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The developmental scenario of heritage tourism in Sivasagar district, Assam–
A study by using SWOT analysis.

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Abstract-

Assam, an area known for its rich historical and cultural significance. Sivasagar, once the capital of the Ahom kingdom, is home to numerous heritage sites such as Rang Ghar, Talatal Ghar, Sivasagar Tank, and the Sivadol Temple complex. Despite its historical prominence, the tourism potential of the district remains underutilized. In the midway between inbound tourism and outbound tourism, there are vast sub-branches of tourism like heritage tourism. Heritage tourism plays a principal role in visiting historic places and having the grip to see the glorious past. Sivasagar District of Assam is one of the notable areas regarding heritage tourism. Which has several heritage tourism destinations. Distinctively it has to be mentioned that the area has one world heritage site also, which is called Group of Four Maidam (Charaideo). The present study has been carried out by adopting an exploratory research method and a simple random sampling technique has been used for collecting the data from the native people and tourists; Purposive sampling techniques have been adopted to select the heritage sites. The researcher has visited the heritage sites and ATDC (Assam Tourism Developmental Council) Sivasagar Circle to collect the necessary data. Proving the entire data and information terminated with the proper statistical method applying a quantitatively driven mixed method approach (Quan +qual design) and through the digitized map with Q-GIS. The study shows the pros and cons of the study area and analyzes the data and information by using SWOT Analysis. The concluding remark has carried a proper suggestive measure to control the stumbling block of the study area.

Keywords- Tourism, Heritage tourism, revenue generation, Development, SWOT analysis.

1. Introduction-

Tourism provides practical knowledge of a phenomenon and a theoretical concept. It generates socio-economic and cultural development and also there is a scope for revenue generation. Through the development of the tourism sector; one place, district, state, or country, may gather international familiarity. Tourism is such a platform where people can get employment directly through the government, NGO, and other private and non-private sectors; but also, there is a way to link to the local people to create employment or make earning source in the particular tourist place by themselves. Tourism is a package of travel, and business (including every type or mode of business and travel). The word “Heritage” is related to inheritance; a transferable mode from generation to generation. It is dominant with historical values. Heritage is a key to observing the cultural tradition of society and tourism is a way to acquire traditional to modern knowledge regarding the place. Heritage tourism is a broad field of travel and explains culture as an important marketing division to attract tourists to heritage sites. (Nuryanti,1966). The word Heritage carries bright and ancient glories of culture and tradition. Heritage tourism is a way to get in touch with the histories of a particular area. It may be tangible or intangible; which includes ancient, ruins, architectural masterpieces, sacred sites, traditional crafts, folklore, music, dance, and cuisine etc. Heritage tourism is one of the best practical modes to provide knowledge of the different cultures and traditions and help people understand the significance and context of heritage sites and artifacts (Zeppel H. and Hall M.1990).

According to the Ohio Division of Travel & Tourism (2002), heritage tourism is "traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the people and stories of the past". The term Heritage Tourism is yet to be expanded in a broader sense. Heritage tourism is also can be defined as the source of economic development and restructuring and the establishment of new tourism markets (Oglethorpe, 1987; Urry, 1990; Weiler & Hall, 1992).

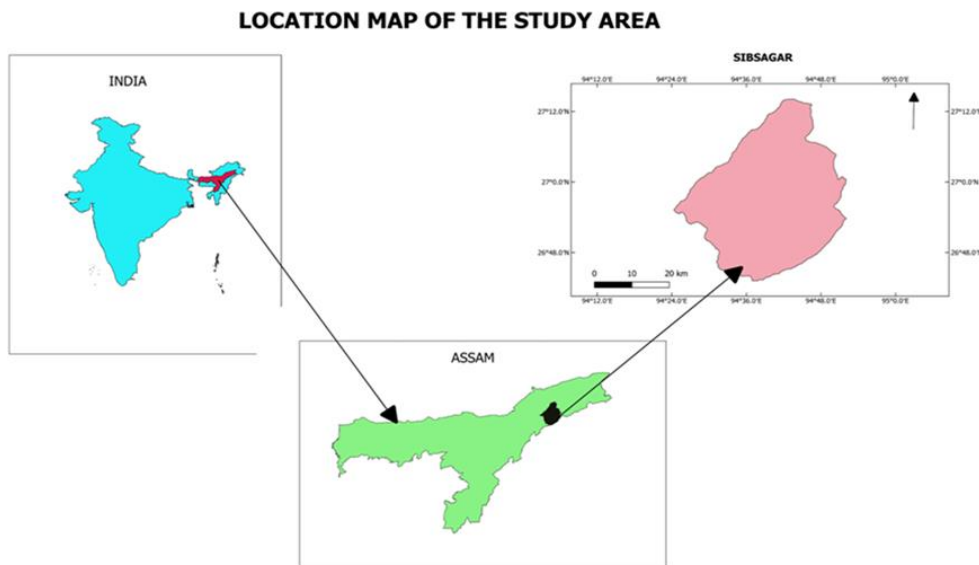
Heritage tourism plays a crucial role in promoting and conservation of heritage sites and it helps to generate revenue by attracting people to the sites. Heritage tourism fosters cultural

exchange and mutual understanding between visitors and native people. Participating with the local people in cultural activities generates immense love and attraction to the particular culture and tradition and also there is a big root for the cultural exchange. Heritage tourism generates employment opportunities for the native people by providing a platform for business and other relevant activities; such as accommodations, transportation, dining, and souvenir sales. It assists to empower the local community. Heritage tourism leads to the socio-economic development of an area.

Heritage tourism is one of the best ways to see the golden past; Which also can generate a way to compare and analyze the various archaeological sites in the world. Tourism and heritage tourism are the collaborative sense; tourism plays a median role in a situation and it asserts the heritage.

In the context of India, heritage tourism is mostly dominant with tangible and intangible heritage tourism. Within the geographical area of the world, there are lots of heritage sites recognized by UNESCO. In that manner, three heritage sites of India are situated in Assam and one of them is situated in the study area, which is a group of four maidams, Charaideo (Undivided Sivasagar) which carries immense importance to study the heritage sites of the study area. From the various heritage sites, the present study covers 14 sample sites for the study. Which has innumerable potential to generate development in the study area.

2. Study area-



Sivasagar district exists in the upper valley of Assam. The latitudinal extension is $26^{\circ}58'48.0000''$ North and the longitudinal extension is $94^{\circ}37'47.9892''$ East.

The district is drained by the major rivers Brahmaputra, Dihing, Dikhow, Disang, and Jhanji.

The Climate of the study area is characterized by a warm, humid, rainy summer and cool dry winter. In winter, there is much less rainfall than in summer. The annual average temperature is 23.7°C and in a year average rainfall is 2244.5 mm.

The present study covers the area under the heritage sites of the Sivasagar district. Both revenue-generated and non-generated sites are in this area. Downright 14 heritage sites are covered within this study area.

Heritage Sites
1.Sivadol complex (1.1 Siva Do, 1.2 Devi Dol, 1.3 Bishnu Dol).
2. Sivasagar tank
3. Joi Dol
4. Jaysagar Tank
5. Rudrasagar Dol

6. Rudrasagar Tank
7. Rang Ghar
8. Talatal Ghar
9. Kareng Ghar
10. Group of four Maidams
11. Namdang Stone Bridge
12. Bakhar Bengena Tree

3. Objectives of the study-

1. To analyze the developmental scenario of heritage tourism through SWOT analysis in Sivasagar district, Assam.

4. Methodology-

To carry out the present study 'Exploratory' research method has been adopted and the data has been gathered by adopting simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Both secondary and primary data have been gathered; from the primary sources data were collected by visiting and interacting with the respondents and the required data has also been gathered from ATDC (Assam Tourism Development Council) Sivasagars sub-circle, DTPC (District Promotional Council). Secondary data were collected through various journals, theses, articles, books, etc. Proving the entire data and information terminated with the proper statistical method applying a quantitatively driven mixed method approach (Quan +qual design) and through the digitized map with Q- GIS.

5. Results and Discussion-

5.1 To analyze the developmental scenario of heritage tourism through SWOT analysis in Sivasagar district, Assam.

To assess the developmental scenario of heritage tourism, SWOT analysis is one of the most salient techniques. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. A SWOT analysis brings light to the actual image of the development. Some factors influence the SWOT of a particular place. Internal and external are two kinds of factors we may find in SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis is a positive way to analyze the cause and effect of an

organization, institute, or situation. For mounting the development of an area or an industry, initially, it should carry the process of SWOT.

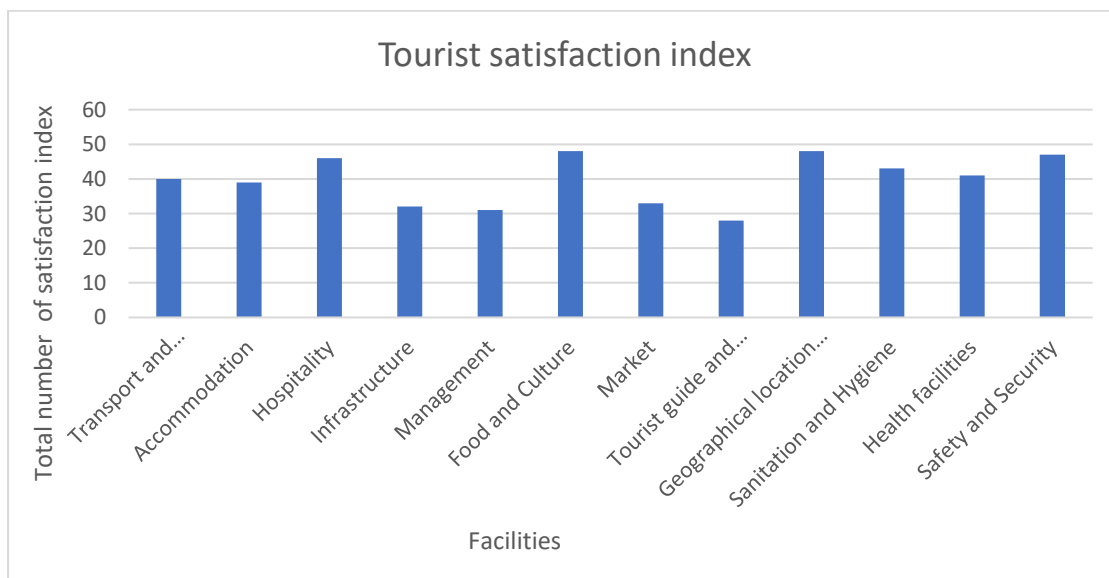
In the historical city, Sivasagar has lots of potential for the growth and development of heritage tourism. Community participation and tourist satisfaction index are taken as the major identifiers to find out the true scenario of the development of heritage tourism in Sivasagar district, Assam. 12 villages (one village from each sample site) have been selected to collect the data regarding community participation and 200 domestic and 50 international tourists have been taken to make an index of tourist satisfaction. Through the process, it is found that Sivasagar has various kinds of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in different zones in the development of heritage tourism. First, to know more about the SWOT and the view of tourists, a satisfaction index and a 5-point self-designed scale were prepared.

Facilities	Satisfaction index (1-5) / Sample sites												Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Transport and communication	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	2	4	40
Accommodation	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	1	2	39
Hospitality	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	46
Infrastructure	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	2	3	3	32
Management	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	2	3	4	31
Food and Culture	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	48
Market	4	4	3	4	3	3	2	2	2	1	2	3	33
Tourist guide and information	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	28

Geographical location and variables	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	48
Sanitation and Hygiene	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	2	3	3	4	43
Health facilities	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	41
Safety and Security	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	47

Tourist satisfaction index-

Table 1: Table 1 shows the facilities and sample sites with the satisfaction index. To show the sample sites here used 1-12 numbers as mentioned in the study area portion. On grounds of satisfaction index here prepared a 1-5 self-designed scale. Where 5-1 indicates: highly satisfied, Satisfied, moderately satisfied, less satisfied, and unsatisfied.



In the graph visualizes the total satisfaction index number that facilities have. Geographical location and food and culture got the highest index number and tourist guides and information got the lowest index number.

5.1.1 Strength- In the heritage sites of Sivasagar, there are various kinds of strengths to attract more tourists to the place and also it generates a way to collect more revenue. According to the tourist satisfaction index and community participation ratio, it is known that Sivasagar heritage sites have these kinds of strengths;

Geographical location- Geographically Sivasagar City and the sample sites are situated in the plain area. Where weather, climate, soil, vegetation, flora and flora etc. Geographic indicators are suitable for travel. So it is a strong strength for the development of the heritage tourism industry in the area.

Transport and communication Another prime strength of the heritage industry of Sivasagar is transport and communication. All the sample sites are nearest in the location and connected by roadway and railway. For international tourists, there are two airports in the nearest city. Which takes one and a half hours from the sample sites. So it is good transport connectivity to visit this place.

Safety and security- Most of the heritage sites of Sivasagar districts are situated in the town area and some of them are in rural areas. There is a very good security service for tourists. Where day can travel without any agitation. Each heritage site has the facility of security service and also the police stations are very near to the sites. So, it plays an important role in attracting tourists to the heritage sites.

Hospitality- The nearest people of the Sivasagar heritage sites are very good in manner and their hospitality is outstanding. They always treated the tourists as God. In India, there is a phrase –“Otithi Devo Bhava” whose inner meaning is –“Guest is God”. So it is very distinct that there is no possibility to get poor treatment from the people near the heritage sites of Sivasagar. That’s why hospitality is one of the major strengths of the development of heritage tourism in Sivasagar district.

Food and culture- Assam is rich in ethnic food and culture. Assamese people have a variety of foods and clothes, religious faith, and also traditions. Which are very attractive to fascinated tourists. Food and culture can elevate the value of tourist sites more quickly. Sivasagar has a shade of food and culture to show the tourists. Sivasagar has people from various religions and tribes. So each tribe and community has its interests in food and culture. Where there is a scenario of unity in diversity. Which is also a noticeable thing in the heritage sites. Hence, food and culture stand as a strength for the development of heritage tourism in Sivasagar district.

Natural beauty- Naturally Sivasagar heritage site is situated in the middle of the natural beauty. Forests, tanks, migratory birds, and various kinds of flowers are adding more vision to attract more tourists to the place. Depending upon the natural beauty, the heritage places can get more tourists seasonally. Because of the seasons, the beauty of nature keeps changing. So, to catch charming beauty near the heritage sites, people used to visit this place seasonally.

5.1.2 Weakness- Weaknesses of the heritage sites are those things for which tourists are usually discouraged from visiting one place. In this manner, Sivasagar heritage sites also have some kind of weakness, for which there is a scope to unattracted people from the place. It is hinted from the study that these are the weaknesses of the Sivasagar heritage sites:

Infrastructure- Infrastructurally all the heritage sites are not equally developed. Some sites are maintained but most of them are moderately and less maintained. For example- the Namdang stone bridge, Bakhar bengena tree, Rudrasagar tank, temple, etc sites are not properly infrastructurally developed. Due to the dullness, the sites are unattractive for the tourists. There is less chance to visit for the second time and less hope of promoting to a broader audience. So this became the weakness of the Sivasagar heritage sites.

Management- Cleanliness, sanitation and hygiene, information, parking, and attraction are shown as not effortful in the heritage sites in the Sivasagar district. So tourists usually given unsatisfactory rates to the sites. Management is a valuable asset to generate more revenue. According to the study, it is discernible that most of the sample heritage sites have that management problem.

Market facilities- Sivasagar carries the glories of the Ahom dynasty; hence, this is a historical city. One world heritage site (group of four maidam) is also there. In that sense, there should be proper market facilities and exhibitions of cultural and traditional things for the tourist. According to the study, it is visible that there are fewer market facilities to fulfill tourists' desires. Only near the Siv Dou complex, Talatal Ghar and Charaideo have a small market facility. Nowadays marketization is one of the important variables for every tourism sector. So, to gather more tourists it should be noticed that there is need for bigger market facilities. At present it is the weakness of the development of heritage tourism in Sivasagar district.

Tourist guide and information- To develop heritage tourism it is mandatory to provide proper information about the heritage sites. Hence, there is a need for smart tourist guides to elaborate and attract tourist's interest to the sites. Interest and attraction are not all about the outer beauty, so it is logical to know about the inner stories of the sites. Sivasagar Heritage sites has also tourist guide facilities but not every site has that facility, because of that, tourists remain unaware of the theoretical attraction of the sites. Which comes as a weakness of the heritage tourism development of Sivasagar district.

5.1.3 Opportunities- Opportunities can be made through the analysis of the weaknesses. Sivasagar heritage sites provide several opportunities to generate more revenue. Without opportunity, the mounting nature of development will fall off.

Awesome Assam- The Awesome Assam campaign is the promotion of the Assam tourism industry through the Bollywood celebrity Priyanka Chopra with the help of advertisements on TV, Newspapers, magazines, road shows, etc. to inform about the beauty and tourism destination of Assam. Sivasagar is the historical city of Assam. One world heritage site is also there. So, there will be strong opportunities to inform about the heritage tourism of Sivasagar district to the unknown people. According to the tourist survey, it has come to know that several tourists getting information about Assam through the Awesome Assam campaign.

Project Rang Ghar- Project Rang Ghar is the latest scheme of the Assam government to develop one heritage site which is Rang Ghar. In that scheme, there are various plans to improve parking facilities, improvement of the garden, infrastructural development of the main building (Rang Ghar building,) Market facilities, ethnic food, dressing market, cultural dance -song performance show, etc. where various people will get an opportunity to get a job there.

Declared world heritage site- On 27 January 2023 One of the heritage sites from Sivasagar, which is a Group of four maidam got recognition as a world heritage site. Which carries golden opportunities to the entire heritage tourism industry. People love to visit that kind of heritage site. Thus, there is a strong scope to generate more tourists to the sites. In Sivasagar each heritage sites are situated in the very nearest location. Which shows the number of opportunities for the development of the heritage tourism industry.

Create natural tourism to mount heritage tourism-In Sivasagar, near the heritage sites, there are innumerable opportunities to create entertainment or amusement facilities for tourists. Which will provide job opportunities to the local people and also will be able to highly satisfy tourist's desires. For example- Near the Rudrasagar temple there are various ponds surrounded by the temple, and there is a strong possibility for the water amusement facilities. Near the Bakhar Bengena tree, there are also some wetlands, so there is some scope to create opportunities for the development of heritage tourism.

5.1.4 Threats- Apart from the weaknesses in the heritage sites of Sivasagar district, the present study found some threats to the sites. Which are external and out of the control. It brings the unwanted scenario to the sites. Which is the prime cause for discouraging tourism to the sites.

Lack of an integrated policy- The lack of integrated policy-making by the government both from the central and state is one of the powerful rationales for the failure to promote tourism and development of the tourism sites.

Traffic Congestion- Traffic congestion is one of the countable threats to the heritage sites. Due to the road structure and inappropriate parking of cars, the people of some sites face severe traffic problems, which brings drawbacks to the sites.

Unsustainable environments- In some heritage sites, the study has found that several disposals were thrown to the ground, and some people used to write unnecessary things on the bricks or walls of the heritage buildings, which destroyed the beauty of the sites. So, it should be mentioned that it harms the sustainable environment of the sites.

Concluding remark- A SWOT analysis of Sivasagar heritage sites has provided the idea of the present scenario of tourism development and growth. The analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats assists in renovating, improving, and promoting the site, gives an idea about the cause and effect to implement the policies, and shows the idea of where to take necessary steps. It evaluates both internal and external factors of the development.

Concluding Remark:

The SWOT analysis of heritage tourism in Sivasagar district highlights the untapped potential of this historically rich region. The unique heritage sites and the cultural legacy of the Ahom dynasty provide a strong foundation for tourism development. However, to capitalize on these strengths, it is crucial to address infrastructural shortcomings, enhance promotional efforts, and create a cohesive tourism strategy that integrates the local community. Opportunities for niche tourism, such as eco-tourism and cultural festivals, can further enrich the visitor experience. At the same time, mitigating threats like environmental degradation and political instability is essential for long-term sustainability. By adopting a strategic approach based on the SWOT findings, Sivasagar has the potential to emerge as a prominent heritage tourism destination in Assam, contributing significantly to the region's economic growth and cultural preservation

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