



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Media**

**ICT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN ASSAM**

**KEY WORDS:** tourism sector, ICT, development, green-tourism

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**ABSTRACT**

Assam bears ample tourism potential. Tourism may be a key segment for harnessing overall development to the state. Its natural beauty, historicity, cultural diversities, customs, culinary arts and ethnic cuisine are considered to be primary sources of tourists' attraction. The induction of the modern means of communication has expedited the tourism sector in Assam by disseminating the right information among the aspirants. The tourism sector in the state already has assumed the industrial shape by dint of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) with rapid pace. The concerned authority has started to maintain all types of operational activities, service quality and gathered experiences. Technology has changed the ideas and habits of the prospective tourists in the globe and started to facilitate right information without any hassle to them by the rampant use of technology. Habits of availing facilities and searching information by the respondents have also been changed. Now the ideas related with chatting the information and its sharing have acquired a new momentum due to the consistent use technology. The paper intends to decipher the importance of ICT in the process of developing tourism sector for mutual sharing and accessing proper data. Besides it, the empirical study aims to focus the utility of ICT and its relationship with the overall growth & development of tourism sector in our state.

**Statement of the Problem**

Tourists from outside of the state are not in a comfortable position to gather their required information by physical means as the entire geography of Assam has only a bottle-neck connection. Moreover that Assam is a land of more ethnic varieties which pose obstacles in promoting local tourism. But the induction of ICT has removed these obstacles in present times and opened up passages for all kinds of tourists whether they are local, domestic and foreign. Prior to the use of ICT necessary messages were not properly communicated to the respondents. Though the ICT is found to be the ultimate means to carry on the related information and messages for the development of tourism; still, the use of ICT has not brought satisfactory results in concord with the global need. Therefore, study about the utility of ICT use may be instrumental for the desired growth of tourism in our state if the concerned authorities start to work in a concerted effort. The attitudinal change is realized to be the pre-requisite for the development in the domain of our state tourism.

**Use of ICT and Tourism sector**

The Information and Communication Technology is an influential means in the development continuum of tourism. It helps to generate easy information highlighting its promotional and developmental activities in the sector. Through the use of ICT, all necessary information may be gathered easily on the basis of which the decision of visiting the place may be justified. It also helps us to know and understand the cultural, social and environmental issues. Tourism sector is based on the tourists' interest of the particular spot or the destination. The ICT is not only to provide the information regarding for the need of it. The application of ICT in tourism sector may be the effective mechanism which is so important for destination management. The ICT is being used by the managers for development purposes of tourism that is just to attract the tourists. Tourism sector has used Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to enhance operational competence, service quality, and to utilize customer's experiences (Singh & Dhankhar, 2014).

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a systematic and vehement approach which is endorsed by the computer mechanism and telecommunication tools in presenting information through proper process. It is the assembling process of computer, communication and electronics to acquire, process, store and disseminate vocal, textual, pictorial, quantitative and qualitative information by micro- electronic based equipment. Instead of using print and other types of media for tourism information and development, the use of ICT is very much effective. It is not only effective but cost effective also. From the aspect of time consumption, manpower use etc. are simplified through the use of intensive ICT. It has made easier to reach and

understand the important points in a systematic way. In addition, the consistent use of ICT has been useful to present data as required by the upcoming tourists before reaching the tourism destination and related services and products. Consequently, consumers get privilege to contact the suppliers directly and to ensure the availability of the products and affirm its rate. Moreover, timely access and accuracy of information attain its importance. (Tahayori & Moharrer, 2006).

In present times, the success of business and dependency of people are significantly based on the ability to acquire and utilize updated information only through the ICT which can provide the accurate and updated version as it is required by the customers of tourist product and services.

Using the ICT in tourism sector development is not just for generating the information only; it acts as the protector, promoter and accelerator of this sector by direct influences of the tourist experiences and the behaviors. ICT system assists the concerned to deliver quality services to their customers and to enhance operational efficiency and justify costs (Kim & Ham, 2007; Sing et al.2006; Winata & Mia, 2005)

The use of ICT is advantageous for tourism management and hospitality services in general to be concern of present changes in the IT and their relationship with customer services. It also establishes a good relationship of the service provider and the customer for getting the product and services. ICT provides admissible and right set of circumstances for better development and promoting a local tourism industry. Before the emergence of the IT in large scale sufficient information was not provided by the management of the concern tourist spot of our locality. The customer had to avail certain information through the print materials prior to the induction of ICT in this sector. The way of publicity was stereotype which could not suffice the needs of the customers.

**ICT and Tourism in Assam**

The relationship between tourism and media is pragmatically important. Because not only for information purposes but direct and indirect ways of providing various types of facilities for the development of the sector also. Tourism is mostly dependent on media because the information and knowledge of destination and transporation are basically reported by the media. Therefore, the role of ICT, in present times, has been emphasized for the benefits of the tourist coming to Assam. Assam basically is a state of natural beauty, cultural heritage and ethnic varieties. Vaishnavite cult predominates the rich cultural heritage in Assam for centuries and it has assumed new forms with the pace of changing time. Satras and Namghars are the great repository of the said cultural legacy.

A good number of tourists from different places of India and abroad come to Assam as tourism destination. Assam is blessed with National Park and Wild Life Sanctuaries. These are: Kaziranga National Park, Manas National Park, Gibon National Park, Orang National Park, Nameri National Park, Dibru-Saikhow National Park, Bhejan-Borajan Wild Life sanctuary, Nambur Wild Life Sanctuary, Laokhowa Wild Life Sanctuary, Pabitora Wild Life Sanctuary, Deepar Beel Wild Life Sanctuary etc. Besides all, Assam possesses historicity, religious diversity, ethnicity and greenery. Besides these, Assam is a state which can be recognized as the state of green tourism as the state is not only covered with natural beauty but state has the glory of tea plantation and the bio diversity owing to the tropical climatic condition. ICT use may be the wonderful tool for the development of tea tourism and the eco-tourism possibilities to attract tourist from nook and corner of the world. It is now assumed that green gold concept may be assembled with the green tourism by the use of the ICT to attract tourist. Assam is famous for one horned rhinoceros and a large number of rare avian and animal species. Moreover, the jungles of Assam are the abodes of wonderful flora and fauna.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) comprises communication channels which usually disseminates news, entertainment options, education, data and the promotional messages for the target group. By the rapid advancement of ICT in the day to day life the popularity of the internet and social sites e.g. facebook, twitter, whatsapp etc. are becoming integral part for maintaining communication. Social Medias are now considered as important ways that facilitate detailed messages to the public. The pilot survey reveals that the social media option is becoming a very easily accessible media which now cover more than 65 percent population of the state. This size of population is more or less aware about tourist spot or destination of Assam. Almost 42 percent populations have the tourism habit. They have visited any one of the tourist places once either in two or three years regularly. Present trend indicates in Assam that local tourists mainly of old age people visited the religious places as pilgrims. A large section of young generation people also agree to visit the religious spots in which during the time of summer vacation students community visited different spot of education concern taking the name of educational excursion. Guardians also accompany their children during visiting the places for gathering the knowledge and getting amusement.

Among the different sections of people except some of the older people as tourists are getting proper benefit from ICT use. Media like other modes, ICT is trying to project the tourism resources and products of Assam in different systems and presentable ways. ICT can be used in a variety of scopes and ways for messaging tourism sector in Assam. ICT also trying to protect the environment and minimizes the bad social impact from the development of the tourism industry of Assam by taking remedial measures. It also now becomes the social responsibility to intensify awareness among the people having greater economic benefits for the people of Assam and enhances the rich identity of Assamese people in the domain of hospitality since the time immemorial i.e. Atithi Deva Bhava-the societal maxim is the indicative of hospitality saga of our land. Assamese people greet the guests as 'God or Deva' in accordance with the rich cultural heritage of the land. In Assam it is an intrinsic responsibility to exchange such an idea with the guest. ICT renders a positive responsibility to the conservation of natural beauty and cultural heritage of the state of Assam taking the promotional steps for its diversity in all aspect like the print and electronic media. ICT helps to understand the reasons for main attraction of tourist of particular destination for its special types of cultural, social an environmental issues. Helping in this particular field the ICT always trying to promote and develop the tourism in Assam.

Today from Sadia to Dhubri and the other places of Assam covering by the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley have lots of tourist destinations such as natural, educational, religious and historical etc. to attract the domestic and foreign tourists. Maximum of the tourist spot is now covered by the services of ICT to generate information and knowledge for interested tourist to know about in details. The messages are being used in updated forms which are

full of required information for developing the tourism sector.

### Literature Review

ICT is being used to develop all the steps of the tourism industry. ITC's are bringing significant changes keeping pace with the global trend showcasing all the traditional activities. Development of tourism industry cannot be imagined without the use of ICT. Among all the means of media, ICT has a pivotal role in transforming the entire gamut of tourism sector.

Internet, mobile phones supported by Android and other modes of satellite communication provide tourist with the means to gain immediate access to relevant information of greater variety with accuracy which have been available previously about destination throughout the world (WTO, 2001).

The success of a business to a great height depends on its efficacy to acquire and utilize updated information to assist its management, marketing and monitoring process. In this situation ICT assists organization to manage information dynamically and influences business competitiveness (Singh, Dhankhar, 2014)

One new types of consumer behavior has been created as it introduced the new technology (Red Bee, 2011). Tourists always attempt to search and realize information by changing the methods to obtain all everything (Gretzel et al.2012).

The aim to involve ICT intermediaries to inform potential consumers about tourism services, products and destinations or spots. Social network, forums ,discussion groups represent a new field for exercise for maintaining information regarding services etc. which may be more meaningful when the information about the characteristics of tourist, their expectations and experiences is easily accessible. Online query currently becomes the normal practice to acquire and collect information. Therefore the satisfaction of tourists and behavior of them depend upon the response of the online inquiries. Responses and reactions to inquiries are essential for success of such a sector ( Beldona et al. 2005; Pechlaner et al. 2002 ).

Application of ICT to the development of the tourism sector is an effective mechanism and now considered as significant one. At the meantime, ICT enables to boost the globalization of industry by facilitating efficient tools for vendors to develop, operate and globally distribute their offers ( Buhails, 2003 ).

In all the steps the use of ICT can't be ignored because the most serious and important merit of ICT is both availability of information to the increasing number of people and diminish production cost for increasing the efficiency relating to it. ICT also enables for tourism sector as a whole to have access to a number of markets and to use global supply chains in a simple and acceptable way (UNWTO, 2001).

The significance of the ICT revolution for tourism competitiveness and management are identified in different sectors of tourism and its closely associated industries. ICT tools are sometime deeply involved in selling activities creating a feeling and emotion by tourist. (Bonjec & Kribel). It brings new challenges before the tourism sector with high quality new products and services consumed by the tourists.

### Need for the study

The land of Assam is blessed by natural resources and it is located at the epicenter of the world's most important bio-geographic zone. Natural beauty, rich culture, ethnic heritage are the main factors to attract the tourists. Tourism has the scope and potential for generating income and the employment in Assam. Assam is rightly endowed with nature and has considerable possibilities for developing into a convincing strength if the tourism sector is encourage as a thriving industry. The total number of employment in tourism sector in Assam is seen 121.11lakh which is 5355.4 lakh in India. The direct share of tourism employment in Assam is 2.87 percent as compared to the corresponding of 4.37 percent of India (Source: Regional tourism satellite Account Assam, 2009-10)

Here, it is important to indicate that the revenue earning from the Indian and foreign tourist in Assam is remarkably and gradually increasing from the year 2009-2010 to 2012-13 though it reduces in the year 2013-14. But again the revenue earning from the tourist is increased in the year 2015-16 as compared to the other years (Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam from 2009 to 2016). In the year 2009-10 the total revenue earns from Indian & foreign tourist is 131.63 lakh. The revenue 143.60, 184.49, 248.19, 191.32, 211.77 and 1057.24 lakh have been collected from both the Indian & foreign tourist in the year 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 accordingly. This growth rate of the tourism sector has witnessed a satisfactory outcome which is indicative of state GDP increase. The contribution of tourism sector in case of Assam GDP is around 5.5 percent. Sources of information of the spot have been followed from the social media which is 69 percent in the state of Assam besides the other sources of information to develop the tourism sector.

## CONCLUSION

ICT can be used in multidimensional ways for the development of tourism sector. The scope of the tourism experiences is largely depending upon the role of ICT. The ICT is not only being used to provide information but to invite the innovative ideas also making it beneficial for the uplift of the sector. For the purpose of the development and for the experiences of the tourist it has adopted the ICT to maintain all operational activities, service quality and also for getting proper messages by the respondents which is obviously important in the present perspective. Development of tourism sector is usually associated with the influential role of the ICT as the present trend demands. The tourism sector needs to strengthen the all rudimentary activities and build competences with the legitimate use of the ICT. The mode of inquiry and availing the required facilities may be intimated through the ICT use which is considered as a key factor in the development of tourism sector. ICT can disseminate all types of message and information in details to help the tourists' as well as the management activities of the tourist destinations.

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