

**ENSURING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD THROUGH TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP - A
CASE STUDY OF UMRANGSO**

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Abstract

Umrangso is ideal to be developed as a tourist destination. One needs to cover 112 km from Haflong and 248 kilometers from Guwahati to reach Umrangso. This place has its own uniqueness of natural beauty with abundance of hills and lush greenery for nature lovers. There are few cement companies having their factories besides Kopili Hydro Electric Project of NEEPCO in Umrangso. Hence, employment opportunities are very limited. Thus, developing the place as a tourism destination will help in creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for the local communities.

This place hold the festival named, Falcon festival every year which attracts huge tourist visit. Since Dima- Hasao is stocked with nature's bounty and rich in flora and fauna, Umrangso can be another added destination for the tourists. However, lack of infrastructure in terms of transportation, hospitality services etc. are the serious challenges in the development of this place as an attractive tourist place.

This study focuses on the scope of developing the place as a prime tourist destination which can ensure sustainable livelihood for local community through entrepreneurship in tourism. Case study method is adopted for the study based on Primary and secondary data. The study is expected to through light on the obstacles in the path of developing the spot as a tourist destination and ensuring sustainable livelihood for the local community.

Keywords: Umrangso, tourism, livelihood, entrepreneurship, economic development.

Tourism is a rapidly growing industry worldwide, and anticipated to continue to increase in the future. The tourism industry has been promoted as a common tool to develop and regenerate rural areas. Tourism is perceived as a job generator and accelerator of growing economies in both developing and developed economies. Further, tourism significantly contributes to regional economic growth by activating the local economy. The development of tourism in various areas has helped local communities to achieve their goal of improved livelihood. Tourism participation has also helped local populations increase their income and enhance their livelihood. According to UNWTO, A destination for tourism is a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries where a visitor spends overnight with products and services, activities and experiences along the tourism value chain. The economic advantage of tourism for any country includes improved tax revenue and personal income, increased standards of living, and more employment opportunities for all.

There are various definitions on **Entrepreneurship** but, it simply involves the creation or extraction of value. Entrepreneurship is an act of being an entrepreneur or the owner or manager of a business enterprise who, by risk and initiative, attempts to make profits. An entrepreneur is a person who starts a new business and usually risks his own money to start the venture. Bula (2012) added that of entrepreneurs is someone who is willing to take risks, the coordinator and organizer, leader and creator of the creative. Entrepreneurship and the creation of new business are important to create and sustain a healthy economy because it creates new job opportunities and a contributor to economic sustainability for many.

Tourism entrepreneurship refers to the activities undertaken for the effective and profitable interaction of demand for and supply of tourism products with an intention of gaining socio-economic status. It is a type of businesses offering tourist products and services that ensures that there is responsible production

and consumption of tourism products and services. According to WTO, a tourism product is a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific center of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customers which is priced and sold through distribution channels. Generally, tourism entrepreneurship promotes new parameters of thinking towards conservation and sustainability.

Sustainable livelihood approach acknowledges that, particularly in poor communities, people gain their livelihoods through multiple activities rather than one formal job. “The most widely used definition of sustainable development by the Brundtland Report in 1987, is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Brundtland Commission had also introduced sustainable livelihood as a broad goal for poverty eradication.

Umrangso: Umrangso is the second largest town in Dima Hasao located at the borders of Assam and Meghalaya, 112 km from Haflong, the district headquarters of Dima Hasao district of Assam. The town of Umrangso has a number of big industries such as Kopili Hydro Electric Project of Nepco, along with a few cement factories such as NECEM cements, Vinay cements, etc. One can connect to Umrangso via Guwahati and via Shillong also. From Guwahati the tourists can come to Lanka by train or bus and from Lanka, direct bus or sumo is available for Umrangso. And from Shillong one can get direct bus to Umrangso. The town is a beautiful one with abundance of hills and lush greenery. Umrangso, an exquisite travel destination offers magnificent & splendor places to experience the surreal beauty of nature, outstanding landscapes, and striking views. This is undoubtedly one of the best & popular tourist attractions among Indian travelers, especially among newlyweds and young people looking to relish outdoor adventurous sports.

Review of literature

Kokkranikal J. & Morrison A. (2002) in their study stated that the involvement of local community in the form of small-scale entrepreneurship may contribute to economic benefit for the sustainability of tourism at destinations in developing country. (Kokkranikal J. & Morrison A. 2002) ¹

Machey A. & Sut U (2016) in their study explored ethnic tourism as a source of local economic development of Assam with special reference to Singpho tribe of Margherita Sub-division. It was stated that the Singpho people have been able to earn handsome amount of money from the tourist and every succeeding year the income increases. Income from domestic tourist is greater than foreigners. Ethnic tourism has been observed to encourage the local economic development. (Machey A. & Sut U. 2016) ²

Das R.(2017)stated that the main constraints that are coming into the way of tourism development are-Lack of infrastructure, Absence of proper tourism policy, publicity, Climate factor, Insurgency, Absence of tourist guides, Lack of coordination etc. (Das R. 2017) ³

Khound S. (2017) in her study has mentioned that tourism positively contribute to economic development of Assam and good transport and communication and making sufficient provision for accommodation of the tourist at and near the tourist sports with all types of civic amenities the state can earn huge amount of income from tourist sector. (Khound S. 2017) ⁴

Dr. Saikia. M, (2020) has stated in her study that that tourism has positively affected the probability of improving the standard of living due to participation in tourism related activity by the local community

but, tourism has less impact on improvement of infrastructure and also on creation of a market for local produce. (Saikia. M, 2020) ⁵

Importance of the study

Tourism in Assam is based on wildlife, natural beauty, unique flora & fauna, holy shrines, lush green tea gardens, turbulent rivers, vibrant and colourful cultural festivals. This sector can positively contribute to economic development of Assam.

Blue Hills Society, a reputed NGO from Haflong, Dima Hasao, aims to boost the tourism sector of the district. Umrangso is a beautiful travel destination with abundance of hills and lush greenery but the development of the area is very minimum. No study has yet been conducted on the tourist's spots of Umrangso. Thus, the study can help in making the place known to the readers for future research and indirectly promote the place which will have positive impact into the lives of local community residing nearby.

The study is expected to be a useful addition to the growing literature and research of the impact of tourism on local community of Assam. In order to have a better idea about the impact of tourism on the life of local community, we have to make a study about the economic impact on them and their standard of living. This study will examine the positive and negative economic influences on their life and also its impact on improving their living standard. Hence, the present study will provide means and ends to improve the tourism sector of Assam.

Some of the attraction of the Place:

Panimur falls: In the North Cachar Hill District of Assam, there is the waterfall of Panimur which is a famous tourist spot. Situated about 120 km away from Haflong, the Kopili River is obstructed by stones, but yet it turns into a gushing milky white waterfall at this spot called Panimur and is indeed an ethereal beauty. The panoramic view of the scenery attracts a number of nature lovers and photographers into this place. It becomes a picnic spot on December and January. There is a Forest Inspection Bungalow in this place, which can house a few tourists but needs to be booked in advance, especially in the tourist season.

Thuruk: Thuruk is a small village about 115 km away from Umrangso, Dima Hasao of Assam. This is perhaps the only place in the state which experiences snowfall in the winter. November and December are the best month to go for holiday to Thuruk for enjoying snowfall. The place is surrounded by hills, and there are a few trekking trails, which makes it favoured by the trekkers.

Golf field: The place is 6 km away from Umrangso market. The place is beside Kopili River with the 18-hole natural golf course. People visit the place to enjoy natural scenery, enjoy picnic, ride horse, play golf and enjoy boating. Falcon Festival is an annual event which happens every year at Umrangso.

Umrong Dam and Khandong Dam: The Khandong dam impounds Kopili River and Umrong dam impounds Umrong River creating Kopili reservoir and Umrong reservoir. Kopili reservoir partially falls in Meghalaya state as Kopili river forms geographical boundary between Assam and Meghalaya in this region. Khandong Dam is in the border area of Assam and Meghalaya.

Neepco Guest House: A wonderful guest house to stay in with beautiful outer scenery. The wonderful reserve in front of it gives a charming view. One can experience a comfortable, peaceful stay here with very refreshing scenic beauty.

Pushrindhi Island: The island has luxury tent houses for the tourists and a Boat house with 4-bedroom to help the tourists enjoy the natural beauty.

Botanical Garden: A garden including collection, cultivation and preservation of wide range of plants, which are typically labeled with their botanical names.

Falcon Festival: Falcon Festival is an annual event which happens every year at Umrangso. This festival aims at creating awareness among the people about Amur Falcons, the longest traveled migratory birds. This event is organized by Blue Hills Society and supported by Assam Forest Department to promote tourism.

Objectives

- To analyze the nature of involvement of the local communities in tourism related activities
- To analyze the problems that stands as barriers in the development of Umrangso as a tourist hotspot.
- To analyze the scope of tourism entrepreneurship in Umrangso in the light of ensuring sustainable livelihood of local communities.

Methodology

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected through structured schedule containing both close ended and open ended questions. Data were collected through personal interview from the respondents. A total of 381 number of sample were selected for the study as per Krejcie and Morgan table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Due care was taken in collecting data from those respondents who are associated with the tourism industry in Umrangso for at least three years. The secondary data were collected from research articles, books, Statistical Hand Book, internet etc.

Results and Discussion:

Respondents' Profile - Table 1: Age and Gender of Respondents

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
20-25	44 (11.5%)	20 (5.2%)	64 (16.7%)
26- 31	93 (24.4%)	24 (6.3%)	117 (30.7%)
32- 37	100 (26.2%)	30 (8%)	130 (34.2%)
38- 43	29 (7.6%)	15 (4%)	44 (11.6%)
44 and Above	20 (5.2%)	6 (1.6%)	26 (6.8%)
Total	286	95	381

It is evident from Table 1 that majority of the respondents (34.2%) belongs to the age group of 32 -37 years. 30.7% respondents are in the age group of 26- 31 years and 16.7% respondents are in the age group of 20- 25 years. It indicates that the youths are mainly associate with the tourism related activities.

Table 2: Educational Level of Respondents

Education Level	Male	Female	Total
Primary	72 (19%)	42 (11%)	114 (30%)
Middle School	52 (13.7%)	33 (8.7%)	85 (22.3%)
Senior Secondary	47	10	57

	(12.3%)	(2.6%)	(14.9%)
Graduation and Above	0	0	0
No Education	115 (30.2%)	10 (2.6%)	125 (32.8%)
Total	286	95	381

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents have crossed the senior secondary level of education. They are mainly engaged in earning their livelihood and support the family.

However, Umrangso, as a tourist spot have limited scope to provide for livelihood opportunities to the local youths. Figure 1 shows that majority of the respondents are engaged in transportation activities. However, transportation provides good source of livelihood to the respondents mainly during peak season of tourist arrival. During the off season, they used to go to the nearest town Hojai to earn their livelihood by carrying the local commuters.

Accommodation, being an integrated part of tourism provides ample opportunities for the local youths to earn their livelihood. The respondents (18%) are mainly engaged in providing home stay facilities to the tourists. They redesign their homes and provide one or two rooms as home stay facility for the tourists. Some of the respondents are engaged in these home stay facilities as employee. 13% respondents are engaged in handicrafts which are available in the local market for the tourists. These handicrafts attract the tourists. However, the problem lies with the seasonality feature of tourism and during off season they have limited earning source. They shifted to agriculture during the off season to assist their family in agricultural field.

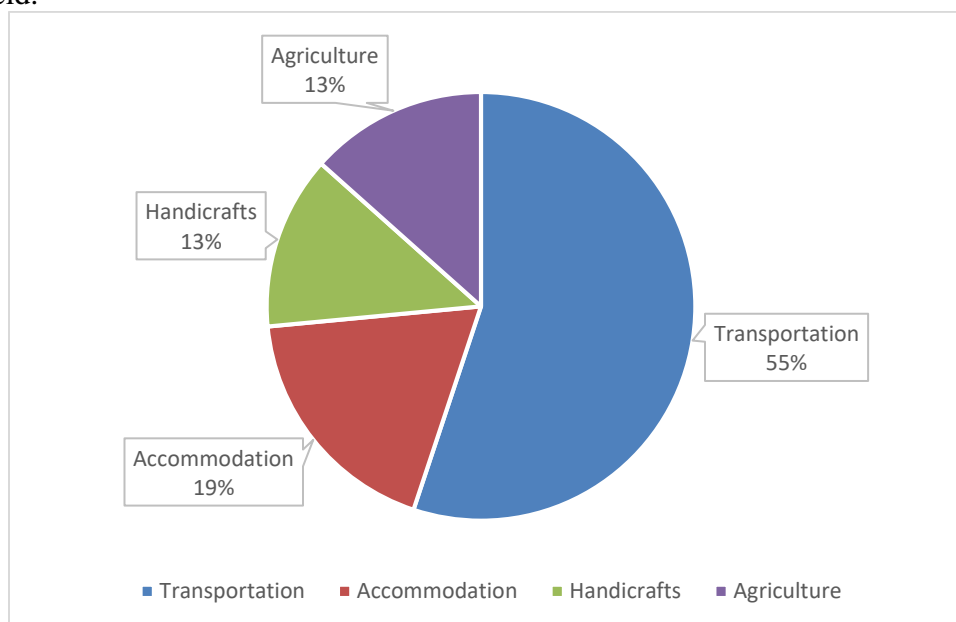


Figure 1: Respondents' Engagement with Tourism related Activities

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study are stated below-

The various tourism related activities undertaken by the local people in the study area are: Transportation, Accommodation and Handicraft.

The study shows low female representation in tourism related activities. Thus, the male members are found to be the main participants in earning the livelihood and there is a scope for empowering the females and engaging them in tourism related activities.

The highest education found among the respondents is higher secondary which is one of the restricting factors in orienting the local community towards tourism entrepreneurship.

Various horticultural (in the form of kitchen garden) activities undertaken by the common people are- Nursery, cultivation of pineapple, Small Fruits, Vegetables etc. The tourists visiting the place enjoy those beautiful natural beauties. However, the local people seems not to be benefited financially from these activities.

Transportation businesses are undertaken throughout the year. However, they earn a good amount of profit only during the peak tourism season i.e. in the month of October and November.

There are only three lodges and a good number of homestay facilities run by local people for tourists. However due to poor maintenance, they fail to attract the tourists. Recently, tent house facilities have been arranged in Golf field by the local community which is attracting the tourists.

Selling handicraft (*Dimasa Mekhela Chador*) items and handmade bamboo products to tourists is also not found to be economically beneficial because of limited market.

The problems hindering in the economic benefit of local community are:

Lack of infrastructural facilities: Infrastructural facilities are highly inadequate for tourism, both in terms of transportation and accommodation.

Lack of professionalism among the local community,

Lack of entrepreneurial talent among the youths.

Though the place has a lot of natural and cultural resources, it has not been able to give due publicity which has restricted tourist mobility.

Recommendations

- Based on the study, the following recommendations may be put forwarded:
- Well- Planned Publicity for promoting tourism should be undertaken.
- Training for developing the human resource to serve the tourists should be provided to local people.
- The government should develop infrastructural facilities and initiate policy measures for developing the economic condition of the local communities.
- Tourism infrastructure need to be developed in PPP mode.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the involvement of local community may contribute to significant economic benefits for their sustainable livelihood. However, it requires proper guidance and participation of both public and private sectors. Tourism if well planned could provide large scope to the youths of Umrangso for sustainable livelihood generation. Steps need to be taken to develop Umrangso as a popular tourist destination to ensure sustainable livelihood of local communities. The various ongoing government projects aiming to fulfill the requirements of sustainable growth of the community are Lower Kopili Hydro Electric Project and bamboo Industrial Park. Government has also taken initiative to improve the road condition of Umrangso. The efforts of the government and the involvement of the local community will speed up the process of development of Umrangso as an attractive tourist destination in the tourist map of India.

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