

# **BOOSTING ASSAM**

# **TOURISM**

A Case Study by

- Bhadra Tendulkar
- Kishan Kumar
- Yash Kataria
- Tejas Tendulkar
- Khushi Agrawal
- Tanmay Totla

## **Introduction:**

Assam offers a wealth of natural beauty, cultural diversity, and historical significance that makes it an excellent destination for tourism. Its untouched waterways, lush forests, impressive mountains, and flourishing wildlife create a paradise for adventure enthusiasts and nature lovers. The state boasts a rich biodiversity, with several rare and endangered species such as the one-horned rhinoceros living in its national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

Assam's cultural heritage is equally fascinating, with a mixture of tribal communities, each with its unique customs, traditions, and cuisine. The state is home to several ancient temples and monasteries that showcase the richness of its religious and spiritual traditions. Colourful festivals, such as Bihu, celebrate the changing seasons and demonstrate the state's lively and joyful cultural heritage.

Additionally, Assam's history is steeped in the legacy of British colonialism, with numerous tea estates and bungalows that carry a rich heritage and architectural splendour. The state is also home to several archaeological sites, such as Sivasagar and Hajo, that bear witness to the region's glorious past.

## **Defining the problem statement:**

Assam's tourism strengths lie in its natural beauty, cultural diversity, and historical significance, making it an ideal destination for travellers seeking an authentic and immersive experience. With its untouched natural landscapes, vibrant culture, and rich history, Assam has the potential to become a leading tourism destination in India.

Though it has seen a growth in the number of both domestic and international travellers, it does not make it to the ranking of the top 10 most visited states in the country. This project aims to take into account problems faced by the tourists visiting Assam and to suggest possible solutions in order to improve the experience of tourists. It also aims to make recommendations related to other fields that can directly impact and boost the tourism of the state.

The goal of this project is to address the challenges and concerns often encountered by tourists during their visit to Assam. The aim is to offer recommendations for enhancing the overall tourism experience. These recommendations have been ideated based on an assessment of the existing tourism policies, infrastructure, and future prospects across different states and countries. The unique features and rich cultural diversity of Assam have also been taken into account while making recommendations, keeping in mind the objective of stimulating growth in the tourism industry in Assam.

## **Defining Possible KPIs to measure the success of any recommendation:**

Key Performance Indices used to gauge the state of tourism:

- 1) Number of domestic tourists visiting per year: To get an idea of how effectively any tourism policy regarding domestic tourists.
- 2) Number of international tourists visiting per year: To get an idea of how effectively a tourism policy work when it comes to international travel.
- 3) Revenue generated from tourism activities in Assam, including hotel accommodation, transportation, and attractions to get an idea regarding the size of the tourism industry and its yearly increase.
- 4) Average number of days that a tourist stays in Assam, which indicates the state's ability to retain tourists.
- 5) Amount of money spent by tourists in Assam, including accommodation, food, transportation, and attractions. The more an average tourist spends, the more impact on the state's economy.

## Wildlife

<u>S.N</u> <u>o</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>UNIQUE</u> <u>POINTS</u>	<u>PROBLEMS</u>
1	Kaziranga National Park	One-horned rhinoceros is found here	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poaching of animals, especially the rhino is still prevalent in the park which lessens the number of animals and thus the visitors interest.</li> </ul>
2	Manas National Park	Variety of endangered species found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The region where the park is situated is considered unsafe as it is prone to have political disputes and tensions. eg:in 2014 when this park was shut down for tourists because of ethnic violence involving the militant organization- National Democratic Front of Bodoland.</li> </ul>
3	Pobitora National Park	Highest concentration density of rhinos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People find it similar to Kaziranga due to which most of them skip visiting this place.</li> <li>• Another problem encountered is the lack of professional guides.</li> <li>• Tourists often complain about the marshy way to reach the park and the dusty environment there.</li> </ul>
4	Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary	Elephant sightings are quite prominent and in winters it becomes a spot for migratory birds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive human activities like fishing and encroachment have reduced the wildlife here.</li> <li>• Boats, which are generally in bad shape, need to be rented to see the birds clearly.</li> <li>• A road is present which runs through the area, thereby reducing the probability of wildlife sightings.</li> <li>• Disputes keep coming up between local fishermen and officials which often increase scale and intimidate the tourists.</li> </ul>
5	Hoolongpar Gibbon Sanctuary	Various kinds of gibbons - a rare kind of ape are found here	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineffective guides with a bad track record - including cases of increasing fees midway during the trip</li> <li>• No proper maintenance of the place for tourists to walk on.</li> </ul>

## **Solutions**

It can be seen that the major problems faced are the poaching of animals, poor maintenance of the place and its associated facilities, and inefficient.

Possible Solutions:

- 1)  
Assam saw zero rhino poaching in the year 2022, owing to the creation of a special task force comprised of senior police officials and officers of the forest department. Thus continuing and expanding this task force would ensure that poaching in the state stops.  
(source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/others/no-rhinos-poached-in-assam-in-2022-for-1st-time-in-45-years-101672715521177.html>)
- 2) **Having more programs like the 'Training Facilities and Tour Familiarization':**  
By conducting more programs like the 'Training Facilities and Tour Familiarization', given in the sustainable goals of the state's tourism sector for the training of educated youth as tourist guides, thereby not only helping the tourists but also generating employment for the youth, the problem of inefficient guides can be solved.  
(source: [https://tourism.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/5/menu/right\\_menu/right\\_menu/sustainablegoals.pdf](https://tourism.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/5/menu/right_menu/right_menu/sustainablegoals.pdf))
- 3) **Conflict Resolution in areas of insurgency:**
  - (i) security forces/ 'police action';
  - (ii) more local autonomy through mechanisms such as conferment of Statehood, the Sixth Schedule, Article 371 C of the Constitution in case of Manipur and through 'tribe specific accords' in Assam etc;
  - (iii) negotiations with insurgent outfits; and
  - (iv) development activities including special economic packages.(Source: [https://mdoner.gov.in/contentimages/files/ARC\\_7thReport\\_Ch12.pdf](https://mdoner.gov.in/contentimages/files/ARC_7thReport_Ch12.pdf))
- 4) To add to all these, a frequently reported problem related to wildlife is the absence of food outlets at in the vicinity in certain cases. This can be resolved by increasing and promoting food outlets near the wildlife parks so as to make the tourists' experience convenient and hassle free.

## **Ethnic Tourism:**

Developing ethnic tourist circuits can be an effective way to attract visitors from around the globe. Organising festivals that showcase the unique socio-cultural and religious traditions of indigenous communities, including vibrant song and dance performances, colourful attire, and diverse culinary experiences, can be a major draw for tourists.

Ethnic tourism ought to be planned, managed, and marketed effectively as a viable and sustainable tourism form. This could serve as a powerful tool to preserve and safeguard cultural and heritage values while also contributing towards the alleviation of poverty.

## **Major Tourist Festivals in the State:**

- 1) **Bihu:** Occurs thrice a year, each having its own significance in agriculture. 'Bohaag Bihu', which marks the Assamese New Year, is celebrated in the month of April, Magh Bihu, which is the harvest festival, is celebrated in the month of January and Kati Bihu is celebrated in the month of October.

- 2) **Ambubachi Mela:**

Celebrated at the Kamakhya Temple

Celebrated every year during the monsoon season- typically during mid-June.

Every year during the time of Ambubachi a large number of devotees gather here to perform religious rituals.

Problems faced by tourists in the previous years:

- ❖ During the Ambubachi Mela 2019, despite the expected rush of tourists, there were no special trains arranged, which caused immense discomfort to passengers travelling for the festival.
- ❖ Although 100 buses had been promised for taking the tourists from the railway station to the temple, devotees had to arrange for transport on their own.
- ❖ Even the General Secretary of the Temple claimed that the organisers had not paid attention to the pilgrims living in the temple.

(Source: <https://www.eastmojo.com/news/2019/06/21/assam-ambubachi-pilgrims-face-problems-as-facilities-go-for-toss/>)\

- 3) **Raas Leela:**

Annual festival being performed on the full moon day (Purnima) in the months of October-November (Kati- Aghun) during the autumn season though the exact date changes every year several thousand devotees visit the holy temples every year.

<https://www.tourmyindia.com/states/assam/majuli-festival.html>

- 4) **Ali-ai-Ligang:**

This festival initiating cultivation is celebrated in February-March by the Mishing tribe on the occasion of the beginning of the Ahu paddy cultivation.

- 5) **Me-Dum-Me-Phi :**

Me-Dam-Me-Phi festival marks ancestor's worship which is being celebrated all over Assam on January 31 of every year. This is the fundamental festival celebrated especially by the Ahoms since the 12th century.

- 6) **Majuli Festival:**

This festival is always held in the month of November and lasts for a total of 4 days showcasing a number of ethnic groups with their cultural performances. Artists and artisans from all over the state also come to exhibit their handmade products including traditional handicrafts and garments, locally made cane and bamboo products, and so

on. Food fests are also organised at the festival and there is a rich display of the local delicacies of the state in general and of the tribes of Majuli in particular.

## **Solutions and possible ways to increase footfall:**

- 1) Although data of problems faced by tourists is not available in case of most of the festivals, the inconveniences faced by tourists in some cases depend on the location of the place and its associated features. For instance:

The problems related to Majuli as a place would impact tourists visiting for Majuli festival as well. Thus identifying problems based on previous years' data and working on their solution would ensure that tourists have more ease and comfort while visiting.

- 2) In cases like that of the Ambubachi Mela 2019 incident, provisions must be made beforehand to ensure that a similar incident does not occur. Adequate transportation should be disposable depending on the number of people estimated to come.

There should be a committee to oversee the smooth execution of religious festivals that are carried out in temples, which has officials of the tourism department, local civic body officials, along with the priests from the temple to ensure that every problem is catered to.

The government should maintain a record of the number of people visiting every year and plan accordingly every year to ensure that there are adequate facilities for the people visiting.

- 3) Increased promotion and marketing of festivals, specifically using content creators and influencers:

In order to promote fests and festivals to a larger audience, it is important that they get to know about the overall atmosphere and the cultural importance of that festival. This can be accomplished by using the services of influencers to promote festivals in the state.

---

## **Handicrafts of the State:**

Assam is home to several tribes, which have their own specialty when it comes to making artefacts and handicrafts. Assam is also famous for its terracotta artefacts, handloom industry, and its bamboo products. It also launched a new handicrafts policy with the aim of improving the socio-economic conditions of the artisans by developing the growth of economically viable crafts-based businesses along with developing the capacity of those involved in the sector.

Handicrafts directly impact tourism and the economy, since they attract establishment, give the local artisans a source of livelihood, therefore strengthening the economy of the state. In order to give tourism a boost, by the means of policies relating to handicrafts, we consider the handicraft policies of two governments - Assam and Rajasthan, one of the leading producers and exporters of handicrafts in the industry.

Benefits/Incentives offered by the Assam government's tourism policy that directly impact tourism:

- 1) Cluster Development: For all round development of a craft in a particular cluster, the Government shall provide appropriate technology, facilitate supply of raw materials, arrange capacity development of the artisans and initiate steps for product design and marketing.  
These clusters will eventually be known for their craft, thus making them a tourist attraction.
- 2) Brand Building: Initiating measures for branding "Craft of Assam" by registration of a common logo, publicity through print, electronic and social media, opening of dedicated web portal, tying up with National and International online portals for selling craft items, encouraging setting up of souvenir shops nearby tourist destinations.
- 3) Marketing Assistance: Marketing assistance towards advertising in print/electronic/social media shall be reimbursed up to 50% subject to a maximum ceiling of Rs. 30000.00 per annum for a period of three years.
- 4) Online marketing: One-time financial assistance of up to Rs.30000.00 shall be provided for the development of web portal/App for online marketing of products.
- 5) Assistance for Participation in Fairs / Exhibition ranging from within the state to abroad, the government will provide support on reimbursement on stall rents, travel, etc. This would help promote the state's culture throughout the world, thereby attracting more tourists.

In order to recommend more possible ways to increase the footfall of tourists by strengthening the handicrafts industry, we referred to the Handicrafts policy of Rajasthan, the exports Policy of Uttar Pradesh.

- 1) Brand Ambassador –Prominent personalities like celebrities or influencers would be appointed as the Brand Ambassadors for the promotion and publicity of handicrafts and handlooms of the state at national and international levels. This would help spread and promote the culture of the state, thereby attracting more tourists.
- 2) Preparation of a special action plan for the identification of at least one handicraft product in each district and its promotion under the ODOP(One District One Product) Scheme. This scheme is also present in Uttar Pradesh for promoting its handicraft industry.  
Assam is home to several tribes and communities being spread in every district, thus a similar initiative can be carried out in the state. This would promote such districts for distinctive products, thereby attracting tourists.
- 3) For the exhibition and marketing of handicraft products, counters will be made available by the Tourism Department in their Tourist Reception Centres and Tourist Information Centres located within and outside the State.  
Information about places already renowned for their handicrafts will be included as 'Handicraft Circuit' in the tourist literature, web portal, and social media handles of the Tourism Department to ensure their publicity and promotion.
- 4) Establishing a State Level handicraft museum for exhibiting major handicraft products of the state at a central location, like Guwahati or Dispur. Establishing mini handicraft museums in districts presently famous for handicrafts to display their local handicrafts. These museums will act as places of tourist attraction.

<https://invest.rajasthan.gov.in/policies/rajasthan-handicraft-policy-2022.pdf>

[https://invest.up.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Export-Policy-2020-25-eng\\_141122.pdf](https://invest.up.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Export-Policy-2020-25-eng_141122.pdf)



## **Gastronomy Tourism:**

According to Godrej Food Trends 2022, India is fast emerging for food tourism with more people willing to travel to try out authentic cuisines. This trend was almost non-existent a decade ago but given its current state, is expected to grow even beyond in the upcoming years.

Gastronomic Tourism also attracts foreigners who are willing to try out authentic cuisine.

Assam can focus on this rising form of tourism to attract more tourists, given the rich heritage of cuisine it houses, such as:

Steps that can be taken to boost culinary (gastronomic tourism) in the state:

### **1) Local village and food tours:**

Conduction and promotion of local village and food tours which not only include attractions that talk about the culture of the villages but also give importance to the food in the region. Given Assam's multi-ethnicity, there would be several options to offer when it comes to food that belongs to different indigenous communities residing in the state, which makes any food tour complete.

### **2) Exposure of the Traditional Rice Beer varieties of Assam**

The Ahom, Deori, Karbi, Rabha, Mishing, Bodo, Dimasa ethnic communities have their own traditional rice beer which goes by different names. Also, the process involved varies within the communities. This drink has great religious and cultural connotations and is especially made during their respective main festivals and thus is an integral part of the culture and cuisine of Assam. By actively promoting it and associating its identity with the state, Assam can attract more tourists.

### **3) Organization of specialty dining experiences like that of Kaziranga National Orchid:**

Kaziranga National Orchid and Biodiversity Park (located near Kaziranga National Park) hosts a traditional dining experience all throughout the year in the most authentic manner with there being traditional food of Assam accompanied by traditional dance and music. By encouraging and organizing such specialty dining experiences at other places of tourist attractions or during fests and festivals, tourists can be given a taste of the cuisine of the state.

### **4) Organizing Food Festivals:**

The Brahmaputra Beach Festival, Majuli Raas Mahotsav, Chandubi Festival, Junbeel Mela, Dehing-Patkai Festival etc. are events which has and will keep attracting visitors. So it is important that such festivals are timely organised to promote culture and tourism.

Assam has a lot of potential in culinary tourism and if certain areas are focused, and efforts made accordingly then chances are that Assam can be the next food destination of the country.

### Solutions:

- 1) **Organizing dance festivals:** Government of Karnataka organizes the Hampi dance festival to promote its culture and dance forms every year in the months of October and November. Similar dance festivals are also organized in several other parts of India. Organization of a similar event in Assam could lead to it becoming a tourist attraction.  
<https://www.indiaculture.nic.in/festival-cultural>
- 2) **Establishing a dance museum:** One of the most famous museums dedicated to dance is the Dance Museum located in Stockholm which houses all exhibits associated with dance: costumes, masks, scenography designs, works of art, posters and books. A similar initiative can be uptaken to promote the dance forms of the state. This can also help in attracting tourists.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333871297\\_Dance\\_in\\_Tourism\\_from\\_an\\_Anthropological\\_Perspective\\_An\\_Introduction\\_to\\_the\\_Research\\_Issue](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333871297_Dance_in_Tourism_from_an_Anthropological_Perspective_An_Introduction_to_the_Research_Issue)
- 3) **Organizing dance recitals of famous award-winning personalities by the government:** Similar to the initiative taken by Telangana government, renowned personalities belonging to the field of music and dance can be roped in for recitals for special festivals which would attract tourists.  
<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/elgandal-fort-comes-alive-with-bharat-natyam-recital/article30898200.ece>
- 4) **Marketing to increase reach:** Promoting the state dance forms and traditional music by advertising.

[https://www.indianetzone.com/39/mythological\\_themes\\_indian\\_literature.htm](https://www.indianetzone.com/39/mythological_themes_indian_literature.htm)

## Temples

Sr No	PLACE	UNIQUE POINTS	PROBLEMS
1	Kamakhya Temple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An important religious place within the city of Guwahati, I.</li> <li>One of the 51 <a href="#">Shakti Peethas</a> of Goddess Durga</li> <li>During the month of June, the river Brahmaputra</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A lot of tourists found that the queues of the temple were time consuming, even after paying extra for the 'VIP Darsan' facility.</li> </ul>

		<p>passing near Kamakhya turns red. This event is said to celebrate the natural biological process of menstruation and speaks strongly in support of it (although it is considered taboo in whole india)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The VIP Darsan tickets are limited in number and without those, it takes upto 7 hours of waiting in queues at times until you get to see the shrine.</li> <li>• At times even after buying the VIP tickets, it takes roughly 5 hours to reach the shrine.</li> <li>• Some of the tourists feel intimidated by the animal sacrifices being carried out in the temple.</li> <li>• Once the gates are closed and the queue is still, one can neither move ahead nor leave which agitates the tourists.</li> <li>• People claim monetary scams around the temples.</li> </ul>
2	Umananda Temple		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The temple is located on peacock island, and there are no food facilities near the temple on the island.</li> <li>• There are two types of ferries operating between the mainland and the island, and usually drivers try to loot the tourists by taking them to the private ferry which is priced higher.</li> <li>• Tourists claim that the boats are not senior citizen or people-with-disability friendly.</li> <li>• There are no signages or boards regarding the history or the importance</li> </ul>

			of the temple.
3	Barpeta Satra		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signages are not clear at places which leads to confusion amongst the tourists.</li> </ul>
4	Basishtha Ashram Temple		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The temple and its surroundings are not well maintained.</li> <li>• The main unique point of the temple, a waterfall through the ashram is itself muddy and dirty.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
5	Negheriting Shiva Doul		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The temple is not well maintained from the inside - there is a peculiar odour inside the temple.</li> <li>• The monkeys around the temple are often a menace to tourists.</li> </ul>
6	Siva Dol		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priests/ Temple staff directly asks for money as 'donation'</li> <li>• Lack of maintenance</li> <li>• Temple guides are rude and not helpful</li> </ul>
7	Kedareswar Temple		
8	Asvakranta Temple		
9	Ugra Tara Temple		
10	Bhairabi Temple		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animal sacrifice practices which intimidate some of the tourists.</li> <li>• Lack of general maintenance of the temple.</li> </ul>
11	Dhekiakhowa Bornamghar		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most tourists faced the problem of parking</li> </ul>

			spaces, with the parking spaces and its prices controlled by the local residents making the prices very high.
12	Maha Bhairava Temple		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The temple's surroundings are littered.</li> <li>Tourists have claimed the temple staff to be rude.</li> </ul>
13	Da Parbatia Temple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ruins of shiva temple along with some other ahom temple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ruins have not been maintained enough and the signages near the temples are not sufficiently informative for tourists to comprehend the history associated with the temple.</li> </ul>
14	Sukreshwar Temple		
15	Hayagriva Madhava Temple		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The temple staff and the management are claimed to 'ask for monetary benefits' from the tourists and scam them.</li> </ul>
16	Tilinga Mandir		
17	Mahamaya Temple`		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The temple staff of the temple are not well-behaved, with the tourists being almost forced to pay up.</li> </ul>
18	Hajo Temples		

## **Solutions:**

The most common problems encountered by tourists are pertaining to poor crowd management (affecting the most visited temple of the state), rude temple staff and management, poorly maintained temples/area around the temples.

- 1) Have a department to control and manage temple administration under the state, similar to the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment of Tamil Nadu.
- 2) Having an online system to register complaints against the temple and/or its administration, similar to the platform introduced by the DMK Government in the year 2021. (Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2021/may/25/dmk-govt-goes-online-to-receive-grievances-related-to-hindu-temples-2307276.html>)
- 3) In 2006, the Calcutta High Court ruled that this practice must be visually concealed at Kalighat, a religious site in West Bengal. The bench argued that the blood and offal produced by this practice create an inappropriate visual experience for visitors at a major pilgrimage and tourist site in the city.  
This can be used as a precedent for asking temples to conceal animal sacrifices from tourists so that they do not feel unpleasant and intimidated.  
As far as the issue pertaining Kamakhya Temple is concerned, the mismanagement of the temple has been taken up in the Supreme Court of India, since Oct 2022, with the problems regarding hygiene being highlighted. The case was deferred until January 2023, with it still being in the process. The verdict and suggestions given by the court will definitely act as solutions for boosting tourism.
- 4) Tourism Department should ensure the presence of informative signages at every temple to ensure that the tourists get to know the history and importance of the temples.  
Maharashtra, one of the highest footfall-receiving states in India when it comes to tourism had planned the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) to install signages at major destinations within 3 years using PPP (Private - Public Partnerships). State of Assam can employ a similar model to ensure the installation of signages.
- 5) For sites relatively more difficult or unconventional to reach, for instance, Umananda Temple requires tourists to use boats, the local civic bodies should ensure that the mode of transport employed to reach the site is comfortable for every tourist.
- 6) The temple committee, along with the help of local civic body should ensure that the area around the site should be safe, without the local residents there threatening the tourist.

## **Medical Tourism in Assam:**

**USP:** Healthcare facilities in Guwahati have improved tremendously in the past few years, with several prominent chains now having a branch in Guwahati.  
Guwahati has already started getting patients from Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal.

Cheaper rates than the

Improvement of health infrastructure of hospitals and other complementary structures, as well as technologies and skills, are also required.

The main market of medical tourism for Assam are the nations of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Myanmar to some extent.

## **Possible ways of boosting medical Tourism in Assam:**

Financial Transactions:

- ❖ Payment of fees from origin countries generates informal payment along with reducing the revenue for the government.
  - ❖ BBIN countries may take steps to facilitate region-wise e-transaction for medical payment purposes.
  - ❖ Strengthening banking networks- for instance Guwahati does not have between the countries would ease the burdens on patients aiming to get treated in India.
- 1) Improving Connectivity:
    - ❖ Improving the connectivity of Assam internationally would boost medical tourism in the state. Guwahati should be linked with Dhaka, Kathmandu, Thimpu and Yangon by direct air.
    - ❖ Currently, Guwahati is the only airport in Northeast India, which is connected with Thimpu and Bangkok.
    - ❖ Dhaka – Shillong – Guwahati bus services are yet to be operational.
    - ❖ Patients arriving at Assam – Bangladesh (Dawki/Tamabil) border from Bangladesh for health treatment may be given on-arrival visa with biometric pass to the patient and one accompanying person for some certain days.
  - 2) Opening up of branches of Indian hospitals in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal by FDI (foreign direct investment) should be taken up.
  - 3) Signing of Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRAs) for health services in BBIN region, to acknowledge the degrees and diplomas in the health sector and allowing doctors and nurses to move hassle-free across the border and carry their services.
  - 4) Except for Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya (for post graduation institute), the north Eastern states do not have any credible medical college. To sustain its medical tourism, Assam should focus on building more accredited medical institutions. This will not only empower the youth by making them skilled, but also give rise to newer jobs.
  - 5) Presence of consulate services would help facilitate health tourism. Guwahati already houses the consulate of Bhutan and the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission. By encouraging the establishment of consulates of other nations, there would be a significant boost to tourism.

Maharashtra receives the highest traffic of people coming for medical tourism. Given its tourism policy, the following recommendations can be made to improve the scope of medical tourism in Assam:

- 1) Storing data of the nationalities visiting the state of Assam for medical tourism and creating a dedicated marketing and promotion plan for these nations.
- 2) Developing a marketing roadmap for existing markets as well as new potential identified markets for medical tourism in India. They have been grouped together, based on their culture and other factors for the purpose of devising a strategy of targeting them. They include:
  - ❖ Russian region (covering Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine),
  - ❖ Brazil
  - ❖ South Korea
  - ❖ Spanish region (covering Spain and Portugal)
  - ❖ Thailand region (covering Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar),
  - ❖ Argentina region (covering Peru, Chile, other neighboring Spanish speaking countries).

## **Future Plans of Government:**

In the month of December 2022, the tourism minister of Assam honorable Jayanta Mallabaruah ji had a meeting with the officials of the tourism department and medical representatives. The outcome of the meeting:

- Highlighting specific medical branches specialized in various hospitals across the state to attract patients from
- 
- Organization of roadshows in the neighboring countries to create awareness about the medical facilities available in Assam.

(Source: <https://www.sentinelassam.com/topheadlines/meet-explores-ways-to-boost-medical-tourism-sector-in-assam-629979>)

## **Places of Historical Importance**

<b><u>S.No</u></b>	<b><u>Place</u></b>	<b><u>USP</u></b>	<b><u>Problems</u></b>
1	Hajo Powa Mecca	Resting place of Pir Ghiyasuddin Auliya, an Islamic pioneer. It is believed that the earth imported from mecca was used to lay its foundation in 1657 when it was built	



2	Rang ghar, Sibsagar	Known as the "Colosseum of the east", it is one of the oldest remaining amphitheaters. It is an ahom structure which exemplifies the architectural perfection and majesty of that period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cases of tickets being charged even for children under the age of 15, which are supposed to have free entry.</li> <li>• Staff is unprofessional and there have been cases of invasion of privacy of tourists.</li> <li>• Trouble caused by locals.</li> <li>• Poor maintenance of the place.</li> </ul>
3	Talatal Ghar, Sibsagar	The biggest Ahom monument in the world. Gist of mughal architecture can also be seen in the structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly maintained</li> <li>• Absence of signages.</li> <li>• Rude staff.</li> <li>• People randomly scribble on the walls of the monument.</li> </ul>
4	Surya Pahar, Goalpara	Associated with the cult of sun worship. Locals say that there are 99999 Shiva Lingas there.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of trained guides.</li> <li>• A lot of scriptures, murals etc are present but nothing about them is mentioned in the entire complex.</li> </ul>
5	Satras, Darang	A monastery founded by sankardeva and his followers. Assam's unique and diverse culture can be witnessed here as many forms of art are presented here.	
6	Khaspur, Silchar	Home to the Dimasa Kingdom's ruins, which are a spectacular sight to behold. Many centuries old architecture like a Sun gate, a Lion's gate and much more can be found here. The entrance gates, which still stand tall are shaped as elephants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No signboards</li> <li>• poorly maintained</li> <li>• cases of snatching by local goons</li> <li>• dirty environment.</li> </ul>
7	Charaideo, Sibsagar	Known as the 'Assam pyramids'. Considered to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor maintenance of the site</li> </ul>

		<p>be holy as many Ahom emperor and queens' graves are present here. The architecture of the tombs are comparable to the Egyptian pyramids. The major attraction of this site is the burial vaults, which contain a great deal of information about the Ahom monarchs' lifestyles and cultures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of proper guides to explore the place.</li> </ul>
8	Sukapha Samannay Kshetra, Jorhat	<p>Symbol of alliance between tribal and non tribal people of Jorhat. The first Ahom monarch, Sukapha arrived from Thailand after climbing the Patkai mountain range and established the dynasty. This place was constructed in order to honour the leadership quality of Sukapha.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor maintenance of the site</li> <li>• Lack of proper guides to explore the place.</li> </ul>
9	Ladai Garh, Jorhat	<p>Was built by the ruler Pratap Sinha in order to protect the village from intruders. It is divided into three sections, each with its own heading - Mera garh, Swalat garh and Ladai garh.</p>	
10	Patharughat Swaheed Minar, Darang	<p>Although the district Darang already is house to many stunning temples, sanctuaries and historical landmarks, this one is a bit different. This structure was built in honour of the victims of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre who were of the Assamese descent. The minar's structure is a work of art created by the engineers of that time.</p>	

### **Solutions:**

The main problems arising are inefficient guides, poor management of places with the staff there being unprofessional and rude. Possible solutions that can be implemented:

- 1) The Tourism Department should ensure the presence of informative signages at every temple to ensure that the tourists get to know the history and importance of the temples. Maharashtra, one of the highest footfall-receiving states in India when it comes to tourism, had planned the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) to install signages at major destinations within 3 years using PPP (Private - Public Partnerships). State of Assam can employ a similar model to ensure the installation of signages. For citing relevant information, help can be taken from the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) under the Ministry of Culture.

## **Marketing Strategy:**

When it comes to tourism, one of India's most successful advertisement campaigns is "Gujrat Ki" which was launched and aired by the government in the year 2010. In just five months of telecasting the advertisements, the footfall of tourists in Gujrat increased by 13 Lakhs, with the number of foreign tourists increased by 65%.

Gujrat spent rupees 71 crore rupees in two years, for making the ad campaign.

### **Brand Communication Approach:**

Gujrat had released print advertising in the year 2006 but this generated very little impact on its tourism. Instead of going after conventional advertising consisting of just video and information, the brand of Gujrat was advertised by associating a perception with it. The advertisement campaign was labeled "Khusboo Gujrat ki" which was aimed at associating the diverse culture of the state with its fragrance. This unique way of communicating the culture to the audience attracted viewers. Print advertisements were also made in sync with the Khushboo Gujrat ki campaign to reinforce the brand's identity amongst the public.

### **Similar approach that can be implemented in Assam:**

Assam's unique culture, especially the fact that the state is infamous for its tea can be used to identify a unique way of promoting the state, with the importance being laid on offering the users a unique and different perception, similar to the approach taken by Gujrat.

The campaign was carried out in three phases over a period of two years, with the first phase targetting major tourist attractions like Gir, Kutch, Gandhi Ashram, and Porbandar. These places were already famous and were accessible. Focus was laid to increase tourists in these places before targeting other tourist spots.

In phase two, once the footfall of tourists increased in the state, festivals like Navratri, RannUtsav, Modhera, and Patan were chosen with the aim of promoting the culture of the state and its local handicrafts, dishes, danceforms and empowering local artisans.

In phase three, the target audience was expanded with the emphasis being laid on relatively lesser-known festivals and places Saputara, Ambaji, Adalaj, and the Buddhist trail, and promoting sites of interest that could attract relatively lesser visiting groups of people.

**Similar initiative that can be carried out in the state of Assam:**

Upon finalizing the theme and the type of marketing, depending upon the advertising strategy being implemented by other states during that time, a strategy should be devised that would gather maximum attention and also stand out uniquely from other advertisements.

### **Other points that add to boosting tourism:**

- 1) Lack of healthcare facilities in remote tribal-inhabited areas and poor literacy levels have directly contributed to compelling illiterate and semi-literate people to resort to superstitious practices. Incidents pertaining to this, up to some extent, discourage tourists to visit the state.

By educating people of the state regarding superstitions and introducing them to scientific methods, we can ensure that the claims related to black magic no longer continue to discourage people from visiting.

## **Appendix: use citationmachine.net for this**

<https://www.eoiriyadh.gov.in/page/types-of-tourism-in-india/>

<http://dlkhsou.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/127/1/14.pdf>

### **Medical Tourism:**

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326626946\\_Study\\_of\\_the\\_of\\_Growth\\_of\\_Guwahati\\_a\\_s\\_An\\_Emerging\\_Hub\\_of\\_Medical\\_Tourism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326626946_Study_of_the_of_Growth_of_Guwahati_a_s_An_Emerging_Hub_of_Medical_Tourism)

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/et-commentary/making-northeast-medical-tourism-hub-for-the-region/>

[https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/4\\_p\\_i.pdf](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/4_p_i.pdf)

[https://tourism.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/5/menu/right\\_menu/right\\_menu/sustainablegoals.pdf](https://tourism.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/5/menu/right_menu/right_menu/sustainablegoals.pdf)

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259568619\\_Problems\\_and\\_Prospects\\_of\\_Cultural\\_Tourism\\_A\\_Case\\_study\\_of\\_Assam\\_India](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259568619_Problems_and_Prospects_of_Cultural_Tourism_A_Case_study_of_Assam_India)

<https://pnjournal.com/index.php/home/article/view/7086/9268>

<https://assam.gov.in/about-us/405>

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/0973703019870881>

<https://tourismcorporation.assam.gov.in/about-us/detail/arrival-of-tourists>

<https://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-06/Brief%20write%20up.pdf>

### **Marketing Strategy:**

<https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jbm/papers/ies-mcrc-icscm/Part%205/44.pdf>

[https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/khusbhoo-gujarat-ki-costs-gujarat-govt-rs-71-crore-113032500333\\_1.html#:~:text=However%2C%20he%20had%20informed%20that,f or%20shooting%20of%20the%20advertisement](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/khusbhoo-gujarat-ki-costs-gujarat-govt-rs-71-crore-113032500333_1.html#:~:text=However%2C%20he%20had%20informed%20that,f or%20shooting%20of%20the%20advertisement).

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/big-b-impact-13l-more-tourists-visit-guj/articleshow/7062300.cms>

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-law-and-religion/article/abs/on-blood-power-and-public-interest-the-concealment-of-hindu-sacrificial-rites-under-indian-law/339C7920CEB8F426D575635EDC6ACE9B>