

**Economic Impact of COVID-19 on the Tourism Sector of Assam.  
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**Abstract:**

Based on the secondary data, the present study has aimed at, the study of the economic impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sectors of Assam and its suggestive measures. A total of 20 papers was downloaded to study in-depth and wrote the result. From the various literature reviews, it has been found that due to COVID -19, the whole economy of the world was experiencing sluggish growth and the possibility of a severe economic downturn is very high. The results indicate that COVID -19 had hit very badly on the tourism sectors of not only Assam but all over the world. Due to the lockdown process for COVID-19 not only employment had declined but also revenue had fallen in these sectors. Consequently, the Entrepreneurs in this sector have also faced lots of problems. Since the tourism sector of Assam is one of the great contributors to the state domestic product.COVID-19 brings a big challenge to the economy of Assam by hitting these sectors. The present study also reveals some suggestive measures to overcome the problems faced by this sector during the pandemic situation.

**Keywords:** Assam, COVID-19, Economic impact, Pandemic, Secondary data, Tourism sector.

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**1.Introduction:**

The Coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19 was first reported on 31 December 2019, in Wuhan China. As the infection was rising the World Health Organisation (WHO)declared it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)on 30 January 2020 (Nath,2020). Again, it was declared as Pandemic on March 11, 2020.

Due to COVID-19, the world economy is facing one of its worst crises in a century as economies across the globe are seeing a sharp contradiction in growth (Saripall,2020). The Indian economy was facing serious issues like supply reduction in output, employment, and consequently demand (Saripall,2020). Due to the Pandemic, as so many people killed, locked down were imposed for control measures of COVID-19, which have a bad impact on the

tourism sectors of the whole world. For many countries in the world, like India, Tourism is seen as the main instrument for regional development, as it stimulates economic activities like the balance of payment, employment generation, generation of gross income, and production. But due to lockdown, it suffers a serious problem. The tourism sector of Assam has tremendous strength of tourism attraction like scenic beauty, cultural variety, ethnic mixture, and diverse flora and fauna and by which this sector helps to contribute positively economic development of Assam. But, due to COVID-19, and lockdown, these industries have been suffering since April 2020.

The major objectives of the present study are: to study the economic impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector of Assam

and to examine the suggestive measures to overcome the problems faced by this sector in Assam during the pandemic situation.

## **2.Review of literature:**

The present study is based on the following literature reviews:

COVID-19 was first detected in Wuhan, China, where, the number of laboratory-confirmed COVID-infected patients was 41, which was reported to the office of the World Health Organisation (WHO), China on 31 December 2019 (Grossling, Scot and Hall,2020).On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020, COVID-19 was declared by WHO, as a public health emergency and state that by detection, isolation, prompt treatment and a vigorous system of contact tracing, the spread of the virus can be curtailed (Sohrabi, Alsafi, O'Neill, Khan, Kerwan, Al-Jabir and Agha,20210).COVID-19 has spread across 85 countries by 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020. (Guo et al;2020) and it was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The tourism and hospitality sectors are considered the hardest-hit industry due to the COVID-19 outbreak (Sharma, Dollar,2020). Due to the massive impact of COVID-19, there is a risk of losing 50 million jobs in the global travel and tourism sector, notified by the council of world tour and travel (World Economic Forum).In Malaysia, COVID-19 had a devastating impact on the tourism and hospitality sector as it experienced a situation where different Airlines have to stop operations and the hotel industry has to shut down their working according to Movement Control Order (MCO) (Karim, Hague, Anis and Ulfy,2020).

## **3.Objectives of the study:**

The present study is based on the following two objectives:  
economic impact of the COVID-19 on the tourism sectors of Assam.

1.To study the

2.To examine the suggestive measures to solve the problems faced by the tourism sectors of Assam during the Pandemic.

## **4.Methodology:**

The present study has conducted based on secondary data. Various research papers, documents, E-news papers, E-Magazines, internet sources are the major sources of secondary data for the study. Data collected from the Ministry of Finance, Government of Assam, Statistical Handbook of Assam and Regional Tourism Satellite Account Assam, etc have used to examine the economic contribution of tourism sectors in Assam. .

## **5. Profile of the tourism sector in Assam:**

Assam is considered as one of the tourist attraction places for its friendly treatment to all visitors. In Assam, forests, wildlife, and landscapes for eco-tourism, centers of pilgrimage for spiritual tourism, heritage, tourism, and hotels for heritage tourism, and colorful fairs and festivals held for leisure tourism are considered as the center of tourist attraction (Rahman,2020). Wildlife sanctuaries at various places of Assam, like, the national park of Kaziranga in Golaghat district, that covers approximately an area of 429.93sk.km.situated on the Southern bank of river Brahmaputra, can attract tourists all over the world (Rahman,2020). Kaziranga is a place of attraction for tourists due to herms of rhinoceros, vast grassy and green forests of the parks. On the other hand, Manas, Orang, Dibru-Saikhuwa, and Nameri are attracting tourists worldwide with its natural beauty.Again ,Bhairabkunda that is situated at the borderof Arunachal Pradesh is a center of attraction for the tourists due to its natural beauty(Gogoi,2017) .Chandubi is another picnic place which attract people with its natural beauty(Gogoi,2017) .Jatinga,that is situated at Near Haflong,in North Casar district,famous for variety of birds with their mysterious behaviour as local people callthat the birds commit suicide here or certain specific days.Besides ,Assam has many religious places where so many people of both outside and inside the country come every year(Gogoi,2017) .Barpeta is one of the place where many people come to visit the famous vaishnava monastery(Gogoi,2017). Batadrawa is a birth place of Shri Sankardeva(Gogoi,2017) .Hajo is another religious place for Hindus,Muslims and Budhists.Kamakhya is one of the famous religious place of

Hindus within the Guwahati city on the top of Nilachal Hill that attracts thousands of devotees and other tourists every day by its natural granure(Gogoi,2017).Majuli is another beautiful tourist place of Assam(Gogoi,2017). It is the largest river island in the world that seat of many satras(Gogoi,2017). Surya pahar is situated on a hill surrounded by statues of Durga Devi,Ganesh,Surya,Chanda,Budha (Gogoi,2017). The Tourism industry of Assam has a great contribution towards the economy that is reflected by the data collected from the Regional Tourism Satellite Account Assam,2009-2010. Accordingly, overall employment generation in Assam was 121.11 lakh and in India, it was 5355.4 lakh in 2009-2010.Out of which 3.47 lakh people employed in Assam and 234.2 lakh people employed in India, in tourism characteristic industries. Again,0.99 lakh people were employed in Assam and 203.7 lakh people employed in India in tourism connected industries. In the case of tourism specific industries,4.46 lakhs people employed in Assam, and 437.9 lakhs people employed in India. The share of total employment of tourism characteristic industries of Assam was 2.87 percent, where the overall contribution of India was 4.37 percent. Again the share of total employment of Tourism connected industries of Assam was 0.82 percent and India was 3.8 percent. On the other hand, the share of total employment of tourism specific industry of Assam was 3.68 percent and India was 8.18 percent. Again the data collected from the Statistical Handbook of Assam,2009,2010,2011,2012,2013,2014,2015,2016 has provided a clear picture of the total number of domestic and foreign tourist came to Assam and total revenue earned from tourists lodges of Assam.Accordingly, the number tourist staying in tourist lodges in Assam in 2009-10 were 25665(Indian tourists),669 (foreign tourists),in2010-11 were 25831(Indian tourists),594 (Foreign tourists),in 2011-12 were 264339(Indian tourists),696(Foreign tourists),in 2012-13 were 22057(Indian tourists),711(Foreign tourists),in 2013-14 were 23890 (Indian tourists),579 (Foreign tourists),in 2014-15 were 21092 (Indian tourists),422 (foreign tourists),in 2015-16 were 42988 (Indian tourists),1077 (Foreign tourists).Again the number of tourists staying in other accommodation like hotels in Assam in 2009-10 were,3869860 (Indian tourists),14030 (Foreign tourists),in 2010-2011 were,4101616 (Indian tourists),15039 (Foreign tourists),in 2011-12 were 4381897 (Indian tourists),15964 (Foreign tourists),in 2012-13 were 4522609 (Indian tourists),16997 (Foreign tourists),in 2013-14 were 4420503 (Indian tourists),18507 (Foreign tourists),in 2014-15 were 4842734 (Indian tourists),19583 (Foreign tourists),in2015-16 were 5599962 (Indian tourists),25243 (Foreign tourists).On the other hand , total revenue earned from the tourists lodges of Assam were,131.63 lakh (2009-2010),143.60 lakh (2010-2011),184.49 lakh (2011-2012),248.19 lakh (2012-2013),191.32 lakh (2013-2014),211.77lakh (2014-2015),1057.24 lakh (2015-2016) respectively. From the above discussion, it has been cleared that, the tourism sector can positively contribute to the economic development of Assam.

## 6.Results and discussion:

**6.1.Economic impact:** Based on the literature reviews it has found that, COVID-19, in the face of the global outbreak of the pandemic, the tourism sector has suffered the most (Borthakur,2020). The heavy impact of global and national lockdown had fallen on this sector. The Federation of Association in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) had predicted that about Rs.5 lakh crores losses of the tourism sectors in all over India. As a result,5.5 crores of employed workers in this sector had put out of work (Borthakur,2020). Assam tourism industry had been suffering even before the pandemic was in full effect due to the several curfews and bouts of violence of the Citizenship Amendment Act, December 2019, that hits this sector (Borthakur,2020). That is why from October 2019 to April 2020 the tourism and hospitality industry in Assam was under serious condition. Due to CAA and pandemic, about 90 percent of people working in several tourism businesses had lost their jobs. Not only jobs but also revenue of about Rs.500crores of the tourism industry had fallen due to the pandemic. Because, in Northeast India, in 2019 December during CAB/CAA movement and lockdown effect of COVID-19, with large scale cancellation of travel plans, by both foreign and domestic tourists results that there has been a drop in both inbound and outbound tourists (Baruah,2020). The COVID-19 has caused a sudden and unexpected slowdown in the tourist flow, that hits all the people associated directly and indirectly with the tourism industry, such as naturalist drivers, guide, hoteliers, and all other small scale establishments that are completely dependent on tourism (Borthakur,2020). According to the official statistics, in the year 2018-2019,(up to December 2019) in Assam, around 47,10,971 domestic tourists and 25,739 foreign tourists has visited (Borthakur,2020). According to the Economic Survey of Assam (2018-2019),9711 vehicles registered under All Assam Tourist Taxi Component (Borthakur,2020).

The major challenges faced by the entrepreneurs of this sector are:  
of paying the EMI's for a bank loan.

(1) the Burden  
(2)Covering the fixed expenses like salary, rent, etc. is a very difficult one. Because there are very limited opportunities for the industries to generate revenue for the next six months (Baruah,2020). To overcome these problems the entrepreneurs are looking at their possible opportunities like identifying the scope of local tourism and targeting inbound tourists, adopting the strategy of minimizing recurring cost and investment, and focus on digital marketing (Baruah,2020). Under the backdrop of such a critical juncture, unprecedented efforts from all sections of the society, from the government to the policymakers as well as a helping hand from the country as a whole must be needed to sort out a future course of action with their effective parameters to revive the tourism sector of Assam(Newar,2020).

## 6.2.Suggestions:

Based on the literature reviews, the present study has revealed that, to overcome the problems of tourism sectors of Assam due to COVID-19, the following suggestions can be expected from the Government.  
(a) Provide short-term interest-free loans for rebuilding business. (b) To avoid mass lay off, the government should double the existing overdraft facilities for the industry.

(c)The government should provide an interest-free moratorium on existing loans for nine months.  
(d)The government should remove the fee for any upcoming licenses or permits and all statutory compliances and state goods and service tax (SGST)should postpone (Baruah,2020).

Scheme announced by the government of Assam:

To bring respite to their crisis-battered situation of the tourism industry of Assam, the chairperson of Assam Tourism Development Cooperation, Jayanta Malla Baruah have announced few schemes to focus area from “global to local”.These are:

(a)A working capital loan with a year-long moratorium period under Parjyatan Sanjeevani Scheme. By this scheme, the stakeholders can avail of a working capital loan of Rs.1 lakh to Rs.20 lakh from banks at an 8to 10 percent interest rate.  
(b)Modification of Punya Dham Scheme, to include religious places within the state rather than other states of the country due to pandemic.

## 7.Conclusion:

Tourism gives the pleasure of the people by usual movement from one place to another.Primarily it relates to the movement of people to places outside their usual residence ,hence it includes economic activities either directly or indirectly.Besides other social and infrastructural dimension,tourism could be in terms of economic output or in terms of employment generation(Gogoi,2017). The present study concluded that,tourism sector of Assam has hitted badly by COVID -19 .As tourists cannot come to Assam ,it hampers not only income of the entrepreneurs of this sector but also the workers which are directly or indirectly related with this sector have lost their jobs.COVID-19 carries a big challenge to this sector of Assam.Consequently the economy of Assam has losted a huge amount of revenues collected from this sector as well as the amount of state domestic product declines.Assam tourism sector has a great contribution to the economy by generating revenue and employment. Hence such a sector needs a special bailout package(Baruah,2020). Due to the pandemic, not only their revenue has gone zero but also, their vendors have stopped paying them and receivable are completely frozen(Baruah,2020). The recovery of the sector can not be going overnight though lockdown is removed, hence, the entrepreneurs need to figure out what the world needs and not what they need to produce (Baruah, 2020).Hence the government as well as the entrepreneurs of this sector should take seriously the concept of “global to local” for its fastest recovery.They should aware this topic among the local people of Assam for successful implimentation of this programme “global to local”.

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