

Employment Opportunities through Tourism in Goalpara District of Assam: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

With technological advancement in all sectors including communication, tourism is spreading tremendously in the world as a whole. Tourism is not merely a travel for fun rather it also linked with several economic activities that can lead to various employment opportunities. Thus, we can use tourism as a tool for reducing unemployment. This paper will explore how tourism can contribute in unemployment reduction and also explores different tourist attraction points in Goalpara district that can be used for future growth of tourism and help the natives to get good employment opportunities.

Keywords- Tourism, employment opportunity, Goalpara, unemployment, rural tourism.

Introduction

Tourism is travel for enjoying time and engage in activities that give pleasure to human mind. The commercial activities and organisations related to providing and supporting such travels is called tourism industry.

Being a labour abundant country India has been facing unemployment since independence. Government of India have also launched different schemes to promote employment opportunities. Similar to India, Assam is also facing unemployment as an obstacle in the path of development. Government of Assam currently giving importance on developing skills of youth by different schemes so that they can earn money even if they don't get a government job. In this unemployment scenario Tourism being a labour-intensive industry can help to generate employment opportunities and help to reduce unemployment in Assam and as well as in India.

Objective

1. To analyse the various employment opportunities in the tourism industry.
2. To analyse different types of tourism in Goalpara District.
3. To study the prospects and challenges of Tourism in Goalpara Assam

Methodology

This study is descriptive in nature and based on secondary data. This study includes research articles in magazines, periodicals, websites, published books etc and data from Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

Review of Relevant Literatures

Pawar (2013) in his research paper “The Possibilities and Strategies for Development of Tourism with Special Reference to Dharwad Gadag and Haveri District” found that tourism provides income and diversification to local communities. Most of the income generated from outside visitors stay within the local economy.

Singha (2013) in his article “Ecotourism for Sustainable Development: A Case Study of Goalpara District in Assam” able to draw an overall view that Goalpara district has immense potentiality for such low impact and sustainable development-oriented tourism.

Katoch (2016) in his paper “The Impacts of Rural Tourism on Local Community Development: A Study of Himachal Pradesh India” observed that large numbers of tourists are coming to Himachal Pradesh for tourism activity. This can be justified by the increase in the figure of the tourists in the statistics on a yearly basis till date.

Das (2017) in his article “The Prospects and Problems of Tourism in Assam” found that the development of tourism industry Assam largely depends upon the formulation of a proper tourism development policy and people’s co-operation and consciousness. The High-Powered Shukla Commission has recommended for establishing a North-East Tourist Development Corporation to develop tourism in the region.

Kalita (2024) made a study on “Tourism Entrepreneurship and Its Role in Socio Economic Development of Western Assam”. Major findings are the tourism entrepreneurship of Assam is not only a source of visual entertainment but also a significant driver of economic growth. This entrepreneurship plays an important role in creating employment opportunities for both the skill and unskilled workers.

Baishya (2024) studied about “Employment Generation in Context of Eco-Tourism in Assam”. Tourism industry in India generates several employment opportunities that positively contribute global economies. Both in rural and urban areas, this industry creates multiple job opportunities across different skill levels.

Tourism & Employment generation

Being a labour-intensive industry, tourism can help to control and reduce unemployment. Tourism can generate huge employment opportunities directly and indirectly. In direct process it generates employment in the form of hotel management teams, travel agencies, cab or rental taxis or two-wheel vehicles, souvenir dealers, local products shopping outlets, vegetable sellers, restaurant staff, tour guide, museums management teams, jobs in protected areas such as national parks, palaces, religious sites, resorts, photographer, jobs in farm houses like cook, gardener and others etc. apart from direct process it also generates employment outside the tourism industry. Tourism indirectly generate employment in the form of activities like restaurant supplies, food delivery, construction companies that builds necessary infrastructure for tourism like road, bridges etc, marketing agencies, accounting services, farming etc. so development of tourism is directly linked with increasing demand in other sectors like agriculture, construction etc which will again generate employment in those sectors.

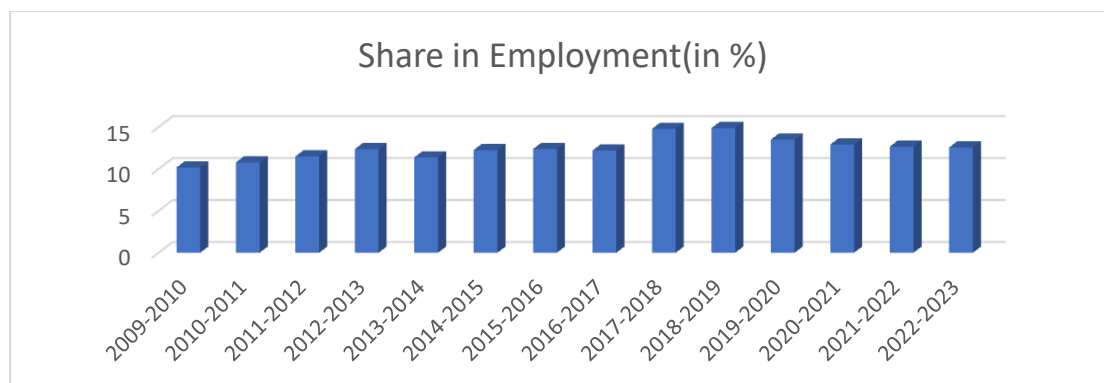
Tourism and Employment: India

The tourism industry is regarded as the foundation for related industries such as hospitality, civil aviation, travel and transportation, hotels, resorts, and home accommodations, street sellers, spice stores, travel companies, etc. Both the federal and state governments make significant investments each year to support the growth of the tourism industry. One of the key factors influencing growth, job creation, rising national and personal income, improving the balance of payments position and foreign exchange revenues, raising people's standard of living and consumption, etc., is the improved tourism industry.

Year	Share in Employment (in %)	Employment (million)
2009-2010	10.17	64.5
2010-2011	10.78	65.6
2011-2012	11.49	66.7
2012-2013	12.36	66.9
2013-2014	11.37	67.21
2014-2015	12.25	69.75
2015-2016	12.38	72.26
2016-2017	12.2	75.34
2017-2018	14.78	72.69
2018-2019	14.87	75.87
2019-2020	13.5	69.44
2020-2021	12.91	68.07
2021-2022	12.66	70.04
2022-2023	12.57	76.17

Source: Ministry of Tourism

The table shows the share in employment in percentage and the actual number of people employed in million through tourism in India from 2009-10 to 2022-23. According to the data, between 10 and 15 percent of India's jobs were continuously generated by tourism. Both the percentage share and employment figures climbed steadily between 2009 and 2016 i.e., from 10.17% to 12.38% which was a result of both direct and indirect growth of jobs due to tourism. Tourism continues to be an important contributor to the employment in India. In 2017–18 and 2018–19, the employment share increased significantly to 14.87%. However, there is a decline starting in 2019–20. The COVID-19 pandemic, which caused serious travel disturbances, lockdowns, and employment losses in hotels, airlines, transportation and other tourism-dependent sectors. The years 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 show signs of the post-pandemic recovery, with employment rising once again to 76.17 million and share in employment started to increase in 2022–2023 but the percentage share of employment through tourism did not entirely return to pre-pandemic levels.



Tourism and Assam

Assam is a region in northeastern India that is rich in both natural beauty and cultural legacy. Assam, one of the states that make up the northeast, is a true representation of the region's natural beauty and grace and has long been acknowledged as a major tourism destination. Both the other states in the North Eastern Region and other regions of the country are easily accessible from Lower Assam, also known as Western Assam. Assam is now well-known throughout the world thanks to its tourism industry, and its wildlife tourism is particularly alluring on a worldwide scale. Credit for this tourism belongs to places like Kaziranga National Park, Rajib Gandhi National Park, Manash National Park, and Rimona National Park, among others.

Tourism in Goalpara

Goalpara is situated in the west part of Assam in the south bank of mighty Brahmaputra. Natural beauty, cultural heritage, religious significance and historical importance make Goalpara a unique district for tourist attraction. Its unique blend of natural sites, archaeological sites, scenic hills with ancient temples, large tribal cultural heritage of Rabha, Bodo, Garo, Hajong and others. All these make Goalpara a potential hub for Tourism in Assam.

The places of Goalpara that attract tourist can be explained as follows –

1. Nature Tourism:

Nature-based tourism is mostly associated with natural settings that draw tourists for the purpose of directly experiencing nature. Goalpara has a variety of natural areas that can draw tourist.

- **Nisangram:** It is situated 7 miles from the Dudhnoi subdivision and is among the most scenic spots in Goalpara District. Tourists are drawn to Nisangram mostly by its beautiful scenery, eco-friendly practices, and cleanliness.
- **Urpada Beel:** One of the biggest lakes in lower Assam is Urpada Beel, which is located in the Goalpara district of Agia. It is well-known for aquatic plants like water lilies and birds like kingfishers, and it draws photographers and environment lovers.
- **Nalonga Waterfall:** One of Goalpara's tourist attractions is the Nalonga Waterfall in Agia. This waterfall is ideal for short trips or a peaceful natural break because it falls over a rock ridge and is surrounded by dense forest.

- **Kumri Beel:** Located in the Goalpara district, Kumri Beel is a naturally occurring lake that draws a lot of tourists, photographers, and environment enthusiasts. The beel is surrounded by 5 villages (about 200 families) of fishers who earn their daily bread from the aquatic resources of the beel.
 - **Ajagar Wildlife Sanctuary:** It is another nature-based tourist place located in Badahapur, Goalpara. It focuses on forest area conservation and rich diversity of flora and fauna.
2. **Religious Tourism:** People who travel alone or in groups for religious reasons, like rituals, worship, or the pursuit of peace, are engaging in this sort of tourism. In Assam, Goalpara is a popular destination for religious tourists.
- **Sri Surya Pahar:** Sri Surya, a well-known archaeological site in Assam, is situated roughly 12 kilometers southeast of Goalpara town. It is connected to the worship of Surya, the Sun God. There are many ancient Sculptures, Shivalingas, Buddhist Stupas, Jain Carvings, Modern Sun Temple which attracts tourists.
 - **Tukreswari Temple:** This ancient Hindu temple, which is devoted to Sati, is situated in Assam's Goalpara district. This temple's primary draw is its distinctive fusion of historical significance, spiritual value, and a large monkey population.
 - **Paglartek Shiva Mandir:** This ancient temple is situated in the Goalpara district's Barbhita village. Tourist can observe the neighbouring Brahmaputra River and explore its cultural legacy.
 - **Sri Chaitanya Gaudiya Math:** It is another cultural hub aligned to the Sri Krishna Chaitanya culture, located in Goalpara. It hosts many events and festivals relating to Sri Krishna which attracts many devotees.
 - **Nandeswar Devalaya:** On top of Nandeswar Hill, close to the Dudhnoi River, Nandeswar Devalaya is one of the oldest Shiva temples.
3. **Rural Tourism:** In rural tourism, people showcase rural life, handloom, art and craft, raw culture at rural locations and villages in the natural environment. Being naturally beautiful and good connection with their root, most of the villages in Goalpara have the potential to enter in rural tourism. Villages by providing a rural set up for relaxation with all their native resources and by including activities like fishing, farming etc can attract people mostly from cities who want to enjoy few days staying away from city chaos. In Goalpara, a village called Rangsapara which is quite popular as cleanest village of Assam has already showed a real example of rural tourism.

4. **Cultural Tourism:**

Goalpara not just has natural beauty but also it has rich cultural heritage that can attract tourist. It represents unique blend of indigenous traditions, diverse ethnic groups, festivals, cuisine, art, dance, music and spiritual practices. Goalpara is home to tribes like Rabha, Bodo, Hajong, Garo, Koch-Rajbanshi and many other. Each of these communities has own language, dress, dance, music, festival, cuisine, handloom style etc. thus we can say that there is great potential for cultural tourism in Goalpara district of Assam. Festivals like Dodan mela, Baikho, Baishagu etc can attract tourist as well.

Challenges

Future planning and implementation in Goalpara, Assam must be done at both the ordinary and management levels. But even if Goalpara's tourism industry needs a lot of work, there are a few issues that must be resolved first. Some of the difficulties are listed below:

1. **Lack of Infrastructure and Transportation:** Like other states of Assam, in Goalpara also, a major problem is the absence of infrastructure and transportation. The majority of the rural areas are still not well connected to the cities for seamless interactions. This causes a disconnect between the potential for tourism in rural areas and the number of travellers who want to go there.
2. **Absence of sufficient trained tourist guide:** This is a big challenge when it comes to tourism in Goalpara, Tourists are often found in a state of confusion without the proper guidance from tourism stakeholders.
3. **Lack of awareness:** Another problem with tourism is that visitors and local communities don't know enough about it.
4. **Lack of decent accommodation facility:** It is another challenge which need to be addressed. Even though we don't anticipate five-star hotels be found in rural locations, there must be enough good hotels or lodging options for visitors to stay.
5. **Weather change:** Climate change is considered a major concern in the travel industry. Because floods, heavy rains, and rising temperatures harm tourism assets and reduce visitor numbers,

Conclusion

Though we have found several challenges but there is strong possibility of Goalpara being a tourism hub in near future due to its natural abundance and archaeological sites. Goalpara is blessed for religion tourism, having ancient sites like Surya pahad, with proper planning and action Goalpara can transform it into a proper tourist place with enough hotels and guides that can attract tourist more. Again, there is a strong possibility of rural tourism and adventure tourism in Goalpara due to its geographical characteristics. Since this district also share boundary with Meghalaya, it also has hills where they can introduce adventure activities like hiking, rock climbing, camping, mountain biking, zip-lining etc. So with help of both public and private stakeholders Goalpara can emerge as a tourist attraction point and can provide various employment opportunities which will eventually lead to unemployment reduction in the state as a whole.

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