

A STUDY ON IDENTIFYING THE DRIVERS OF GROWTH OF PHOTOGRAPHIC TOURISM IN THE DISTRICT OF TINSUKIA, ASSAM

AMALESH BHOWAL¹ & DEBORSHEE GOGOI²

¹ Professor, Department of Commerce, Assam University, Diphu Campus [a Central University], Assam, India

² Research Scholar & Assistant Professor, Department of Marketing, Digboi College, Digboi, Assam, India

ABSTRACT

Photographic Tourism is relatively a new addition to the existing Tourism industry. This tourism dimension is gaining popularity in recent years, especially due to the technological revolution that has made photography accessible to everyone. There is a dearth of research for which its role in the context of economic development has never been assessed. This paper tries to identify the drivers of growth of photographic tourism in the district of Tinsukia, Assam. Understanding the drivers of growth is very much important for effective policy making as well as developing photographic tourism products to suit the tastes and preferences of tourists visiting the district.

KEYWORDS: Photographic Tourism, Photographic Tourists, Drivers of Growth

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has grown and matured over the years and so has the tourists. Today, tourists' expectation is not just confined to leisure travel only. They expect more meaningful experiences that help them gain insights into new fields of knowledge. Tourism suppliers are also constantly innovating ways to differentiate their offerings from that of the competitors and stand out in the market. As a result of this, newer concepts like space tourism, wine tourism, sport tourism, hill tourism, etc. are becoming quite popular among tourists who expect something more than just a regular leisure travel. Photographic tourism is one such recent addition to the existing dimension of tourism. Photography is gaining huge popularity today. Credit goes to the technological revolution that has made photography accessible to almost everyone.

Every year, people make huge investments in procuring their photography gears and travelling to places only to take that particular photograph that makes them happy. This can be treated as a separate discipline, where tourists primarily involve themselves in travelling to places with the prime objective of taking photographs.

Photographic tourism can be defined as those forms of special interest tourism, in which tourist visits a particular place with the primary aim of photographing subjects that are unique to him. The scope of photography may range from landscapes, portraits, architectures, culture, food and wildlife to even macro subjects.

From the above definition, two important features of photographic tourism can be determined viz., 'motive behind visiting a particular place' and 'uniqueness of subjects'.

To make the statement more clear, it can be assumed that a tourist will not visit a place only to photograph subjects which is already available in his normal places of work and residence. Uniqueness in the subject like landscapes, wildlife, people and their culture, or food habits and dress codes of the travel destination is more important that would

stimulate his desire to explore the land with the prime objective of taking photographs.

These features are the distinctive traits of a 'photographic tourist' that separates them from a normal one. 'A photographic tourist is a person, who travels with the prime objective of photographing something unique.' Here, 'uniqueness of the subject' and the 'primary objective' is the motivating force that urges the tourist to undertake a tour.

It is not always necessary that only professional photographers make a photographic tour. A photography enthusiast, a hobby or even a common man can undertake a tour with the primary motive of taking photographs. In that instance, they will be termed as photographic tourists.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The Objective Covered Under this Study is as Follows:

"To identify the drivers of growth of Photographic Tourism".

Working Hypothesis

"There is a tremendous scope of 'photographic tourism' in the district of Tinsukia as a Tourist destination".

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study follows Descriptive Research design. Due to the unknown or infinite population size snow-ball sampling has been used. In order to determine the sample size, the formula suggested by Gorden (2004) was used. This formula revealed that in the case of infinite population the size of sample should be 384. Properly structured questionnaires designed with the help of Google Forms were circulated among the respondents through social media like Face book, email, messenger, etc. as well as in hard copy format to those, who could be personally approached. Responses from 311 individuals could be collected and the rest 73 were the non respondents of the study.

Analysis and Interpretations

The under discussed analyses have been done based on the parameters, as found and mentioned in the laid down objectives and hypothesis, and interpretations relating thereto have been made accordingly.

**Table 1: Whether Purpose Of Visit to Tinsukia
As Photographic Destination Successful**

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| No | 17 | 5.5 |
| Yes | 294 | 94.5 |
| Total | 311 | 100.0 |

Source: Compiled from Survey Data

Table 1 inquires whether the purpose of the visit to Tinsukia as a photographic destination by the respondents successful. It is quite evident from the responses shown in the above table that the majority of the respondents i.e. 294 out of 311, who visited Tinsukia, felt that their purpose of visit was successful. Only 17 respondents informed that their purpose of visiting Tinsukia as a photographic destination was not successful. This is 5.5% of the total responses.

Table.2: Reasons for Failure of Purpose of Visit

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Bad weather condition | 11 | 3.5 |
| Band | 4 | 1.3 |
| More variety of other places | 2 | .6 |
| Not applicable | 294 | 94.5 |
| Total | 311 | 100.0 |

Source: Compiled from Survey Data

Respondents were asked regarding the reasons for failure of their visit to the Tinsukia district as photographic destination. Table 2 showcases the reasons for failure as mentioned by the respondents. Out of the 17 respondents who felt that their trip was not successful, 11 informed that bad weather condition was responsible for failing their trip in Tinsukia; 4 respondents informed that a band called by an organization was responsible for the failure of their purpose of visit to the district. 2 other respondents felt that there are more potential photographic tourism destinations than Tinsukia, with more varied photographic subjects.

Table 3: Services Expected from Photographic Service Providers

| Services Expected | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Accommodation near the photographic destination | 17 | 5.5 |
| Accommodation near the photographic destination, Expert guides | 10 | 3.2 |
| Accommodation near the photographic destination, Expert guides, Expert photographic advice | 9 | 2.9 |
| Accommodation near the photographic destination, Traditional cuisine | 3 | 1.0 |
| Accommodation near the photographic destination, Traditional cuisine, Expert guides | 10 | 3.2 |
| Equipment rentals | 42 | 13.5 |
| Equipment rentals, Accommodation near the photographic destination | 28 | 9.0 |
| Equipment rentals, Accommodation near the photographic destination, Expert guides | 23 | 7.4 |
| Equipment rentals, Accommodation near the photographic destination, Expert guides, average pricing in lodging | 2 | .6 |
| Equipment rentals, Accommodation near the photographic destination, Expert photographic advice | 16 | 5.1 |
| Equipment rentals, Control over noise, nuisance, and indiscipline among tourists | 1 | .3 |
| Equipment rentals, Expert guides | 29 | 9.3 |
| Equipment rentals, Expert guides, Expert photographic advice | 11 | 3.5 |
| Equipment rentals, Expert photographic advice | 21 | 6.8 |
| Equipment rentals, Traditional cuisine, Expert guides | 3 | 1.0 |
| Expert guides | 50 | 16.1 |
| Expert guides, Expert photographic advice | 11 | 3.5 |
| Expert photographic advice | 4 | 1.3 |
| Others | 11 | 3.5 |
| Traditional cuisine | 4 | 1.3 |
| Traditional cuisine, Expert guides | 5 | 1.6 |
| Traditional cuisine, Expert guides, Others | 1 | .3 |
| Total | 311 | 100.0 |

Source: Compiled from Survey Data

From Table 3, following interpretations with regard to the services expected by the respondents from the Photographic Tourism Suppliers of the district is drawn:

- Out of 311, 50 respondents i.e. 16.1% felt that there is a need for expert guides when it comes to photography, especially wildlife and birdlife. The reasons as described by the tourist states that although the district of Tinsukia is quite rich in terms of wildlife and birdlife but thick vegetation and unpredictable behaviour of the wild animals and birds make photography difficult for the tourists. This makes the role of guides even more significant because an expert guide can perceive where one can find a particular target species. Moreover, he is conversant with the behaviour, nature and habitat of the species and can locate target subjects with their sounds/calls which are most essential when it comes to wildlife photography.
- 42 respondents i.e. 13.5% felt that photographic tourism providers of Tinsukia district should introduce equipment rental, which is already popular in other photographic destinations of the world. Respondents are of the view that, if such services will be introduced in the district, then they won't have to carry their heavy equipments with them. Restrictions on luggage weights during their travel through the air also make them incur extra expenses. Moreover, there are possibilities of damages to their expensive equipments caused during the travel. For all these reasons, respondents feel that equipment rental will be of great help if introduced by the service providers of the district especially to the growing numbers of photographic tourists.
- 17 numbers of respondents felt that there should be accommodated near the target photographic destinations. This will not only help save time but also increase the possibility of encountering their target subjects, especially when the target subject is a wild animal. It is worth mentioning that wildlife has fix time and place for resting and other activities for which a photographer is expected to take positions before time to get good photographs.
- 29 respondents are of the opinion that photographic service providers of the district should introduce equipments rental along with expert photographic advice. This constitutes 6.8% of the total responses.

Table 4: Photography Genera Having Maximum Potentialities to Flourish in the District of Tinsukia

| Photography Genera | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| Bird photography | 146 | 46.9 |
| Can't say | 2 | .6 |
| Culture and lifestyle | 34 | 10.9 |
| Landscape Photography | 15 | 4.8 |
| Macro Photography | 8 | 2.6 |
| Nature & Wildlife, Bird, People, Culture & Lifestyle | 3 | 1.0 |
| Portrait photography | 33 | 10.6 |
| Portrait photography, Landscape Photography | 1 | .3 |
| Portrait photography, Wildlife Photography | 2 | .6 |
| Wildlife Photography | 67 | 21.5 |
| Total | 311 | 100.0 |

Source: Compiled from Survey Data

Table 4 is concerned with the photography genera having maximum potentialities in Tinsukia district as per the respondents. Following interpretations can be drawn:

- According to the 146 respondents, i.e. 46.9% of the total responses, Bird Photography have the maximum potentialities in the district of Tinsukia.

- The second most potential photography genera as felt by 67 respondents i.e. 21.5% is Wildlife photography.
- 34 respondents i.e. 10.9% felt that the Tinsukia district has huge potentialities in cultural and lifestyle photography, whereas 33 respondents i.e. 10.6% were of the view that Portrait photography has the maximum potentialities in the district of Tinsukia.

Table 5: Overall Experience at Tinsukia in the Context of Photographic Tourism

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Average | 54 | 17.4 |
| Excellent | 133 | 42.8 |
| Good | 119 | 38.3 |
| Poor | 5 | 1.6 |
| Total | 311 | 100.0 |

Source: Compiled from Survey Data

Respondents were asked about their overall experiences at Tinsukia district in the context of Photographic Tourism. From Table 5 following interpretations are drawn:

- 133 respondents out of 311, i.e. 42.8% informed that their overall experiences at Tinsukia in the context of Photographic tourism were excellent.
- 119 respondents i.e. 38.3% were of the view that their overall experience in the district was good.
- According to 54 respondents, their overall experience in the district was of average nature where as overall experiences of 5 respondents constituting 1.6% of the total responses were bad.

This is an encouraging statistic for the Tinsukia district because, the majority of the respondents had positive experiences in the district with regard to photographic tourism, in spite of the fact that, this genus of tourism is still in its infant stage in the region.

Table 6: Respondents' Views Regarding Prospects of Tinsukia District to Emerge as a Photographic Tourism Destination

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Can't say | 47 | 15.1 |
| No | 9 | 2.9 |
| Yes | 255 | 82.0 |
| Total | 311 | 100.0 |

Source: Compiled from Survey Data

In Table 6, responses with regard to the prospects of Tinsukia district in emerging as a photographic tourism destination of the country are showcased. Following interpretations can be drawn from the table:

- Out of 311, 255 respondents felt that the district of Tinsukia has tremendous prospects to emerge as a photographic tourism destination. This is 82% of the total responses. According to the respondents, the diversity and uniqueness in the photography subjects are a major advantage in the district, and if realized, Tinsukia has all the possibilities to emerge as a major photographic tourism destination of the country.
- 47 respondents, i.e. 15.1% were not sure about the prospects of the district in emerging as a photographic tourism

destination, for which they opted for the 'can't say' option.

- There were 9 respondents, who felt that the Tinsukia district has no prospects to emerge as a photographic tourism destination.

Table 7: Respondents' Overall Experience vs. Respondents' Views Regarding Prospects of Tinsukia District as a Photographic Tourism Destination Cross-Tabulation

| | | Prospects to Emerge as a Photographic Destination | | | Total |
|---|-----------|---|----|-----|-------|
| | | Can't say | No | Yes | |
| Overall Experience in the district of Tinsukia in the context of Photographic Tourism | Average | 31 | 3 | 20 | 54 |
| | Excellent | 3 | 0 | 131 | 134 |
| | Good | 13 | 2 | 103 | 118 |
| | Poor | 0 | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Total | | 47 | 9 | 255 | 311 |

Source: Compiled from Survey Data

From Table 7, we can find that

- Out of 5, 4 respondents whose overall experience in the district in the context of Photographic Tourism was poor felt that there is no prospect for the Tinsukia district to emerge as a photographic tourism destination.
- Similarly, 3 out of 54 respondents whose overall experience was average, felt that there is no prospects for the Tinsukia district to emerge as a photographic tourism destination; whereas 31 such respondents didn't provide a clear picture and opted for the 'can't say' option provided in the questionnaire.
- Out of 252 respondents (with excellent and good overall experiences), majority i.e. 234 felt that Tinsukia has prospects to emerge as a photographic tourism destination.

Table 8: Respondents' Views Regarding Future Visits to Tinsukia District for Photographic Tourism Related Activities

| Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Can't say | 31 | 10.0 |
| No | 0 | 0.0 |
| Yes | 280 | 90.0 |
| Total | 311 | 100.0 |

Source: Compiled from Survey Data

From Table 8, following findings can be drawn

- The majority of the respondents i.e. 280 out of 311 expressed their willingness to visit Tinsukia district for photographic tourism related activities in the near future. They constituted 90% of the total respondents.
- There were 31 respondents constituting 10% of the total responses, who were not sure about their future visits to the district of Tinsukia on account of photographic tourism related activities. Therefore, they opted for the 'can't say' option provided in the questionnaire.

Major Findings of the Study

- 94.5% of the respondents informed that their purpose of visit to Tinsukia as a photographic tourism destination was successful.
- Respondents felt that expert guides, equipment rentals, accommodation near photographic destinations, expert photographic advice and traditional cuisine are some services, which need to be introduced by photographic service providers of the district in the context of photographic tourism.
- According to the majority of the respondents, the most prospective photographic genera in the district of Tinsukia are Avian-photography, followed by wildlife photography, portrait photography, culture and lifestyle photography, and landscape photography.
- 82% of the respondents stated that Tinsukia has the potentialities to emerge as prospective photographic tourism destinations of the country.
- 134 respondents out of 311 rated their overall stay in Tinsukia district as excellent, 118 respondents as well, 54 respondents as average and 5 respondents rated the overall stay as poor.

CONCLUSIONS

From the above discussions, we can conclude that there is a huge prospect in the district of Tinsukia for different genera of photography. The need of the hour is to initiate effective promotion and focus on the drivers of growth to tailor the photographic tourism products as per customers' tastes and preferences. From the above discussion, we can thus conclude that Working Hypothesis for the study, "There is a tremendous scope of 'photographic tourism' in the district of Tinsukia as a Tourist destination" stands accepted.

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