



TOURISM, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL MEDIA-A STUDY ON UNEXPLORED TOURIST SPOTS OF MEGHALAYA

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KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION:

Employment now-a-days become a big challenge for every country. Every country tries to find new sources to generate employment towards their country people. The nature itself contributed much more resources such as hills, rock, river, lake, forest, sea, flora-fauna, wild-life, culture, food and last but not least the people itself. The totality of these natural resources can be use as way to create employment. These resources form the very core of the term tourism.

The concept of tourism is old; it was found that the word was first appeared in 14th century. And it was derived from Latin word 'tornare' which means return, go back or come and the word tourist was used 1772. In ancient period it was basically happened for the purpose of trade and searching for food and devoting. Generally the concept tourism is about movement of people for various purposes from a common geographical area to another. It includes activities, service and industries which is associated with accommodation, fooding, recreation, entertainment, shopping, and relaxation, refreshing of human being with experience. At different time the various author gives many definition regarding tourism.

The first definition of tourism was given by Guyer and Feuler(1905) "as phenomenon unique to modern time which dependent on the people's increasing need for a change and relaxation, the wise of recognizing the beauties of nature and art and the belief that nature gives happiness to human beings and which helps nations and communities approach each other thanks to the developments in commerce and industry and the communication and transportation tools becoming excellent" UNWTO define tourism as "tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purpose." One of the notable thinks that there is difference between tourism and travel .Whenever we say about tourism it must be displacement of people for various purpose.

Commercialized tourism started almost 261 years ago when Richard Cox became official travel agent for Royal Armed Force during the British era and Cox & King became first travel agency in the early 1758. From that period till the date these sections become one of large industry in the world platform and generate income through various ways of its services. According to record of world tourism ranking during the year 2017, 1.323 billion people become as tourist across the world with the increase rate of 6.8% compare to 2016. In these regards Asia-Pacific region recorded 323 million international tourists and India had received 15.5 million tourists during the year.

In case of India the country have one of specific region in the foot hill of Himalayan range; this region is known as Northeast region which consist of 8 states such as Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. Geographically this part of the country is sharing international border with several countries. The region is rich

by its virgin beauty and epic culture which have a vast scope for tourism, many part of this region still untouched by the world. In this case one of state of this region Meghalaya popularly called 'Scotland of the East' have eye catching nature beauty and history of some of popular tribe of northeast known as Khasi, Jaintia and Garo.

OBJECTIVES:

The study has been done with the following objectives-

1. To study the role of social media in attracting tourists in selected unexplored tourist spot of Meghalaya;
2. To examine the increase in income generation of local people in the selected spots.

Research Queries:

The following research queries have been framed for this study-

1. Whether social media has played a role in attracting tourists in selected unexplored tourist spot of Meghalaya?
2. Whether tourism has assisted the local people in their income generation?

METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on primary and secondary data. Four unexplored tourist spots in Meghalaya have been chosen. These spots are Ialong village and Nartian Durga Temple selected from West Jaintia Hills and Pynursula, Kongthong village are selected from East Khasi Hills part of the Meghalaya. 10 local people residing in each of these destinations have been selected. Moreover 10 tourists visiting these spots have also been selected for interview for the purpose of this study. Thus a total of 40 local people and 10 tourists have been selected on the basis of Simple Random Sampling. The secondary sources of data include research papers, websites and face book pages of these selected spots. The study has been undertaken for a time period of three months. The study is limited to the availability of data.

Unexplored Tourist Spots of Meghalaya:

Meghalaya have 3 divisions with 11 district such as Khasi Hills Division, Jaintia Hills Division and Garo Hills Division. This 3 division have too many unexplored place which preserve lot of eye catching natural beauty along with lot of scope for tourism activities. Some of place specified in the paper by the researcher which is mainly located East Khasi Hill and Jaintia Hill Division. Name of the place are Ilong village, Mawlyngbna , Mawphanlur ,Umden, Nonglang, Kongthong , Pynursla, Sohra (river camyoing), Mawphlang Sacred grave, Mawkhong View Point, Langkawet, Phe phe water Falls, Tyrshi Falls, Moopun Water Falls, Syntu Ksiar, Borghat Temple, Narting Durga Temple, Narting Monoliths, Kyrdenkhla, Sua Ludong Water Falls, Thadlaskein lake, Lawmusiang, Mawphlang, Mairang, Nonknum Island etc. Some of them are discussed in details below:

1. Ilong village:

This is the typical village of East Jaintia Hills. The village have 400 household and one of the specific character of the village

is that majority of population is belong to a single clean .The place is famous for its cultural richness; some of specific festival celebrating in the village such as Chad Chukra and Noh Sceriat which is celebrating during the month of April relating to sowing and harvesting activities. Another festival Behdeinkhlam and Manic celebrating at the time of August for the purpose of good health, property and bumper festival .The village is sourding by Pynthorwah Vallye, Myntdu River and Ilong Eco Park which are truly breath taking. And the village is also rich for organizing Archery contests and local theatre.

2.Nartiang Durga Temple:

This is one of the Shakti Peethas of Hindu Mythology among the 51 which located West Jaintia Hills. It is one of the best examples of Hindu and ancient Khasi tradition. The temple have more than 500 years old history where it have mention that the temple was constructed by the Jaintia King Dhan Manik to converted into Hinduism . Presently the temple is well maintain by the local people and even today during the period of Navaratri (Sep or Oct month) the local people organized Durga puja and workshop the Devi. The local Chieftain or Syiem is considered the chief patron of the temple. The temple is famous for sacrificing rites from the ancient period; earlier human also sacrifices for rites and even today goats and duck are sacrificed for the Devi.

3. Kongthong Village:

This village is located East Khasi Hills part of the state which is located 56 km from the main shillong city and which is also part of khatar Shnong group of a 12 village . The village has one of the unique character i.e no villager called each other's by their name instead sing out names that are given to individual of the village at childhood .It is quaint village with a distinction in Organic Honey Production which is brought by the village into international and national level. The village has traveler nest facilities which known as Kongthong Travelers' Nest and it is manage by Indigenous Agro Tourism Cooperative Society Ltd, Khatar-shnong .The place is famous for trekking, fishing & Angling, Camping and its valley.

4.Pynursula:

It is one of the offbeat parts of Meghalaya. It is one of the last part of East Khasi Hill and nearest to Bangladesh. The place is located 51 km from the Shillong city. The place is famous for providing home stay service in rural setting environment along with adventurous activities. Pynursula have 133 villages through which offerde rural village tourism. The place has trek road from Cherrapunjee to Pynursula and Krang to Pynursula and Pynursula root bridge .

5. Umden Traveller's Nest (Umiaphati village):

It is a small hamlet ideal gateway which is located 75km from shillong city under the Ri-bhoi District, Nongpoh .The place is famous for sericulture activities which mainly produce Eri Silk . The village also related with traditional handloom activities and also famous for age old traditional production process of Eri Silk where they does not killed the silk worms. All these activities carried by the villager under the corporation of Diwon Handloom Cotton and Khadi Village Industrial Cooperative Society Ltd. Along with Eri Silk production process the place is also attracted by Kayaking, Mountain Biking, Heritage walk.

6. Mawphanlur:

It is one of the hill top village of West Khasi hill. The village is witness of glorious setting of the sun and quite dark beauty of night with great Himalaya range. It is a place for truly nature lover along with trekking, camping activities. The village has Mawphanlur Integrated Multipule Cooperative Society Ltd who manage or own Mawphanlur traveler nest and engaged every individual of the village towards traveling activities.

7. Nartiang Monoliths:

This place is haven for those who are interested in

archaeological study. It is the collection of monoliths which are constructed during 1500AD and 1835 AD by Jaintia King which is located 65 km from the capital of the state. There are lot of believe regarding construction of these monoliths like on the memory of Legendry of king and women, for particular events and some of believe there was stable for royal horses. It was summer resort of Jaintia King during 17th century according to local believe. It also believed that the place have longest monoliths of the world which is 8 meter long.

8. Tyrshi Falls:

One of the water falls of Jaintia Hills which is located 8 km away from Jowai.

9. Syndai:

It is one of important village of West Jaintia Hills which is famous for several caves and limestone-borne area.

Role of Social Media:

In the present times, social media has become all pervasive in the lives of people throughout the world. An internet connection and a device get people connected across the globe through social networking. Social Media means and includes forms of electronic communication (websites and applications) through which users share information, ideas, videos and such other contents quickly. Social networking is a powerful tool in the hands of people. In this section the role of social media in attractinng tourists in the select destinations has been studied.

It has been found by Tafveez (2017) that social media has evolved as an important platform and it plays a prominent role in tourism. Unexplored tourist destinations are those which have potentialities for tourism but they have remained unknown mostly due to lack of promotion. Social networking sites provide a platform for people to post pictures, videos and share the contents with others connected through the sites. It also enables other users to comment on such contents or post queries. When a person visits an unexplored destination, shares posts in social media, then such posts attracts the attention of other like-minded individuals and intrigues him/her to know more about the destination which finally results in travelling to that spot.

It needs to be mentioned that the local people in all the selected spots have pointed out that there has been an increase in the tourist inflow to these spots. They have also mentioned that many of the tourists include people outside Meghalaya. However, the number of tourist inflow could not be gathered and is a limitation of this study. The selected tourists are non locals and they have come outside the state of Meghalaya to visit the destinations. The tourists, when interviewed, pointed out that posts and recommendations in social media forms the foremost reason for their visit to such unexplored spots. A close observation on how social media has attracted tourists and also led to the increase in tourists for the four unexplored destinations reveals the following:

- Except Nartian durga temple, Ialong village, Pynursula, and Kongthong village have their respective face book page and YouTube channel in which people can share pictures, videos and recommend the place.
- When asked about the source of information of these spots, all the selected tourists have said that their major source of information about these spots is social media. They have pointed out towards face book.
- All the tourists have agreed that that they will surely share posts or have already shared posts containing pictures or videos accompanied by their experiences (in words) and recommend these places in social media.
- The tourists have also mentioned that reviews put forward by other travellers in social media is very helpful in planning their visit as they can know beforehand what to

expect from these unexplored destination and how to reach the spots.

Thus, social media has played a role in attracting tourists towards the four selected unexplored tourist spots of Meghalaya.

Employment of Local People:

There is a scope of generating employment for any tourist destination. Most of place of the selected division of Meghalaya are surrounded by hills and semi forest area. The main activity of the state is agriculture; 80% of total population is engaged into it by seasonally but rest of time they are unemployed. Earlier coal mine and rock mine were some of the essential income source for the local people but due to various legal issues now it is stopped and as result a number of local people lost their way of earning. Now many of rural people selected their inherited beauty as source of income and created self-employments. While visiting the destinations, observation of their activities was done by the researchers. Further interview of the selected local people has also been done. The following has been revealed:

- In Kongthong Village the villagers have adopted Organic Bee Farming in the near forest area and constructed 2 tourist cottages at valley top which is maintained by the local villager under the guidance of headman of the village. The total income drive from the tourist cottage and honey selling is distributed among the villagers and also each individual from the village got the chance to work there as tracking guide or caretaker or service person. Tourists are their one of main buyer of their organic honey.
- The Ilong place is locally known as Ilong Recreation cum Tourist Centre which is created 1997. Based on it there is constructed Eco lodge with 3 cottage facilities. Due to this cottage services, many of local people open small retail shop which basically serve the people who visit there and also being local toll gate service for the tourist cars where mainly engaged local villagers.
- In the content of Nartian durga temple, as it is one of notable Shakti Peethas of the country ; devotees come from various part of the country who are aware about it whole of the year but during the period of Navaratri (Durga puja) the number of visitor increase. And is also one of recreation place for other part of state Meghalaya. The local people also organized various fairs in their time by time of the year and it is also near of nartiang monoliths as a result visitor of monoliths visit their too as targeting the visitor and devote the villager sold their locally produce fruits and various decorative items which is made from bamboo and pine trees at very minimum cost.
- Pynursula one of place for tracking, hiking and cycling with this feature the local people stated loading services along with facility of food with minimum variability. Basically home stay services provided by them those go too visited secrete forest and butterfly park, Root Bridge. Around 133 villages of Pynursula division in most villages, home stays are one of the major sources of income and also provide the guide services to explore the area by the tourist at reasonable fees. Now some of resorts are also opened who only appoint local people to serve the tourist with local Khasi tradition.

All the selected spots are lesser known by the world and lesser connected by the all means and also have language problem still the local people can find a way of live hood due promotion of visitor or tourists through various social networking sites.

CONCLUSION:

Northeastern part of the country yet not has any big business house or industrial unit as a result it is very difficult to create employment of this region in organised way. And the government of all state is also not capable to fulfil the demand

of employment. In this regard the tourism might become one of the large ways to create and fulfill the demand of income and employment of people in this region because the region has epic beauty and can become tourism hot-spot of the country. The present world is information edge as a result social media play an important role to give information to the entire world especially about those places which is not easily reachable by everyone. From the ancient period northeast India always be unexplored for the world. Though tourism has developed, however, the researchers express that the serenity and beauty of these spots need to be protected.

It has been found that social media has contributed towards attracting more and more tourists to those places which were less popular; thus it helps local people to get employment at their own places. Hence tourism in lesser known or unexplored spots has become a source of income for the local people in the study area.

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