Tourist Expectation and Satisfaction: An Analysis on Selected Heritage Destination of the Sivasagar District of Assam.

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Abstract: *Heritage tourism is an important aspect of Indians tourism industry. It is one of the largest and fastest growing global tourism markets and it covers all aspects of travel that provide an opportunity for visitors to learn about other areas' history, culture and life style. It is an important form of tourism that specifically targets the art, architecture, history, monuments, museums, religious heritage. The area of the study is Sivasagar district, which is the pride of Assam due to its rich heritage and historical importance. Once it was the capital of the great Ahom kingdom, the brave dynasty who ruled Assam for glorious six hundred years, where 551 historical monuments were commissioned during the era of Ahome periods (1228-1826 AD). The recent studies about heritage tourism focused on the tourists satisfactions who visited Sivasagar. The study also attempts to investigate overall satisfaction of tourists at selected cultural heritage destination in the district.*
Keywords: *Heritage tourism, Heritage destination, Tourist Expectation, Tourist Satisfaction, , Sivasagar.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Today tourism is one of the largest and dynamically developing sectors of external economic activities. Its high growth and development rates, considerable volumes of foreign currency inflows, infrastructure development, and introduction of new management and educational experience actively affect various sectors of economy, which positively contribute to the social and economic development of the country as a whole. According Economic Survey of Assam (2012-13) 44, 08,336 domestic tourist and 16,660 foreign tourist visits were recorded in Assam, and Assam Tourist Lodge earned Rs. 184.49 lakh from foreign and domestic tourist. In order to boost the tourism sector, there is a trend for segmentation of tourism based on distinctive features like, natural tourism, cultural tourism, medical tourism, sports tourism, eco-tourism, heritage tourism etc. Heritage Tourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry.

1.1. Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism is a broad field of specialty travel, based on nostalgia for the past and the desire to experience diverse cultural landscapes and forms. It includes travel to festivals and other cultural events, visit to sites and monuments travel to study nature, folklore or art or pilgrimages.(Zeppel, H. & Hall, C. 1992) The word "heritage" in its broader meaning is generally associated with the word "inheritance," that is, something transferred from one generation to another. The concept of "tourisme," on the other hand, is really a form of modern consciousness. In this study, both heritage and cultural tourism are used in combination and/or interchangeably. (Nuryanti, W. 1996).

Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is important for successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Measuring tourist satisfaction plays an important role in marketing tourism products and services. Understanding tourist satisfaction is of utmost importance for the tourism industry, especially because of its effect on their future economy. Satisfied tourists tend to communicate their positive experience to others (word of mouth) and they tend to buy the product repeatedly. Satisfaction is defined as "a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment " Oliver (1997: 13) The overall satisfaction is then the result or the sum of the relative importance and the level of satisfaction experienced of all the single attributes.

1.2. Statement of the problems

Sivasagar district is the pride of Assam due to its rich cultural heritage and historical importance. Once it was the capital of the great Ahom kingdom, the brave dynasty who ruled Assam for glorious six hundred years, where 551 historical monuments were commissioned during the era of Ahome periods(1228-1826 AD). Though tourists are visiting these cultural heritage sites; whether they were satisfied in the destinations is yet to be known. Thus, there is a need to investigate which attributes satisfy tourists who visit heritage destinations in order to help tourism planners develop strategies to attract customers and to also find heritage tourists' demographic and travel behavior characteristics in order to help tourism marketers better understand their customers as there have been few studies that identify the relationship between heritage destination attributes and tourists' satisfaction.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The present study is an attempt to understand tourist satisfaction at Sivasagar District, particularly who visited cultural heritage destination. The following specific objectives are considered for the study-
1. To analyse the tourist expectation and experience on tourism services provided by service providers.
2. To examine the overall satisfaction of tourists at selected cultural heritage destination in the district.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Sibsagar District of Assam. The sample size for the study was 200. The following variables were taken into consideration based on the objective of study. Tourists' satisfaction: Facilities/ Service like, food, shopping places, information centers, atmosphere, indoor facilities, accommodations, tour packages, guides. In order to fulfill the objective of study, Primary and Secondary data were collected and coded, computed, and analyzed using the Statistical tools such as weighted average, mean, percentage etc. Data analysis and findings are divided into three major sections. The first section provides the demographic characteristics. The second section presents impact attributes of the Expectation Vs Satisfaction of the tourist from the service providers which are directly related with tourism. The last section presents the overall satisfaction of the tourist at three different important destination of the district.

IV. SELECTED TOURIST DESTINATION OF THE SIVASAGAR DISTRICT

- **Sivasagar Town:** The main feature of the Sivasagar town is the water body from which it takes its name. This is a 257-acre (1.04 km2) tank, also known as the Borpukhuri, which is at a higher elevation than the rest of the town, with three temples i.e. Sivadol, standing tall at 104 feet (32 m), Vishnudol and Devidol. The temples were built by Kuwori Ambika, wife of Swargadeo Siba Singha, in 1734.
- **Joysagar:** Joysagar is famous for biggest man-made lake in the country, is spread over 318 acres (1.29 km2). This lake was built by Swargadeo Rudra Singha in honour of his mother, Joymoti.The Raj Kareng or royal palace in the new capital complex stands magnificently near Joysagar tank. The Ranghar known to be the first sports pavilion in Asia and built in its present shape by king Pramatta Singha in 1746 A.D. also situated at Joysagar.
- **Gargoan:**Gargoan is famous for "Karang Ghar" is a Royal house of the Ahome kings situated at around 15 K.M. away from Sivasagar town. The palace structured was made of wood and stones by King Pramatta Singha in 1747 A.D. After destruction of the old palace it was rebuild by King Rajeswar Singha in 1725 A.D.

V. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

1. **The demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents: N=200

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	60	30
	Female	140	70
Age	0-20	11	5.5
	20-40	129	64.5
	40-60	58	29
	60-80	2	1
State	Assam(within the State)	136	68

	Outside of the State*	64	32
Education	Below 12	85	42.5
	Graduate	83	41.5
	Post Graduate	20	10
	Professional	12	6
Income	No Income (Unemployed)	37	18.5
	below 2 lakh	16	8
	3-5 lakh	90	45
	6-8 lakh	37	18.5
	9 - above	20	10

Source: Field survey

In the gender distribution almost (70%) respondents was female and only 30% were male respondents. The dominant age group of the respondents was 20-40 years (64.5%), followed by 40-60 years (29%), below 20 years (5.5%), and older (1%). Most of the respondents reported that they live in the state of Assam (68%), and 32% respondents were live in other state. In terms of level of education almost 42.5% were under graduate and 41.5% were graduate whereas a few respondents were PG degree (10%) & Professional Degree (6%). With regard to respondents' annual income, the largest group included those with an annual income of 3-5 Lakh per year, followed by 9 Lakh and above (10%), and below 2 lakh (8%).whereas18.5% respondents were unemployed.

2. Travel behaviour characteristics of the respondents
Table- 2, Travel Behaviour Characteristics (N=200)

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Purpose of Visit	Recreational	139	69.5
	Excursion	26	13
	Academic	16	8
	official	5	2.5
	Other	14	7
Sources of information	Own	120	60
	Agency	9	4.5
	Friend	71	35.5
Interest	Monuments	122	61
	Native life/culture	10	5
	Architecture	7	3.5
	Others	61	30.5
Past Experience	Yes	144	72
	No	56	28
Length of stay	2-5 days	176	88
	One week	24	12
	Two week	0	0
	Above 2 week	0	0
Member of the Group	Alone	5	2.5

	Couple	7	3.5
	Family	167	83.5
	Friends	21	10.5
	Organised Groups	0	0

Source: Field survey.

Travel behavior characteristics of the respondents are shown in the Table- 2 . In the category of the purpose of visit to the destination 69.5% respondents visited at the Sivasagar for the recreational purpose and it followed by 13% for excursion, 8% academic and 2.5% visited any other purpose. With regard to the source of information about destination, almost 60% respondents previously knew about the destination, 35.5% respondents knew about the destination from their friends & relatives, only smallest group of respondents (4.5%) sources of information was travel agency. In the category of the number of previous visit at Sivasagar only 28% of the respondents did not have previous experience with the area and almost 72% of the respondents visited to the destination previously. With regard to the length of the stay at the destination 88% respondents stay for 2-5 days, only 12 % respondents stay for one week, no respondent were found to stay at the destination for 2 week and above 2 week. Lastly, In the category of members of the group most respondents (83.5%) travelled with a family, 10% respondents travelled with friends, whereas 3.5% were found couple.

3.   Expectation VS Satisfaction of the Respondents:

Table-3 Analysis of Expectation VS Satisfaction

Sl No	Variables	Satisfaction		Expectation		Mean Differences
		Total WA	**WA Mean**	**Total WA**	**WA Mean**	
1	Food/ Beverage	9951	49.755	8580	42.9	6.86
2	Shopping places	10050	50.25	9330	46.65	3.6
3	**Information centers**	**7080**	**35.4**	**10740**	**53.7**	**-18.3**
4	Atmosphere/people	9690	48.45	9105	45.525	2.93
5	Transportation	10035	50.175	8775	43.875	6.3
6	Expensiveness	10005	50.025	9360	46.8	3.23
7	Climate/Weather	9720	48.6	8880	44.4	4.2
8	**Accommodations**	**9735**	**48.675**	**9780**	**48.9**	**-0.23**
9	**Tour packages**	**4860**	**24.3**	**9360**	**46.8**	**-22.5**
10	**Guides**	**4815**	**24.075**	**10860**	**54.3**	**-30.23**

Source: Field survey. / * WA= Weighted Average ./N=200

The survey was done through 5 Point Scale comprising very low to very high for the measuring expectation and satisfaction of the respondents at the destinations. Among 200 respondents, it is found that weighted average mean (WAM) of the expectation of the "Food and Beverages" is 42.9 where respondents express average satisfaction 49.76 which is greater than 6.86 point of the expectation, With regards "Shopping Places" of the district, respondent's expectation WAM is 46.65 and satisfaction WAM is 40.25 which is greater than 3.6 point of the expectation. Regarding Atmosphere of the people of the Sivasagar, respondents expect 45.53 WAM and they feel 48.45 WAM which is greater than expectation 2.93 WAM. In regard "Transportation Facility" of the district, weighted average mean(WAM) of the expectation is 43.88 where respondents express satisfaction 50.18 which is greater than 6.3 point of the expectation which is second highest satisfaction rate of the respondents followed by satisfaction 4.2 at "Climate and weather of the District" and Expensiveness 2.32.

On the other hand respondents are highly dissatisfied at Guide Service, Tour Packages and Information Center for Tourist" of the district which are respectively-30.23, -22.5 and -18.3 WAM negative differences with the expectation.

4. Overall Satisfaction at Heritage Tourist Destinations of the Sivasagar District
4.1. Gargoan as a tourist destination

CROSS TABULATION		SATISFACTION						WA Mean
		Very Low (1)	Low (2)	Average (3)	High (4)	Very High (5)	Total	
EXPECTATION	Very Low (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Low (2)	0	4	0	0	0	4	0.04
	Average (3)	0	0	16	8	0	24	0.36
	High (4)	0	0	32	64	24	120	2.4
	Very High (5)	0	0	0	24	28	52	1.3
	Total	0	4	48	96	52	E. Mean= 4.1 S. Mean= 3.98 MD= - 0.12 P<E= Unsatisfied	
WA Mean		0	0.04	0.72	1.92	1.3		

Where P = Performance(satisfaction), E= Expectation, MD= Mean difference

From the above cross tabulation it found that among 200 respondents 4 respondents expectation is low and same respondent's satisfaction is also low. 24 respondents expectation is Average but 48 respondent satisfaction is average, its greater than the expectation rate , 120 respondent's expectation is high but only 96 respondent's fell high satisfaction, its lower than the expectation. 52 respondent's expectation is very high and same respondents fell very high satisfaction at the destination. There are no respondents are found in very low category. The total weighted average of the Expectation is 4.1 on the other hand total weighted average of the satisfaction is 3.98, therefore, the rate of satisfaction is lower than expectation and hence, it is considered as an unsatisfied destination for tourist.

4.2. Sivasagar town as tourist destination

CROSS TABULATION		SATISFACTION						WA Mean
		Very Low (1)	Low (2)	Average (3)	High (4)	Very High (5)	Total	
EXPECTATION	Very Low (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Low (2)	0	4	0	0	0	4	0.04
	Average (3)	0	0	8	16	0	24	0.36
	High (4)	0	0	16	76	28	120	2.4
	Very High (5)	0	0	0	8	44	52	1.3
	Total	0	4	24	100	72	E. Mean= 4.1 S. Mean= 4.2 MD= + 0.1 P>E=Satisfied	
WA Mean		0	0.04	0.36	2	1.8		

Where P = Performance(satisfaction), E= Expectation, MD= Mean difference

From the above cross tabulation it found that out of 200 respondents 4 respondents expectation is Low, 24 respondents is Average , 120 respondents is High, and 52 respondents is Very High. On the other hand same respondents feel Low and Average satisfaction. 100 respondent's fells High and 72 respondents are Very High

at the destination; it's greater than the expectation. No respondents are found Very Low expectation and satisfaction. The total weighted average of the satisfaction is 4.1 on the other hand total weighted average of the expectation is 4.2, therefore, the rate of satisfaction is greater than expectation and hence, it is considered as a satisfied destination for tourist.

4.3. Joysagar as tourist destination

CROSS TABULATION		SATISFACTION						WA Mean
		Very Low (1)	Low (2)	Average (3)	High (4)	Very High (5)	Total	
EXPECTATION	Very Low (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Low (2)	0	4	0	0	0	**4**	0.04
	Average (3)	0	0	8	12	4	**24**	0.36
	High (4)	0	0	8	64	48	**120**	2.4
	Very High (5)	0	0	0	8	44	**52**	1.3
	Total	0	**4**	**16**	**84**	**96**	**E. Mean= 4.1** **S. Mean= 4.36** **MD= + 0.26** **P>E=Satisfied**	
WA Mean		0	0.04	0.24	1.68	2.4		

Where P = Performance(satisfaction), E= Expectation, MD= Mean difference

From the above analysis it found that among 200 respondents 4 respondents expectation is Low and same respondents satisfaction is also Low. Expectation of 24 respondents is Average but only 16 respondents' fell average at the destination. 120 respondents expected High satisfaction from the destination but 84 respondents fell High satisfaction at the destination. 52 respondents expected very high satisfaction but 96 respondents fell High satisfaction at the destination, on the other hand no respondents' expectation and satisfaction were found Very Low. The total weighted average of the satisfaction is 4.1 on the other hand total weighted average of the expectation is 4.36, therefore, the rate of satisfaction is greater than expectation and hence, it is considered as a satisfied destination for tourist.

VI. CONCLUSION

There are 10 variables of the service providers, broken down into satisfaction and dissatisfaction categories. The results indicated that respondents are highly dissatisfied at Guide Services, Tour Packages and Information Center for Tourist of the district; on the other hand they highly satisfied at, food / beverage, transportation facilities and climate & weather of the destinations.

Another objective of the study was to identify the overall satisfaction of tourists at the selected three destinations of the district. From the study, it is found that, tourists were satisfied with destinations like Sivasagar, and Joysagar, while Gargoan was unable to fulfill the expectation of tourists as tourist destination. The main reasons of dissatisfaction of these destinations are, Archaeological Survey of India protect only 19 (Nineteen) and State Archaeological Department protract only 22(twenty two) historical monuments in the district among 553 ancient monuments, on the other hand renown organizations organizes various festivals at monuments site and uses high sound system, digs the area for construction of pandels for their functions, which has gradually hampered the monument. Some tourists write their name on the walls of these monuments. Some of the local community has been occupying the monument's preservation land and some even have constructed unauthorized business houses nearby and under the monuments site. Therefore, it is necessary that, Tourism planner have to think about the practical problems of the dissatisfaction of the tourist, rather than artificial beatification of the destination area, and stakeholders should try to promote responsible practices at the destinations otherwise Sivasagar which is popularly known as heritage destination of the state disappear from it.

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