Promotion of Culinary Tourism as a Destination Attraction of North-East India

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ABSTRACT: Food plays a key role in attracting tourists to a certain destination because of its reflection of a region’s culture and lifestyle. Cuisines has a great impact on traveller’s decisions when choosing their destination. A diverse range of businesses including farms, restaurants, or specialty food stores, cooking school, tour operators, breweries, wineries, historical attractions and many other businesses across the country have capitalized on their regions culturally unique cuisines to attract visitors. Culinary of a destination are also categorized as a part of cultural tourism. It is not only a basic need for tourist but also a cultural element that can positively present a destination. Food consumption can be used in the development of a destination image. In addition culinary tourism is not only appealing to tourist, but also contributes to the social, economic and environmental development of a destination. The paper aims at the importance of the connection between food and tourism which cannot be ignored. Each destination of northeast india has different levels of attractiveness that can draw tourist from different countries and thus the delicious food of northeast can be used as the main attraction and promotional tool for the development of tourism in northeast india.

Keywords: Breweries ,Cuisines, Culture, Food Stores, Tourist.

I. Introduction:
India’s North East, situated between 21°57’ North to 29°30’ North latitude and 88° East to 97°30’ East longitude with an area of 262185 sq. Km. World Food Travel Association (WFTA) defines culinary tourism as the search for inimitable and memorable eating and drinking experience. Culinary tourism is an element of regional agricultural and economic growth. It is an essential feature of local tourism promotion for a destination. The central functions of the tourism industry is to provide food experiences. The relationship between food and tourism seems paradoxical. Culinary Tourism are related to food and eating experiences that occur when people travel. Food has an important role for food tourism is strengthening a region’s identity, sustaining cultural heritage. Food tourism is defined by Hall and Mitchell [1] as ‘visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production regions are the primary motivating factor for travel’. It has been a vehicle for regional development and strengthening local production. Each
destination has different level of attractiveness that can draw tourist. Authentic & interesting food can attract visitors to a destination. It can be said that culinary tourism can be associated with a travellers interest in the food of a destination. A destination can be used as the main attraction and can use food as the main attraction and can develop marketing strategies that will focus on the food of its own region. It is important for marketers of a culinary destination to know the image currently held by its targeted customers and how to affect their intention to visit through effective marketing strategies. Destinations can use food to represent its cultural experience, status, cultural identity and communicating. According to Hobsbawn & Ranger [2] ‘Cuisines that are highly known for their taste and quality can be developed into tourist products. According to Riley[3], the association of national cuisine & tourism depends on the role of the cuisine in the social culture that creates national identity. Thus, destination can use its cuisine as a marketing strategy.

India’s North East, situated between 21°57’ North to 29°30’ North latitude and 88° East to 97°30’ East longitude with an area of 262185 sq. Km. Northeast is every food lover’s paradise. A major reason people travel to Northeast today is to experience and taste the exotic and ethnic food of this region. Northeast cuisines offer a multitude of dishes, traditional foods, both of vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Tourist comes to visit Northeast India to enjoy its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. One key component of the relation between food and tourism is that of the promotion of traditional foods. The tourism industry need to diversify their products and include more cultural tourism based components. The strength of people’s desire to visit Northeast is largely due to its newly discovered ethnic cuisine. Food is blended in the culture of northeast and connected to the lifestyle of its people. Culinary Tourism can be found in both rural and urban areas and tourist should be available to visit all year round. Food can convey an unique experience and enjoyment to traveller. Specifically food may totally enhance tourist experience and can be the most memorable part of a trip. Thus, the food of a destination can be used to represent the image and distinctiveness of a destination. Previously overlooked, culinery tourism is an important new niche that fosters economic and community development and new intercultural insights. Popularly known as ‘Paradise unexplored’, the Northeast India can offer and take advantage of its ethnic food and local wine and position them as premier tourism products which will increase the value of this destination.

The American Culinary Traveller Report, 2013 published by the American travel market research firm Mandala Research has a few interesting findings:

• Travellers are most interested in local and authentic foods and culinary experiences that are different from those they can get at home.

• Most travellers combine culinary activities with other activities, also participating in culture, heritage and nature-based activities.
Increasing reliance on reviews and recommendations of friends makes getting the word out through social media and other user content sources critical for destinations.

Festivals motivate culinary travellers, so destination marketing organizations should consider hosting a beer, wine or culinary festival to feature local fare, products and unique food activities like chef demonstrations and samplings.

Foodies want to be educated when travelling. Eighty-three percent enjoy learning about the local culture and cuisine of the destinations they visit. And the same percentage says they will spend more money on food and drinks while travelling.

II. Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of this is to present trends in the emergence of culinary tourism in northeast states of India. The paper aims to focus on the impact of culinary tourism in regional and local development and conservation of culinary traditions that is mingled with the culture of northeast India. A special emphasis has also been made on food as an attraction in destination marketing apart from other tourist attractions.

An attempt has been made to portray the scope of culinary tourism in northeast India which indirectly helps the tourist to get along well with culture, rich heritage traditions and inclination of a particular region. In northeast, the concept of culinary tourism is still new, underdeveloped and unexplored by many tourism professionals about the fact that the cuisine of a place is in fact an reflection of its history. The sole aim of this paper is to develop culinary tourism concept like other forms of tourism and pave the way for its sustainability and exploring and bringing to limelight the antique foods which are hidden as the Treasure Island and putting it as one of the masterpiece of India’s rich culinary repository. The purpose of the study is to find out the initial growth and scope of culinary tourism in northeast India. So, as a strong marketing strategy can be chalked out for successful destination promotions and products improvisation to make it prime focus in the tourism system. Yet another purposor of this study is to learn the future trends of gastronomic tourism in northeast India.

III. Methodology:

It is a cross-sectional study which explanatory in nature. It mainly involved secondary data collection. Secondary data has been collected from text book, research papers and websites. Some primary data source has been used from the informations gathered from direct enquiry.

IV. Results and Discussion:

NORTHEAST INDIA: PARADISE UNEXPLORED

Northeast India is a paradise for tourist. Its enchanting hill, dancing rivers, roaring waterfalls, thick and dark forests, heavy rains during monsoon, innumerable varieties of flora and fauna, countless species of wild animals and plants, mysterious clouds, melodious folk
music, thrilling dances and festivals, variety of many delicious dishes, handlooms and handicrafts, and above all its green landscape attract people from different parts of the world. Assam, one of the constituent states of the region, an embodiment of natural beauty and grace, a true representative of the region, has always been at the centre stage of tourist attraction. The ungrudging blessings of nature have made tourism in Assam essentially nature centric, despite the fact there are historical and religious places of tourist attraction.

SCOPE OF CULINARY TOURISM IN NORTHEAST

In gastronomical point of view cuisine of India is as rich and diverse as its civilisation. The scope of Northeast India culinary tourism is immense and it has not yet carved a niche in global culinary map because of its recognition as like other tourism. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, the cuisine of India is widespread. The Cuisine of India can be segregated in region wise and can be explored simultaneously. Each region cuisine has its own identity in the field of culinary art which are the hidden treasures of immediate aroma and flavour compared to other cuisines of the world that should become the forefront for tourist.

The Tourism of Northeast India has scopes to promote tourism through cuisines of each destination of the region as these are interlinked with each other by setting street side food kiosks, mega food parks, theme restaurants, as well as food courts which caters the tourist the traditional local foods in an eco ambience. By showcasing the Northeast food can attract million of tourist to the regions of Northeast India. Culinary Tour Packages can be arranged in a detailed manner so as to analyse the influence of both domestic and international tourist and their attachment towards to the cuisine of the particular region.

POTENTIALITY OF CULINARY TOURISM IN NORTHEAST INDIA

There is much about the cuisines of northeast india that is not known and there is also much about the northeast india that does not find too many listeners despite the odd dialects of its eight states. Each states has a distinct identity, terrain, communities, languages and dialects and an amazing and unusual food history and heritage and also one of the most important common link in the simple humanity, those who live with nature, it is said, are naturally human beings with the mighty Brahmaputra. A Tourist who visits Northeast India cannot forget the essence of assamese cuisine with extensive use of local produce, some very exotic like Ou Tenga, herbs of Narahinga, Bhederlota, Kosu etc. Assam is also known as a rice eater’s paradise, there are several varieties of rice to choose from the aromatic Joha, the sticky bora saul, to japonica. In several homes, komal saul is breakfast, which is a typical rice to the region, requires no cooking and has to be just soaked in slightly warm water. It is mixed with milk or curd and jaggery which is a nutritious one too. As far cuisine is concerned, the state of Arunachal Pradesh too love their rice which is more than just a cereal to them. The meat of Mithun is considered as delicacy in Arunachal Pradesh. Food items of smoked pork, kerela chutney, chhurpi with vegetables are popular there. One cannot forget the tart sweetness of the small but taut orange from a family garden, or the rich taste of Doh Kleh of Meghalaya, which
is literally a state of fruit basket with oranges, pineapples, guavas, plums, peaches, jackfruit etc. The local potato, ginger, bay leaf, betelnut, betel vine and above all turmeric which is said to be the best all over the world with a curcumin content and much in demand. Local varieties of rice including the red rice of the Khasi Hills go into making dishes like Putharo, Pu Nui, Pu Khlein etc. On other hand, Thombou Shingju or Lotus Stem salad, Chagem Pomba Bodi Thongba, Iromba are another specialities of Manipur. The Mizos from Mizoram can actually pat themselves on the back for having the original healthy diet salt and oil free. Bai is a traditional food of Mizos which is a combination of random vegetables, water and fermented soyabean. In Nagaland, each tribe’s cuisine centres on natural produce of their region. The Lothas are known for their lip smacking food cooked in bamboo containers and for their bamboo shoot preparations. The Aaos for their yam leaf preparation. Nagaland has been placed on the global map for a deadly spicy element known as Bhoot Jolokia or Naga Raja Mirchi. In Tripura, for the tripuris, food means enjoying the simple and subtle flavours of vegetables. With the Bengali influences creeping in, Tripuris are learning to fry their food and use masalas. One of the special item of Tripura is Bangui, a rice dish cooked in banana cones generally prepared during festivals. The special cuisines of Sikkim are Pu Doh, Neiiong, Momos, the Phangshapa the delicious strip of pork fat stewed with radishes and dried chillies.

MARKETING STRATEGIES

- Aggressive marketing of indigenous food products is very necessary to start with.
- The model of two states of India can be taken in this regard—Goa and Kerala. Goa aggressively markets Feni (a locally prepared alcoholic brew prepared either from cashew or coconut) and cashew while Kerala markets its spices.
- The North Eastern states must come up with its list of products that can attract the tourists. The website www.igougo.com tries to draw tourists towards Goa by saying it to be the ‘land of beach, hot sun and heady feni but look at the supreme appreciation of the lesser known alcoholic brew of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The strategies adopted in marketing of spices in Kerala can be used for marketing pickles that are exclusively produced in the region. Pickles of the world’s hottest chilli found exclusively in states like Assam and Nagaland can be much sought after souvenirs to take back home.
- The forceful marketing of Darjeeling tea needs to be reciprocated in the case of Assam tea as well. For this it must be made available to the tourists by setting up adequate outlets selling quality tea. The places in and around the Kaziranga National Park stands put to be the most profitable beneficiaries in such an exercise. As of now only Hatikhuli Tea Estate has its own company retail outlet in the vicinity of the on the National Highway 37 in addition to some other individual establishments. Assamese sweetmeats and pancakes that are not easily perishable can also be take away souvenirs for a visitor.
- Growth and development of tourism marketing involves attention on four salient features:
Attraction (sites of historical interest or natural beauty, manmade structures and monuments, museums, parks, spaces of socio-cultural attraction etc),

Accommodation (Hotels, Resorts, Guest Houses, Motels, Home Stays etc.).

Accessibility and Amenities (eateries, souvenir shops, tourist information bureaus, security, guides and other facilities covered under the head of niche tourism).

Amenities are of utmost necessity for a tourist and are factors that can pull a tourist towards a particular destination again in future.

- The Word-of-Mouth promotion is far more effective in generating interest regarding a tourist destination among the acquaintances of a tourist than cost-intensive advertisements in the media and tourist literature. This is primarily because of the notion that advertisements usually cover-up the unsavoury sides of a destination.

In the context of culinary tourism which can be included in the fourth category of necessary features of the growth and development of tourism a proper result-oriented marketing strategy is very vital. S.M.Jha opines that marketing strategies in the tourism sector involves going for strategies intended to offset challenges or to utilise the prospect available in what he calls the “(four Ps of marketing), e.g., alter the product, the price, the promotional campaign and the place.” [4]. For those involved in the promotion of culinary tourism tremendous focus is to be laid on the second and the third parameters as exorbitant pricing is a potential customer dispelling factor. Tourism planners and managers emphasize on sustainable tourism which concentrates on the maintaining socio-cultural identity on the face of the cultural aggression of the tourists (specifically in terms of attires, life-style, material possessions, exhibited habits), mitigating any unsavoury economic because of the cash inflow from tourists and physical impact which is the change in the physical features of a destination because of tourist inflow. This makes determining the Tourism Carrying Capacity of a particular region that witness tourist footfalls a major exercise for all the policy making agencies in the field. This is the capacity of a tourist spot of bearing tourist inflow without any undesirable impact on the social, cultural, psychological, environmental, legal, economic and other factors that are linked with the sustenance of the people and distinctiveness of the place. Growth of ethnic culinary tourism is inextricably related to maintaining standard levels of Tourism Carrying Capacity as an unmaintainable spurt in the number of tourists would lead to gradual dilution of the quality of the menu which is nothing less than a faulty representation of a region’s socio-cultural life. One recent trend in the hospitality industry of North East India is the growth of interest in ethnic food. While talking of ethnic food and traditional cuisines. Authentic presentation of ethnic food needs to be made at the various festivals and fairs that are organized in various places of the North East (the Hornbill festival of Nagaland, the Dihing Patkai Festival of Assam, the Ziro Festival of Arunachal Pradesh etc.) and they should be scheduled during the tourist season. The
authors visited two such festivals showcasing the culture of the area concerned in particular and the state of Assam in general – the Dhemaji Utsav and the Majuli Utsav. Gastronomy was not the primary thrust of the organizers but the food stalls catering local delicacies seemed to attract considerable crowd though the menu was limited. Instead of offering a complete palate the focus remained on a few products. A more professional approach in the culinary dimension can translate such festivals into cultural spaces that can be utilized for benefit of the local culinary entrepreneurs.

FUTURE TRENDS

The stakeholders of culinary tourism are to methodically target belonging to the categories that comprise of tourists ready to indulge in fresh experiences like the local cuisine. The Special Interest Tourist(s) and General Interest Tourist(s) are potential consumers. This would in turn bring in greater professionalism in all those involved directly and indirectly with the tourism machinery. That culinary tourism can be a major revenue earner for the states of the region can be presumed from the increased tourist footfalls in the region during the last few years. Foreign tourists inflow into Northeastern states has increased by over 27 per cent last year against a national growth of only 5.9 per cent, according to a top Union Tourism department official the number of foreign tourists visiting the Northeast region has increased by 27.9 per cent in in 2014.

As per provisional estimates, contribution of tourism to total employment (direct and indirect) for the years 2010-11, 2011-12 & 2012-13 was 10.78%, 11.49% and 12.36% respectively. During the 10th and 11th Five Year Plans, the contribution of tourism to total employment (both direct and indirect) progressed from 8.27% to 11.49% and the Foreign Exchange earnings for the corresponding period progressed from Rs.20729 crore to Rs.94487 crore. An additional employment of 24.5 million (direct and Indirect) is targeted to be created during the years 2010 to 2016. Understanding the sense behind such an assertion in the whole of India in general and the prospect of culinary tourism in India the National Tourism Policy of India, 2002 stated that attempts should be made to: Capitalize by packaging India”s unmatched variety of traditional cuisines that are today becoming increasingly popular in the world. The linkages and ripple effects created by a rapidly expanding restaurant sector can have dramatic implications for the Indian economy, implement private-public partnership of the Culinary Institute of India that will research and document ancient culinary traditions, create a highly skilled workforce of culinary professionals that can populate not only hotel and catering establishments in India, but also internationally through a non-traditional medium, and encourage Indian entrepreneurs to establish restaurants of Indian ethnic cuisine internationally, by conceiving an innovative incentive scheme. For these initiatives , tourism industry definitely need source of funding, especially from government. It would encourage the restaurants to adapt more ethnic cuisines in their menu, exploring the opportunities of Culinary Tourism.
SWOT ANALYSIS

The aroma of Northeast culinary skill has reached foreign shores, attracting them in hordes to idyllic landscape of northeast india. In a nutshell we can plot the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats of Tourism Industry in the following manner:

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<th>STRENGTH</th>
<th>WEAKNESS</th>
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<td>• Global band.</td>
<td>• Lack of proper solid waste management.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Highly educated</td>
<td>• Overchanging of services</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Good law and order.</td>
<td>• Distance from major markets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Better infrastructure</td>
<td>• Infrastructure issues with respect to transportation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Segmented Tourist packages</td>
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<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>THREATS</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Culinary Tourism</td>
<td>• Threats from other competitive states in India like Kerela, Goa, Himachal Pradesh etc.</td>
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<td>• Medical Tourism</td>
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<td>• EcoTourism</td>
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<td>• Trade Opportunities</td>
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V. Conclusion:

To sum up, Northeast India Culinary Tourism has vast potential for generating employment and earning large sums of foreign exchange besides country’s overall economic and social development. Tourism is a multi-dimensional activity and basically a service industry. It would be necessary that both Central and State governments, private sector and voluntary organisation become active partners in the endeavour to attain sustainable growth in tourism. Culinary is bestly and experienced in India because in every hundred metres, the food dimension changes and a tourist can enjoy the different food with different experience which is nowhere found in the world.[5] Tourist are gradually pouring into the Northeast but most states of the region are still faring below the national average and as such there is no space for complacency. Tourist circuits are few and facilities concentrated on a few places. Despite odds culinary tourism can be gainful source of livelihood for the people and for this the culinary richness of the region needs to showcase effectively for the prospective tourist in discovering the richness of it one will discover the culture of the land. However, Culinary Tourism will keep growing, create huge job opportunities in all the related sectors including small and medium scale businesses. In future Culinary Tourism will be the largest sector of Tourism.
industry in terms of tourism receipts, while developing countries will emerge as top most destinations due to their natural resources and cheap labour force.

References:


