements to the airport, roads, and other infrastructure. As I discussed before in my discussion on opportunity costs, money invested in these areas may reduce government money required in other essential sectors such as education and health.

Increase in prices:

The presence of tourists raises prices in the local region, which is one of the most evident economic benefits of tourism. Tourist demand for essential services and commodities frequently results in price increases that are passed on to local inhabitants whose income does not rise in lockstep. Tourism growth, as well as the resulting surge in real estate demand, might drive up construction costs and land values considerably. Gentrification is a term used to describe the process of local residents being driven to migrate away from areas where tourist is concentrated.

Economic dependence of the local community on tourism:

Many countries are at risk of over-dependence on tourism. When a country sees cash signs, it devotes all of its resources to the tourism industry. While this may be advantageous, it is also a risky endeavour! If tourism diminishes in a location for whatever reason, it is vital that the destination establish alternative revenue streams. If they don't, they risk facing major financial problems if their tourism industry experiences a downturn.

Foreign ownership and management:

The last negative economic impact of tourism that I will discuss is that of foreign ownership and management. As the cost of doing business in the developed world rises, many companies opt to expand abroad.

While this may save the company money, it is rarely advantageous to the host destination's economy. Foreign firms frequently bring their own employees with them, reducing the economic benefit of increasing employment. They will often export a major amount of their earnings to the country in which they are based.

II. Conclusion:

Ecotourism has a beneficial and considerable impact on the local and state economies because it expands local livelihood prospects. Because it helps and enhances the local community economically and socially, ecotourism is a poverty-reduction method. Local community participation in ecotourism is critical for maximizing the sector's potential advantages, eradicating poverty, and conserving the environment. It's worth noting that ecotourism's potential beneficial socioeconomic and environmental benefits might be direct, indirect, or induced. However, such occupations increase human well-being by allowing people to earn money. It is extremely difficult for an area to retain its own folk culture and handicraft that exists among the indigenous people in this age of increasing automation and consumption. This can only be protected if their value and business demand are rediscovered. Local art and craft may be re-evaluated and used profitably thanks to ecotourism. Ecotourism activities might also be employed to alleviate the impact of mass tourism in the main region.

Different government and local authorities must collaborate to boost ecotourism in the state. The government should create a new department called "Department of Ecotourism," which would oversee the growth of ecotourism in various places. NGOs, local bodies, and clubs should step up to give training to local residents in order to help them enhance their abilities. The government and local governments must work together to improve public knowledge of flora and wildlife.

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