

Impact of Tea Tourism In Dooars, North Bengal. An overview.

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Abstract:

Tea tourism is defined as “Tourism that is motivated by an interest in the history, traditions and consumption of tea. Tea tourism in Dooars started during the British period. Nowadays tourists from all over the world visit Dooars region to witness quality tea cultivation. In India tea is the most popular beverage. The efforts from Government of India and North Bengal tea estate owners have made the North Bengal tea tourism, to a global name. Tea tourism or home stay in tea gardens is a fast growing segment. The world famous Darjeeling tea is representing the Dooars to the world. A tourist staying in the tea gardens in Dooars gets the opportunity to stay in historic bungalows or local heritage houses which may be invariably built before 1960. These types of bungalows or houses are generally renovated and are being promoted by various organization or individuals. This kind of tea tourism facility offers best of service & luxuries stay to the tourist. It's not a normal stay but a lifetime experience, where the tourist can directly interact with the local Communities, enjoy the natural beauty of tea gardens, and even enjoy the local food and can participate in local tradition and customs. The communities attach to the tea gardens generally offer the best ideas & options. Presently the home stay facility in Dooars, North Bengal is improving by leaps & bound due to its awareness & number of tourist growing with time. Beautiful nature, cool breeze, lush green grasses, lofty hills, blue mountain covered with mist & snow, forest includes wildlife, adventure, rituals of tribal's make the stay memorable. Tea tourism is really a lifetime experience, where tourist can participate from plucking to packaging including the manufacturing of tea. Tea tourism in Dooars is an activity of promoting hospitality, where economic & business activity is concerned, with the main focus on to attract the tourist to a particular destination and fulfil their needs of pleasure, relaxation and experience. The main focus of tourism promotion is to get more and more tourist and give them maximum satisfaction at a lower price. Sometimes in tea gardens, tourism activity is criticized by the outsider, where local/host usually get low end jobs for lack of skills. As a result the community feels unhappy with no economic benefit. Community Based tea Tourism, given an alternative to solve all such issues, where community is kept at the centre of tea tourism development. Tea tourism always includes tourism facilitation by local communities. The growth of tea tourism in Dooars is depending on a growing awareness of the need for more resident responsive, tourism. Now days the impact of tea tourism is an emerging form of sustainable tourism in tea Gardens of Dooars. In Dooars, tea tourism brings various financial/nonfinancial benefits to local Communities. Many Tea garden villages have launched a variety of approaches and initiative to promote their local Customs, tradition, culture, & community. The local resident of the tea gardens are generally working in tea gardens, and under a Caste. Presently many tea gardens owners of Dooars are already started tea tourism facility by providing a Bungalow or home stay facility, belonging to the community living in the villages. Apart from improving of the living standards of local communities, the main purpose of tea tourism in tea gardens of Dooars region, North Bengal is to promote the socio cultural status, customs, tradition & environment of local communities. This Study examines the impact and Hospitality opportunity of tea tourism in tea gardens of Dooars region, North Bengal.

Keywords: Impact of tea tourism in tea gardens of North Bengal, tea tourism & Hospitality facility under the concept of community tourism & involvement in Dooars, Home stay tea tourism in Dooars, North Bengal, Challenges of tea tourism in tea gardens of Dooars North Bengal .

Introduction: Tea tourism is relatively a new idea and concept in the world. Dooars region of North Bengal is taking a lead in this area to promote tea tourism, and community based tea tourism in North Bengal, especially the Dooars region. Now there are nearly 100 tea gardens in the Darjeeling districts each producing its distinct tea & flavour. Dooars is the Best for tea tourism. The flora and fauna of the region is diversified. The region is covered with forest & tea gardens and in between these virgin forests is the settlements of small tribes like

katamb, Mech, Rava, Munda & kora. Besides the experience of finest tea gardens, the North Bengal is well known for its finest and lushy green tea gardens. In North Bengal, there are more than 250 operational tea gardens that span across more than 3500 acres, of land area. In Dooars region there are more than 280 tea gardens that span across, 2800 acres of area. Most of the tea tourism projects allow guests to stay inside the tea gardens in tea bungalows. Bungalows are basically constructed during the British era and influenced by Victorian and Gothic architecture. The scenic beauty of the tea gardens is also mesmerising. The maximum tea garden provide excellent view of mountain, some of the gardens are very close to forest. Some of the most famous tea tourism centre in Dooars are-Ghoomtee tea tourism centre, Glenburn tea garden eco tourism centre, Makaibari tea tourism centre, Salim hill tea tourism centre, Phaskowa tea tourism centre etc. Staying in tea resort bungalow may not be an option for all, because such tea bungalows are limited in number and expensive, because such upscale tea bungalows are mostly targeted for luxury traveller. But now a day's most of the tea gardens are providing the home stay facility to the tourist, where the rate is relatively low. In home stay facility, the food is generally prepared by the resident people, with the traditional feelings of taste and flavour. Some tea gardens also provide a budget accommodation that are set up in tea estate and offer nice way to enjoying the beauty of tea garden and hills, and even tea plucking. Most of the tea tourism centre of Dooars provides real time activities to the guest, where the guest is allowed to visit the tea factory for watching the production, joining a tea testing session, even going around the tea estate, with local resident. At evening tourists can enjoy the jungle safari or to a nearby lake for boating. It's a experience when the tourist, spending a few days in sprawling tea garden villages as a home stay guest, located in the village itself or at the heritage bungalow, designed in the British style of architecture. The British bungalow retains the antique furnishing of the colonial day. In home stay facility, the tourists can enjoy the local authentic food prepared by the local people. The tourists can enjoy the local culture, custom, by spending some days with them. Tourists can take a walk through the villages, and nature trails, get dipper inside the lives of the villagers. Tourist entertains with local cultural dance and traditional music. It is true that there are some tea gardens in North Bengal, where tea tourism have reached its perfection. In the Dooars region, most of the tea garden workers and villagers have extended their houses, for home stay tourist facility, at low budget, and offer them homemade food, at a home feeling atmosphere. Staying in tea garden villages, is not like staying in five star luxury hotels, but it brings you closer to the nature and garden life.

Objectives of the Study:

There are four objectives of the study. First is to study the scope & impact of the tea tourism in the Dooars region of North Bengal. Secondly, to find out the impact & hospitality perspective of home stay facility around the tea gardens of Dooars. Third is to find out the variation of customs, culture, food habits and traditions of the local Communities, which help to promote the tea Tourism in the tea gardens of Dooars. Fourth is to find out how much tea tourism contributes to the Development of local community.

Background of the Study:

Dooars region of North Bengal is surrounded with natural beauty of foothills, magnificent world famous tea gardens, wildlife sanctuary, with a maximum number of tourism destination in various forms like, resorts in tea gardens, Wildlife resorts, home stay facility at villages of tea gardens, tent & bungalows in forest & tea gardens, natural eco tourism centre, and tea tourism centre. Tea gardens of Dooars has a super natural capacity to promote the complete nature based tea tourism facility and hospitality. Tea tourism facility in the villages of tea gardens empowers the local community to control the major management of sustainable growth and control. Local residents of the tea gardens needs to be fully empowered in tourism management for independent growth, in which home stay tourism facility, is a part of tourism activity. Dooars is the most famous tea tourism centre, and also includes the availability of different varieties of culture, foods of tribes etc. Suitable guidelines are prepared with the survey conducted upon local people of tea gardens in Dooars, which is fruitful and with a relentless and concerted effort to make this area as a complete and independent tea tourism destination in India as well as in the global context. The Dooars region is surrounded by forest, wildlife, and tea gardens, which is also a centre of community based tea tourism centre, where the tourist can enjoy the beauty of hills, forest and tea gardens. The communities living in the tea garden areas provide an affordable and adventurous home stay facility to the tourist, providing their classical authentic foods, thereby presenting their ethnic culture earmarked by traditional elements and behaviour.

Research Questions:

The following research questions are formulated for this research.

- a) What are the key factors, which contribute to promote the tea tourism in Dooars, North Bengal?
- b) What are the major initiatives taken by the Government to promote tea tourism in Dooars North Bengal?
- c) Does tea tourism have a significant impact on the community development of the villagers living in North Bengal Tea gardens?

Literature Review:

The literature review covers developments, of tea tourism, and home stay tourism in tea garden villages of North Bengal. It facilitated to understand the study in depth to formulate a theoretical frame work and methodology. Tea tourism has been defined as most responsible tourism to a community area or a tea garden ,by which the well being of local population is improved as well as the local environment is conserved(International Ecotourism Society, 2009). Prof. Lee Jolliffe in his Book "Tourism & Cultural change, Tea & Tourism Tourist Tradition, & Transmission" 2007, (unit-II), says, tea tourism is similar to Cultural, and ecotourism or nature based tourism. Mallya(Wildlife Tourism & Conservation), a review, VOL-65,PP-211-214- In his book analyzes the nature of eco-tourism and the details of community based -tourism programmes around the world. Not only this, the book also investigates the role of community participation in the development of eco-tourism from social, political and conservation perspective. Romila Chawla (Economics of Tourism& Management) (2012) volume - 2, no.1, pp. 64-68 -In her book notes that indiscrete expansion of tourism industry causes various damages to the host communities and environment..Georg Barna in his book "Seven Faith Tribes" unit-6- provides helpful insight into how tribal groups influence our economy, politics, and values. Through his in-depth study of all seven tribes, Barna has identified potential strategies that faith tribes-if they choose to-could employ to facilitate healing and restoration in culture, and cultures across the world. Lain De Botton, in his Book "The Art of Travel 2014" (unit-4) says, tourism although related to nature based tourism bears many characteristics, like community developments, conserve resources, & conserving heritage. in Mallya(Wildlife Tourism & Conservation), a review, VOL-65,PP-211-214, his book analyze the nature of ecotourism and tea tourism, around the North Bengal region. Not only this, the book is also investigates the role of community participants in the development of community based tourism in the tea gardens. Except this the author gives some guidelines and recommendation on the development of community based tea tourism, and eco tourism with the participation of local communities. Biswas and Bera (2009) Development of tribes through eco-tourism in Dooars region of Jalpaiguri, west Bengal", geographical review of India, volume - 70, no.1, pp.62 – 65 ,in their paper express, that the Dooars, North Bengal region, present a high percentage of tribal population, they are basically lives in the tea garden area of North Bengal, they are still backward and mainly engaged with primary activities and they are still below poverty level. Prasanta & Horen (2014) in his article "Tea Garden Workers Perception towards Working Condition and Role Performed By Trade Unions: With Special Reference to Jorhat District" highlighted the prospects and challenges associated in the promotion of tea entrepreneurship amongst the women through examining their present situation in the tea sector. Tea tourism, Community based tourism, sustainable tourism, eco tourism are subsets of the concept of sustainable development by the United Nation World Tourism Organization (WNWTO 2008). The WNWTO has guided many local communities through the development of tea tourism projects. Tourism industry in Dooars North Bengal, mostly depend on the resorts, home stay, and ecotourism facilities. Now it's focuses on social and environmental sustainability. Tourism and sustainability development was declared at the world summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Jolliffe 2007:9-unit-v,pp-21-23 explain "Tea tourism, is generally a type of tourist activity , where guest is allows to stay in tea garden by enjoying the taste of tea and see the plantation & processing of tea leaves.

Research Methodology:

The Research Design use in this study is both Descriptive & Empirical. The survey instrument by using convenience sampling procedure on tourist. At first theoretical framework has been applied in this study. Then it is followed by brief discussion, regarding the research design, Data collection, and instrument development, sampling method and last data analysis.

Theoretical framework:

Tea tourism Development + Participation + Leadership = Tea tourism.

Tea tourism development, leadership, participation are closely inter-related variables that affect tea tourism.

Research Design: Exploratory factor analysis followed by descriptive analysis which uses to taste influential attributes. The result shows that for potential benefits of tea tourism, tourist perception is highly depend on destination(choice of tea gardens) or spot brand image(Brand of tea garden) or traditional facility(Like traditional Food, Traditional Welcome, Traditional customs) provided to the tourist, followed by customer satisfaction. In this research design primary data is manage through data collection. A total number of ten questionnaires were distributed to the local tea garden village peoples or local home stay communities, visited by the researcher. On the other hand respondent was given explanation about the question to ensure the data collection meaningful and accurate. Five tea garden villages have been selected in Jalpaiguri, & Darjeeling District, under the Dooars region, where tea resort, home stay facility, & bungalow facility, tent or common accommodation facility is available. This Research study will help the organizations, & tourism operators of tea gardens of North Bengal, to understand the common factor, which are influencing the tourists towards tea tourism. Sampling used to collect the data depending upon the availability of tourist, and host in the sample villages at the time of data collection.

The communities which lives in the tea garden villages of North Bengal are commonly under the tribal communities including the Bodo, Rabha, Mech, Lepcha, Tamang, Limbu, Mangar, & Chik Baraik.

Name of the Tea Garden Villages: Figure: 1

Name of the Tea garden village.	Area/District	No of Houses (Approx)	Population (Approx)	Sample Distributed. (as 10 percent of Total No. of Houses)	Total Sample collected (Respondent) (as 10 percent)
Chengmari Tea Estate.	Chalsa/Jalpaiguri	211	745	21	74
Dharanipur Tea Estate	Nagrakata/Jalpaiguri	180	851	18	85
Sylee Tea Estate.	Chalsa/Jalpaiguri	200	654	20	65
Fagu Tea garden.	Gorubathan/Jalpaiguri	160	740	16	74
Jayshree Tea Garden.	Jalpaiguri	172	860	17	86
		Total=553	Total=3850	Total= 92	Total=384

Data Collection & Sampling procedure: The field survey was conducted on above listed tea gardens. Surveyors request the villagers and invite them to participate in the survey. After filling the Questionnaire the participants return the complete questionnaire. The surveyor checked if there is any missing response. In this process a total number of 92 Houses were selected randomly for the survey, which is utilized for data analysis. Among 384 respondents from the sampled families, 45% were Female, and 55% were Male respondent. In the survey of respondent Villagers, 50% are High school pass out, 10% are Graduate degree holder, 10% are post Graduate degree holder, and 30% are under class five pass. The data is analyzed through descriptive and empirical statistics, such as percent analysis, standard deviation and factors. In terms of the duration of the stay in Tea gardens home stay facility or resort, Bungalow, 30% reported for one day trip, followed by two days 35%, three days (20%), five days or more (15%). When the travel purpose, asked to the tourist, about 50% indicates for relaxation, followed by nature (20%), Enjoyment (15%), adventure (15%).

Ratio of male and female under survey Respondent. Figure:2

Name of the Survey Villages.	Sample Collected.	Male	Female
		Total Male=212(as 55%)	Total Female=172(as 45%)
Chengmari Tea Estate.	74	39	35
Dharanipur Tea Estate	85	37	48
.Sylee Tea Estate	65	40	25
Fagu Tea garden	74	45	29
Jayshree Tea Garden.	86	51	35

Problems of the study: Tea gardens of North Bengal is basically covered by a rich flora, fauna, and other natural resources. Dooars region of North Bengal is enriched with different distinctive species of flora & fauna, majestic view of eastern Himalayan foothills, Various orchids, cultural heritage, rituals & festivals. But the region has not witnessed major tourism development activity especially in tea tourism, or home stay tourism. The reason behind it as follows.

a) Lack of co-ordination between local tea garden authorities and Government Forest & tourism department: There are more than 350 operational tea gardens in the Dooars region of North Bengal. The living communities of these tea gardens are not properly trained regarding the implementation of tea tourism or home stay based cultural tourism, or tea tourism facility in bungalow or a tea resort. They need a proper training based on tea tourism promotion, and activity. Home stay facility, tea resort facility & bungalow facility in tea gardens is one of the most up growing favourite facility in tea gardens of Dooars, North Bengal. To visit these areas tourist, basically have to be dependent on the forest and tourism department, or through online booking facility provided by the various well-known tea gardens. A good and balance co-ordination is required between the local tea gardens and forest department, for the promotion, & improvement of tea Tourism in tea gardens of Dooars, North Bengal.

b) Lack of proper planning: Lack of Systematic planning & proper organization is another constraint of tea tourism in tea gardens of Dooars. There are no such particular tea tourism organization, Government agencies, & NGOs in Dooars, North Bengal for promoting the tea tourism or community based tea tourism. An effective tourism planning is required for the benefit of tea tourism, around the villages of tea gardens in Dooars North Bengal. Hence there should be a separate tourism organization for Promotion of tea tourism in Dooars, North Bengal.

c) Government Funding: Lack of Government funding, is one of the most important problem for the promotion and emerging prospect of tea tourism. Without the Government funding it is very difficult to maintain the standard of tea tourism in tea gardens villages of Dooars North Bengal.

Result & Discussion: The most relevant Socio-demographic Variables of the sample are shown below.

Figure:3

(Variable)	(percentage)	(variable)	(percentage)
Gender		Place of Residence	
>Men	55	>Tea Garden Villages.	80
>women	45	>Tribal Villages of tea gardens.	20
Age		Academic Level	
>15-30	22	>Primary Education	30
>30-45	30	>Secondary Education	50
>45-60	40	>Higher Education	20
>60 and above	8		
(Variable)	(percentage)	(variable)	(percentage)
Gender		Place of Residence	
>Men	55	>Tea Garden Villages	80
>women	45	>Tribal Villages of tea gardens	20
Age		>Interest in home stay Tea tourism	41
>15-30	22	>Interest in cultural tea tourism	23
>30-45	30	>Interest in community based tea tourism	25
>45-60	40	>Interest in Resort or Bungalow facility around the tea garden.	11
>60 and above	8		

When tourist recourses had been indentified, the first step in this investigation is to ask the local community, regarding the activities of tea tourism is increasing as a consequence of tourism development .One of the objective of the development of such activities through tea tourism, which could provide a satisfactory response to specific visitor profile.

Choice of Tourists Activity in Tea Garden: Figure: 4

Activity	Men (%)	Women (%)	Total (%)
Tea cultivation & processing	12	15	27
Nature & Experiment	33	28	61
Leisure	25	20	45
Local culture & customs	10	22	32
Food & Accommodation	21	15	36

As shown in above figure, most popular activities to grow are enjoying the natural beauty of tea gardens & experiment the natural environment, and the other one is for leisure and relaxation purpose. It should be pointed out that, during the field survey in the villages, it observed that accommodation is normally provided by local peoples in their own house as a home stay, where tourist are feeling home like atmosphere. Similarly other facilities like resort & bungalow facility in the tea gardens, where the guest or tourist, feel the luxury, and enjoy the traditional food prepared by local people in a hygienic condition and serve to the guest with local traditional service utensils. Some of the tourist also shows their interest activity levels in local culture and customs. Food & accommodation is also a preferred activity of the tourist.

Average evaluation of tourists resources: Figure: 5**The average evaluation of the area (1=poor, 2= standard, 3= Very Good) as follows.**

variable	Average	Variable	Average
Key Factor		Tourist services	
>Hospitality	2.00	>Food	2.72
>Tea Tourism Activity (Visiting Tea processing Factory, participating in Tea plucking, Tea Testing, Purchasing etc)	3.8	>Accommodation	2.58
		>Activity Level	3.12
General services		Activities	
>Food	2.41	>Ecology	2.95
>Safety	2.04	>Culture	2.55
>Transport	1.00	>Adventure	1.10
>Other Services	2.05	>Wildlife	3.08
		>Experience & Knowledge	2.52

Table shows that tourists are commonly highly interested in activities, like tea tourism activity (Visiting tea Processing factory, participating in tea plucking, tea testing, Purchasing etc), ecology and wildlife. Hence food, safety, accommodation, & Cultural activities also obtain a remarkable score. Tourist also believes that there would need to be an improvement in aspects such as hospitality, adventure & transport.

Conclusion:

The tea industry of North Bengal has a history of more than 150 years. Tea tourism is considered as one of the most famous tourism activity in Dooars North Bengal. Dooars region of North Bengal consider as a second leading tea production region in India, next to Assam. It has directly related to the entire socio-economic & socio-cultural features of the people of Dooars. Maximum tea estates are coming forward & open up their gardens & bungalows for the tourists. Few years ago, there was a time, when tea tourism was limited only to the manager bungalow & owner families. But now, tea tourism of Dooars is lifted up with their facilities like adventure, nature, experience, culture, tradition & customs. Experiencing the tea tourism in tea gardens with local culture, socio –cultural activities, sightseeing tour, tea harvesting, tea testing, local food, ethnic culture, is really being a wonderful experience of life. It is a discover of new destination or tourist spot instead of a traditional one. This is facilitating, the local communities, or tribes to generate wealth, income as considering tea tourism to be an economic activity. The living communities of tea gardens, of Dooars, North Bengal, are now more active, to participate in tea tourism and related activities in the tea gardens. Tea gardens are always be an example of natural beauty. Tea tourism activities in the tea garden villages always gives a heartiest feelings to the tourist along with nature feelings, traditional cultural experience, emotional touch with environment & local customs.

In this paper the study includes a specific area of Dooars North Bengal, under Siliguri, Jalpaiguri, subdivision. In Dooars, tea tourism activity is becoming, one of the major tool for economic development of the villages and district. At present the home stay facility is more attractive for the tourist those who are interested for local culture & food. Now the local tea garden workers & villagers are extending their houses to accommodate tourists. In this way the villagers earned money as an additional source of income. It also helps to create more jobs opportunities, for the tea garden villagers. But overall tea tourism is still not an organised sector in Dooars, North Bengal. Tour agencies, tour operators, local Government bodies, NGOs are not so much active to promote tea tourism in Dooars, North Bengal, due to various factors related to facilities, infrastructure and safety. But North Bengal forest department, tea board, North Bengal tourism department, Dooars tea gardens association has taken a positive initiative, for upholding & promotion of tea tourism in the tea gardens of Dooars, North Bengal.

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