



RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXPLORING ECO-TOURISM TREASURE OF NORTH-EASTERN STATES OF INDIA: A SUSTAINABILITY PERSPECTIVE

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 09th March, 2025

Received in revised form

21st April, 2025

Accepted 19th May, 2025

Published online 30th July, 2025

Key words:

Ecotourism, Homestay,
Hotels, Tribal Communities and Tourists.

ABSTRACT

The northeastern states of India are blessed with beautiful natural landscapes, flora and fauna, folk music, mountains, mysterious clouds, cuisines, and tribal culture, making it unique for eco-tourism. The region has enormous scope for the growth of eco-tourism, with many wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, local art and craft, and fairs and festivals that can attract more tourists from home and abroad. This beautiful region abounds with adventurous activities like jungle safari, trekking, pilgrimage tour, mountaineering, tea garden tour, and ornithological tour are also available. However, transportation, accessibility, security threats, tourist facilities, hygienic food, accommodation, tourist information system, system of permission, and brand image are the basic challenges before its the tourism sector. Through a descriptive analysis, this paper discusses the opportunity and scope of sustainable eco-tourism in the North-Eastern states of India.

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Citation: Dr. Sukanta Sarkar, Dr. Suman Kalyan Chaudhury and Dr. Apoorva Behera. 2025. "Exploring Eco-tourism Treasure of North-Eastern States of India: A Sustainability Perspective". *International Journal of Current Research*, 17, (07), 33875-33880.

INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is a nature-based activity that attracts people to certain scenic places of nature. Such activities are economically, ecologically, and socially sustainable and helpful for the well-being of the local people and conservation of the areas. Local people benefit through such activity without affecting their culture and customs. Sustainable ecotourism benefits both the visitors and the locals. Since it is based on certain principles, like (a) awareness about the culture and environment; (b) reducing the social, psychological, and behavioural effects; (c) conservation of nature, and (d) empowerment of local communities as management of waste and preservation of nature are an integral part of the ecotourism. There are many benefits of eco-tourism, like generating revenue that can be used for development of nature and local communities; (b) creating employment opportunity among the locals that can be useful for fighting against poverty and unemployment; (c) increases environmental awareness among the tourists and local people; and (d) helping to enhance biodiversity, and conservation of nature (Zimik and Barman, 2021). Ecotourism can be classified in four ways: These are (a) Mutually beneficial community development trips, where a traveller lives with the local communities to collect more and

more information about their culture and lifestyles, and simultaneously works for the welfare of the local people. (b) Eco lodging and low-impact accommodation in natural surroundings with little disturbance to the local people and the wildlife, as these accommodations are generally prepared using the local resources with caution of limited resources. (c) Eco trekking and activity-based ecotourism is a type of educational tour where travellers visit various places and involve themselves in climbing, hiking, water-based activities, nature walking etc., carried out with minimum harm to nature. and (d) Agritourism and a focus on rural communities where travellers visit the rural areas to enrich their understanding of the local life and culture. Ecotourism raises awareness about nature among travellers. It increases the opportunities for jobs and boosts the rural economy. It encourages governments, charitable organizations, and other enterprises the conserve of nature (Saikhom, 2021). The term tourism was introduced in the 19th century and has been associated with sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism is involved with the development of both the present and future generations. Tourism basically means the movement of people outside their homes to visit various places. It is considered a bigger industry in terms of employment and foreign exchange earnings. It is useful for improving communication among people and solving various

social disputes. It is useful for increasing the conservation of nature and economic growth. Travellers can witness the beauty of the natural environment and also learn about the culture of the ethnic people living in its lap. It can be useful for promoting the nature and culture of people. India's diversified culture and natural beauty open opportunities for the development of ecotourism. Lakshadweep Islands, North-East India, Kerala, the Himalayan region, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands have an enormous scope for the growth of ecotourism (Rubita, 2012).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper is explorative in nature. The basic objectives of the paper are as follows:

- To have an insight into the opportunity of sustainable eco-tourism in the North-Eastern States of India.
- To identify the basic challenges before the tourism sector of the states of India and
- To identify the variables of the SWOT Matrix for tourism in the north-eastern states.

Opportunity and Scope of Sustainable Eco-Tourism:

North-eastern states of India are well-known for their beautiful natural landscapes. Hills and mountains dominate the region. This region constitutes the eastern part of the Himalayas. Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim, and Nagaland are the eight states of the region. These are well blessed with flora and fauna, folk music, landscape, mountains, mysterious clouds, cuisines, etc. But of connectivity due to geographical isolation is a big challenge to the tourism sector of the region. There is also an impression among outsider that this region is not safe and secure for them to visit in contrast, these states are more peaceful, like their natural beauty. There are many wildlife sanctuaries and national parks in the region. The specialty of the heritage of this region is the tribal culture. Many people visit this region to understand the tribal people and their indigenous culture. Local art and craft of them are different. Fairs and festivals can be useful for attracting more tourists. The Hornbill Festival of Nagaland is a perfect example of this. Adventurous activities, jungle safari, trekking, pilgrimage tour, mountaineering, tea garden tour, ornithological tour etc. are open a massive scope for ecotourism (Priya and Dhiren, 2016).

The above table (1) discusses the topography of the north-eastern region of India. It has been found that Arunachal Pradesh is the largest state in terms of geographical area, but Assam is the largest state in terms of population. Assam and Arunachal Pradesh have more airports than the other states. Except for Sikkim, railway connectivity is available in every state. Water transport is possible in the north-eastern states except Sikkim and Tripura. Lack of proper Transportation and accessibility, threats, tourist facilities, hygienic food, accommodation, tourist information system, system of permission, brand image, and security threats etc. are the basic challenges before this sector of the region. Heavy rains, thick jungle tracks, and rivers like the Brahmaputra and Barak have shaped its economy, lifestyle, and ecology of the region. Assam is more popular among tourists. It attracts more tourists due to its good connectivity and unique natural places. Nagaland is the least visited state. Mawlynnong village of East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya is the cleanest village in

Asia. Villagers are more concerned about the conservation of nature. Umden is a village of Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya, is known as a sericulture hub and is well-known for the production of their silk and famous for its orchards and green fields. Majuli in Assam is popular among tourist as being the largest riverine island in India. Every year, thousands of tourists visit this place. Raas is the main festival of the island. Namphake village of Assam is a perfect place for ecotourism as the Tai-Phake tribe live in the place. It is situated on the south bank of Buridihing River. Touphema of Nagaland is a well-known place for community based tourism. The village was built for the travellers for understanding the lifestyle and history of the people of the place (Phukon et. al., 2020).

Loktak lake in Manipur has more opportunities for ecotourism. It is a flouting lake and near to its capital Imphal. It is the largest freshwater lake in India. The lake supports the livelihood of thousands of people as it absorbs the floodwater in rainy seasons. Dzongu in North Sikkim is another destination for tourists. This place is reserved for the Lepcha tribal community. They enjoy their unique culture, customs, and language. The village is near the Teesta river. The region is famous for various unique handicraft products. Handicraft and bamboo goods are traditionally produced by the local tribes. These products include the Lashingphee of Manipur, Carpets of Arunachal Pradesh, Muga products of Assam, are Shawls of Mizoram are the example of some unique products. Manas National Park and Kaziranga National Park have more scope for ecotourism. The Manas Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in Assam which is a hotspot of biodiversity. Kaziranga National Park is situated in the Nagaon and Golaghat districts of Assam. This park is well-known for its one-horned rhinoceroses. It was included in the list of World Heritage Sites in 1985. The ethnic landscape of the region is useful for other types of tourism, such as mountain tourism, folklore tourism, tribal tourism, anthropological tourism, tea tourism, and ethnic tourism. Nameri National Park of Assam is situated in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas. It is a paradise for bird watching with its unique biodiversity (Karmakar, 2023).

Khonoma is an Angami Naga village in Nagaland and it has a green village tag. The Khonoma nature conservation and Tragopan sanctuary were established in 1998 for development of the place. Yuksom is a historical town of Sikkim which is famous for its green and charming climate. It is surrounded by the high hills and lush green forests. Kanchenjunga national park of Sikkim is popular among the trekkers. The mban is a beautiful ancient village of West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. Community-based eco-tourism has been introduced in the village. Eaglenest wildlife sanctuary is situated in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. It is known for its diverse animal population. There are many rare animal and bird species in the sanctuary. Khumulwng eco-park of Tripura is situated in the Baramura hill range having a unique panoramic environment. Khumulwng in tribal language means "valley of flowers". It is surrounded by green forests and river valleys. The Ziro valley of Arunachal Pradesh has plenty of natural elements for tourist interest and attractions. This valley is surrounded with blue pine and bamboo plantations. The other important attractions of this locality are the Hakhe Tari Trek, Talley Valley Trek, Pamu-Yalang Trek, Bird Watching Expedition, and Ziro Butterfly Meet. The Talley valley wildlife sanctuary is the another place of attraction of Arunachal Pradesh. It has the unique and endangered but a diverse range of flora and fauna (Joshi & Dhyani, 2009). The table (2)

Table 1. Overview of the North-Eastern Region of India

States	Airports	Area ¹	Population ²	Literacy rate ³	Railway (Km)	Waterways (Km)
Arunachal	4	83,743	1,383,727	65.38	12	311
Assam	7	78,438	31,205,576	72.2	2519	1938
Manipur	1	22,327	2,855,794	76.9	13	44
Meghalaya	1	22,429	3,366,755	74.4	9	90
Mizoram	1	22,081	1,097,206	91.33	2	155
Nagaland	1	16,579	1,978,502	79.55	11	276
Sikkim	1	7,098	610,577	81.24	0	-
Tripura	1	10,486	3,673,917	87.8	193	-
Total	17	263181	46,172,054	78.59	2759	2814

Source: Economic survey of the States; Note: ¹ as Sq. Km; ² as per 2011 census report; ³ as percent

Table 2. Wildlife Sanctuaries and their specialty for Ecotourism in Assam

Name	Area (sq. km)	District	Specialty
Morat logri	451	Karbi Anglong	Wild Pig, Woodland Bird, Rock Python
Borail	326.26	Cachar	Himalayan Black Deer, Horn Bill, Clouded Leopard
Amcheng	78.64	Kamrup	Vulture, Python, Cobra, Butterflies
Nambor	97.15	Golaghat	Elephant
Gibbon	20.98	Jorhat	Hoolock Gibbon, Birds
Barnadi	26.22	Udalguri	Pigmy Hog, Elephant, Hornbill, Hispid Hare
Burha sapor	44.06	Sonitpur	Water Buffalo, Aquatic Bird, Bengal Florican, Rhino
Nambar	325.25	Karbi anglong	Elephant And Hoolock Gibbon
Garampani	6.05	Golaghat	Elephant, Hoolock Gibbon And Birds
Sonai rupai	220.00	Sonitpur	Tiger, Elephant, Hornbill
Chakrashila	45.56	Dhubri and Kokrajhar	Golden Langur And Aquatic Bird
Bherjan- Podumoni	7.22	Tinisukia	Hoolock Gibbon, Pigtailed Macaque, Stump Tailed Macque
Laokhowa	70.13	Nagaon	Wild Buffalo, Swamp Deer, Duck, Cormorant, Rhin
Pobha	49	North Lakhimpur	Wild Water Buffalo
Pobitora	39	Morigaon	One Horned Rhino, Leopard, Tiger

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam.2021

Table 3. List of Register Homestay in Ziro, Arunachal Pradesh

Name of Homestay owner	Location	Contact No
Miss Takhe Ankha	Hong Village	+91 8575770952
Smti Narang Yamyang	Hong Village	+918014012680
Mr Takhe Nyikang	Hong Village	+91 8014068697
Miss Dusu Yami	Perbi, Ziro	+919856347746
Miss Hage Anu	Hari village	+918794363633
Shri Hage Dolo	Hari village	+919615239954
Shri Hage Hinda	Hari village	+918014526454
Shri Tasso Rinyo	Hari village	+918729904079
Smti Hibu Yache	Siirro village	+918575052646
Smti Kago Kampu	Siirro village	+918014348727
Smti Punyo Yalung	Siirro village	+919856209494
Smti Nada Yasha	Hija village	+918974100539
Smti Pura Yanya	Hija village	+918014647860
Shri Michi Tajo	Michi village	+918014012558
Shri Mudang Rosy	Mudang Tage village	+918794405047
Shri Tamo Tamang	Bamin village	+919862890096
Smti Talying Shanti	Suluya village	+919615170002
Smti Tiling Yaneng	Ziro village	+918974384507
Smti Hinyo Amung	Ziro village	+918132861756
Shri Koj Mama	Hapoli village	+918575248013

Source: Mize, T., Kanwal, K., Rangini, N., Yama, L., Patuk, O., and Lodhi, M. (2016). The Current Development of Ecotourism in Ziro Valley and its significance in Arunachal Pradesh, India, IJARIE, 2 (6), 1740.

Table 4. Protected Area Network for Ecotourism in Manipur

Protected Area (conservation)	District	Area (Sq. Km)
Keibul Lamjao NP (In-situ)	Bishnupur	40.00
Yangoupokpi Lokchao WLS (In-situ)	Chandel	184.80
Bunning WLS (In-situ)	Tamenglong	115.80
Zeilad WLS (Insitu)	Tamenglong	21.00
Kailam WLS (Insitu)	Churachandpur	187.50
Jiri-Makru WLS (In-situ)	Tamenglong	198.00
Shiroi NP(In-situ)	Ukhrul	797
Manipur Zoological Garden (Ex-situ)	Imphal West (Iroishemba)	0.08
Second Home of Sangai (Ex-situ)	Imphal West (Iroishemba)	0.06
Orchid Preservation Centre (Ex-situ)	Imphal East (Khonghampat)	0.50

Source: Alam, W. (2019). A Review on the Scopes of Ecotourism in Manipur: An Approach for Environmental Conservation, International Journal of Scientific Research and Reviews, IJSRR, 8 (1), 176-177.

Table 5. State-wise domestic and foreign tourist visits in North-eastern States of India, 2020-21

State	2020		2021		Growth Rate (%)	
	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign	DTV 21/20	FTV 21/20
Arunachal Pradesh	42871	961	102915	182	140.06	-81.06
Assam	1266898	7285	1409161	536	11.23	-92.64
Manipur	49669	3139	49371	648	-0.60	-79.36
Meghalaya	24734	2311	154409	411	524.28	-82.22
Mizoram	30890	265	87232	234	182.40	-11.70
Nagaland	10979	518	23968	325	118.31	-37.26
Sikkim	316408	19935	511669	11508	61.71	-42.27
Tripura	127815	31877	177816	5	39.12	-99.98

Source: India Tourism Statistics, 2022, p.139.

Table 6. Percentage shares and rank of different North-eastern States of India in domestic and foreign tourist visits, during 2021

State	2021		Percentage Share		Rank 21	
	Domestic	Foreign	DTV	FTV	DTV	FTV
Arunachal Pradesh	102915	182	0.02	0.02	33	32
Assam	1409161	536	0.21	0.05	23	27
Manipur	49371	648	0.01	0.06	35	26
Meghalaya	154409	411	0.02	0.04	31	28
Mizoram	87232	234	0.01	0.02	34	31
Nagaland	23968	325	0.00	0.03	36	29
Sikkim	511669	11508	0.08	1.09	25	13
Tripura	177816	5	0.03	0.00	30	36

Source: India Tourism Statistics, 2022, p.141.

Table 7. Recognized travel trade service provider in the country during 2021-22

States	Green Shoots/Start Ups	Tour operators	Travel Agent	Tourist Transport Operator	Total
Arunachal	0	0	0	0	0
Assam	0	2	1	0	3
Manipur	2	2	0	0	4
Meghalaya	0	0	0	0	0
Mizoram	0	0	0	0	0
Nagaland	0	0	0	0	0
Tripura	0	1	0	0	1
Sikkim	0	0	0	0	0

Source: India Tourism Statistics, 2022, p.168.

Table 8. SWOT Matrix for Tourism of North-eastern States

Strengths	Weaknesses
•Historical and Ethnic commonalities along with a cultural Diaspora •Surrounded by tourist zones of India •Education Index •Strategic Location for Look East Policy •Youthful Population •Strong Local Communities •Natural Resources •Moderate climatic conditions •Local market for handicrafts and handlooms. •The hospitable and friendly behaviour of the people in this region	•Poor connectivity and lack of Infrastructure •Image problem- myths about terrorist activities •Low awareness in the market •Transport and Communication bottlenecks •Lack of network and synergy among public and private organizations •Lack of trained experienced workforce
Opportunities	Threats
•Ecological Resources, Agricultural Development •Vast rural villages •Identifying Niche Area Rural Innovation •Special attention to Northeast India •Vast unexplored rural destinations •Enhancing local workforce training and educating residents about welcoming tourists •The potential for international engagement in introducing and developing the region's tourism attractions.	•Growth of insurgent activities •Economic Backwardness •Extortion network •Ethnic clashes

discusses the wildlife sanctuaries and their specialty for ecotourism in Assam. It has been observed that wildlife parks and sanctuaries are scattered in various districts of Assam, providing ample opportunity for ecotourism. Nameri National Park (Assam), Dibru-Saikhowa National Park (Assam), Orang National Park (Assam), Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary (Assam), Namdapha National Park (Arunachal Pradesh), Mouling National Park (Arunachal Pradesh), Dampa Tiger Reserve

(Mizoram), Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary (Nagaland), Balpakram National Park (Meghalaya), and Singchung Bugun Village Community Reserve (Arunachal Pradesh) are the examples of some wildlife parks and sanctuaries. There is also a growing scope for ecotourism based on the tea plantations in the region. Tea plantation gardens are found more or less in every state of the region. Jorhat, Tinsukia, and Dibrugarh in Upper Assam are well known for their tea plantation. In Lower Assam, tea

gardens are available in Barpeta and Goalpara. Ambikanagar tea estate and the Bhuvan Valley tea estate are popular in the Cachar district of Assam. The Tripureswari Tea Estate and the Hiracherra Tea Estate are renowned in Tripura. Mawlyngot Tea Estate and the Lakysiew Tea Estate are well-known in Meghalaya. Temi Tea Estate is popular in Sikkim (Bressers, 2004). The above table discusses the registered homestays in Ziro, Arunachal Pradesh. Ziro is a hilly station in Arunachal Pradesh. It has been found that homestay facilities are available in this town. Such facilities are available in Hong Village, Hari village, Hapoli village, Ziro village, Suluya village, Bamin village, Mudang Tage village, Michi village, etc. Ziro is the capital of the Lower Subansiri District. There are possibilities for the growth of ecotourism based on the adventure tourism in the region. River rafting, mountaineering, and trekking are also possible. Some examples of adventure tourism activities in the region are trekking in the Dzukou valley, white water rafting in the Brahmaputra river, paragliding in Sikkim, mountaineering in Arunachal Pradesh, caving in Meghalaya, biking in the Ziro valley, and angling in the rivers of Arunachal Pradesh. Manipur is another beautiful State of this region. Manipur is known as the of jewel in Northeast India. The state is popular for its cultural festivals, which attract lots of tourists. The popular festivals are Chumpha, Ningol Chakhouba, Rasa Lila, Kut Festival, Heikru Hitongba, Ratha Jatra, Cheiraoba, Lai-Haraoba, Yaoshang (Doljatra), Lui-Ngai-Ni etc.

The table (4) discusses the protected area network for ecotourism in Manipur. Manipur is blessed with gurgling rivers, rolling meadows, emerald mountains, and foaming waterfalls. The state is famous for its scenic beauty, rich flora and fauna, lush green plains and hills, salubrious climate, floating national parks, wetlands, and lakes. Manipur is the land of the Meitei, Kuki-Chin-Mizo, Nagas, and Gorkhas. The Shiri-Kashong range is enriched with endangered species. There are various old caves like Khangkhui caves, Mongjam caves, Tharon cave, Sangbu caves, Nongpok Keithelmanbi Cave, and Wangoo caves are the popular caves in Manipur. Barak Waterfall, Khayang Waterfall, Alng Takhou waterfall, Dilily Waterfall, Ngaloï Falls, Bro Waterfall, Ishing and Thingbi waterfall are the important waterfalls in the state. Andaro is a beautiful ancient village having the dolls of 29 recognised tribes of Manipur. Khongampat Orchidarium is popular among the tourists. It is the breeding centre of 110 species of orchids. Singda is a beautiful hill station near the Singda lake. Loktak lake and Sendra Island are well-known among tourists. Kroubu-Ching, Thangjing-Ching, and Nongmaiching-Ching are the traditional eco-tourism centers of the State. Ecotourism is playing a vital role of Tripura tourism industry. Lush green landscapes and diverse flora and fauna make the state a unique place for the tourists. The state has many national parks and sanctuaries. Sepahijala wildlife sanctuary, Trishna wildlife sanctuary, Rowa wildlife sanctuary, Baramura eco-park, Gomati wildlife sanctuary, Kalapania nature park, Tepania eco-park, and Khumulwng eco-park are the popular ecotourism places of Tripura. Mizoram is another state in the region having more potentiality in ecotourism. Tamdil Lake, Champai, Lunglei, Vantawng Water Falls. Bung and Paikhai are popular among the tourist. Phawngpui and Dampa wildlife sanctuaries are the best places for the trekking and wildlife viewing. Phawngpui is known as the Blue Mountain. It is a reserved place for the rare exotic plants and medicinal herbs. Dampa is a popular wildlife sanctuary surrounded by Bangladesh, Mizoram, and Tripura. Champai is

a small town near the Myanmar border. It is well-known for its natural beauties. The table (5) discusses the state-wise domestic and foreign tourist visits to the North-eastern States of India. It has been found that Assam, Sikkim, and Tripura are attracting more and more tourists than the other states. Nagaland is the least popular among the tourists, preceded by Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Manipur. There are more potentialities of ecotourism in Arunachal Pradesh. More than 500 species of birds are found in the state. Each district of the state has a rare variety of orchids. There are many wildlife sanctuaries and natural parks in the state, like Namdapha Wildlife Sanctuar, Dihang Debang Biosphere Reserve, Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary, Dr. Daying Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, Mouling National Park. Kane Wildlife Sanctuary, Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary, and Sessa Orchid Sanctuary. The state has five major rivers (Tirap, Siang, Lohit, Subansiri, and Kameng), and the majority of the population is tribals. Aalo it is the capital of West Siang District and an ideal place for trekking, angling, and hiking. Pashighat is the capital of East Siang district and is surrounded by the snow-clad peaks and the tributary of Brahmaputra. Dong Valley is the place from where people can see the first Sunrise of the country. Namsai is well known for natural beauty and biodiversity of Piyong Reserve forest. Yingkiong is the capital of Upper Siang district and popular for its beautiful landscape and natural beauty. Koloriang is the capital of Kurung Kumey district, and travellers can enjoy the culture of the Nyishi community. Seppa is the capital of the East Kameng district, and is situated on the bank of Kameng River. Tawang is a popular hill station. It is well-known for its various Buddhist cultural places. The above table discusses the percentage shares and rank of different north-eastern states of India. It has been found that the highest number of domestic tourists visited Assam, followed by Sikkim and Tripura. The least number of domestic tourists visited Nagaland, followed by Manipur, and Mizoram. The highest number of foreign tourists visited Sikkim, followed by Manipur and Assam. The least number of foreign tourists visited Tripura, followed by Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. Meghalaya is blessed with the beauty of nature as there are more opportunities for ecotourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, and agri-tourism. There are scopes for hard and soft tourism activities. A Traveller can be involved in hard tourism, like rock climbing, trekking, caving etc. Soft adventure tourism involves bird watching, eco-tour, fishing, boating, etc. Tourists can avail of the homestay and homely stay in local resorts. Travellers can involve in barn dances, campfires, meeting barnyard animals, breweries, etc. Khasi hills, Jaintia hills, and Garo hills have the abundance of natural heritage. Sohpetbneng Peak, Spread Eagle Falls, Sweet Falls, Nongkhnun islands, Kyllang Rock, Elephant Falls, Diengieipeak, and Cherrapunjee are the popular places of Khasi hills. Balpakram national wildlife park, Nengkong, Balpakram, Siju caves, Resubalpara, and Wakso Chiring the tourist-interest places of Garo hills. Bishop and Beadon Falls, Elephant Falls, Sweet Falls, Lmilchang Dare Falls, and Spread Eagle Falls are the waterfalls of the state. Travellers can enjoy the Shillong Peak and Tura Peak. The table (7) discusses the recognized travel trade service centers in the north-eastern States. It has been found that Manipur, Assam, and Tripura provide recognized travel trade services. The other states of the region do not have any recognized travel trade services. The Himalayan state of Sikkim is well-known for its tourism sector. The Leppchas the tribals of the Sikkim call it as "Nye-Mal-Ale" or "Heaven". There are many ecotourism zones in Sikkim. Nampong lingdok ecotourism zone, Okharey

ecotourism zone, Uttarey ecotourism zone, Lingee Payong ecotourism zone, Lachung ecotourism zone, Lachen ecotourism zone, Kitam ecotourism zone, Khecheopari ecotourism zone, Hee-bermiok ecotourism zone, East Pendum ecotourism zone, and Dzongu ecotourism zone are the examples of them. Opportunities like river rafting, hiking, and trekking are available in the state. Cymbidiums, Hooheriana, Dendrobiums, Cattleyas etc. are the famous orchids that originate in the state. Fairy blue birds like kingfishers, cuckoos, woodpeckers, Emerald Dove, etc., are the attractive birds which adore the sky of the state. Sikkim has Khangchendzonga National Park, Fambong Lho Wildlife Sanctuary, and Singba Rhododendron Sanctuary. White water rafting adventure sport is popular in the state. Saikip-Jorethang-Majitar-Melli and Makhna-Sirwani-Bardang-Rangpo are the two popular rafting routes. Homestays with the locals is popular in Sikkim.

CONCLUSION

The tourism industry is considered a bigger industry in terms of employment and foreign currency earnings. It is useful for improving communication among people and solving various social disputes. Ecotourism is useful for increasing conservation and economic growth. Travellers can witness the beauty of the natural environment and also learn about the culture of the ethnic peoples. The specialty of the heritage of this region is the tribal culture. Many people visit this region to learn about the tribal people and their indigenous culture. Adventurous activities, jungle safari, trekking, pilgrimage tour, mountaineering, tea garden tour, ornithological tour, etc. have a massive scope for ecotourism.

There is enormous scope for sustainable ecotourism in the region. There are many wildlife sanctuaries and natural parks in the region. Homestays with the locals are popular in many places of the region. Assam is more popular among tourists. It attracts more tourists due to its good connectivity and unique natural places. Nagaland is the least visited state. Loktak lake in Manipur has more opportunities for ecotourism. There is also the scope of growing ecotourism based on the tea plantations in the region. Tea plantation gardens are available in more or less in every state of the region.

Cultural festivals also attract lots of tourists. The ethnic landscape of the region is useful for other tourism like mountain tourism, folklore tourism, tribal tourism, anthropological tourism, tea tourism, and ethnic tourism. Homestays with the locals are popular in Sikkim. Transportation, accessibility, security threats, tourist facilities, hygienic food, good accommodation, tourist information system, system of permission, brand image, etc. are the basic challenges before the tourism sector of the region. Implementation of tourism policies are important for the development the tourism sector of this region. Government should focus on community involvement, prioritization of domestic tourism sector, promotion of tourism infrastructure, enhancement of tourist facilities and services, extension of extend tourism-based education and training, and better management of the sector.

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