

Tourism Prospects and Its Challenges: A Case Study of Sivasagar Districts in Assam, India

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Abstract:

Tourism industry is one of the fastest growing industry and one of the largest contributors to the world's GDP. With tremendous growth scenarios of tourism industry, it has offers a huge prospect for generation of employment and overall development of the Sivasagar district because of its heritage sites, rich biodiversity, ethnic diversity, and tea garden area. Based on the present analysis the tourism potentialities of the Sivasagar can be categorized into – Historical tourism, cultural tourism, wildlife tourism, Tea Tourism. The present study has been carried out to understand and highlight the prospects and problems of tourism development in the Sivasagar District which was a third capital during Ahom reign.

Keywords: Tourism, Sivasagar, GDP, historical, cultural, Tea, UNWTO.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a rapidly growing economy sector which is associated with many other aspects of human life. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) declaration in 1991, "Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to staying in places outside of their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purposes". Tourism industry is one of the largest contributors to the worlds GDP and fastest growing industries in the world. According to The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that in 2018 travel & tourism sector experienced 3.9% and contributes about 10.4 % of the world's GDP.

India has progressed a lot since 1950 in tourism sector. In India tourism industry emerged as one of the fastest growing sector which contributes 9.25 % (USD 240 billion) of the total GDP and provided job for 42.67 million people as per WTTC reports in 2018. Although India has huge potentiality in tourism growth but there is higher disparity amongst the state in terms of tapping the inflow of tourist. Compare to the total tourist flow to the other region of the country, Eastern India draws only 4% of the total tourist in India. In Assam there has been significance progress in tourism sector in last few years.

Table: Year wise domestic and foreign tourists visit in Assam during 2011-2017.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Domestic	43,39,485	45,11,407	46,84,527	48,84,527	56,42,950	57,13,156	59,34,791
Foreign	16,400	17,542	17,638	21,725	26,320	28,419	31,739

Source: Assam Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. (Official website)

STUDY AREA

Sivasagar district is one of the 32 administrative districts of Assam state which is located in North

Easter part of India between 26.45° and 27.15° North latitudes and 94.25° and 95.25° East longitudes. In 2019, Sivasagar is declared by Government of India

as one of the five archeological sites in India developed to be “Iconic Site”. The name Sivasagar is derived from its manmade tank ‘Sivasagar Tank’. Sivasagar means “Sea of Siva”. The historical

district is bordered by Brahmaputra River to the north, Charaideo district to the East, Nagaland to the South and Jorhat district to the west.

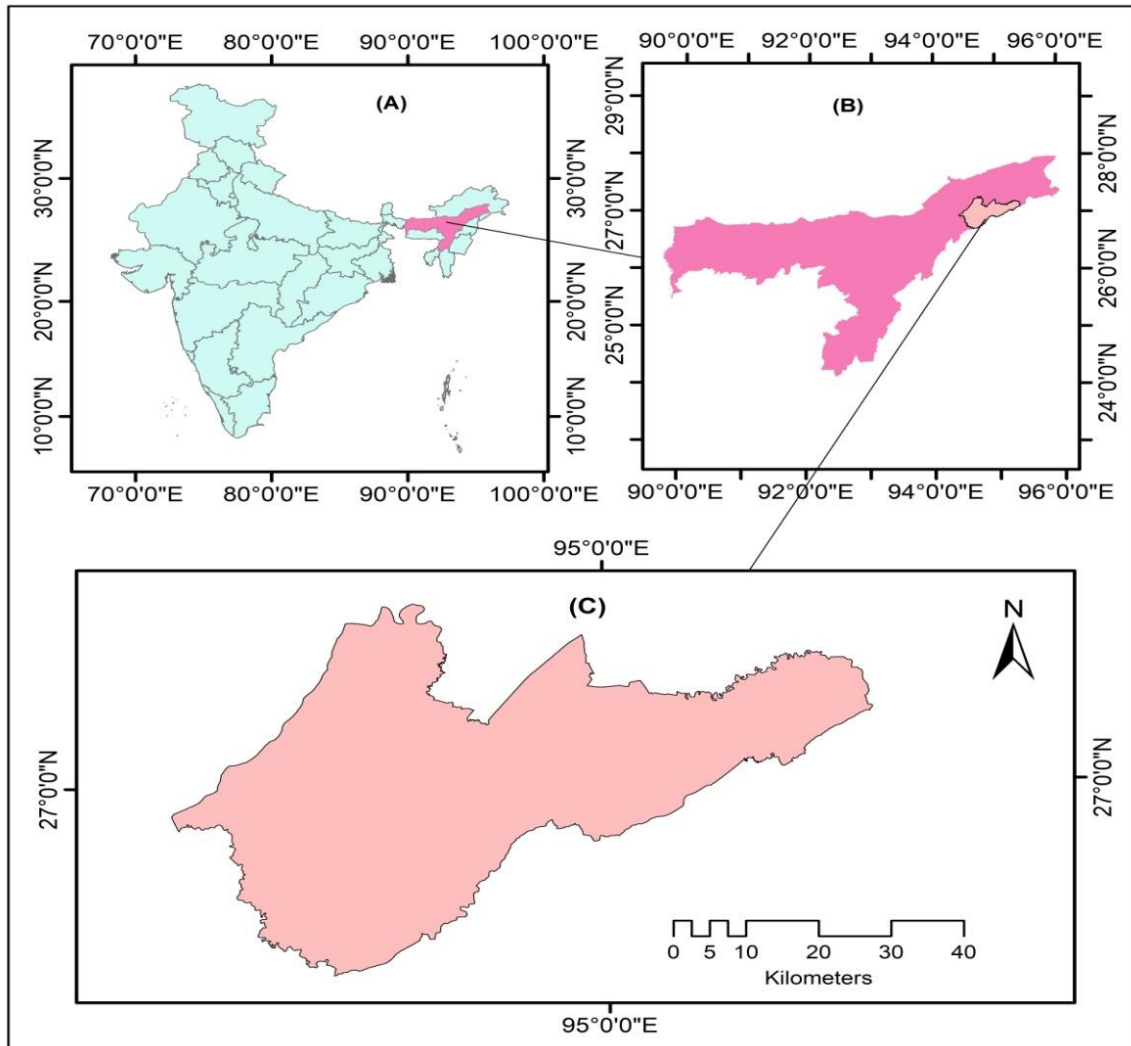


Figure 1: Location map of the study area: (A) India, (B) Assam and (C) Sivasagar District

METHODOLOGY

The present study has been carried out using qualitative and quantitative approach. Data's are of both primary and secondary based sources. Primary data's are of GPS location and field based observation of the major tourist sites and secondary sources data's are collection of various official documents, magazines, books. To show the location of the important tourist places cartographically various GIS tools have been used.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. PROSPECTS OF TOURISM:

From the view of historical significance, cultural diversity, rich biodiversity in Sivasagar district, it has offer huge range of opportunity for the vibrant tourism based economy. Based on the present study tourism opportunities can be categorized into-

4.1.1. Historical tourism: Since the establishment of Ahom reign Sivasagar has been occupy a very significant place in Assamese history and culture. Gargaon and Rangpur were two of the capitals during Ahom reign. Many archeological remnants

are spread across the districts. Some of the important monuments are Rang Ghar, Kareng Ghar, Talatal Ghar, Man-made tanks (Sivasagar Tank, Jayasagar Tank, Gaurisagar Tank), Namdang Rock Bridge etc.

4.1.2. Cultural tourism: Demographically Sivasagar is a divers place. Many ethnic and

religious communities have been peacefully coexisting for long periods. Some of the major festivals and fairs observed in the districts are include Bihu (Magh bihu, Rongali Bihu and Kati Bihu), Maha Sivaratri, Id-ul-juha, id-ul-fitr, Ali-aye-ligang etc.

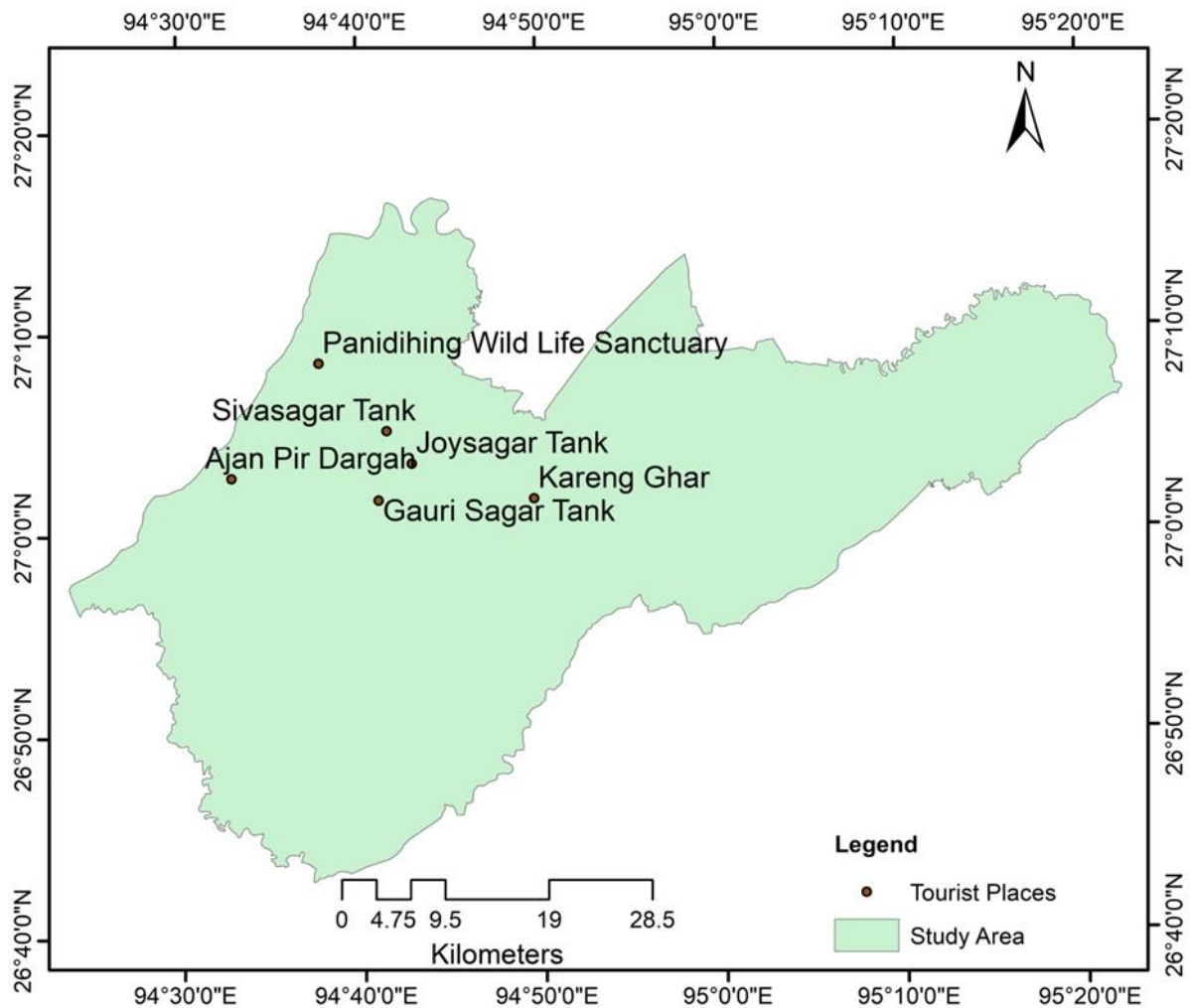


Figure 2: Location of important tourist places of attraction

4.1.3. Wildlife tourism: Sivasagar has rich biodiversity which offers great opportunity for sustainable wildlife tourism. Some of the important wildlife protected areas located in the study area are Pani Dihing Wildlife Sanctuary, Abhayapur Reserve Forest etc. Pani Dihing Wildlife Sanctuary offers a hotspot for bird watcher, academican and researcher.

4.1.4. Tea Tourism: Tea based tourism is a recently developed concept in tourism sector having great

economic potentiality in Assam, state is still far away in tapping the tea based tourist compared to the developed world. Tea estate bungalows are often well-preserved relic of the colonial era, with large courtyards swimming pool, century-old trees and green lawns, which capture an old charms (Goowalla & Neog, 2011). There are 85 tea estates in Sivasagar district.

4.1.5. Religious Tourism: In case of religious point of view Sivasagar is home to three important

religious sites i.e. 175 years old Sivasagar Baptist Church, Siva Temple and Ajan Pir Dargah. These places could be turned into important tourist destination for both domestic and foreign tourist. Every year Maha Sivaratri held in Sivasagar district and thousands of devotees visit there. Like that Ajan

Pir Dargah is also a very important pilgrimage site and is sacred mausoleum of Great 17th century Muslim preacher and Sufi saint. Thousands people from all over the country visit this Dargah to pay their homage to this great reformer.

Important tourist places in Sivasagar District		
Sl. No.	Sites of attraction	Speciality of the site of attraction
1	Rang Ghar	Rang Ghar is double storied unique building and Asia's oldest surviving pavilion.
2	Kareng ghar	Kareng Ghar is, also known as The Gargaon Palace, a royal house of Ahom kings when Gargaon was their third capital.
3	Talatal Ghar	It is a seven storied building and houses two secret tunnels which were used as secret exit during war.
4	Sivasagar tank and its temple complex	Man made large tank, built by Ahom Queen Ambika, having an area of 130 acre and 3 temples Siva, Vishnu Temple and Devi Temple stand near it.
5	Gaurisagar Tank and its temple complex	This tank was excavated on the order of Queen Phuleswari Devi and temples of Hindu Goddess and Gods stand near it
6	Jaysagar tank and its temple complex	India's largest man made tank excavated by Ahom King Rudra Singha in memory of his mother Joyamoti.
7	Pani Dihing Wildlife Sanctuary	Important bird sanctuary and abode for the bird watcher.
8	Ajan Pir Dargah	Important religious place for Muslim community

4.2. PROBLEMS IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT:

Although Sivasagar has huge potentiality for tourism development but due to some of the major setbacks district has unable to enjoy the benefits generated from tourism. These are as follows-

- Poor infrastructure: These are includes non-availability of quality roads, poor connectivity to the tourist places, adequate lodging facilities etc.

- Lack of proper promotion policy: There is no proper marketing strategies to make Sivasagar as a must visit place for domestic and foreign tourists.
- Lack of development fund: Due to lack of adequate fund development of tourism site cannot be carried out in proper way.

- iv) Bandh Culture: Frequent strike and bandh culture in the state adversely effects in the tourist flow to the sites.
- v) Lack of human resources: Insufficient skilled persons supply like tour guide, hospitability services etc.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

There is immense tourism potential in Sivasagar to attract both domestic and foreign tourist because of its rich heritage, natural resources and cultural diversity. To attract more tourist inflow there should be developed some attractive recreational facilities and improved infrastructure which could bind the tourist to stay for longer periods and visit again in future. If government focus on the formulation of tourism based economic policy then it could generate huge employment and boost economy of the state as well as country.

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