

Present status of infrastructure in Tourism sector of Kamrup District A study based on the “Importance-Satisfaction” Model

Siddharth Nayan Sharma

Asst Professor, Department of Commerce

Gauhati University

Email: siddharthnayan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Tourism has the greatest potential for generating income and employment opportunities in Assam because Assam is not only characterized by the blending of flora and fauna it is also exceptionally rich in bio-diversity. It has a rich cultural and ethnic heritage that can easily make it a tourist-spot. Tourism is one of the enormous service industries in India with its contribution of 6.23 percent to national GDP and 8.78 percent of total employment, witness more than 5 million annual foreign tourists arrivals and 562 million domestic tourists. Though Assam is having a very huge potential for tourism industry there are some constraints which are restricting its development. Out of these one of the main factors is the Lack of proper infrastructure. The North eastern states are being geographically isolated naturally have been facing some infrastructural issues from long back. Like other industries the tourism industry of Assam is also facing the problem of lack of proper infrastructure. To have a developed tourism industry a strong infrastructure is always needed in a state. So Government has to take serious call in this aspect. In this study an attempt has been made to understand the status of infrastructure in a systematic approach.

Keywords: Tourism, importance, satisfaction, management, infrastructure.

1. INTRODUCTION

Assam is a State of breath taking scenic beauty. Its rolling hills, dense forests, green valleys, large waterways and rich bio-diversity make Assam one of the splendid tourist destinations in the world. The State is also having unique art and culture, fairs and festivals, temples and monuments and handicrafts and handlooms. Assam is a natural conglomeration of various ethnic tribes and groups, each having a distinct language, culture, songs, dances and festivals. Rongali Bihu festival, tea tourism festival, Brahmaputra beach festival, etc. are being organized in the state as tourism events. The cultural tourist attractions of the state also include a large number of ancient temples and shrines. Kamakhya temple which dates back to pre-historic times is one of the most revered religious places in the country. The other important shrines of interest include the ancient Umananda Siva Temple, the Navagraha temple, Hayagriva Madhava Temple, Pua-Mecca mosque, etc. Guwahati in the Kamrup district is the most important and busy town in Assam. Dispur, the capital of Assam, forms part of Guwahati. The gateway to Assam and the adjoining North Eastern states is also Guwahati as it is connected both by air and rail to other parts of India. Lying on both sides of the river Brahmaputra, Guwahati is the largest commercial, industrial and educational centre of the region.

2.1: Objective of the Study:

The objective of this study is to ascertain infrastructure gaps in tourists' locations in Kamrup district. The present study is based on the “Importance-satisfaction” model. That is, the study will, first, find out what infrastructure at tourist sites tourists consider as “important” and then assess the level of “satisfaction” with the existing infrastructure at the tourist sites in Guwahati. This approach will be able to assess “importance-satisfaction” model which categorizes the facilities which tourists view as important but were not found satisfactory (by tourists) currently. Facilities classified in this category are those, which are high on importance and low on satisfaction. This approach basically, is a “Service Quality Approach”.

2.2: Study design:

The study design was an exit interview where tourists were interviewed at the time they were about to leave the site. Different sites of tourist destination in Kamrup districts were visited to collect information from tourists. A sample of 70 tourists, 40 Indians and 30 foreigners, was taken for the study. Due to lack of time and seasonal effect sample size is limited to 70 only. In making selection of the tourists from the site, it was assured that sample is a random sample by random time allocation

2.3: Study tools:

A study tool with “Importance-Satisfaction” questions relevant to the tourism sector was obtained from the Ministry of tourism. This questionnaire has two sections: one to assess importance tourist assigns to different facilities and the other to assess his/her satisfaction level with the existing level of the facility. Ten broad categories of facilities were:

- i. Air connectivity
- ii. Road connectivity
- iii. Rail connectivity
- iv. Civic administration
- v. Traffic and transport management
- vi. Tourists’ facilities
- vii. Taxes/permits
- viii. Maintenance and management of monuments/tourist attractions
- ix. Other services including power supply situation and Telephone/mobile services), and
- x. Visa, immigration and customs (for foreign tourists)

The tourists were asked about each facility/component of infrastructure to score it on the scale of 1 to 5, for both “importance” of infrastructure and that on the level of “satisfaction” as per their Assessment of the facility/component (shown below):

TABLE: I

Importance		Satisfaction	
Answer	Score Assigned	Answer	Score Assigned
Least Important	1	Poor	1
Somewhat Important	2	Unsatisfactory	2
Not so important	3	Average	3
Very Important	4	Good	4
Most Important	5	Excellent	5

Source: Field Survey

3.1 Demographic Profile of tourists:

- i. *Foreign tourist-* More than two-fifths (43%) of the tourists were in older ages of 55 years or above. Most of the tourists were of middle aged, 26-55 years. Only about 8 percent were in younger ages of 25 years or below. For about 50 percent, it was their first visit to India.
- ii. *Indian tourists-* About fifty five percent of the tourists were in the age group of 26 – 45 years (32.3% in the ages 26-35 and 23.0 % in 36-45 years). Only 15.1 percent of them had crossed 55 years. Majority of them (39.0%) were from Assam itself, followed by those who came from the neighboring state of West Bengal (19.0%).

4.1: Analysis and Findings:

- I. All the tourists were asked several questions related to their visit to the tourist venue. Three-fifths of the tourists came first time to the tourist site.
- II. The main sources through which they came to know about the tourist site were: friends / relatives (57.6%), followed by “own efforts because of interest in seeing tourist places” (31.7%).
- III. Since Indian tourism offices are located in only a few important cities in some countries, the tourists from these countries were asked about their experiences with the tourist office. Almost 60 percent of the foreign tourists from different countries reported to have known the Indian tourism office in their country. But only 35 percent of them contacted the Indian tourism office. Eighty four percent out of were satisfied and 13 percent stated that response of tourist office was just O.K.
- IV. About four-fifths of total tourist either used Train (43.8%) or public bus (20.0%) or plane (15.5%) to reach the tourist site. Only 16.9% came by their personal cars.
- V. While in Assam for this trip, more than two-fifths (42.4%) were staying in some commercial place, another 29.3 percent were staying with their friends/relatives and 10.7 percent had hired a place on rent.

Under the study it was tried to find out what are the facilities considered as very important by the tourists. Tourists include both foreign as well as Indian tourists. From the data collection some differences were found in assigning very important factor among various facilities. These facilities are grouped into some broad categories of facility. Ranks of ten tourist facilities reported as important by foreign and domestic tourists are shown below:

TABLE: II

Ranking of facilities by their “importance”(Percent tourists reporting score 4 or 5)				
Facilities	Foreign tourists		Indian tourists	
	Percent	Rank	Percent	Rank
Air connectivity	74.6	4	89.6	6
Road connectivity	65.0	8	91.5	5
Rail connectivity	62.6	9	92.3	3
Civic administration	81.2	2	94.0	2
Traffic and transport management	71.8	6	91.6	4
Tourist facilities	77.9	3	87.8	7
Taxes/permits	50.8	10	75.6	9
Maintenance and management of monuments/tourist attraction	74.3	5	87.3	8
Other services like Power supply situation Telephone/mobile services	68.5	7	94.2	1
Visa, Immigration and customs	88	1	NA	NA

Source: Field Survey

Finding from Table II-

- I. Foreign tourists feel that rules related to immigration, visa and customs are very important for the tourists.
- II. Whereas domestic tourists feel that other services like Power supply situation Telephone/mobile services are very important.
- III. We can observe that there are some differences in ranking of importance (score 4 or 5) in various facilities given by Foreign tourists from that of Domestic tourists.
- IV. But civic administration is having same rank in case both types of tourists.
- V. In case of connectivity Air Connectivity is mostly ranked as important by foreign tourist whereas domestic tourists mostly concerned about rail connectivity and least about Air connectivity.
- VI. For both kinds of tourists Taxes/permits are considered as lowest rank deserved under importance score of 4 or 5.

Now under the satisfaction part study was made to find out the level of satisfaction among the two kind of tourists i.e., domestic and foreign. Below mentioned table will show the ranks given to various measures of satisfactions related to the present infrastructure of tourism industry of Kamrup district. During the study some very significant measures of satisfactions were referred by respondents which are tabled below with ranking of their satisfaction level. The below mentioned analysis is very significant to understand the level of satisfaction that tourists had during their visit to different tourists place in Kamrup district.

TABLE: III

Ranking of satisfaction on various parameters					
Domestic(Indian)Tourists				Foreign Tourists	
SL	Measure	Rank	%	Rank	%
1	Condition of City Roads/ Traffic Management	2	70	2	67
2	Conditions of signage within the monument/ tourist attraction	4	65	2	78
3	Conservation of heritage sites/ monuments	3	78	2	72
4	Public utilities at the monument/tourist attraction	3	68	3	54
5	General cleanliness of monument/tourist attraction and area around it	2	72	3	85
6	Behavior of service personnel at wayside restaurants and dhabas	3	82	2	84
7	Drinking Water supply	2	92	2	92
8	Behavior of the taxi drivers	4	64	3	95
9	Garbage disposal	2	89	2	85
10	Public conveniences along roads/streets	3	65	3	86

Source: Field Survey

In the above table under Rank Column the mostly given rank is considered and the percentage of respondents for the particular rank is shown under the “%” Column. To have a better and brief understanding only the mostly categorized rank is shown. The other parts of responds are not shown. Under the study the mostly appearing satisfaction rank is considered. We can observe that there are some difference in ranking of satisfaction in different measures given by Domestic and Foreign Tourists.

Major differences between foreign and Indian tourists can be listed in the following points:

Foreign tourists have problems with monuments/tourist sites—condition of the signage, general cleanliness and public utilities at the sites. They have also reported complaints about services of the reception offices. Foreign tourists have complained about the poor conditions of the road. Foreign tourists have complained about Garbage disposal and drinking water supply.

Indian tourists have problems with traffic management, traffic signals, telephone and mobile services which foreign tourists have not reported as problems. Indian tourists have also reported problems of garbage disposal, sewerage and drainage system, and drinking water supply.

4.2: Recommendation and suggestions based on matrix of Importance-Satisfaction gap:

In case of Foreign Tourists:

More gaps were reported on condition of signage and condition of signage within the destination. They need to be improved so that tourists can get enough guidance and information about the site. Even reception offices were reported to be deficient. Gap was found in the tourist facilities all around the place—roads and public conveniences. Since poor conditions around the site leave a bad impression about the site and the country, there is need to improve them. They were particularly concerned about hygienic conditions and cleanliness all around and behavior of people whose services they needed during their visits. Not much complaint was made about visa, immigration and custom services though it was reported as very important.

In case of Indian tourists:

The domestic tourists were more concerned about infrastructure like hygiene at wayside restaurants and dhaba, public conveniences along roads/streets, garbage, drinking water supply, traffic management, sewerage and drainage system. Like foreign tourists, they also saw gap in the behaviors of taxi drivers and restaurants staff around the tourist site. Most of them were not using services of the organized tours because either they were not available or they did not know about them. Greater support from organizers of tourists will be useful for better tourism in the country. They also expressed need for better infrastructure like

telephone/mobile services at the tourist site. It may be noticed that actions of the Ministry of Tourism can itself help in improving the volume of tourism as it will make their visits more satisfying and a happy experience.

4.3. Some suggestions on findings from the secondary data collection:

The tourist visits in Assam has been increasing steadily during the last few years and the trend needs to be sustained through the provision of appropriate tourist facilities and services. There is good number of accommodation units scattered throughout the state. These units are primarily meeting the demands of domestic tourists and as such there is a need for more quality hotels, particularly in tourist destination like Guwahati, Kaziranga, Nameri, etc. Assam also has the potential of attracting more foreign tourists, particularly those segments of tourists having a liking for cultural and wild life attractions. Special efforts have to be therefore, made to improve the requisite infrastructure facilities and strengthening overseas publicity and promotion. It is also important to develop and implement strategies for enhancing the duration of stay of both domestic and foreign tourists. The policy framework and facilitation services in Assam also need to be improved for attracting private investment in tourism sectors.

REFERENCE:

- i. Khound Jinku Moni, "Constraints and Prospects of Rural Tourism Development: An Overview of Tourism in Shyamgaon of Titabor of Jorhat District (Assam)", *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 27-31, 2013
- ii. Das Dinesh, "Prospects and Problems of Tourism Industry in Assam", *Global Research Methodology Journal*, V01-II, 7th issue, Aranya Suraksha Samiti & Bilasipara College Library Study Circle, pp. 1-6, 2013
- iii. Deka, U.C, "Tourism in Assam's Economics Development: Policy Implication", *Development Studies*, Vol.24, No.4, pp. 122-124, 2004
- iv. Fayissa, B.C. Naish, and B. Tadasse, "The Impact of Tourism an Economic Growth and Development in India", *JNU, Department of Economics*, 2006
- v. Iyer, K.H., *Tourism Development in India*, Vista International Publishing House, New Delhi., 2006
- vi. Kreishan, F. M. "Tourism and Economic Development-The Case of India", *European Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.34, No.8, pp. 255-259, 2008