

## BRIDGEWAYING TOURISM & ENVIRONMENT: PROPOSING A ECO-TOURISM MODEL

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### ABSTRACT

*In recent years tourism business has emerged as the key driver of the global economy. The unique potential of climatic-biological diversity of ecotourism vests on the travel in nature and thereby fulfilling the goals of travel rejuvenation along with sustainable tourism management. The immense variety of climatic, edaphic, altitudinal variations with picturesque topography, rich biodiversity and forest wealth is the real hub of eco-treasure of north east region of India. The essential objective of the present paper is to identify the ecotourism prospects, environmental aspect and tourist footfall in the north eastern region (NER) of India. The authors of the paper have made a modest attempt to develop a comprehensive model for bright prospect of eco-tourism in North-east sector. The main research methodology was conducted with extensive literature review considering research papers, articles, journals and related reports of NER region. From the literature explicated in the paper, a clear attempt has been made to identify the constructs impacting ecotourism viz., population density, sound pollution, garbage, hostility with art and brutality, airport noise, traffic in roads, off-road driving, engine boats, hunting, collecting memento, feeding animals, sticking advertisements, collecting wood for food and walking and having fun in animal habitats, A conceptual framework in the nomenclature “People-Planet-Profit-Eco-Tourism Framework” have been formulated to assess the impact of ecotourism in the north east province. The coverage of the paper makes a realistic attempt to reveal the upcoming potentials of eco-tourism business in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy with an optimistic tourism horizon in the coming years.*

**Keywords:** *eco-tourism, north east, business, environment*

### INTRODUCTION

India is a land of tourist's paradise. From the snow clad mountains of the Himalayas in the north to the confluence of three mighty oceans notably Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean & Arabian Sea at Kanyakumari in the South; from the salt marshes of Runn of Kutch in Gujarat in the west to the Seven Sisters in the North East – India has a lot to offer to the tourists. Nature has unfolded its various wings to make our country lively, beautiful and above all Incredible. The North Eastern states of India comprising of Arunachal

Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura - commonly known as the Seven Sisters has its own charm which enthrall the tourists. The area possesses great physical and human diversities making it as one of the most potential areas of the country for promoting tourism. Eco-tourism is a new and growing aspect in this area which has caught the attention of the tourists to a great extent. Eco-tourism is the development of a region or area in such a way in so far as the resources and the attractions are not depleted or finished. The North eastern States has a plethora of eco-tourists destinations and it is now becoming a hot bed for the tourists not only International but also for domestic.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The primary aim of the study focuses to explore the prospects of environmental aspects on the tourist footfall in the North Eastern states of India. The essential objectives of the study rest on:

- i) To identify the constructs pertinent to eco-tourism environment in the North Eastern region.
- ii) To design a conceptual framework with investigation of eco-tourism business.

### **Interlinking Eco-Levels – Eco-Certification – Eco-Tourism: an Outline**

The recent years have witnessed a change in the minds and attitudes of the travellers. Phrases like Eco-Tourism, Eco-Levels and Eco-Certification are gaining ground and there has been a transformation in the mindset not only of the tourists but also of the local population. Environmental Labels or commonly called Eco-Labels provide information about a product or service in respect of its terms of its overall environmental character. The objective of Eco-Labels are to provide reliable, definite, accurate information to the tourists or consumers so that they can think in terms of environmental impact which the product they are buying / thinking of buying will bring forth. In recent years eco-certification and eco tourism are very much interdependent on one another. Eco-Certification is primarily dependent on nature and it certifies tourism products like catering, accommodation and attractions. The tourists are assured that the money they are spending meets the international standards and they will be provided with experiences which are of high quality based on nature. In Eco-Tourism, nature is the central figure around which everything revolves. Eco-Tourism has a great prospect in the North Eastern states and the states too have started exploring the same.

### **Reinventing Avenues of Sustainable Tourism Development: A Conceptual Approach**

Nations across the globe are desperately examining the propensity of promoting their destinations for the cause of tourism. No doubt, tourism brings manifold advantages to the government and to the local population but while trying to do so we forget that we are opening the avenues of our death, though silently. Environment and culture is damaged to a great extent because of the short term tourism planning and ill effects. The concept of carrying capacity is a critical factor that defines various forms of tourism. United

Nations have accorded highest priority to issues like climate change, effective resource management, poverty reduction and inclusive growth as the corner stone of tourism development. In this connection The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), proposes a plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity for all countries. The Sustainable Development Goals are now recognized as a universal 17-goal plan requires all stakeholders to act in harmony. It is high time that the means and ends for developing sustainable tourism are met or else the existence of human beings will be at stake.

### **Twin Features of Tourism: Eco-Tourism & Economic Development**

Tourism is one of the largest contributors for the economic development of any country and generates income and employment opportunities to a wider section of the population. Employment can be in terms of direct, indirect and induced. Tourism creates one out of every eleven jobs and has the potential to generate foreign exchange. Ecotourism focuses on the local culture, different types of adventures while travelling to destinations comprising of rich flora and fauna. Notwithstanding the advantages which eco-tourism has in relation to economic development, certain flaws can also be highlighted one of which can be in terms of migrating workers both skilled and unskilled from their native places to the tourist destination. Consequently this will have an adverse impact on the environment in terms of carrying capacity. The North Eastern States is a perfect destination as far as ecotourism is concerned. The area with its lush hills, meandering rivers are an astounding examples of ecotourism which can be initiated here. The national parks and sanctuaries located here are an attraction to the tourists and are meant to preserve the wildlife resources which are exclusive for that destination.

### **Mass Eco-Tourism Vs Eco-Mass Tourism: A Comparative Outlook**

The discussion of Tourism development is often incomplete without mass tourism and eco mass tourism and they are being considered as opposite sides of the same coin. The thin line of difference between these two stems from the sense of the involvement of the tourists at the destination. Eco-Tourism which comprises Ecosystem and Tourism has been beautifully defined by Ceballos-Lascurain, who is generally accepted as the first person to define ecotourism, as “Tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations found in these areas (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1991, P. 25). On the opposite side we have the mass tourism which imply travel / tourism with a large number of people that visit a destination. Mass tourists are concerned with leisure / pleasure and they are more interested in 3 S’s: sun, sea and sand. However, the importance and requirement of both these types of tourism for the growth and sustainability of a place can’t be denied at all.

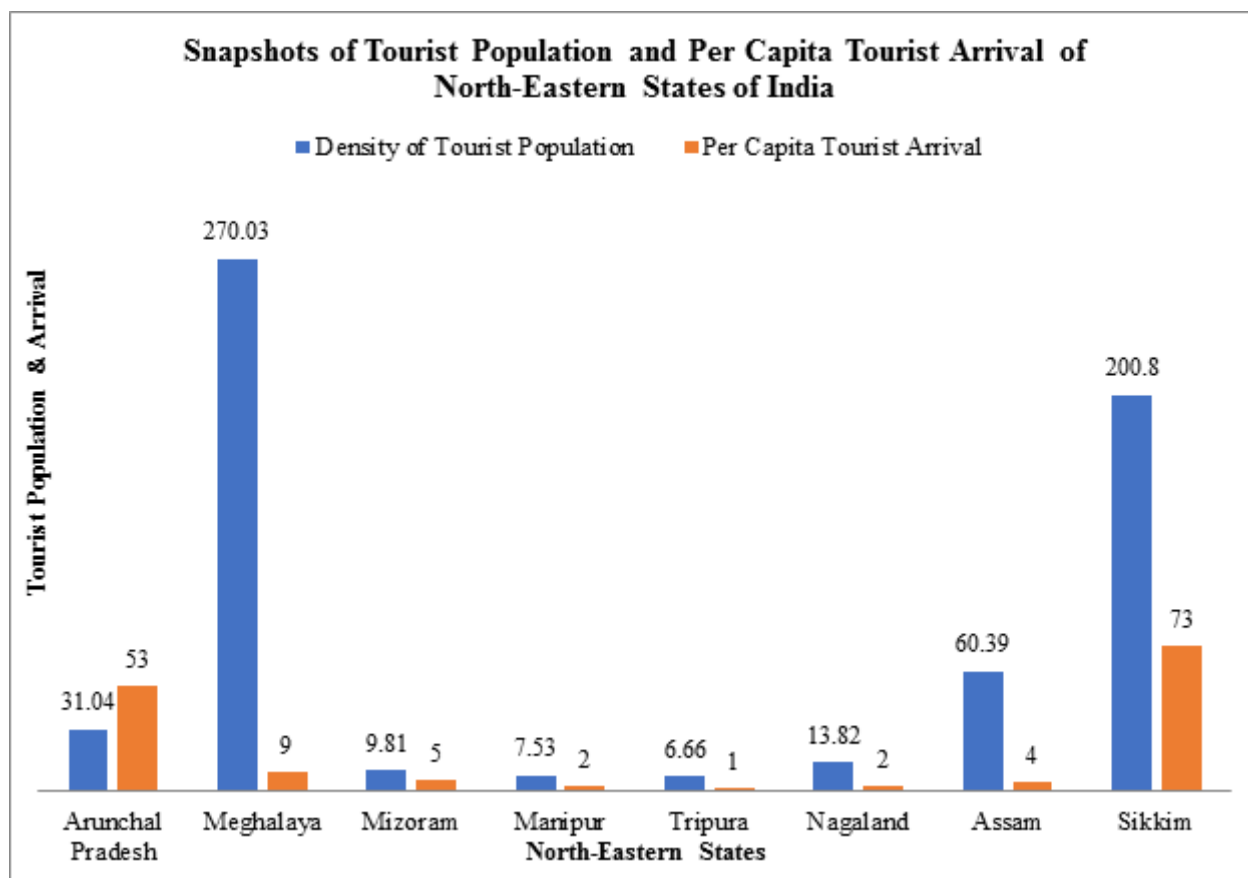
## **Essence of Environmental Eco-Tourism Planning: Roadway towards Sustainable Tourism Management**

As a result of various types of developments taking place through the world, there has been a complete destruction on the environment. Creation of hotels, resorts and various types of accommodation, attractions are a boon to the tourism industry but at the same time it brings a death knell to the whole human race. Nature has taken a tough stand against human kind and it has been manifested in various ways for example cloud busts, landslides, earth quakes which has resulted in the death of many people and destruction of property. Ecotourism in co-operation with research has the capability to significantly affect nature conservation in many positive ways. In order to route tourism development in a more positive ways it is high time that the programmes which are developed must include and encourage the locals to participate in eco-tourism in order to improve the protection of the environment and natural resources. Not only this, the host population can be assisted for managing the tourism attractions for their maximum benefit, while ensuring the least negative impacts. All these have one objective: to make the universe a better place to live.

### **North East Region Eco Tourism: Need of the Study**

With diverse extravaganza of rich biodiversity, vast array of aromatic plants, ethnic beauty picturesque topography- all these endowment makes North-East a potential tourism paradise. The states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim comprise the Indian Northeast as on date. North East India is extremely underdeveloped but is blessed with richest bio-geographic areas with all the ingredients for an economic take-off powered by eco tourism. The nature has bestowed enchanting, unique and magnificent tourism spots upon the eight north-eastern states and thereby providing this region a enormous opportunity for tourism business to flourish. The epicenter of eco tourism attraction of North East paves its voyage from Dragon fruit of Nagaland, Lady's slipper of Meghalaya, The Bugun bird of Arunachal Pradesh, Kaziranga National Park of Assam, Eagle-nest Wildlife Sanctuary of Arunachal Pradesh to Changu glacial lake in Sikkim. These states in the recent times have emerged as on the well-loved tourist destination for travelers worldwide. An outline of density of tourist population and per capita tourist arrival of eight states of North-east India is projected in the graphical representation in table 1.

**Table1:** Comparative Analysis of Tourist Arrival & Income in NER



The table shows that the density of tourist population is higher in Meghalaya state followed by Sikkim. It is lowest in the state of Tripura. On the other hand Per Capita Tourist arrival is highest in Sikkim state followed by Arunachal Pradesh with Nagaland lowest among all states.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main source of research methodology hovers around extensive literature review considering research papers, articles, journals and related reports of North Eastern region. The research study was conducted identifying the prominent places in NER which may have immense potential in becoming one of the most attractive nature tourist destinations. The study considers online reviews from different travel review websites like tripadvisor.com, outlook.com and others to find out the most popular nature based tourist location. The study moreover helps us to understand the quality of the tourist destination and their experiences. Purposive sampling was used in selecting reviews in the present study as most of the reviews were text based or rating based. In purposive sampling the research only include the texts that fits the criteria so that the keywords related to tourists satisfaction accurately reflects the qualitative details of the place of study. Exponential growth in the development of social networking, travel review and other relevant websites have facilitated the tourists exposure to share their voyage, experiences on online platform.

## FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

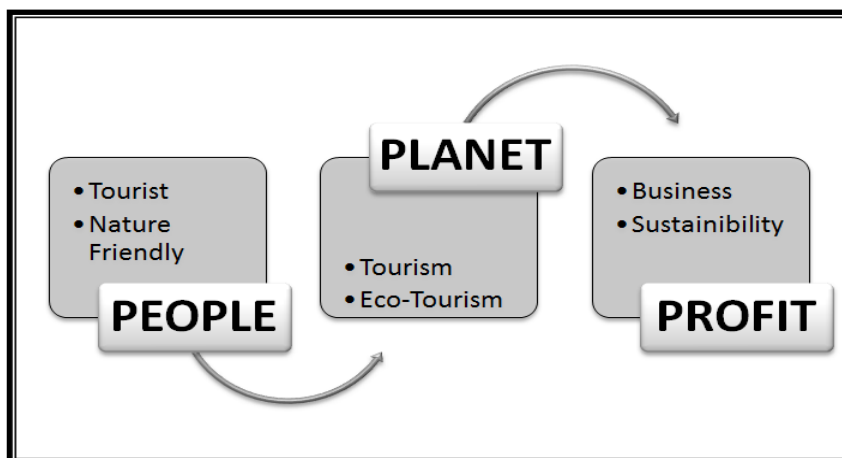
### Findings 1

**Table 1:** Constructs Impacting Eco-Tourism in NER

No	Construct	Adverse Impact	Favourable Impact Initiatives
I	Unplanned development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loss of habitat</li> <li>▪ Destruction of vegetation</li> <li>▪ Proximity of unhygienic environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Restoration of vegetation areas</li> <li>▪ Implementation of law of the land</li> <li>▪ Well organized distribution of visitors in the area</li> </ul>
II	Aggravated Pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Disturbing wildlife</li> <li>▪ Creating threats of life of the inhabitants</li> <li>▪ Hampering ecological balance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building proponents of awareness</li> <li>• Upholding legislative regulations</li> <li>• Maintaining ecological equilibrium</li> </ul>
III	Airport noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stress on human environment</li> <li>▪ Hampering habitat of the creatures</li> <li>▪ Posing risk to nature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Changing the items of takeoff and landings</li> <li>▪ Controlling usage of land</li> <li>▪ Creating avenues of alternatives</li> </ul>
IV	Engine Boats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Disturbance to wildlife</li> <li>▪ Hampering laying and nesting of wild creatures</li> <li>▪ Mounting sound pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Building restricting to the access of site</li> <li>▪ Planning environmental education</li> <li>▪ Controlling pollution effects</li> </ul>
V	Hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Competition with natural hunters</li> <li>▪ Reduces resources</li> <li>▪ Disturbing wildlife sanity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimising hunting exposures</li> <li>▪ Creating avenues for resource restoration</li> <li>▪ Maintaining wildlife equilibrium</li> </ul>
VI	Wood collection for fuel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Destruction of wildlife environment</li> <li>▪ Causing wildlife death</li> <li>▪ Eliminating natural resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creating awareness</li> <li>▪ Planning environmental education</li> <li>▪ Application of legislation of rules</li> </ul>
VII	Off-road driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Damaging vegetation</li> <li>▪ Wastage of soil</li> <li>▪ Disturbing wild life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduced access</li> <li>▪ Adhering strict laws and regulations</li> <li>▪ Maintaining ecological equilibrium</li> </ul>
VIII	Feeding animals, sticking advertisements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Destroying vegetation, soil</li> <li>▪ Hampering wildlife</li> <li>▪ Disturbing ecofriendly environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creating awareness</li> <li>▪ Promoting environmental education</li> <li>▪ Implementing legislation of laws</li> </ul>

## Findings II

**Figure 1:** People-Planet-Profit'-Eco-Tourism Framework



## Implications and Usefulness of the Study

One of the fastest developing industries acclaimed globally is the tourism industry. The implementation of sustainable tourism popularly connoted as eco-tourism is still surviving in its infancy stage in India. Tourism is one of the major income and job generating segments of the north eastern economy. The north east India is a heavenly abode of ecotourism galaxy attracting tourists flavour. The Government of India has introduced special schemes for the development of north eastern tourism with allocation of funds for varied promotional schemes but tourism is yet to flourish among the north eastern states symmetrically. Building sustainable eco-tourism is not feasible without effective utilization of resources and the mind set need to be changed to have the fullest development in tourism sector of north eastern beauty. Tourism industry in north east India is growing and it holds huge potential for generating jobs and revenue for economic and societal growth of the states. The present study focuses eco-tourism as the key to the future for tourism promotion in a controlled and matured manner protecting the environment as well as the inherent culture of the locality it operates in. Eco-tourism needs maximum support, encouragement and impetus so that it helps in conserving and sustaining the diversities of India's natural and traditional surroundings.

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