EXPLORING THE UNEXPLORED PARADISE, TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NORTHEAST INDIAN STATES: PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS

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การสำรวจสวรรค์ที่ยังไม่เคยถูกสำรวจกับอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวในอินเดียอุษาคเนย์: ความรุ่งโรจน์ และปัญหา

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กระบวนทัศน์ของคนอินเดียยังยึดติดอยู่กับความมั่นคงของประเทศแม้หลังการได้รับอิสรภาพ ภาค
ตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือของอินเดียจะมีทรัพยากรธรรมชาติอยู่มากมายแต่กลับไม่ถูกตั้งให้เป็นประเด็นที่สำคัญ ด้วย
เหตุนี้โอกาสด้านการพัฒนาประเทศและการพึ่งพาตนเองในด้านเศรษฐกิจจึงถูกมองข้ามไปอย่างน่าเสียดาย ภาค
ตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือก็ยังมีปัญหาอยู่มาก ประกอบด้วย ความไม่มั่นคงทางการเมือง ความยากจน การบริหารของ
ภาครัฐที่ไม่มีประสิทธิภาพ รวมทั้งความขาดแคลน การว่างงานและความเห็นแก่ได้ของผู้ประกอบการ งานวิจัยนี้
จึงนำเสนอรูปแบบการพัฒนาจากการผสานความคิดของทั้ง "ความมั่นคง" และ "การพัฒนา" กรณีนี้งานวิจัย
วิเคราะห์ความเป็นไปได้และประโยชน์ของการส่งเสริมการท่องเที่ยวและเสนอว่าการท่องเที่ยวเป็นนโยบายที่มี
ประสิทธิภาพเพื่อที่จะแก้ปัญหาด้านการพัฒนาและต้นเหตุของ "ความไม่มีอิสรภาพ" ให้กับหลายชีวิต เนื่องจาก
ความได้เปรียบเชิงเปรียบเทียบที่ยังไม่ได้ถูกใช้ประโยชน์ของภาคธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยว

งานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพนี้รวบรวมข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลักและการทบทวนวรรณกรรมซึ่ง
ยืนยันได้ว่าภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือมีฐานที่เพียงพอในการพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยวแบบบูรณาการเช่น การท่องเที่ยว
และการดื่มชา การท่องเที่ยวและการตีกอล์ฟ การท่องเที่ยวและการผจญภัยเชิงนิเวศ การท่องเที่ยวเชิงวัฒนธรรม
และการแสวงบุญ การท่องเที่ยวในเขตพื้นที่ชนบท การท่องเที่ยวบนเรือสำราญ การท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพ การ
ท่องเที่ยวตามรอยสงครามโลกครั้งที่สอง นอกจากนี้ธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยวยังไม่ได้จำกัดอยู่แค่ในพื้นที่ของภาคแต่
เป็นรูปแบบการท่องเที่ยวข้ามพรมแดนกับประเทศพม่าซึ่งเป็นการใช้ประโยชน์จากความสัมพันธ์และภูมิ
รัฐศาสตร์ระหว่างกันเพื่อการสะท้อนกลับของความท้าทายเชิงเศรษฐกิจและพัฒนาในยุคปัจจุบัน

กุญแจสำคัญของงานวิจัยชิ้นนี้คือการเสนอให้ภาครัฐมองเห็นความสำคัญของการสนับสนุนนโยบาย
การท่องเที่ยวเชิงบูรณาการในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือโดยการเน้นความคิดด้าน "การท่องเที่ยวที่ยั่งยืน" และ
"การมีส่วนร่วมของภาคประชาชน" และควรดำเนินการโดยการเน้นใช้ "ทัศนคติเชิงการพัฒนา" มากกว่า "การ
ดึงดูดนักท่องเที่ยว" ที่สำคัญนโยบายควรเป็นไปในทางเดียวกันกับนโยบายการท่องเที่ยวของประเทศพม่าเพื่อ
สร้างนโยบายที่เหมาะสมและตอบสนองต่อความต้องการในด้านการพัฒนาให้กับภูมิภาค

| สาขาวิชา | การพัฒนาระหว่างประเทศ | ลายมือชื่อนิสิต | |
| ปีการศึกษา | 2557 | ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก | |

JUNTY SHARMA PATHAK: EXPLORING THE UNEXPLORED PARADISE, TOURISM INDUSTRY IN NORTHEAST INDIAN STATES: PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS. ADVISOR: ASSOC.PROF. NITI PAWAKAPAN, Ph.D., pp.

Despite being endowed with huge untapped natural resources the North Eastern region of India for most of its post-independence history has been primarily perceived within security paradigms. This has resulted in major negligence of its development and self-sustainability while its economic potentials have remained unexploited. Consequently, the region is plagued with multiple issues of political instability, poverty, maladministration and is yet to gain freedom from wants, hunger, unemployment and exploitation. Thus, this paper argues for the need of an alternate model of development for the region interlinking purposes of '*security*' and '*development*'. In this context the paper analyses the potentials and benefits of promoting tourism and argues that tourism can be an effective policy option to meet special development needs and to remove major sources of '*unfreedom*' from human lives in the region, especially because of wide untapped comparative advantages in the sector and its inherent multiplier effect on development.

Primarily a qualitative study, data was collected through interviewing key informants and from extensive literature review, which reveals that there is ample scope in the region to develop new tourism products (notably tea tourism, golf tourism, wild life/eco/ adventure tourism, cultural/pilgrim tourism, rural tourism, river cruise tourism, medical tourism, defence tourism & world war II Trail / circuits) not only regionally but also through a model of cross border tourism with Myanmar, taking advantages of shared ties and its geo political location to meet present economic and development challenges.

As a key priority of the research is to provide recommendations, the paper suggests that Northeast should adopt an integrated regional tourism policy with core ideas of '*sustainable tourism*' and '*people's participation*', the tourism development policy should necessarily be organized on a '*developmental perspective*' rather than the present '*attraction centric approach*', the policy should converge with Myanmar's tourism policies to build on listed potentials among other recommendations to help in formulating suitable tourism policies for the region to bring much-needed development as is hoped for.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OFABBREVIATIONS

NSDP – Net State Domestic Product

GOI- Government of India

ASEAN- Association of Southeast Asian Nations

GMS- Greater Mekong Sub Region

UNWTO- United Nations World Tourism Organization

WB- World Bank

ADB – Asian Development Bank

MDG- Millennium Development Goals

ATDC – Assam Tourism Development Corporation

UN – United Nations

PAP/RAP/ILP - Restricted Area Permit, Protected Area Permit and the Inner Line Permit

AFSPA – Arms Forces Special Powers Act

PRO – Public Relations Officer

WTTC- World Travel and Tourism Council

BIMSTEC- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

WTO- World Trade Organization

UNEP- United Nations Environment Programme

MOU- Memorandum of Understanding

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1 Geo-Political Location of NER

Source: Google Images

1.1 Introduction

One of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in Asia, the landlocked eastern most part of India- the NER[1] geographically connects three important broad regions of South Asia, East Asia and Southeast Asia. Often described as the north-western borderlands of Southeast Asia, 98% of its border forms India's international boundaries with China, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan.

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[1] The word NE and NER has been used interchangeably during the course of this paper.

Sanjib Baruah argues that "*the idea that South Asia is a discrete geographical region separated from Southeast Asia is a fiction*"(Baruah, 2003, p. 46). He emphasizes this by pointing out that there are no natural geographical boundaries separating South and Southeast Asia along the Indo-Myanmar border. In territorial terms today's `South Asia' is to a large extent successor to the colonial entity called `British India'. Therefore NE India's ties -- historical, cultural, social and economic -- do not stop at these international boundaries (Baruah, 2003).

Surrounded by sensitive and volatile neighbours of South and South East Asia, NER's journey post British colonial rule and within the independent Indian Republic (Since 1947) has been one deeply associated with security concerns lending to it a perspective that it overwhelmingly oriented within security paradigms. Its proximity to golden triangle[2] has resulted in nexus between drug traffickers, arms dealers and various organized criminal networks operating across the region and has been a cause of instability. Since the colonial period this area has witnessed a large flow of migrants from other more densely populated parts of South Asia such as Bihar, Bengal and even parts of Nepal that have added more pressure on the economic and natural resources of the region. Huge inflow of migrants especially from present day Bangladesh has led to powerful political movements and discourses against this '*illegal infiltration*' highlighting grievances and perceptions of inaction by the state and central government.

The factors touched on in the above discussion reflect a state glaring negligence in the development and self-sustainability of the region while also suggesting that its economic potentials (local, regional) were never exploited thoroughly. Consequently unresolved development issues has given rise to issues of political sovereignty, sub- nationalism, governance deficit, armed insurgencies,

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[2]The Golden Triangle refers to the region between Northern Thailand, Laos and Myanmar that is infamously known as a production region of drugs. See more athttp://alcoholrehab.com/drug-addiction/golden-triangle-drug-production/

political violence and gross developmental disparity between mainland India and NER.

But in the recent times, Northeast has begun to see signs of peace and political stability, giving rise to hope and optimism among its people. There is a growing realization that NER requires an alternative model of development combining both components of security and development.

This is well summarized by Manwaring, who writes that, "*Security can no longer be considered only in terms of protecting national territory and interests against external military aggressions. Rather, security is being redefined more broadly to encompass stability; stability is dependent on the legitimate political, economic and social development, well-being of the global community*"(R. Bhattacharya, 2014, p. 65).

This recognition has compelled policy makers to modify their policy orientations to combine both elements and identify processes and strategies that might provide a better solution for the region and bring much-needed development as is hoped for (R. Bhattacharya, 2014).

Accordingly, Government of India's *North-eastern Region Vision 2020* document earmarks infrastructure-led tourism development as one of the primary potentials for revenue generation. While India is one of the ten top tourist destinations of the world, the Northeast plays a negligible role in the overall percentage of tourist arrivals in India, constituting a meagre one per cent (Neog, 2011, p. 1).This is mainly because the tourism potential of the Northeast has not been constructively tapped into. The Ministry of Tourism calls the region a '*paradise unexplored*'.

However with global tourism booming and with future projections showing an upward trend, it has been observed that the "*New generations of travellers who are 'money rich and time poor' are increasingly looking for unique experiences. More and more people are looking at tourism as less of a journey and more of an experience*"(Bezbaruah, 2005, p. 1) And Northeast with its variety and uniqueness holds immense attraction for these new and growing breeds of tourists. The rich natural beauty and its diversity, exotic cultural and ethnic mosaic, flora and fauna and the serenity of the virgin, unexplored ecosystems provide possibilities of a totally different experience for the tourists (Bezbaruah, 2005).

Moreover, Northeast is situated to link India with ASEAN both in a geographical and commercial sense with pre-existing cultural and historical linkages with the East that can be utilized to forge greater economic collaboration. Thus, discussing the tourism prospects of Northeast India alongside at least two crucial factors and their inter-relations can be highly useful. Firstly, the broader Look East Policy[3] orientation of the Indian government and secondly, there are the tourism prospects and policy frameworks of the neighbouring countries. Studying them together can be of great importance to identify ways to boost tourism and consequently also enable the region to extricate itself from economic under development (Bezbaruah, 2005). Especially with Myanmar, Northeast India shares deep rooted historical, cultural, social and economic ties that simply does not stop at the international boundary and in fact extends deep into the territories of the respective regions (Karthykeyan, 2009). Also, given the region's comparative advantages in tourism and the commitment showed by the Government of Myanmar to develop tourism in Myanmar as one of the major economic sectors, targeting possible cooperation and markets in South Asia(Tin, 2004, p. 2), highlights opportunities for tremendous benefits that exist from deepening collaboration in the area of tourism. This will enable both the countries to reap benefits from the potential that exists out of the strong historical, cultural and ethnic links between the two

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[3]India's Look East policy represents its efforts to cultivate extensive economic and strategic relations with the nations of Southeast Asia

countries and also those with the wider Southeast Asia which has not been have not been harnessed presently (Bezbaruah, 2005).

In this context, looking at prospects of tourism in the region holds immense relevance because tourism industry can act as a revenue generator and as a catalyst for development in the region. Although there are several measures being taken by the State and the Centre to upgrade tourism potential of NE, it has a long way to go to flourish as a development industry. Therefore, there is a need to highlight the various measures taken and the ones that need to be adopted across government bodies to promote tourism in the NER, which will underscore the shortcomings and challenges which plague the region.

Thus one can safely say that research on prospects of tourism has important regional development policy implications especially for geo-political spaces like the NER. Moreover research findings of such a study has immense practical applicability for policy makers to formulate relevant development and tourism promoting strategies at regional as well as national level.

1.2 Research Question

➢ What are the potentials of tourism in Northeast, India as the new development strategy for the region to achieve economic growth and local development?

➢ How can Northeast formulate an effective strategy to develop its tourist potential?

1.3 Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are-

1. To explore existing and potential variety of tourism in North East in India.

2. To prepare a case study of Myanmar to examine and identify potentiality of tourism between North East India and Myanmar.

3. Lastly examine a way forward to help in formulating suitable tourist policy for the region

1.4 Conceptual Framework

This research will mainly explore the tourism potential of Northeast besides forwarding suggestions for the formulation of a pragmatic tourism policy region. An attempt will also be made to clearly identify implementable interventions for promotion of stronger regional cooperation between India and Myanmar in order to enhance existing tourism economy.

Essential conceptual elements of this study can be argued to be the idea of development which is not overly dictated by the present security paradigm adopted by the GOI in NER, but envisions a model that connects issues of security and development. By development we are just not talking about achieving regions economic viability or self-sustainability but going beyond traditional notions of development and security to ensure human security i.e. 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear'.

This paper highlights the voices within the region that urge for the need of revisiting and critiquing the traditional security paradigm and increasingly attempt to reinterpret NER in the light of 'security through development'. As Amartya Sen has famously argued "*development is closely connected to the removal of major sources of 'unfreedom' from human lives, which roots to social deprivation and lack of human security*"(R. Bhattacharya, 2014, p. 64).

Another significant feature of the conceptual framework is how *'tourism'* is discussed as a strategy to meet special development needs of NER and as a strategy to removal of major sources of '*unfreedom*' from human lives in the region. Expressed simply**,** we are referring to a regional tourism industry that *"takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, and the environment and host communities"* as put by the UNWTO[4] *("Sustainable Development Tourism,").*

This paper conceptually relies heavily on the idea of a 'policy' underscoring the fact that correction of existing policies and formulation of new well suited policies can possibly help the ailing tourism industry to immensely benefit from its underutilized tourism potentials. Policy in this context can be understood as basic principles by which a government body is directed and limits its actions in the pursuit long term goals.

It is also important to note that we are talking about a future tourism policy which will recognise *'people's participation'* as one of its core principles. Here we are referring to a "*process through which all members of a community or organization are involved in and have influence on decisions related to development activities that will affect them*" ("Participatory Development Definations ")This implies that the tourism projects will "*address those community or group needs on which members have chosen to focus, and that all phases of the development process will be characterized by active involvement of community or organization members*" ("Participatory Development Definations ")

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[4] http://sdt.unwto.org/content/about-us-5

While addressing the second objective of identifying potential thrust areas between India and Myanmar to develop a niche tourism economy transnationally will conceptually require to be based on the idea of *'cross boarder tourism'* that can be defined as the as "*activities of persons travelling across the broader to stay in places outside their usual environment for a reasonable period of time*"(Tobora, 2014, p. 1). This is of great relevance to the study because for full exploration of tourism potentiality of the region it needs to be discussed trans-nationally especially with Myanmar given its geo-political location and pre-existing socio cultural linkages and the vast untapped possibilities that can be a great attraction for tourists if developed trans-nationally.

The discussed ideas will help us to answer following objectives:

- **Policy Potential:** the research will explore the policy prospects for tourism as the driver of growth for NER. Whether tourism sector and its policies hold sufficient scope to ensure development? In doing so an attempt will be made to analyse how existing policies and how these policies can yield better results for the region. Whether the region can incorporate policies to draw benefits from potential cross-border cooperation between India and Myanmar; if there exists any to develop respective tourism economies.

- **Tourism and Development:** Tourism as a strategy to meet special development needs of NER. Attempt to answer how development of tourism can be crucial for assuring sustainable development of NER. Can it be a strategy to removal of major sources of "unfreedom" from human lives in the region? What are the competitive edges and location advantages of NER in the context of tourism development? How to utilize such competitive edges of the region for the development of less developed economy of NER?

The importance of this framework lies in the fact that the NE so far has suffered from a long journey of insecurity and policy failure which has failed to better people's lives. Therefore the region requires a change in outlook to redesign their strategies to meet special development needs of NER by interlinking purposes of security and development as visualised in this paper.

1.5 Research Methods

- ➢ The research employed a qualitative method to examine the research question at hand.
- ➢ Primary data was collected through interviewing key informants like politicians/ policy makers, academicians/ scholars, in bound tourists, entrepreneur from NER who have been involved in tourism development and management in NER. Field work also included holding discussions with local communities, government authorities and inbound tourists from various countries and from within India.
- ➢ The study is primarily based on secondary data gathered from extensive literature review supplemented by secondary data from- Government of India, Tourism Ministry, Northeast Council, and Ministry for Development of North-eastern Region.
- ➢ Simple statistical methods like calculations using percentage has been used to show growth rate of tourism and NSDP.

1.6 Research Scope

The research was physically based in the three Indian states of New Delhi, Assam and Meghalaya. The first site was the national capital of New Delhi where Members of Parliament from the various states were interviewed; data from central ministries of tourism and MDONER were collected. Prime tourist locations covered in Assam like Mayong (heritage), Pabitora (National Wild Life Santuary), Sonapur (lesuire), Kamakhya (Pilgrim) and the river side were interactions with community members, tourists and entrepreneurs were held. Discussions with state tourism offices and scholars, bureaucrats and other relevant stakeholders were also included in this second site. Lastly, the city of Shillong in Meghalaya was selected as the third site to

mainly interview hoteliers and tourists. While communities members from all the eight states and several foreign and domestic tourists were interviewed in nodal locations like Guwahati, Shillong and Delhi. Important sites were Guwahati International Airport, Delhi International Airport, Tourist Information Centres in Connaught Place- Delhi, Paltan bazar, Pabitora- Assam, and Police Bazar – Meghalaya.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study was affected by factors like firstly language barrier: lack of understanding the local language majorly limited the selection of primary sources of information. Secondly, bias of interpreter: reliance on an interpreter also meant that the observations were affected by the interpreters' personal biases, views and opinions. Thirdly access; due to prevailing security threats in some parts of the study access to certain groups and areas were restricted like the potential border tourism areas of Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. Fourthly lack of reliable data & under research topic; the topic comparatively is under researched therefore the availability of data to test its relevance was limited. Lastly limited time; the study was conducted over a very short period of time of three and a half months to be able cover all nuances of a diverse region like NER.

1.8 Significance of Research

The proposed research holds immense significance not only for the Indian Government to formulate effective strategy to develop its tourism sector but will also usher a wide range of incentives for the people of NER by benefiting from suitable policy. It is strongly held that a well-planned tourism industry that will usher in economic development, create jobs and provide additional source of revenues is particularly significant for Northeast India and Myanmar. Therefore a study discussing the tourism prospects of NE and assessing type of expectations, purpose and challenges that tourists from its neighbouring country have will immensely contribute to the process of public policy decision making. One can conclude by

saying that for an economically robust Northeast with ample resources, an assured local market of approximately 40 million people with geographical and economical connections with Southeast Asia, such a study holds immense promise. Essentially to kick-start tourism in NER exploring the option of integrating with neighbouring countries like Myanmar is inevitable, whether to connect the region to farther east or for the success of its Look east policy.

1.9 Ethical Issues

The '*North Easter Region Vision 2020*' document released by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2008 earmarks infrastructure-led tourism development as one of the primary sources of expectation and optimism for revenue generation, the document also clearly earmarks Tourism and Hospitality Industry as one of the thrust areas for the region. Therefore, the subject at hand is fairly a non-controversial one and seems to enjoy broad acceptance among stakeholders. However all interviewees were provided with the option of anonymity and sensitivity was paid to issues wherever necessary.

CHAPTER II

LITREATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the pertinent existing body of literature that also addresses the research question at hand. The first section looks at the present tourism development patterns in NER, the existing arguments explain the state of affairs and the nature of government's response to the industry. The next section will explore the growth and nature of tourism industry Myanmar and the concluding section will identify existing gaps in knowledge within the present literature highlighting the importance of the research undertaken.

2.1 Tourism Development in NER

Today, it is globally held that tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors in the world. In India too it is an enormous service industry with a contribution of 6.23 per cent to national GDP and 8.78 per cent of total employment, hosting more than 5 million annual foreign tourist arrivals and 562 million domestic tourists. While in terms of terms of price competitiveness India was recognised as 6th in the world by WTTC 2007.[5]

India's Northeast is extremely "*well blessed by nature and lies at the centre of one of the world's richest bio-geographic areas. In addition to being a treasure house of various economic resources, it has a rich cultural and ethnic heritage that can easily make it a tourist spot. Tourism has the greatest potential for generating income and employment opportunities in Northeast Indian states because NE India is*

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[5] See more at http://www.wttc.org/tourism-for-tomorrow-awards/

exceptionally rich in bio-diversity"(Das, 2013 p. 1) and we can also add that the region is marked by wide and exotic varieties of flora and fauna.

But, despite its uniqueness, blessed natural beauty and some limited government effort the region is still one of the least visited places in India. Moreover the Northeast plays a negligible role in the overall percentage of tourist arrivals in India, constituting a measly one per cent (Neog, 2011, p. 1). As per figures given by the Directorate of Economic and Statistics and economic survey of respective States – although the region shares similar scenic Himalayan landscape and features NER highlights uneven growth and development in tourism. In terms of inflow of tourist, Assam ranks first while Nagaland ranks last. The average annual growth rate of tourist arrival over the last five years is highest in Arunachal with 55 per cent. The Density of Tourist Population (DTP) is highest for the state of Sikkim with 101.57 and lowest in Nagaland with 1.35 (Rizal & Asokan, 2013 p. 59).

Table 1 Total Number of Tourists' Arrivals in North-Eastern States of India from 2004-5 to 2010-11 (In Numbers)

Year	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Sikkim	Tripura
2004-05	NA	2195615	97302	445902	NA	11140	NA	269870
2005-06	33170	2594737	93679	381010 4	46312	18353	364168	225291
2006-07	51755	3492878	120835	NA	50786	16426	439992	232798
2007-08	39039	3503013	101460	462952	44961	23021	483041	246855
2008-09	152312	3713239	115571	554873	57635	22348	531527	249155
2010-11	199092	3910219	127929	595920	58314	22376	633358	325694
2011-12	143363	4143080	NA	656933	58242	NA	720768	359296
Growth rate	55	8.70	5.29	6.76	4.29	16.81	16.32	4.73

Source: Directorate of Economic and Statistics of respective State Governments, Economic survey of Assam 2011-12, Economic review of Tripura 2010-11, Economic survey Manipur 2010-11, Economic survey Manipur 2010-11 and 2011-12, Directorate of Tourism Government of Meghalaya, Statistical abstract of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim statistical profile 2011-12, Statistical Handbook of Nagaland 2011 (Central Statistical Organization (CSO) 2013.

However "*despite the low base, several Northeast states have seen increased tourist arrivals, and in the latest figures available for the year ending 2012, the growth rate of foreign tourist arrivals overshadowed domestic tourist arrivals. Manipur and Tripura saw an increase of about 30 per cent for foreign tourists in the same period. As of January 2011, the restriction on foreign tourists into the region* (requirement for a PAP) *was relaxed and there is a view that this led to an increase in tourist arrivals into the region*"(Sailo, 2013, pp. 1- 2).

This is reflective if one looks at the latest available data which points towards an upward trend for every state in region after the restrictions were lessened and efforts were initiated to promote tourism by their respective state governments.

Table 2 Domestic and Foreign Tourist Visits to North-Eastern States of India during 2012 – 2013 (In Numbers)

States	2012		2013		Rank 2013	
	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign
Arunachal Pradesh	132243	5135	125461	10846	32	27
Assam	4511407	17543	4684527	17638	21	24
Manipur	134541	749	140673	1908	31	32
Meghalaya	680254	5313	691269	6773	26	28
Mizoram	64249	744	63377	800	33	34
Nagaland	35915	2489	35638	3304	34	31
Sikkim	35915	2489	35638	3304	27	23
Tripura	361786	7840	359586	11853	29	26
India	1045047536	18263074	1145280443	19951026		

Source: Ministry of Tourism

2.1.1 Government Initiatives and Operations in the North- East

Meanwhile both the central and state governments has projected tourism as a potential driver for revenue generation and regional economic growth in Northeast India and started to coordinate intra-state tourism plans, made efforts to develop infrastructure to give a boost to the industry among others.

"All states of the Northeast have increased their tourism budgets with a focus on creating more infrastructure facilities – particularly transport connectivity – as well as increasing rooms available for tourists. Initiatives like Nagaland's Hornbill Festival have gained considerable traction attracting regular attention within India and abroad while those like Mizoram's Anthurium Festival have shown potential" (Sailo, 2013, p. 2).

Between September 2012 and 2013 nearly 13 per cent of the central Tourism Ministry's budget was spent in the Northeast. New Delhi has also announced a Central Finance Assistance of over Rs 123 million for various tourist projects in the region which includes development of eco-friendly walkways, landscaping, beautification projects, development of more accommodations, eateries as well as up-gradation of signage and hoardings to make it easier for tourists to get information once they are in the region. Funds for the development of eco- adventure and cultural tourism in Hunli region in Assam and Kuhuboto in Nagaland has also been earmarked. While the development of the Buddhist tourist circuit in Tawang Arunachal Pradesh received the single biggest portion of the recently disbursed funds (Sailo, 2013, p. 2).

Also, up to end of January 2012 rural tourism projects at 183 sites in 29 States/Union Territories were sanctioned by the Ministry of Tourism. 55 of these sites are situated in the North-Eastern states. Other financial assistance for the development and promotion of Tourism in NER includes 10 per cent of the plan allocation of the ministry. An amount of rupees 105.00 crores has been earmarked in budget estimation 2010-11 for the region. In addition to assistance for development of tourist

infrastructure, promotion of fairs/festivals and tourism related events in the region, publicity campaigns, market development assistance, human resource development, promotion and marketing have been provided (Rizal & Asokan, 2013 pp. 56- 57).

2.2 Linking Northeast India's Tourism Potential with South East Asia

It is also very important to point out that the Government of India has been constantly looking for opportunities that exist for synergy between Southeast Asian countries, on one side, and Northeast India, on the other. "*While the obvious complementary aspect is provided by tourists from Southeast Asia as consumers looking for new destinations which Northeast India provides, the development of such cooperation mechanisms opens new opportunities that can have significant impact for the region as a whole*"(Sailo, 2013, p. 1).

Therefore the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region has structured the tourism policy in NER within four concentric circles as follows:

a. State based or intra State tourism

b. Inter-State tourism with clearly identified multi State tourism circuits

c. Pan-regional tourism involving developing of linkages between the NER and other regions of the country particularly East India

d. International Tourism with connectivity from within the NER to neighbouring and other foreign countries. For instance efforts are underway to develop Sikkim as hub linking other Buddhist destinations in Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet Autonomous Region and Tawang area of Arunachal Pradesh to a Pan-regional Buddhist circuit. The Kolodyne multi-modal transport link between Mizoram and Sittwe port in Myanmar will further open up new opportunities for tourism between Northeast India and Myanmar. The existing Indo-Myanmar link through Moreh already draws fair number of domestic tourists however with improved infrastructure and promotion, it is said to have potentials of becoming a thriving tourist destination with possibility of Indian tourists being permitted to travel upto Mandalay in Myanmar. Furthermore, a request by the Government of Manipur for a bus service between Imphal and Mandalay is too under discussion between India and Myanmar. The Government of India has already declared the WW-II Stillwell road from Ledo in Upper Assam to Kunming in Yunnan

Province of China through North Myanmar as National Highway – 153 and talks are underway to revive the route with major strengthening of infrastructure it Pangsau Pass on Indo-Myanmar Border (M.D.O.N.E.R, 2006).

Various scholars including M.P Bezbaruah and Laldinkima Sailo and the Ministry of NER Development have argued that the " *increase in demand for eco-adventure, and cultural tourism, the development of a Buddhist circuit that encompasses locations across India, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and other Southeast Asian destination is one of the most promising sectors for the entire region. Within India, the World Bank is to provide funds for ASEAN member countries that have already been working on the development of Buddhist circuits within their own countries, on a bilateral basis and at the regional level, including taking it up with India*" (Sailo, 2013, pp. 2- 3) It is believed that a "*well-planned tourism industry that will usher in economic development, create jobs and provide additional source of revenues is particularly significant for Northeast India and Myanmar*"(Sailo, 2013, p. 3) In fact inflow of tourist to sites within Buddhist circuits are said to hold substantial opportunities in bringing the neighbours closer as they constitute a shared sacred geography that have enormous emotional and sentimental value.

Also Myanmar with the on-going changes remains a top priority in the success of India's new foreign policy of engaging with its distant and immediate eastern neighbours. The policy was designed taking the dimension of Northeast India into consideration. However this explains the need for proper synchronisation and synergy of developmental efforts between the countries. Moreover it also highlights the unavoidable role of Myanmar in the development of the land locked NER given Myanmar's geo-strategic position as India's land corridor to Southeast Asia, with India's Northeast as linkage.

Taking this view forward as a member of the BIMSTEC initiative [6] India has already identified infrastructure in the form of transport and communication as one of the priority sectors of BIMSTEC and initiated infrastructure development with proper coordination with Myanmar. Consequently, many infrastructure ventures between India and Myanmar have come up as integral part of the initiative. Under this initiative tourism is also one of the priority sectors of BIMSTEC where India is taking the lead to develop greater cooperation between India-Myanmar cooperation with India giving emphasis to its Northeast. Discussions with the objective to renew and rejuvenate the age-old cultural and historical ties between the peoples of Southeast Asia and Northeast India through Myanmar are already underway under the said initiative for enhancing the avenue for tourism led growth(Singh, 2010).

2.3 Challenges to Tourism Development

Available literature clearly points that the development of the tourism industry in Northeast region is failing to meet its expectations despite receiving care and the regions clear potentiality for generating development opportunities through tourism led growth has not been satisfactory. Major constraints in this context has been identified as (a) Lack of infrastructure, (b) Communication blockades, (c) Geographical remoteness, (d) Ethnic clashes leading to political instability, (e) Insurgency (f) Limited funds (g) Absence of leadership and entrepreneurship ability, (h) Indifferent attitude of the Government both at State and Central level (i) Flawed socio-economic and political set up (j) Absence of a proper tourism development policy of the Government (k) Limited co-operation and consciousness, of people (l) Unfriendly investment scenario (m) Absence of congenial atmosphere to attract the tourists, the presence of draconian AFSPA and many other factors (Das, 2013 p. 4).

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[6]The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an international organisation involving a group of countries in South Asia and South East Asia. These are: Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka,Thailand, Bhutan and Nepal.

With regard to the issue the MDONER identifies lack of basic infrastructure, inadequate community participation and private sector initiatives and investments, the restrictive PAP/RAP/ILP[7] regime and security concerns, as the main impediments. The other issues hampering development of tourism as per the ministry include the inability of some state governments to make land available, inadequate expertise to prepare project proposals, delay in implementation of projects etc.

2.4 Way Forward

From the above discussion it is quite evident that in recent years, concerted measures have been adopted to inject dynamism into the development process to enable the region to catch up with the rest of India. Therefore priority has been given to sectors like tourism having both comparative advantage and high linkages with other sectors. In this context various recommendations have been suggested like restrictions of movement within several North Eastern states for non-locals (including Indians) like the RAP, PAP and the ILP need to be reviewed to promote tourism (Duarah & Mili, 2013) . Other important recommendations include the need for restoration of peace and political stability in the region by initiating political dialogue with the various insurgent, development of required infrastructure of the region, creation and maintenance friendly atmosphere in the region for attracting reliable investments as well as tourists, the need for planned, planned interventions to improve the socio-economic and political set up of NE India, introduction of Charter Flights for NE specific package tours among others. "*Moreover, an honest and strong will of the government coupled with people's hearty co-operation will definitely boost up tourism industry in North-eastern Indian states in near future*" (Das, 2013 p. 6).

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[7] As per Wikipedia the non-Indian citizens require Protected Area Permit (PAP) to visit NER under the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order 1958. The Act also states that Restricted Area Permit (RAP) will be applicable for non-Indians to visit the same. For Indians residing outside NER an Inner Line Permit (ILP) is necessary to enter the region. See more at

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreigners_(Protected_Areas)_Order_1958_(India)

2.5 Tourism Development in Myanmar

The Myanmar Tourism Master Plan states that in Southeast Asia travel and tourism are one of the most dynamic and resilient economic undertakings. International arrivals to ASEAN countries during the last three decades achieved a historic high with increased an average 7.3% per year, rising from 21.8 million in 1992 to 89.5 million in 2012 (Taw, 2013, p. 4).According to the WTTC *"tourism industry currently contributes 11.1% to regional GDP ($255.1 billion) and sustains a total of 25.4 million jobs (8.8% of total employment) across a wide range of economic sectors. Taking into account it's direct, indirect, and induced impacts, travel and tourism contributed $47.7 billion to investment in Southeast Asia and $95.5 billion to exports in 2012, representing 7.3% of total investment and 6.2% of all exports." The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) forecasts 540 million international arrivals and 30% of global market share by 2030 for the wider Asia and the Pacific Region*" (Taw, 2013, p. 4). Although Myanmar received the second lowest share of arrivals in ASEAN during 2012 (1.2%), it is important to point out that annual growth was the highest in the region at 29.7% while together Thailand and Malaysia accounted for about 54% of total arrivals in 2012. For the first time in history, visitor arrivals increased by 29.7% between 2011 and 2012 and the country received over 1 million international visitors. Important drivers for such an enhanced growth has been identified as the rapid expansion of scheduled inbound flights, eased tourist visa-on-arrival privileges at gateway airports, improving business and investment conditions, and the growing demand for international travel among regional and long-haul markets. *"Although Myanmar possesses diverse and extensive cultural, natural, and historic assets, it has only begun to develop its enormous tourism potential*" (Taw, 2013, p. 1).

Myanmar with a rich cultural heritage, blessed with a unique environment; snow-capped mountains, beautiful lakes, long rivers, lush tropical forests, unspoilt beaches and archipelagos, is realizing the importance of the role of tourism and is committed to develop tourism as one of the major economic sectors for earning foreign exchange and has directed its efforts to achieve the goal. Giving priority to the

development of tourism, the country has been promoting *"tourism based on nature, history and cultural heritage as major themes, targeting a broad range of markets in Europe, Pacific Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Australia and the Americas"* and is also developing new tourist attractions while ensuring encouragement to both local and foreign entrepreneurs to participate in the newly emerging market oriented economy of Myanmar (Hausler et al., 2012, p. 8).

As the fastest growing tourist destination in South East Asia, the government realized that it risks potential unsustainable tourist growth, which can negatively impact its environment, culture and society. Therefore in its attempt to develop long term success of tourism led growth the Government of Myanmar introduced its Myanmar responsible tourism policy in 2012. Responsible Tourism is an approach to manage tourism in the country while aiming at maximizing economic, social and environment benefits and minimizing cost to destination. The policy aims to develop tourism sector as a national priority sector with broad local social and economic development, maintaining cultural diversity and authenticity while conserving and enhancing the environment. It also aims to strengthen institutional capacity to manage tourism in the country. The action plan includes integrated tourism planning (land use, zoning, resource planning), tourism investment process that includes development guidelines, integrate domestic tourism as an important part of tourism economy among others. The government has also attempted to promote economic growth and integration with other Asian economies. It strongly supports regional cooperation in tourism and participates in tourism-related initiatives of ASEAN, the GMS Economic Cooperation Program, the Ayeyarwady-Chao Phaya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy, and the BIMSTEC. On 1 June 2012 Myanmar re-joined the UNWTO and is also a member of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (Taw, 2013).

2.6 Conclusion: Identifying Gaps in Knowledge

From this literature review it is quite clear that there is much to be done in NER; tourism development has not been taken up in a planned manner with the required urgency. Therefore, Northeast India as a whole continues to need a big push to put the regional economy on the path of development. While the immense unexploited tourism potential of the Northeast has been broadly researched about there continues to exist gaps in knowledge to enable this potentiality see light of day.

Important gaps in this context are: despite obvious comparative advantages tourism has not played an effective role in the economic planning or in inspiring growth in the region because most planning pertaining to tourism in the region is seen to be carried out in an ad hoc manner as put by M.P. Bezbaruah. There is an essential need to draw up definite plans of action, charting out the future directions clearly, which requires professional and policy expertise, in addition to relying on studies that can help to chart out tasks at hand which is unavailable at the moment. Which is why to suggest such policy measures that can ensure utilization of its potentials, research needs to be conducted to identify existing and possible varieties of tourism that can be developed. Without such studies to clarify the kinds of tourist potentials available and the factors impeding its growth, it is futile to plan and implement grand tourism frameworks spanning the region, especially when the region also lacks a sufficient development base (infrastructure, schools, hospitals).There is a clear lack of studies investigating the kind of tourism that going to be most appealing to people to enable the sector develop its niche. Scholars like M.P Bezbaruah argue that regional co-operation in tourism has emerged as the new global trend. Hence developing institutional arrangements for regional tourism will result in regions complementing each other rather than competing and thereby enhancing the tourist appeals of the region. For successful marketing of the region from the tourism angle while exploring the option of integrating with neighbouring countries like Myanmar will require studies that have explored the tourism potentials of the concerned areas. Therefore, that identifies potential areas of collaboration, while suggesting suitable policy measures to leverage benefits arising out of each other's tourism industry is of immense desirability. Which is why exploring the existing and potential variety of

tourism, identifying obstacles and policies to rectify the ailing tourism industry is very necessary. Without such insights formulating appropriate tourism policy will not be possible. This research is also a response to the dearth of studies discussing the role of tourism in delivering broad and equitable social, economic, and environmental benefits in NER.

CHAPTER III

CAN TOURISM ANSWER THE DEVELOPMENT QUESTION

This chapter will discusses how tourism led development growth can be a primary hopeful to inject dynamism into the regions development processes as raised in the research question. However before embarking in this journey it is important to spell out what development really means here, what it is supposed to achieve and how ? Broadly speaking development is a process that encompasses the need and the means by which to provide better lives for people especially in poor areas, in this context NER of India.[8] By Development we are just not talking about achieving regions economic viability or self-sustainability but going beyond traditional notions of development and security to ensure human security i.e. 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear'. We are going to discuss *'tourism'* as a strategy to meet special development needs of NER and as a strategy to removal of major sources of *'unfreedom'* from human lives in the region. Expressed simply, we are referring to a regional tourism industry that *"takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, and the environment and host communities"* as put by the UNWTO[9] *("Sustainable Development Tourism,").* Developing such an understanding is very crucial for the region because NER for long has suffered from a journey of insecurity and underdevelopment. Therefore an alternate intervention connecting issues of development, security and regions potentiality is the need of the hour.

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[8] http://www.globalization101.org/introduction-what-is-development-2/

[9] http://sdt.unwto.org/content/about-us-5

3.1 The Development Background

The North East Indian region comprising its eight states is endowed with huge untapped natural resources which have broadly similar economic and geographical attributes while also possessing attributes unique to each state and sub region. That this region merits special policy measures has been well recognized in academic and policy and it is also an important aspect of my paper. Despite being gifted with vast natural resources in terms of forests, biological diversity, hydroelectric potential and minerals, the region has remained largely underdeveloped and its potentials unexplored. The region today is one of the most backward in India. Socio-economic conditions of the region reveal that it is yet to gain freedom from wants, hunger, unemployment and exploitation. NER is plagued with multiple issues of political instability, insurgent activities, ethnic clashes, frequent violation of human rights coupled with maladministration and corruptions. At the same time the socio economic life in the region suffers from prevalence of mass illiteracy, socio taboos, superstitious belief, usage of traditional methods of production etc. (Das, 2013). In terms of bases of development like infrastructure, connectivity, accessibility, investment and commerce the region has remained far behind when compared to rest of India. NER has been primarily sustaining on economic support and assistance received from the central government. This points to the fact that growth and development in India post economic reform period has not been uniform across its regions and subsequently is facing challenges of stark regional disparity. Parts of the country that are better endowed with infrastructure, connectivity, investment, governance and economic freedom are marching ahead garnering benefits of reforms, while laggard regions like the NER continue to remain volatile and marked by insecurity, economic stagnation and governance deficit (R. Bhattacharya, 2014).

Table 3 State wise Percentage Growth Rate of Per Capita NSDP in Northeast, in 2005-06- and 20011-12.

State	2005- 06	2011- 12
Arunachal Pradesh	0.56	1.91
Assam	1.59	7.24
Manipur	4.50	4.42
Meghalaya	6.46	8.38
Mizoram	4.72	NA
Nagaland	8.65	1.38
Sikkim	8.68	NA
Tripura	5.30	8.59

Source: GOI

Although every border area is argued to have its own problems and peculiarities since such areas are generally less accessible, making provisions of basic facilities more difficult and expensive. But the problems and peculiarities of NER are even more accentuated as 98 per cent of its boundary constitutes international borders. Therefore the state governments with international borders are often not only burdened with the heavier cost of providing basic facilities but also burdened with the broader national goal of securing its borders.(Gogoi, Goswami, & Borah, 2009, p. 1) Being surrounded by sensitive and volatile neighbours of South and South East Asia, NER in post-independence was primarily perceived within security paradigms. This has resulted in major negligence of its development and self-sustainability while its economic potentials (local, regional) were never exploited thoroughly. Consequently unresolved development issues of the region gave rise to issues of political sovereignty, sub- nationalism, governance deficit, armed insurgencies, political violence and gross developmental disparity between mainland India and NER (R. Bhattacharya, 2014, p. 63).

3.2 Moving From Security To Security through Development

However in today's global world, the process of globalization and enhanced forms of international cooperation has begun to present these border areas with a wide range of opportunities. And with the emerging signs of peace, the region is no longer only seen   as a distant security outpost but also as a potential bridge. As a result the policymakers and voices within the region are revisiting and critiquing the traditional security paradigm and increasingly attempting to reinterpret NER in the light of 'security through development'. 'Scholars and policy analyst like Rakhee Bhattacharya in their writings about development gaps and security sensitivity of NER have pointed out that *"While looking at the common factors of in domains of both notions of security and development in contemporary time one can see that that the notion of security emerged, evolved and now commonly understood as a state of being free from danger or injury and development as a term has become a continuous process for improving the living condition of human being and then to improve human freedom to choose. Therefore, both the terms share common denomination of improving the state of living of a human being, and are unachievable without the other"* (R. Bhattacharya, 2014, p. 63).

In her work on the same topic she cites Alagappa's view that 'security through development' needs to be a commonly accepted principle given the pan Asian scenario. Citing his work she argues that " *economic security is the key element in augmenting national power, prestige and influence, and as a prerequisite for development and sustenance of diplomatic and military power, as enabling governments to discharge their welfare function, as a critical resource for political and social stability and for enhancing national resilience… Thus human wellbeing has emerged as the prime concern of both development and security, and way back in 1994 UNDP's human development report rightly initiated the concept of human security and has attributed two major components to it, viz. freedom from war and Freedom from Want. Such interlink ages has eventually helped to widen the scope of the conventional meaning of both security and development"* (R. Bhattacharya, 2014, p. 65).

This change in outlook has compelled Indian policy makers to redesign their strategies to meet special development needs of NER interlinking purposes of security and development. As Amartya Sen has famously argued *"development is closely connected to the removal of major sources of 'unfreedom' from human lives, which roots to social deprivation and lack of human security"*(R. Bhattacharya, 2014, p. 64). Thus a model connecting issues of security and development is beginning to be seriously recognized to be a compelling need for NER.

3.3 Tourism the New Development Philosophy

It is not only the GOI that has identified tourism led infrastructure growth as a primary avenue to remove major sources of "unfreedom" from human lives in the region but head of states around the world especially from poor and developing countries (Laos, Thailand, Mexico, South Africa) proclaim the significance of this sector for its multiplying effect on development. The WB and ADB have also promoted tourism and claimed that a strategy promoting tourism can be seen as de facto "pro-poor" strategy. An ADB document that discusses "pro-poor tourism" states that, *"Tourism has several advantages over other productive sectors for pro-poor initiatives: (i) Customers (tourists) often come to the destination where the poor may be; (ii) Tourism is relatively labour intensive (and gender balanced); (iii) Often poor countries have few other suitable export products, and; (iv) Tourism can use assets that the poor often have access to - natural resources and cultural assets" (Guttal, Lahiri, & Pleumarom, 2012, p. 63).*

Furthermore, a recent UNWTO report in 2006 reveals that tourism as an export product has the unique quality of being consumed at the point of production, providing direct benefits to the local community and businesses, it therefore has a multiplier effect on other economic activities, providing jobs and incomes through the supply chain. In addition to being a labour intensive sector , infrastructure required by tourism—transport, communications, water supply and health services—also benefits local communities. For example in Indian states of Kerala and Rajasthan the impact of tourism on local level employment has been remarkable. In the former case it constitutes about 96 per cent of the total income of artisan households and in the

latter's case about 90 per cent comes from tourism related income.(Bezbaruah, 2005, p. 2). While the tourism economy not only in India but globally has shown promising results, nevertheless meaningful adoption of such a strategy for NER requires careful examination of regional needs and problems on one hand and clear understanding of how tourism growth as a strategy can help in resolving the development question and set the regional economies rolling.

3.3.1 The Means and End Relationship: Tourism and Regional Development Needs

Tourism can emerge as a solution for NER only if it can create needed backward and forward linkages and catalyize the regional development mental process to fill existing gaps. The following section will discuss how tourism as a means can be contributive towards important policy ends such as infrastructure building, job creation, economic and industrial growth presently lacking in the region.

Promote Balanced Regional Growth: Tourism development can hugely assist under-developed regions like NER to catch up with rest of the country as regions with a low economic base are believed to have high scenic beauty which if developed for the tourism industry can bring good economic returns to the regional economy with widespread ripple effects and shared benefits for large number of service providers (Reshmi, 2014). Moreover these benefits are more spread out and not concentrated majorly in urban areas like most industries. Hence this multi-sectoral industry can be an effective tool for fairer distributive justice for increasingly unequal India.

Reduce Infrastructure Deficit: On one hand tackling poor and limited infrastructure in NER has emerged as the biggest constrain because physical infrastructure like roads, air-ports, highways, power projects, water supply, urban infrastructure hold the key for growth of every region. However creating infrastructure alone cannot be sufficient for NER to realise its growth potential. Infrastructure often needs to be supplemented with the development of other growing sectors that harness resident skills and assets of the region for its sustainability. Therefore existing and new developed regional infrastructure should be advanced to establish new linkages with

major consumption centres and markets which can help in creation of sustainable sectoral value chains of related industries such as – Horticulture, Tourism, Textile in NER(Lavasa, 2014). On the other hand development of a tourism economy depends on infrastructure for providing accessibility and other logistics, as result any strategy to promote tourism invariably requires a plan for infrastructure development. It encourages the development of multiple-use infrastructure which not only benefits host communities but also the service providers. For example looking at the Ministry of Tourism's expenditure in NE one will find that more than 75% of allocated money has been invested in building tourist infrastructure, destination development and integrated circuit development (Guttal et al., 2012, p. 70).Therefore if tourism is promoted as a priority for regional and local development then the region will inevitably benefit from its significant focus on infrastructure.

Poverty Reduction and Employment Generation: According to MDONER all India rural poverty estimates have declined by 8 per cent between 2004-05 to 2009-10 but poverty rates during the same period have increased in states like Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. Unemployment rate per thousand persons in labour force in NER (2009-10) stands at 188 and merely 58 for all India. In reality unemployment and widespread poverty is one of the major causes for sustained insurgency in the region because unemployed youths continue to become easy target for recruitment for the insurgent outfits. Especially with an increasing youth population, the region urgently needs to diversify its development agenda and create multiple opportunities to unleash the energy of the youth human resource. Tourism is consumed at the point of production so it directly benefits the communities that provide for the sector. It is also known that it enables communities with a weak material base to use their culture, history and heritage as a comparative advantage to generate income. Being labour intensive it creates networks of different operations, (hotels, restaurants, adventure sports Providers, food suppliers) which enables tourist centres to form complex and varied supply chains of goods and services, and supports a versatile labour market with a variety of jobs (tour guides, translators, cooks, cleaners, drivers, and other service sector Workers). Jobs in this sector are also flexible and seasonal and can be pursued alongside existing occupations, such as

farming. In fact the U.N MDG report of 2010 identifies development of tourism as one of the methods for poorer countries to meet the MDG's especially for alleviating poverty. Therefore tourism can be viable alternative to create more jobs and generate more income which can also help in ending the feeling of frustration and insecurity amongst the youth (Honey & Gilpin, 2009, p. 2).

Lack of Other Viable Alternatives: There is more than one reason why tourism could be the best option for NER to extricate itself from economic underdevelopment. Firstly, the climate and terrain are not suited for huge manufacturing industry; agriculture and manufacturing are location specific unlike tourism which can be developed everywhere making it an ideal tool for decentralized regional development, moreover in absence of a sound industrial base and difficulties for profitable cultivation the region is hardly left with any other alternative (Bezbaruah, 2005, p. 1) Rightly so, the Meghalaya Tourism Policy (2001) clearly states that *"Inability of reforms in agricultural and industrial sectors to create an impact on the economy thereby forcing the government to revamp its development strategy focusing on tourism"*(Guttal et al., 2012, p. 71).

Enhance International Cooperation: Today like in many regions of the world, tourism is being aggressively promoted in Asia hoping to invite investment, creating employment and substantially bettering economic conditions of the locals. In this context it is useful to point out those international bodies are also trying to promote tourism through sub-regional cooperation which could immensely help NER and its neighbouring nations. For example against this background, the ADB's initiative to promote tourism through sub-regional cooperation could *"come as a shot in the arm for government's efforts to boost tourism in the NE* "especially because its long international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Burma and China, presents NER with the natural choice of promoting tourism through sub-regional cooperation.(Guttal et al., 2012, p. 71).

Promote Peace and Stability: The role of tourism in promoting peace and stability is often underestimated; however it can play a very potent role by providing jobs, generating income, diversifying the economy, protecting the environment and promoting cross-cultural awareness as already stated (Honey & Gilpin, 2009). Some might argue that it is rather simplistic to believe that development by itself can restore peace and stability, but it is also important to note that development is an important factor in dealing with complex problems of historical neglect, unequal regional growth pressing NER. While risks posed by the tourism industry which can cause potential conflict can be also contained through the sustainable tourism development which requires proper planning and implementation. However at regional level tourism industry has not yet majorly contributed to regional growth due to various reasons which will be discussed in later chapters. But field work conducted has presented the researcher with success stories, where tourism has been an effective model for development, by removing sources of social deprivation and lack of human security.

Example: Revival of Manas: Based on an interview with Partha Das, Tourism Advisor to Bodoland Terretorial Council and Operations Director for – The Great Indian Elephant Safari on 12th May 2015. Manas National Park in Assam is widely known for its wildlife and rich tribal culture of the host community. In 1985, Manas was designated a World Heritage site but unfortunately in '80s and '90s Manas witnessed instability, large scale destruction of infrastructure, poaching, militant activities because of deterioration in its political situation fuelled by issues of insecurity, neglect, poverty among others. The state of the park deteriorated to the extent that UNESCO in the year 1992 declared Manas as a World Heritage Site in danger. However seven years later Manas managed to reclaim its position in the prestigious list. Revival of Manas was based on the idea of incentivised conservation and using eco-tourism as an alternate livelihood model for the local community. With the help of local people, NGOs supported by Bodoland Territorial Council and Assam government the park was saved. Ex militants (who also happen to be poachers as well as being local community members) were guided and involved not only in the conservation or development of the park but were tasked with the revival of the park,

turning poachers into the saviours of the park. While the park has great scope for the development of ecotourism that remains to be explored, Manas nevertheless is an ideal example for the development of sustainable tourism that effectively revived the local situation and the economy as well.10

Example: Pobitora National Park, opportunities it presented. Based on a field visit on 18th May 2015. It was only in 2011 that this park with highest density of rhinos was developed and opened for tourists. But within years of its opening it has opened a wide range of opportunities for the local people living on its fringes. These communities inhabiting the region claim to hugely benefit from new employment avenues that the park offers, improved communication systems and multi-use infrastructure that was created for developing the park. They also add that opening of this park has revived interests of many in Mayong, also known as the Land of Black Magic, which now being is further developed by the ATDC as a potential tourist spot.

Thus the wide range of opportunities which tourism as a new development strategy presents NER can hardly be overlooked. However these opportunities will not automatically transform the NE society, it has to be carefully planned, developed and its potentials maximised while accounting for various sensitivities if successful models have to be adopted and replicated. This brings us to the next chapter that seeks to elaborate on identification of niche areas and understanding of how these potentials can be converted into future price points for developing an innovative tourism policy based on the regions comparative advantages.

10https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SV5Quw4VeLE

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8Lq1QIiKj0

CHAPTER IV

EXPLORING THE UNEXPLORED PROSPECTS

An attempt has been made in this chapter to show how NER has the necessary elements of natural and cultural resources that can possibly convert this region into a preferred tourist destination. For the purposes of this paper tourism potential of NER will be explored and identified at the state, regional and trans-regional level (Myanmar in particular). This chapter will extensively discuss possibilities at the first two levels to answer the first objective.

4.1 Understanding Potential

At the very outset it is very important to clarify what is being meant by 'potential' in the context of this paper. As defined by Glăvan V. *'tourism potential'* here refers to "*the sum of possibilities that the natural and social environment puts at disposal of tourism activities"*(Corneliu Iatu & Bulai, 2011, p. 65*).*Secondly, the clear understanding and identification of tourism potential of an area is a central concern that needs to be grappled with before an actual model development can be planned and put in place. Exploring tourism potential can primarily help us to identify opportunities for growth of tourism of an area. These include developing tourism businesses, enhancing the marketing and product development initiatives of government and is directly linked to natural resources such as scenic beauty that an area offers (Yahya, 2014). Initial studies focussed mostly on developing better understanding of the "existent" variety of tourism (in terms of supply and demand) but current day's researchers have widened their scope to the "possible" kinds of tourism that can be developed in an area (in terms of tourism resources or tourism potential). This shift in focus was needed in order to "*give the possibility to predict*

the appearance of tourism blossoms in an area or to envisage the further evolution of existent structures" (Corneliu Iatu & Bulai, 2011, p. 65). However one must note that is not an easy concept to define because *"tourism potential, like the industry itself, is quite subjective and open to personal preference"* (Yahya, 2014, p. 1).

4.2 Identifying Potential Thrust Areas

The NER is blessed with an abundance of tourist resources, some of them unique to the region. The one horned Rhino of Assam, Cherrapunjee, the wettest place on earth, classical dance of Manipur, the crafts of Tripura, the bamboo dance of Mizoram, the four century old monastery of Tawang and Khanchendzonga of Sikkim are few unique attractions that this region has to offer. Not to forget its people and their culture that is so distinct from the country and rest of the world. This region is ideal for holiday tourism, wild life enthusiasts, nature lovers, adventure tourists, botanists, anthropologists, sociologists, mountaineers, people interested in culture, art and crafts. Interestingly recreational demand of tourists has been changing over time and today traditional holidaying has transformed to what can be termed as "activity holidays". While visiting a new region tourist prefers to take part in different recreational activities or pursue their special interest and hobbies which is resulting in the growth of "special interest tourism" based on aspects of nature, history, culture, economic and professional activity, academic interest etc. of the region. (P. Bhattacharya, 2008).Undoubtedly NER has immense scope for interest based tourism and as one commentator puts it NER *"provides infinite product possibilities – anything under the sun if properly packaged and marketed – such as culture, heritage, nature, cruises, business, conventions, spirituality, adventure, sports, ethnicity and so forth"*(Bezbaruah, 2005, p. 1).

Given the diverse endowments of tourists' attractions, the region can develop its existing and potential variety of tourism into niche tourism or quality tourism. For example there is ample scope in the region to develop new tourism products like tea tourism, golf tourism, wild life/eco/adventure tourism, cultural/pilgrim tourism , rural tourism, river cruise tourism, medical tourism, defense tourism (World War II Trail / circuit, heritage tourism (Wartime cemeteries) among others.

Table 4 List of Potential Trust Areas That Can Be Promoted As Areas Niche Tourism

State	Area
Arunachal Pradesh– Mysterious Magical Mystical	Cultural Nature / Eco, Rural Tourism, Adventure, Wildlife & Forest, Leisure, Wellness, Buddhist Tourism
Assam –Home of the Brahmaputra	Nature/Wildlife, Historical, Tea, Golf, Eco, Cultural, Pilgrim, Adventure, Festivals Tourism
Manipur – Little Paradise	Nature/Eco, Culture, Medical, Shopping, Historical, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Convention and Exhibition), community International Border Tourism
Meghalaya- Many Hues of Nature	Nature, Health, Adventure/Sports, Rural/Legend, Cultural, Golf, Eco, Cave and MICE Tourism
Mizoram – Songbird of the North East	Cultural Tourism through integration at the International / Interstate Tri-Junctions, Defence, Water, Rural, Urban, Heritage, Festivals, Wildlife Circuit, International Border Circuit, River Circuit Tourism
Nagaland – Vibrant Traditions; the Land of Festivals	Eco-Tourism, Nature / Wildlife, Adventure Cultural / Heritage, Leisure, Festivals, International Border Tourism

Sikkim- Just Heaven	Nature & Trekking, Eco & Wilderness, Village/Rural & Home stay , Adventure, Wellness: Meditation, Yoga, Spa & Herbal medicine etc., Pilgrimage & Buddhist , Culture & Heritage, Conference (MICE destination), Tea, Snow Travel and Hydro, Flori-Tourism, Fairs-Festivals , Wedding/Honeymoon /Health Rejuvenation ,Heli , Cave Tourism
Tripura – Cultural Synthesis	Heritage, Nature/Wildlife, Adventure, Rural, Leisure, Pilgrimage, International Border Tourism

Source: Compiled from various sources

Table 5 List of Major Tourist Places in the Eight States

States	Major Tourist Places
Arunachal Pradesh	Tawang, Dirang, Bomdila, Tipi, Itanagar, Malinithan, Likabali, Pasighat, Along, Tezu, Miao, Roing, Daporijo, Namdapha, Bhismaknagar, ParashuramKund and Khonsa.
Assam	Kamakhya Temple, Umananda, Navagraha, Basisth Ashram, Dolgobinda, Gandhi Mandap, State Zoo, State Museum, Sukreswar Temple, etc. in Guwahati, Kaziranga National Park, Manas, Orang, Sibasagar, Tezpur, Bhalukpung, Hajo, Batadrava, etc.
Manipur	Imphal, Bishnupur, Loktak Lake, Sirori Hills, Keibul Lamjao National Park, etc.
Meghalaya	Shillong, Jowai, Cherrapunji, etc.
Mizoram	Aizawl, Champhai, Tamdil, Thenzawl etc.

Nagaland	Kohima, Dimapur, Khonoma, Dzukou valley, Dzulekie, Japfu Peak, Tseminyu, Longkhum, UngmaVeda Peak, Shilloi Lake MountTostu etc.
Sikkim	Gangtok, Bakhim, Yamthang, Dubdi, Dzongri, Varsey, Tashiding etc.
Tripura	Agartala, Old Agartala. Tripura Sundari Temple etc.

Source: Compiled from various sources

Table 6 List of Mega Destination and Circuits Identified In 2011- 12

State	Name of the Mega Year of No. Project/Circuits
Assam	Assam National Park Mega Circuit covering Manas, 2010-11 Identified. Orang, Nameri, Kaziranga, Jorhat, Sibsagar & Majouli
Manipur	INA Memorial 2010-11 1238.59 619.30 33. Integrated Mega Circuit Project - 2011-12 Identified Marging Polo Complex, Keina and Khongjom
Meghalaya	Umiam (Barapani) as Mega Destination
Sikkim	Gangtok Destination
Tripura	Mega Lake Circuit Including Mata Bari

Source: Ministry of Tourism

Table 7 State Wise National Parks and Wild Life Sanctuaries, 2001

State	No. of National Parks	No. of Sanctuaries
Arunachal Pradesh	2	11
Assam	5	15
Manipur	1	5
Meghalaya	2	3
Mizoram	2	5
Nagaland	1	3
Tripura	0	4
Sikkim	1	5

Source: India Stats

Only in the late 1990's after the relaxation of ILP/ PAP/RAP, NER saw first major signs of growth and development of its tourism sector. Since then the flow of tourist into the region has been steadily growing which has resulted in the demand for creation of new tourism products in the region. In this context certain kinds of tourism products that was found to have created major demand for itself in NER during field investigation are-

Eco Tourism- Has received much attention in recent years not only in terms of the demand generated by the tourists but also from the communities inhabiting the region. Ecotourism in simple terms means "*management of tourism and conservation of nature in a way so as to maintain a fine balance between the requirements of tourism and ecology on the one hand and needs of the local communities for jobs, new skills, income generating employment and a better status for women on the other*" (Reshmi, 2014, p. 78). A leading employment generating sector particularly in the remote and underdeveloped areas of India, ecotourism industry directly or indirectly employs around 3.8 per cent out of the total employment generation every year in the country. It is argued that most states of NER have unbelievable potentials that could be tapped

for conservation and preservation of nature while immensely benefitting the local communities. Recent initiatives to develop eco-tourism in NER are -

- Development of Tourist Circuit (Western Assam Circuit) Dhubari-Mahamaya-Barpeta-Hajo
- Development of Mechuka destination in Arunachal Pradesh
- Sikkim Biodiversity and Ecotourism Project developing collaboration between local organizations and communities for biodiversity, conservation and income generation(Reshmi, 2014, p. 111).

- **<u>Tea Tourism</u>** – Around 1000 lush green tea gardens in Assam are a treasure house of exotic beauty of nature with colourful people and their enchanting songs and dances, sprawling bungalows, and residential facilities. Some of them with polo fields, golf courses, air strips and helipads, rest houses and bungalows with modern facilities that are generally kept ready for guests have immense potential to be marketed as tourism packages. Also concept being recent, its potentiality, remains largely unexplored (S.D.R, 2002).

- **<u>Cultural Tourism-</u>** Products in this sector include visual and performing arts, crafts, traditional ceremonies and costumes, fairs and festivals, oral literature, life and lifestyle, dietary habit, etc. Speaking to the Manger of Jungle Travels one of the leading travel agency in NER reveals that the agency receives highest request during festivals such as the Horn Bill in Nagaland, Bihu in Assam, Anthuriumin in Mizoram among other request for tour packages. The agency also confirmed arranging specialised tours for tourists from Europe to explore ethnic life, the art of tattooing and tribal jewellery in the region. Another place of great importance to tourist is the world's largest river island Majuli in Assam, the hub of Assamese neo-Vaishnavite culture.

- **<u>Golf Tourism</u>** – States like Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur with their outstanding golf courses have huge potentials to attract ardent golfers not only from within the region or India but also from neighbouring countries. For example The Shillong Golf Course is one of the oldest 18-hole golf courses in

India, while there are about 10 golf courses located mostly within the compact areas of tea gardens in Assam that present further potentials to be integrated with eco and tea tourism (S.D.R, 2002).

- **<u>Adventure Tourism-</u>** The enchanting blue hills and speedy rivers of NER provide an enormous scope for the development of adventure tourism. Some of the adventure sports activities like Mountaineering, Trekking and camping, Rock climbing and Rappelling, Jeep Safaris, Cultural Tours, Village Home stay, Community Tourism, Bird watching, Angling, water skiing, White Water Rafting, Canoeing, kayaking, etc. all have tremendous conceivable opportunities if promoted by the respective tourism departments of all states. For example annual angling competition is held at Bhalukpung-Potasali (Assam) every year in November in which Indian and foreign tourists participate. While Sikkim presents the opportunity of trekking in the second highest peak of the world, Kanchenjunga, exploring the Rhododendron trek and beautiful land of orchid that is unmatched anywhere else in the world. But other areas of adventure tourism like hang gliding, para sailing and other forms are yet to grow in most states. It was also suggested by interviewees that private companies like Raheja, Tata and Mahindra Club Holiday should be encouraged to participate in NER especially in promoting adventure tourism.

- **<u>Buddhist Tourism</u>-** The South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation's concept of the Buddhist circuit promoted in India holds high relevance for NER. The concept goes beyond the traditional circuit of places where Lord Buddha lived, meditated, attained enlightenment and covers places of living Buddhist traditions like Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal (Tawang) that houses Buddhist art, culture and archaeology turning into an integrated Buddhist circuit concept (Bezbaruah, 2005). Ninong Ering Member of Parliament, from Arunachal further added that places like Namsai and Tawang can be of immense interest to Buddhist tourists if marketed well. The region also has other places of potential interests like Namphake, a hidden citadel of Tai-

Buddhist Culture in Assam which was also visited by Princess of Thailand Maha Chakri Sirindho in 2009. Other areas include fishing, birding and integrated river tourism among others. Also it is worth mentioning that Meghalaya housing Asia's cleanest village in Mauleen presents great opportunities for developing rural tourism.

Thus it is clear that NER being a late industrial starter is a virgin, a paradise unexplored so the government can decide what kinds of tourism it wants to opt for (Kumaran, 2008: 38) to optimally utilize its vast resources to benefit the people. However to extract the full potentiality of the region in tourism, it also needs to be discussed trans-nationally especially with Myanmar given its geo political location and pre-existing socio cultural linkages which will be discussed in the following chapter.
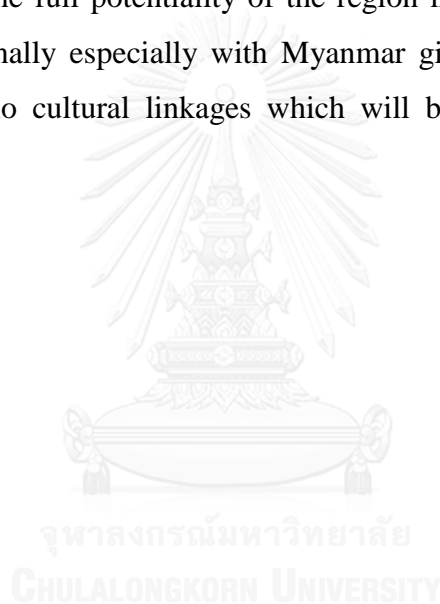
CHAPTER V

INDO-MYANMAR TOURISM – A NEW HORIZON

To address the second objective this chapter will primarily identify potential thrust areas between India and Myanmar to develop a niche tourism economy that can not only transform the regional economy and development of NER but also its neighbouring economy. Such a form of tourism will conceptually be based on the idea of *'cross boarder tourism'* that can be defined as the as *"activities of persons travelling across the broader to stay in places outside their usual environment for a reasonable period of time"*(Tobora, 2014, p. 1). As stated previously for full exploration of tourism potentiality of the region it needs to be discussed trans-nationally especially with Myanmar given its geo-political location and pre-existing socio cultural linkages and the vast untapped possibilities that can be a great attraction for tourists if developed trans-nationally.

5.1 The Need to Link Tourism Potential

Sharing a land border of 1,600 Kilometres and a long maritime boundary in Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea, for India Myanmar is the proverbial 'gateway to ASEAN' and meeting point of South Asia, East Asia and South-East Asia. However India's NER shares with Myanmar deep rooted historical, cultural, social and economic ties with Myanmar which do not stop at these international boundaries (Sharma, 2013). It is argued that the potential that exists out of these strong historical, cultural and ethnic links between the two countries while presently severely under-utilized in fact presents a wide range of opportunities that could immensely benefit both nations especially in its underdeveloped border areas. It is believed that Northeast is ideally placed to link India with ASEAN both in a geographical and

commercial sense with pre-existing cultural and historical linkages with the East that can be exploited to forge a greater economic cooperation.

For instance Indio-Burman historical connection goes back to the fifth century having imprints over the over realms of trade, commerce, religion, law, political philosophy and culture. India's influence has been felt in Burma since ancient times as both Hinduism and Buddhism came to Burma from India by the seventh century. "*Trade relationships between the two countries were also established from ancient times and Indian traders established permanent settlements along the coast of Burma. Politically too, the connection between India and Burma began well before the British conquest. The Arakanese Kings had close contact with India in the 14th century. After the British occupation, the two countries became a part of British Empire*" (Aung & Myint, 2001, p. 88).

If one looked at the cross border relations between the two countries one will realise that there are several ethnic communities that are divided between the two countries. These tribes are divided between the four states (Manipur, Mizoram, and Arunachal& Nagaland) of North Eastern India and the Chin and Kachin States and Sagaing region of Myanmar. Despite decades of division these tribes have been in contact with each other while official attitude to the links has changed according to the political situation of the countries. As a consequence these communities have enjoyed mutual dependence spanning over decades. There exists greater dependence in trade among these groups. Most Konyak and Tangkhul villages of Myanmar depend on the Indian side for supplies. It is also important to note that "*dependence on the Indian side has to be attributed firstly to the poor transport infrastructure. In the Sagaing Region India has built a road to the nearest village on the Myanmar side from some border outposts in Nagaland and Arunachal but there is no road connecting these villages to the rest of Myanmar*" (Fernandes, 2014, p. 14).

Other reasons for dependence on the Indian side arise due to lack of investment in the social sectors of education and health care on the part of Myanmar government. It is observed that while most Chin and Naga village areas have primary

schools, they do not have any provisions for middle or secondary school close by. So, most Chin families that can afford to send their children to India for education get them to cross the border '*illegally*'. Moreover, Indian state of Manipur also receives large number of Naga students from the other side of the border to study in colleges. However, interestingly despite being aware of it government of India does not openly oppose it (Fernandes, 2014) .

Government of India has been constantly looking for opportunities that exist for synergy between Myanmar and other Southeast Asian countries, on one side and Northeast India, on the other. Hence as stated earlier sharing a long international border and with pre-existing historical connections promoting tourism through sub-regional cooperation with Burma emerges as a natural choice for NER to instil vitality into the regional economy. Moreover cooperation with Myanmar Government will not only boost tourism but also has the added advantage of constituting a positive step to remedy several interlinked issues facing the region such as-

- **Success of Look East Policy-** Myanmar is a top priority in the success of India's new foreign policy of engaging with its distant and immediate eastern neighbours. The policy was designed taking Northeast India into consideration and the unavoidable role of the neighbouring nation in the development of the land locked NER given its geo-strategic position as India's land corridor and bridge to Southeast Asia. The important thing to note here is that tourist flow should anyway characterize relations between neighbouring nations by contributing to dynamism and mutually beneficial ties. What needs additional emphasis in this case study is to examine specifically as to how India's look east policy can work to enhance this flow.

- **Access to Market-** Economic integration with Myanmar will help the region to overcome the problems of distance from markets because undeniably the "*region's difficulties as a result of the loss of connectivity and market access following the partition of 1947*"(Baruah, 2005 p. 1). Northeast has also suffered from the disadvantage in attracting foreign tourists, particularly from

the West because of being situated far away from the main entry points of tourists in India located in the far away metro cities such as Mumbai and Delhi (Bezbaruah, 2005, p. 3). However this can be rectified and the flow of tourists can be easily enhanced if NER links its tourism plans with Myanmar and develops cooperation mechanisms. This takes added significance in the light of recent trends whereby Myanmar has emerged as the fastest growing tourist destination in South East Asia. Interestingly while interviewing foreign tourists in Guwahati airport as part of my filed work, it emerged that the possibility of going to Myanmar from NER and vice-versa was received with great enthusiasm. Respondents were quick to point out that it will not only make the travel shorter, hassle free and most importantly reduce the present cost of transit immensely.

- **Development of Border Areas-** The border areas of NER have remained particularly backward in economic terms. Their remoteness and distance from mainland India have been significant in resulting in the present state of affairs marked as it is by underdeveloped infrastructure and non-viability of present economic activities. However exploring tourism with neighbouring Burma can be headway because these areas are extremely rich in terms of their natural and wildlife resources. Tourism can unleash a chain of benefits like employment, attract investments, conservation, infrastructure growth, efficient communication networks; develop human resource capacities of the local people and also facilitate social and cultural interactions between the divided communities living across borders.

- **Other-** Promotion of tourism is also a logical corollary to benefit from the numerous on-going transnational infrastructure connectivity projects. For example if the if the Trans Asian highway and railway projects are properly planned and integrated with tourism potentials it has the potentials of completely changing the present scale of return from tourism. It can also foster international goodwill, appreciation and awareness between countries. While

increased cooperation, mutual benefits and investments in erstwhile Burma can help India to contain Chinas influence in the region. Moreover a successful model of cross border tourism will help not only profit trade relations but also improve security and border management.

5.2 Spotting Potential Areas for Tourism Collaboration

It is clear from the previous section that both regions are blessed with similar comparative advantages in tourism in terms of natural resources and beauty. Besides noting the commitment showed by the Government of Myanmar to develop tourism in Myanmar as one of the major sectors of the domestic economy, it is pertinent to point out that one of the strategies adopted by Myanmar government is to target possible cooperation and markets in South Asia which clearly highlights opportunities for large benefits that exist for deepening collaboration in the area of tourism for GOI. India's look east policy in turn provides the added support for state governments in NE to explore tourism prospects and policy framework with the neighbouring nation within the broader scheme of the policy.

In fact the process of identifying possible areas for cooperation in the area of tourism industry has begun. For example a 12 member delegation from Myanmar visited the NER between the 30th November to 7th December, 2014 with the objective of boosting inter-regional cooperation in Tourism, Education, and Transportation & Culture. The recent visit is also seen as a yet another milestone in furthering relations between the bordering states of India and Myanmar by the 12 member delegation who noted that the visit and positives achieved by it will go a long way in providing impetus to the further expansion and deepening of India-Myanmar relations and opening new avenues thereby ushering peace and co-prosperity to the entire region ("Myanmar Delegation Visit to North East India," 2015). On the other hand an Indian Chamber of Commerce delegation in March, 2012 held successful business meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Transportation, Hotels and Tourism, Construction, Commerce, Health and National Planning and Economic Development in Myanmar. In relation to tourism ways to encourage more

tourist exchanges between two countries and importance of tourism infrastructure development was discussed ("ICC delegation explores Myanmar," 2012).

Table 8 List of Probable Niche Tourism Products That Can Be Developed Between NER and Myanmar

Variety	Location
Medical tourism	Manipur today has the requisite medical expertise, equipment's and professionals to fulfil these criteria. Immediate demand for medical tourism has been seen not only can from neighbouring states but also from neighbouring countries with underdeveloped facilities like Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam.
Defence Circuit	World War II Trial / Circuit – Myanmar to Manipur, Kohima and some parts of Assam
International Border Circuit:	Myanmar border circuit with Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram
River Tourism	Phokhungri / Zungki& Chindwin Rivers / Shilloi Lake (Myanmar border) Region, International Collaborative Project. Zokhawthar / Tiau River / Rihdil Lake (Myanmar border) Region, a site for International Collaborative Project:
Wildlife/ Eco/Nature / Adventure Tourism	Mt. Saramati International Biosphere Reserve (including Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary) and a Centre for Ecology, Adventure & Culture, at Thanamir/Fakim in South Tuensang district on Myanmar border, an Eco-tourism Project.

Cultural Tourism through integration at the International / Interstate Tri-junction.	The locations identified are as under: Junction of Manipur, Myanmar and Nagaland, Junction of Arunachal Pradesh, Myanmar, Nagaland, Junction of Mizoram, Bangladesh and Myanmar, Junction of Manipur, Mizoram and Myanmar
Market/shopping	International Trade centres at Pangsha in Tuensang district, Longwai in Mon district and Awankhu in Phek district (Nagaland) and Moreh in Manipur
Birding	Chin Hills bordering Manipur

Figure 2 Proposed International Tourist Circuits
Source: Tata Consultancy Service, 2014.

These lists of possibilities present India with not only the opportunity to extend its cooperation to strengthen closer relations not only bilaterally but also regionally to reap benefits from Myanmar's tourism policy in developing the mentioned sectors. Therefore there is also a need for India to adopt practices which can accelerate the growth of the sector to leverage benefits from the rapidly growing tourist economy of Myanmar.

It is also suggested that policy makers should also prioritise certain niche sectors of tourism based on nature with Myanmar considering the tremendous potential that exists in both sides of the border. Certain specific areas identified for prospective collaborations by state governments are

i) Phokhungri / Zungki& Chindwin Rivers / Shilloi Lake (Myanmar border) Region, could be developed as the first the International Collaborative Project in Nagaland. The region is blessed with brimming potentials for rural, eco, ethnic, and river tourism. Furthermore the location is already very popular among locals with very cordial and transparent relationship and people from both sides often intermingle. It could also be suggested to plan an International Border Trade Centre as pointed by the state tourism board ("20 Years Perspective Plan for the Sustainable Development of Tourism in the State of Nagaland," 2003).

ii) Mt. Saramati International Biosphere Reserve (including Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary) and a Centre for Ecology, Adventure & Culture, at Thanamir / Fakim in South Tuensang district on Myanmar border, an Eco-tourism Project: This project will have spill over development offshoots like effective communication link between Nagaland and Myanmar and also provides further collaborative tourism opportunities and international circuits for Nagaland and Myanmar. Another probability is to introduce navigational service to take tourists up to the Myanmar border or to the confluence of Zungki and Chindwin rivers as suggest by the state government ("20 Years Perspective Plan for the Sustainable Development of Tourism in the State of Nagaland," 2003)

iii) A similar project that needs to be developed is the Zokhawthar / Tiau River / Rihdil Lake (Myanmar border) Region, as a site for International Collaborative Project.

Most border areas being blessed with vast biodiversity presents opportunities for wildlife conservation and research programme which could also provide interesting opportunities for ecologists and wildlife researcher's especially for prospective areas like Dzukou Valley, Nagaland, Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary. As major focus is on nature based tourism government should be aware to balance conservation efforts with economic development of local communities within or on the periphery of a protected area("20 Years Perspective Plan for the Sustainable Development of Tourism in the State of Nagaland," 2003).

Government of India should intensify its effort to develop International trade centres at Myanmar border as identified by the respective state governments as it may open large avenue for trade for trade and tourism. For instance, Pangsha in Tuensang district, Longwaiin Mon district and Awankhu in Phek district in Nagaland. While Cultural Tourism through integration at the International / Interstate Tri-junction along Junction of Manipur, Myanmar and Nagaland, Junction of Arunachal Pradesh, Myanmar and Nagaland or between Myanmar and Arunachal Pradesh should be taken up without any further delay. Interacting with foreign tourists in the region also revealed the potentials for developing facilities for cross country running/cycling and off road car rallies. It is also believed that Buddhist circuit tourism holds significant opportunities for Myanmar and in bringing its neighbours together.

All these listed opportunities will require India to create policy convergences with Myanmar's tourism policies to build on these potentials. For example Myanmar's Responsible Tourism states its objectives as achieving four principles outcomes of sustainable development, economic growth, environmental sustainability and social justice (Hausler et al., 2012, p. 4). This can be adopted by NER as it clearly relates to the needs of the region and the dimension of social justice makes it even more versatile. Myanmar's policy is also supposed to follow the approach of

focussing on the responsibilities specific role players (Hausler et al., 2012, p. 4). This presents another opportunity for India to frame a new role for itself in Myanmar's policy based cross border tourism to help in developing border areas of both countries. In short these examples show how India can potentially tailor its potential policies for NER to create more areas of converges.

Thus one can see given the wide range of options available for future collaborations the region should be marketed from the tourism angle while integrating with its transnational neighbour. This form of tourism led growth can bring revolutionary transformation not only to the regional economy but also to its neighbouring economy. The next chapter scrutinises the serious factors presently impeding NER on one hand and both countries on the other to take full advantage of the vast shared untapped potentials.
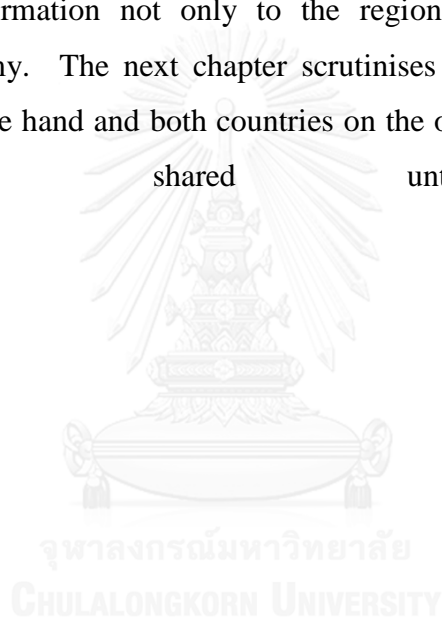
CHAPTER VI

ISSUES OF CONCERN

Listing of potentials is an important activity that one should engage in before a road map is prepared. However the next important task to ensure that these listed potentials are actually transformed into real returns will critically depend on the ability to build a framework which takes into account important parameters and concerns that could possibly hinder the desired results. Which brings us to the crucial need and importance of identifying likely blockades in the journey of tourism led growth as a strategy to achieve regional and local development of NER. Therefore an attempt has been made here to address the factors why NER is failing to meet its expectations despite receiving special care and the regions clear potentiality for generating development opportunities through tourism led growth.

6.1 The Need to Discuss Problems

In the previous section of literature review some common problems ailing the industry have already been pointed out. However it is important to point out that in some cases while the issues may not have been solved completely but the scale or the severity risk posed by the issue could have changed as a result of the constant flux of change the region is undergoing in the most recent years. Secondly, problems are also dynamic and often change forms. Thirdly, if tourism is taken up at the scale discussed to optimally utilize its potentials new obstacles will emerge which require fresh analysis. Lastly, to indulge in speculation of problems will also benefit in accounting for potential areas of risk notably because the region continues to require serious scrutiny of issues because of its poor development status and fragile environment.

This means there is a need for sustainable and responsible tourism policy that is able to cater to context specific and changing needs of the region.

For example the region for long has been mainly known to be hit by insurgency. However as mentioned earlier the region after long has been witnessing first signs of peace and stability which has infused optimism and hope amongst many sections of society. Mr. Sanjay Aditya Singh, CEO of a leading hospitality institute in an interview during filed stay pointed out there is no set/uniform pace or intensity of insurgent violence in the region, it is dynamic and volatile. While there are pockets of insecurity in NER it necessarily does not impact all existing or prospective tourist areas. Further, he was quick to point out that no tourist has been specifically targeted by insurgents in NER. Also the coming of 3 to 5 chains of five stars hotel projects in Assam and on-going talks for the other states reveals commercial faith and confidence that investors have on the state to provide security and are not discouraged to invest in potential areas of profit. While speaking to Colonel Newton, PRO for Defence Ministry researcher is reminded of the fact that one cannot discount the issue of security in NER but with present government's transparency in bringing peace to NE and one of them being through tourism there are positive signs. In this context it has been observed that in recent years GOI have cleared development projects worth more than 20,000 crores to upgrade the region.

A second example that could help us understand the changing and dispersed nature of problems facing the tourist economy is observed in the interactions with Mr.Partha Das, while discussing the issues faced in the development of the Manas Maozingendri Ecotourism Society- a community based initiative. He declares that though the number of tourists is increasing every year the initiative today is lacking a common platform to market and network with various stakeholders. At the same time the security perception continues to hit the eco-tourism society hard. Here one can gage the relevance of the argument made by political scientist Sanjib Barua when he argued that viewing Northeast through   prism of security by policy makers is one of the major factors inhibiting serious investment of resources (political, intellectual and material) (Baruah, 2005 p. 3) .However it is not to say that old problems do not hold

any relevance. In fact already identified issues like that of the restrictive PAP/RAP/ILP regime or the draconian law of AFSPA continues to need policy reassessment.

6.2 An Inquiry of Problems

Despite having a long history of hosting both international and domestic tourists the regional tourism is still of recent origin. It merely accounts for 0.9% and 0.2% of the domestic and foreign tourist arrivals respectively of the country. One could raise pertinent questions about the poor performance of tourism like why has the region failed to advantage of its regional, national and international linkages developed so far in the tourism front? (P. Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 144) Some factors that urgently need to be taken up in the planning and managing of a tourist economy in NER are as follows-

- **Absence of a Combined Tourism Policy** – The region lacks a combined a broad statement of intent and principles. The present tourism policy across the eight states is extremely varied in scope and their level of detailing. It is also said that tourism planners of the NER have overlooked the decisive issue of a combined policy and visualized the industry in such a way that it emerges and performs not only for the region but also the concerned destinations in an isolated manner, not realizing local socio-economic, cultural, institutional and environmental context (P. Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 144).

- **Excessive Reliance on *"Tourist Circuits Specific"* Promotion** – The government both at the state and central level have promoted tourism infrastructure but generally concentrated in pockets of the region which were being explored and campaigned under conventional 'circuit specific strategy' of tourism planning. Such strategies reduced the possible 'spin-off effect' of tourism development in lesser known potential pockets, which were not a part of the projected 'tourist circuits specific' promotion. For example until recently tourism development was confined to Guwahati-Kaziranga- Shillong circuits, as a result of which development possibilities of Mayang-Pabitara area were minimized (P. Bhattacharya, 2008, pp. 155-156).

- **Inefficient Management of Tourism Sector:** The current practice of casually fixing strategies without clear goals, priorities and an authentic time bound action plan has not only adversely affected the industry but also discouraged private sector from investing. On the other hand the lack of proper orientation and management techniques has led to increasing disparity between income and expenditure of the tourism administration at local and regional government level. For example the annual expenditure of the tourism department in Assam is about eight times more than revenue it earns (P. Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 159).

- **Absence of Tourist Guides-** The region virtually does not have any trained guides placed in important places of tourist attraction. While programmes to train tourist guides like in Assam failed to good result because of poor remunerations (S.D.R, 2002, p. 2010).

- **Non completion of Infrastructure Projects -** There is tremendous infrastructure deficit in the region while GOI has invested in infrastructure projects its timely completion has never been achieved. On-going national and transnational road, railway and maritime projects or the up- gradation of urban and border infrastructure are important requirements but reeling under untimely progress. While the already operational transnational connectivity projects have seen delay but they are expected to reach completion in near future which will largely increase the flow of people coming into the region. For instance Indian External Affairs Minister last year assured that two major connectivity projects—Kaladan Multi-modal Transit and India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway—linking India with Myanmar and further to Southeast Asia are likely to be completed by 2016 (Roche, 2014).But the region at present has not devised a plan how to meet the challenges of increased flow of people nor tried to link and promote its combined tourism vision with Myanmar to benefit from the large scale movement. Whereas the NE states should have evolved effective plans for co-ordination and cooperation to pursue joint development of tourism potentials.

- **<u>Other Important</u>-** Issues that were identified while speaking to relevant stakeholders were- the region's taxi system being in chaos, lack of an interactive transport system with no linkages between bus- rail and taxi services, there is no coordination between the states and the festivals they hold as a result no calendar has been prepared listing all the fairs and festivals, increasing pollution levels in river fronts of Assam, regional tours often cannot maintain a high standard because coordinating travel within these states becomes extremely taxing for tourists as an after effect of bad roads and lack of road side amenities. Officials at ATDC state that the department suffers from institutional incapacity to coordinate regional planning while frequent transfer of officials affects follow up procedures. Interestingly, R.S. Kalita, owner of Indo- Myanmar Hotel in Guwahati lamented the fewer number of trade fairs and cultural events being hosted in region in collaboration with other South East Asian governments like in the past which has resulted in lesser number of tourists coming from neighbouring nations.

While the industry's growth in Burma has been hampered by problems such as a 'lack of quality hotels and guesthouses, high room rates, poor transport and communications infrastructure and an underdeveloped domestic air industry with a poor safety record' (Kyaw, 2015).On the other both neighbouring nations despite longstanding and consistent cooperation have not been able to realise the full potential of their relationship to develop economic sectors like tourism due to various factors like the differences in their political system, illegal trade, smuggling of drugs and narcotics, connectivity bottlenecks, trafficking in arms and humans, ethnic conflicts at the border areas among others. However issues of illegality in border trade has been argued to be essentially arising out of the failure to bring much of the existing exchanges into the legal fold which has resulted in implications like the influx of cheap manufactured goods (Levesque & Rehman, 2008). Field work also reveals that presently both the regions are also lacking trained manpower in managerial, personal and technical levels to participate in the hospitality sector.

6.3 Changing Times

Despite all the difficulties and challenges facing the tourism sector in the region and its coordination with Myanmar, one can see things are gradually improving and if the sector is provided with the right momentum and direction it can bring revolutionary changes. For instance *"India-Myanmar relations too have gathered momentum after the Myanmar general elections in 2010 and more so after the landslide victory of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in the by-elections of April 2012"* (*India's Engagement with Bangladesh and Myanmar*, 2014, p. 1) .

This was followed by the announcement of new initiatives and signing of 12 MoUs with Myanmar by Prime Minister of India Dr.Manmohan Singh during his visit in 2012 (*India – Myanmar Relations* 2012, p. 1). Most recently Prime Minister Narendra Modis visit to Myanmar has been also seen as a big positive step towards Indo – Myanmar investment opportunities as the Indian Prime Minister focussed on improving connectivity between what they called "brother countries" to enhance trade and commerce, tourism, people-to-people contacts as these interactions heavily depend on improved and easy connectivity. While another milestone was reached when a 12 member delegation from Myanmar visited the NER between the 30th November to 7th December, 2014 with the objective of boosting inter-regional cooperation in Tourism, Education, and Transportation & Culture. Following up on the many recent diplomatic visits, both neighbouring nations have a historic opportunity to come close to each other once again, transform their bilateral relations and develop its true potentiality. Myanmar with a special place in India's foreign policy along with its rich natural resources and vast potentiality in tourism can help transform NER's tourism sector and economies of both neighbouring nations("Myanmar Delegation Visit to North East India," 2015, p. 2).

Within the region there are also many encouraging stories indictors like the eight states of NER registering a growth of 28 per cent in foreign tourist visits in 2013 compared to a 12 per cent increase in 2012 (Chitravanshi, 2014).

NUMBER OF FOREIGN TOURIST VISITS (FTVS) TO NE STATES*

State/UT	2011 FTVs	2012 FTVs	2013 FTVs	Growth Rate 12/11	Growth Rate 13/12
Arunachal Pradesh	4,753	5,135	10,846	8	111.2
Assam	16,400	17,543	17,638	7	0.5
Manipur	578	749	1,908	29.6	154.7
Meghalaya	4,803	5,313	6,773	10.6	27.5
Mizoram	658	744	800	13.1	7.5
Nagaland	2,080	2,489	3,304	19.7	32.7
Sikkim	23,602	26,489	31,698	12.2	19.7
Tripura	6,046	7,840	11,853	29.7	51.2
Total of NE States	**58,920**	**66,302**	**84,820**	**12.5**	**27.9**

*Source: State/ Union Territory Tourism Departments.

Figure 3 Increase in number of foreign tourist coming to NER
Source: Ministry of Tourism

Manipur has seen a refreshing effort to enhance peoples participation in the state's tourism plans and formed the Manipur Tourism Forum, where dedicated people from without walks of life like doctors, lawyer, academicians, tourism experts have joined hands to form the forum. Booming of tourism and the development ushered in Sikkim makes the state an example to follow. The state has been not only been able to professionally mange the sector but also been able to adopt correct practices to restrain from degenerating into "mass tourism"(S.D.R, 2002, p. 216).

It has been widely acknowledged that tourism sector if properly managed and planned has immense backward and forward linkages in terms of both income and employment avenues that can significantly contributing to reduce poverty regionally. However this is dependent on a sound tourism policy that can not only provide a road map but also be able to cushion the region from potential risks because an unsustainable tourist growth can negatively impact the environment, culture and society. Therefore required attention must be paid to proper planning and formulation of policies to contain risks posed by the tourism industry for the sustainable tourism development which will be discussed in the upcoming chapter.

CHAPTER VII

WAY FORWARD- POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is a part of the last objective that seeks to provide a way forward by suggesting recommendations to help in formulating suitable tourism policies for the region.By listing of policy recommendations an attempt has been made to explore the policy potentials of appropriate strategies to not only reverse the tourism scenario but also to suggest relevant policy measures that can help the region to overcome its present development challenges as discussed in previous chapters.

7.1 Importance of Policy

At its most basic, a policy is *"a course or principle of action, adopted or proposed by a government, party, business or individual"* as defined by the Oxford Dictionary. Politically speaking policy includes basic principles by which a government is guided. Without digressing much policy in the managerial context similarly refers to a set of basic principles and associated guidelines, formulated and enforced by the governing body of an organization, to direct and limit its actions in pursuit of long-term and short term goals.[11] However one might ponder about the reasons for attaching importance to policy and its potentials in the context of developing a tourism industry. Generally speaking the knowledge of policy is important for developing sound understanding of shaping policy decisions and its impact, to provide required data to chart out solutions to a problem or to familiarise oneself with the interests and values involved in policy and planning processes. While

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[11] http://www.volunteer.vic.gov.au/manage-your-volunteers/policies-and-procedures/whats-the-difference-between-policies-and-procedures

specifically relating to tourism importance of studying policy emerges because of its practical (visas, currency restrictions) and theoretical importance (Scott, 2011, p. 3).

The study of policy and its potentials in the context of this research pertaining to the development of a vibrant tourism sector in NER has been underlined by the idea that correction of existing policies and formulation of new well suited policies can possibly help the ailing tourism industry to immensely benefit from its underutilized tourism potentials. This can be clearly highlighted by the following example where if one looks at the tourism potentials of both Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, one may not find a wide gap in terms of their natural beauty. But if we look at their state of present tourism, Sikkim is way ahead of Arunachal not only in utilizing its tourism potentials but also in securing varying developmental and infrastructure needs. Sikkim was not only named top region to visit in 2014 but Lonely Planet also "*recognized the sustainable community-based tourism model that Sikkim has successfully developed in less-developed areas of the state*"(Mazumdar, 2013). This is attributive to the state's ability to adopt right policies and professional management of the sector.

7.2 Present State of Policy Planning and Management

The poor state of affairs is reflective of the fact that tourism planning and management in the region has been carried out in an extremely ad hoc manner. The government approach is often seen to be without any definite plans of action or charting out any future directions clearly. Overall states lack pragmatism in their tourism policies and many a time fails to clearly define an implementable action plan. Most importantly tourism is a multi-dimensional activity, which requires working in close coordination with many other agencies for its success which has been never achieved in these states whether locally, regionally or trans-nationally (Bezbaruah, 2005, p. 6).The state departments do not coordinate processes of development and its operation which frequently results in failure of tourism projects to sustain itself in various local socio-economic contexts and contribute purposefully in the areas wished. It has also been argued that the lack of experience in planning, developing and managing this sector can be held responsible for its reluctant pace of growth. As a

consequence of which efforts for promotion have often been misdirect and resulted in wastage of resources (P. Bhattacharya, 2008).

7.3 Policy Requisites

An effective set of policies that would meaningfully transform tourism potentials of NER and be an answer for local economic and human development will first have to address the already discussed constraints and bottlenecks in addition to amending the current weaknesses in policies. This requires immediate recognition on the part of important stakeholder (Policy makers, local tourism promoters, managers) that tourism development should be based and organized on a developmental perspective rather than the present attraction centric approach (P. Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 160). What is being encapsulated here by the term tourist attraction is the common-sensical yet hugely problematic approach to tourism that the government so far has shown. For instance what is often seen in the government bureaucracy responsible for tourism is that tourism is reduced to the idea of merely showcasing 'famous' sites of attraction to outsiders. Reducing tourism to mere showcasing fails to take into account the economic, social and developmental perspective on tourism. Given this the restricted understanding of tourism its potentials as a development strategy has remained highly unexplored. The policy will also have to clearly respond to questions like what will be the vision of such a tourism policy. The tourism vision should have the objective to create an exclusive brand of tourism for NE whose prospects will not only make NE a Gateway to the East but also generate development. The principles that should form the core of the policy should recognize ideas of sustainability and people's participation. This necessitates the need to create awareness about both the concepts while giving due priority to the ideas in socio-economic development planning of the region. Another aspect would be to identify inspirational models for example whether Sikkim as the most successful case be the guiding light for the rest of northeast to able to maximize its tourism potentials.

Perhaps NER could also learn from Myanmar how to register similar fast growth despite struggling with similar issues of security, human rights violation and lack of infrastructure. The policy has to resonate with fact that probable impacts of

tourism will need to be addressed. Tourism being an amalgam many sectors is more vulnerable to numerous factors that can have a direct impact on the industry. This requires all stakeholders to be aware of risks and impacts of a tourist economy which often has and can have economic, social, environmental and political dimensions to it. This will enable effective formulation and adaptability of policies to changing situations. The policy should identify the organizational pattern to implement the policy and a system of monitoring and accountability. Secondly institutional arrangements should be introduced to maximize coordination among departments (Medhi, p. 2) .There is hardly any doubt that to benefit from prospects of tourism regionally there is a need for an integrated approach to tourism in the region to be led by regional bodies like the North-eastern Council. However this requires consensus on the framework of the minimum requirements of what a combined tourism policy should include. It is argued that regional co-operation by adopting an integrated NE perspective for tourism planning will make the region attractive and cost effective which enhances the tourist appeal of the region by complementing each other rather than competing with each other. Policy analyst like M.P Bezbaruah has also argued that regional co-operation in tourism has emerged as the new global trend. Hence developing institutional arrangements for regional tourism will result in regions complementing each other rather than competing, enhancing the tourist appeals of the region. The regional tourism policy should also be compatible with international standards recognize therefore the five key challenges of managing dynamic growth, climate change, poverty alleviation, support for conservation from tourism spending and concerns about health, safety and security of travellers as identified by WTO and UNEP for sustainable tourism should be taken into consideration (Reshmi, 2014, p. 79). But most importantly -"*A tourism policy would remain on the wish list of the tourism department alone unless it reflects total government commitment*"(Bezbaruah, 2005, pp. 1-3).

7.4 Policy Recommendations

1. To ensure that tourism ventures can sustain, encourage community participation and effectively contribute in varying local contexts, government will have to critically judge the local tourism products prior to their marketing. Government policy should help the local communities to realise where their comparative advantage lies (culture, eco, rural) and built the development strategy around it. Focus should be to keep the host community at the centre of their development strategy because community based tourism is often more sustainable. This mainly because it will ensure local ownership of projects and keep profits in house. Moreover Community-based tourism projects helps to provide the type of authentic experience that most tourists want to experience (Honey & Gilpin, 2009, p. 1). It can also be suggested that the government employs existing participatory and incentive based models for budgeting and revenue sharing, as adopted in the other Indian states of Rajasthan, Kerala among others promoting community based tourism.

2. A study should be immediately commissioned with objective to better understand   the expectation and demand of tourists to develop the regional tourism industry as per the present international and national demands. The government also encourage statistics and research for   generating a tourism database, conducting periodic studies on product status and consumer behaviour should also become a periodic practice (P. Bhattacharya, 2008, p. 159) .

3. The global tourism trade is a highly competitive area, this underlines the need for a very creative marketing strategy for the prompting the tourist industry to communicate what sets them apart from other potential destinations and focus on marketing these distinctive qualities. Moreover Tourism promotion should be a collective responsibility, wherein all stakeholders play varying roles. Presently joint promotions are not organised which can be seen as factor for its infectivity.

4. Interactions with leading private sector companies in the region reveals that should play a key role in planning and guiding the sector to develop its potentials across borders but private sector should also be encouraged participate and invest. Government could offer fiscal incentives or other incentives to the private entrepreneurs to take up a host of tourist related services like transport, accommodation and other logistics by making provisions for soft loan and reducing tax rates. It may also enhance youth participation in the sector.

5. Regarding Transport Policy, an optimisation study for international linkages and transit/transhipment arrangements with Myanmar should be commissioned. There is a need to develop legal frames for these purposes and a standard combined transport document for inter- modal traffic within the region and across its international boundary. An inter- ministerial task force should be set up to review the entire Northeast border with particular reference to Myanmar, Southeast Asia and Southwest China, and to report on trade opportunities, related manufacturing possibilities in the Northeast, required infrastructure and communication links, banking and warehousing facilities, necessary customs and security arrangements and manpower needs ("Transforming the Northeast Tackling Backlogs in Basic Minimum Services and Infrastructural Needs," 1997 p. 15 & 19).

6. Given the tremendous infrastructure deficit Indian policy makers should take immediate steps for timely completion of on-going transnational road, railway and maritime projects while up gradation of urban and border infrastructure is the other important requirement for example in Sendra – Loktak – Moirang and Moreh Town at Indo-Myanmar border. The routes along the Asian Highway should be planned to serve and promote the most important tourism destinations of NER. Infrastructure projects should be prioritized for their overall importance to the tourism and trade led growth strategy. A major component for tourism should be the development of wayside amenities along the Asian Highway (Bezbaruah, 2005, p. 4).

7. Field work reveals that presently both the regions are also lacking trained manpower in managerial, personal and technical levels. Therefore, Government of India can take the lead to provide education and training of people and at community level also to create a band of trained manpower.

8. The safety and security of the tourists should be of the highest priority on the Government's agenda. Therefore India should hold consultation with state governments and Myanmar Government to introduce positive interventions to maintain a secure & safe atmosphere in potential areas of international collaboration.

9. Planners should also note to focus and promote on other key areas like cultural products for tourism in the region including oral literature, life and lifestyle, dietary habit visual and performing arts, crafts, traditional ceremonies and costumes, fairs and festivals, etc. However the success of such a tourism plan also requires enhanced marketing, dissemination of information by prompting it in international forums and the need to portalise[12] information about touristy options.

10. The potential for luxury river cruise in Brahmaputra should be harnessed providing the opportunity to private hotelier or tour operator through tourism finance cooperation of India ltd (Kumaran, 2008 p. 38).

11. All integrated tourist circuits should be urgently portalised to give out information about its accessibility, available amenities, accommodation facilities, enroute amenities and real time information to plan. The region should also have a portal for taxi services to ease transit and travel. The region

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[12] Portalise refers to the act of taking ownership of an internet based portal. See more at http://forums.indiegamer.com/archive/index.php/t-3248.html

should develop a system to get feedback from visitors to improve its tourism services.

12. Visa on arrival (VOA) facility should be made immediately operational at the Moreh and at Imphal International Airport. Efforts should also be made to introduce International Flights between, Imphal- Mandalay- Yangon - Bangkok etc. Both these measures potentially benefit the many Myanmarese would travel to Manipur, especially for availing medical facilities. Another important policy measure in this context pointed out by the state tourism is the option of Healthcare Visa in Manipur. The government should aspire to provide smooth service to foreign patient tourists particularly coming from Myanmar. While to improving the efficiency of the customs authorities and the use of IT by them cannot be overlooked to reduce time taken for clearances to bare minimum("Manipur Tourism Policy 2014 ", 2014).

13. Some other suggestions include formulation of a common platform for tourism of all the states, involving the government and non-governmental agencies to network and discuss issues, Organising road shows by the industry, in the potential markets, like in Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Bhutan. Frequent familiarization events should be taken up so that positive articles/publicity about the destination is published from time to time. The government should also promote "Home Stays" to cope with the growth in tourist arrivals. This will not only be an interesting experience for the tourists but also augment their income.

14. The Indian Tourism Ministry should initiate interaction with Myanmar Tourism to initiate these projects. The basic concept and master plan, including overall budget should be worked out and developed with a time frame. The nature of these projects will require high professional inputs, having elements of broad and futuristic vision in planning, careful handling of the serene ecosystem in an integrated approach. Needless to say

implementation is the key though full with difficulties as it mandates coordination across borders, governments sectors and departments.

The preceding recommendations have been identified for Indian policy makers to formulate suitable tourism policy for the region keeping in minds its already discussed extensive potentials and major challenges. Secondly it also considers the strong socio cultural linkages and shared potentials listed with Myanmar to formulate an effective tourism strategy that will enable to remove major sources of "unfreedom" from human lives in the region while providing a better solution for the region's problems to bring much-needed development as is hoped for. These have been suggested mainly keeping the government in mind because governments have the crucial mandate to provide the political stability, security and the legal and financial framework which tourism requires. However this is not to deny that implementation and success of any development project is not possible without the active and widespread participation of the people. After all, development is wished for the people, so it has to be by the people.

7.5 Conclusion

Finally, to recapitulate once again this paper presents NER with an alternate path of development that not only takes care of its present policy imperative but also foresees future needs for the evolution of a sustainable region. The first chapter presents a critical understanding of why the need for an alternate development paradigm focussing on human security while utilising the region's inherent comparative advantages, has emerged today in NER as the need of the hour. It seeks to explain the wide range of development opportunities and policy goals that tourism as a new development strategy offers NER which should not be overlooked any longer. It shows how tourism can deliver broad and equitable social, economic, and environmental sustainability for NER in addition to developing high linkages with other sectors, satisfying the urgent need for exploring NER's economic viability.

The latter chapter undertakes an elaborate of identification of niche areas and understanding of how these potentials can be converted into future price points for developing an innovative tourism policy based on the regions comparative advantages. This chapter maintains that the region clearly has necessary elements of natural and cultural resources that can possibly convert this region into a preferred tourist destination. It has vast product possibilities to develop new tourism products like tea tourism, golf tourism, wild life/eco/ adventure tourism, cultural/pilgrim tourism , rural tourism, river cruise tourism, medical tourism, defense tourism (World War II Trail / circuit, heritage tourism (Wartime cemeteries) among others.

The following chapter argues that to extract the full potentiality of the region in tourism, it also needs to be discussed trans-nationally especially with Myanmar and identifies the range of options available for future collaborations. It also finds that certain niche sectors of tourism based on nature with Myanmar should be prioritized considering the tremendous potential that exists in both sides of the border. Besides, arguing that the region should be marketed from the tourism angle while integrating with its transnational neighbour to bring revolutionary transformation not only to the regional economy but also to its neighbouring economy.

However these opportunities will not automatically transform the NE society, it has to be carefully planned, developed and its potentials maximized while accounting for various sensitivities if successful models have to be adopted and replicated.

Which brings us to the chapter on 'The Issues of Concerns' that attempts to scrutinize the factors presently impeding NER on one hand and both countries on the other to take full advantage of the vast shared untapped potentials. This chapter establishes a deeper understanding of the changing and dispersed nature of problems facing tourism today. This chapter lists the pertaining as well as probable challenges that require redressal and points out that government will have to change its current practice of casually fixing our strategies with clear goals, priorities and an authentic time bound action plan. If appropriate strategies for tourism growth are adopted the

region will not only see an overhaul of its tourism scenario but also overcome its present development challenges because of the multiplier effect of tourism on development. Lastly it establishes that if the tourism sector is properly managed and planned it has immense backward and forward linkages in terms of both income and employment avenues that can significantly contributing to reduce poverty regionally.

To conclude a list of policy recommendations as 'a way forward' has be suggested to help the region formulate a sound tourism policy that can not only provide a road map but also be able to cushion the region from potential risks as an unsustainable tourist growth can negatively impact the environment, culture and society.

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APPENDIX

List of Expert Interviewee

Name	Occupation
Ninong Ering	Member of Parliament – Arunachal Pradesh
T. Meinya	Member of Parliament- Manipur
T. Baite	Member of Parliament- Manipur
Pankaj Bora	Member of Parliament- Assam
Nazneen Farooque	Member of Parliament- Assam
Shyamal Dutta	Wild life Photographer
Partha Partim Das	Tourism Advisor, Bodoland Council
Prsasant Bhattacharya	GOI, Legal Counsel (AFSPA)
Col. Sunil Newton	Army
Sajad Ahmed	OSD, ATDC
Sanjay Das	Asst. Director , India Tourism Guwahati
Shreevats Sanjay	Regional Director NE, India Tourism Guwahati
Rakhee Bhattacharya	Scholar
Akshay Sharma	Research Scholar
Sanjay Aditya Singh	CEO, Jetwinngs
Barsha Singh	MD, Jetwings
Amitabh Sharma	Manager, Jungle Travels
Hemen Sharma	Manager, Eastern Retreat
R.S. Kalita	Owner, Hotel Indo- Myanmar

VITA

I am Junty Sharma Pathak, a citizen of India and a Master's student at the Chulalongkorn University, in International Development Studies (August 2014-August 2015). I have completed my Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Miranda House, University of Delhi in July 2012.Prior to this I was working as a Research Associate at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies based in New Delhi, before which I was a Research Assistant to Legislators at the same institute. My work required me to research around policy issues and assist Members of Parliament on their legislative work on a variety of issues like poverty, grievance redressal system, unemployment, violence against women and development challenges in North Eastern part of India. My curiosity in developmental studies and processes of social change resulted from experiences in my childhood. I grew up in India's North-East, a region known for its clashing nationalities, ubiquitous insurgencies and rampant use of terror as a method to realize political goals. Concrete, real-life experiences embedded in me a profound interest academically in issues associated with conflict, states developmental policies and how the decisions at the international level affect the locals.