

Cultural Tourism, Economics and Education: A Case Study of Umananda Island, Assam, India

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This case study examines Umananda Island, Guwahati, as a site where cultural tourism intersects with local economic development and educational/environmental learning. Using a descriptive-analytical approach grounded in secondary data, the study situates the island within established tourism frameworks, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, and educational tourism and examines its role as a small-scale but multi-functional tourism resource. The study argues that Umananda's significance lies not only in its religious and historical value but in its function as a live case of how micro-destinations generate local economic activity (transport, boat operators, informal vending, guiding) while simultaneously serving as an informal platform for heritage and conservation education. The paper concludes with a SWOT analysis and policy recommendations for balancing economic utilisation with ecological carrying capacity.

Keywords: cultural tourism, economic impact, educational tourism, heritage conservation, Umananda Island, Assam, golden langur

Introduction

Cultural tourism is generally understood as travel undertaken substantially to experience the cultural, historical, religious, and artistic heritage of a place. Unlike wildlife or adventure tourism, its resource base is not a landscape or a species but a set of

meanings a temple's founding legend, an architectural style, a ritual calendar, that must be actively interpreted, protected, and, in many cases, physically maintained for tourism to remain viable. Umananda Island offers a compact but instructive case. It combines three layers of cultural-religious and river-tourism appeal in a single, very small site:

religious pilgrimage (a functioning Shiva temple with an active festival calendar), historical-architectural heritage (a 17th-century Ahom-era structure rebuilt after earthquake damage), and natural-heritage novelty (its status as one of the world's smallest inhabited river islands, and its historical association with the golden langur). This layering makes Umananda both a strong draw for cultural tourism and a particularly vulnerable site, since all three forms of appeal are compressed onto a landmass of only a few acres in the middle of a major river Mili, M., & Saha, S. (2025). The 22nd session of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) general assembly adapted the definition of cultural tourism as “A Type of tourism activity in which the visitors essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions or products in a tourism destination (World Tourism Organization 2018). These cultural attractions include historic places, monuments, Heritage sites, art-crafts, traditional foods and festivals etc (Ezenagu, 2023); (Jigyasu, 2020); (Jin & Li-Ming, 2011); (Tang et al., 2019); (Chhabra, 2010). The new generations of tourist do not want to visit a destination only for pleasure; rather they try to perform the journey in a more meaningful way with a dual purpose of pleasure and learning through participation (Chang et al., 2024); (Nguyen et al., 2024); (Richards & Morrill, 2020); (Choi, 2025); (Minazzi & Grechi, 2025); (Dr Reamico et al., 2025). They love to experience the diverse cultural elements of the host community by becoming part of the whole event rather being only a spectator, while visiting a local community these tourist often get involved both physically and mentally in a festival testing local cuisine dressing up in a local costume and trying to share their knowledge by spending a night or two with the local people preferably in home stay facility (Luong, 2025); (Kattiyapornpong et al., 2021); (Sianipar et al., 2026); (Singh et al., 2024). The changing mindset of tourist has placed cultural tourism into the forefront of all tourism activities. Assam is very rich in cultural and natural resources. The state is surrounded by the Brahmaputra River, which serves as a lifeline for its inhabitants and shapes. The Ecological and cultural landscape (Heinen & Shrivastava, 2009); (Shrivastava & Heinen, 2007); (Barbora, 2017); (Pathan & Tep, 2025). The state is blessed with bio-diversity including the famous Kaziranga National Park; A UNESCO world heritage site known for its population of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros. Spiritually plays a significant role in Assamese culture with numerous temples, Monasteries and religious sites scattered across the region. The Satras, Menastic institutions founded by

Vaishnavite Saints, serve as Centres of spiritual leaving and cultural preservation. As Assam continues to evolve, its cultural heritage remains a source of pride and inspiration for its people, making it a vital part of India's rich cultural landscape (Das et al., 2024)

Concept of Cultural Tourism:

The concept of cultural tourism is concerned with the nature of the cultural tourism phenomena, and in particular tend to concentrate on what motives the tourist to visit cultural attractions. For example, McIntosh and Goeldner (1956) consider cultural tourism as comprising “all aspects of travel, whereby travelers learn about the history and heritage of others or about their contemporary ways of life or Through.” In other words, cultural tourists are motivated to learn about the products and processes of other cultures. The “wide definition” of cultural tourism adopted by the world tourism organisation (WTO) includes “all movements of persons; because they satisfy the human need for diversity, tending to raise the cultural level of the individual and giving rise to new knowledge, experience and encounter”. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation; cultural tourism is “Movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals and other cultural events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art and pilgrimages”.

Literature Review

The role and importance of cultural tourism as an economic enabler and a tool to ensure and enhance the cultural harmony long been identified by the government. Few of the most Salient moves made by the government can be enumerated as follows:

Purabi Gogoi Dept. of Economics, Dibrugarh University, in Pratidhwani the Echo- A peer-reviewed International Journal of Humanities & Social Science (2017) asserted that through the State of Assam is very rich with regards to natural and cultural resources which essential for Cultivation and Sustenance of tourism industry which is a major contribution to employment and revenue generation but due to very limited government funds and infrastructure made available to the tourism sector its role as economic enable and its contribution is not so much encouraging.

Mr. Anand, MM in his book on Tourism and Hotel Industry in India “1976 examined the reason for the poor tourist traffic in India. He found that the core of tourism industry is hotel and other supplementary accommodations. He Further

suggested that, more input is required with regards to hotel and accommodation facilities for the proper development of tourism.

S.S Bisht conduct a study on “Marketing Practices of tourism Industry: A case study of selected organisations”, For his Ph.D degree from Jania Millia Islamia University, Delhi; 2003. Examined the tourism marketing practices currently prevalent in India, and examined the appropriate marketing mix for the tourism industry to access the current situation of tourism in the state. The author suggested that the tourism marketing strategies should be re-appropriated and an efficient system of communication should be developed to address the needs and wants of the dynamic tourist of today’s times.

Sikeler Uttam Kumar (2014) studied, “Tourism and Economic growth of North-east state by collecting the data from Secondary Sources. Using multiple regression models, the study reveals that the growth of Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) at constant (1698-1713) price at factor cost is not agreeable at all for the North-east Indian States. North-east India has its own culture, traditions and they love to follow them firmly (Jolly Mazumdar 2009). Tourism is one of the massive service industries in india with its contribution of 6.23% of GDP and 8.78% of total employment, witness more than 5 million yearly foreign tourist arrivals and 562 million domestic tourists, Dinesh Das (2013) has pointed out that, India ranked 6th in terms of price competitiveness and 39th in terms of safety and security.

Methodology

This is an exploratory study using both the primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected from the field observations and personal interview. The secondary data has been collected from Directorate of tourism, Assam and also from Journals, websites, annual data report, books etc.

Study area

Umananda Island is smallest inhabited island in the world and one of the Islands off Guwahati shore, which is lies between 91045 to 91050 E longitude and 26007’ to 26010’ N latitude with an area of 407 hactore. The Islands was named as peacock Island by an unknown British administrator. The smallest river island maintains a steady weather with summer temperatures ranging between 200C to 300C and temperature ranging between 100C to 150C. The Islands has tropical climate, while the mean temperature varies from 100C to 380C. The soil mostly brown sandy.

History

There are many mythological stories related to the Island. According to Hindu mythology, the island drives its name ‘Uma’ from the Goden Parvati whereas ananda means Joy. According to Kalika Purna, at the being of the creation, Shiv sprinkled ashes (Bhasma) it this place and imported knowledge to Parvati (his consort). It is said that, when shiva was in meditation on this hillock, kamadeva interrupted his yoga and was therefore burnt to ashes with the fire of shiva’s anger and hence the hillock also get the name ‘Bhasmacala’. The temple of Umananda is located on the island which was built in 1694 AD by the order of King Gadadhar Singh (1698-1713) one of the ablest and strongest rulers of the Ahom Dynasty. The original temple was however immensely damaged by a devastating earthquake in 1897. The present structure was re-constructed subsequently.

Analysis and discussion

Impacts of Cultural Tourism on Economic Development of Assam

Academic discussion or the Economic impacts of cultural tourism mostly revolves round the benefits especially in terms of employment, income, foreign exchange, earnings, infrastructure development and regional development, promoting festivals, cuisine and music. An economic impact analysis will assess the contribution of tourism activity to a region's economy. An economic impact analysis also reveals the interrelationship among economic sectors and provides estimates of the changes that take place in an economy due to some existing or proposed action. A Standard economic impact analysis traces flows of money from tourism spending, first to businesses and Government agencies where tourists spend their money and then to other business (who supplies goods and services to tourist businesses, household (who earns income by working in tourism or supporting industries) Government (who earns revenue through taxes and changes on tourists, businesses and households). Tourism today in a great economic force, it is one of the biggest and fastest growing sectors in the global economy. It has several positive as well as negative impacts on the economy of a particular country or a region or a locality.

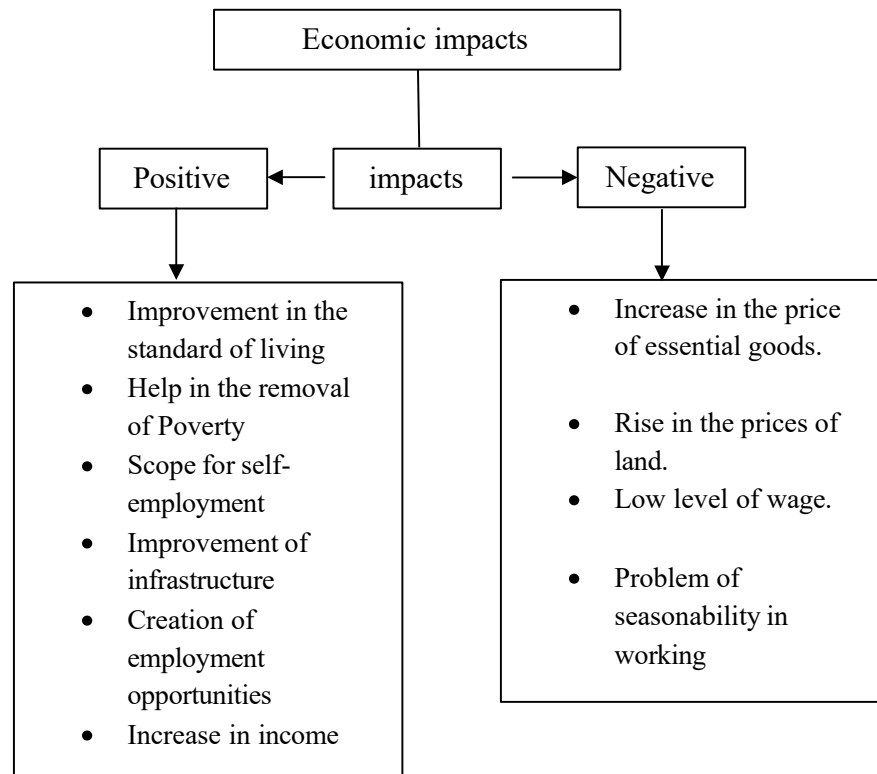
Positive Economic impacts: cultural tourism the practice of travelling to experience a places culture, including its heritage, arts, cuisine, traditions, and everyday life, it is creates huge employment opportunities both skilled and unskilled, helps to improvement in infrastructural facilities, increase in income, better standard living, preservation of

cultural heritage, economic growth, community empowerment, sustainable tourism development and also cultural exchange and understanding.

Negative Economic impacts: Although cultural tourism, while beneficial in many ways has several negative impacts especially when it's poorly managed or driven by mass tourism. The important

negative economic impacts are the cultural erosion and commercialization, overcrowding and infrastructure stain, environmental degradation, economic inequality, heavy pressure on land resources, external costs, seasonality problem etc.

The important economic impacts that are considered in this study are presented in chart



Role of Government in cultural tourism development of Assam

The promotion and development of cultural tourism in Assam rely heavily on coordinated efforts and investments by both the Government of Assam and the central Government of India. These governmental bodies play a pivotal role in shaping infrastructure, formulating policies, and preserving cultural heritage, which collectively help unlock Assam's considerable tourism potential. Firstly, infrastructure development is fundamental to enabling tourism. Improved transportation, accommodation, and public amenities facilitate easier access and more comfortable experiences for tourists. This infrastructural backbone not only supports increased tourist inflows but also enhances local participation in cultural tourism, generating employment and supporting local economies. Evidence from similar contexts, such as rural tourism development in Ethiopia, highlights how strategic investments in infrastructure underpin tourism growth while fostering economic and

community benefits, suggesting that Assam's governance could focus similarly on building robust tourism infrastructure (Yasin et al., 2024).

Secondly, policy-making by these governments is crucial in ensuring sustainable tourism that balances economic benefits with cultural preservation. Effective policies promote ethical travel practices, community involvement, and the allocation of resources for the protection of cultural assets, aligning with sustainable development goals. For example, studies show that local governance policies focusing on cultural activities, recreation, and infrastructure, combined with community participation, significantly enhance sustainable tourism outcomes. The positive effects of such policies have been validated in diverse settings, underscoring the importance of inclusive, context-sensitive policy frameworks for tourism development (Lamoria et al., 2024; Rahaju et al., 2026).

Furthermore, active cultural preservation initiatives

are indispensable. Heritage conservation ensures the longevity of intangible and tangible cultural assets, which are the core attractions in cultural tourism. Sustainable tourism practices that align with heritage preservation contribute directly to maintaining cultural identity and authenticity, which enrich tourists' experiences while safeguarding cultural treasures for future generations. Integrating tools like Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) can aid governmental bodies in mitigating the adverse effects of development on cultural sites, as demonstrated in urban heritage contexts (Chakraborty & Ji, 2023). Additionally, the promotion of community empowerment, such as involving women in rural tourism activities, further strengthens cultural preservation by linking economic incentives with cultural maintenance (Singh & Das, 2025).

Critically, government investments also create enabling environments for regenerative tourism, which goes beyond conservation to actively restore and revitalize cultural heritage through community-driven approaches. Such initiatives not only protect heritage but also promote resilience and sustainability in local communities, aligning well with broader sustainable development objectives (Khater et al., 2025).

In summary, the Government of Assam alongside India's central government plays an essential role by:

- Investing in and improving infrastructure to support tourist access and comfort.
- Designing and implementing inclusive, community-oriented tourism policies that promote sustainable and ethical cultural tourism.
- Prioritizing cultural preservation through conservation programs, impact assessments, and community empowerment.
- Encouraging regenerative tourism models that actively revitalize heritage sites and empower local populations.

Together, these efforts create a holistic framework that can unlock Assam's rich cultural tourism potential, generating economic growth, fostering cultural pride, and ensuring the sustainability of its unique heritage assets (Chakraborty & Ji, 2023; Khater et al., 2025; Lamoria et al., 2024; Rahaju et al., 2026; Singh & Das, 2025). The recent initiatives and projects announced and inaugurated by the Assam government and the Union Home Minister reflect a strategic commitment to preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of Assam, particularly related to the Vaishnav Saint Srimanta

Sankardev. These efforts encompass infrastructural development, heritage conservation, and tourism policy formulation aimed at integrating cultural preservation with socioeconomic development.

Development and Preservation of Historical Sites Related to Srimanta Sankardev

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's announcement on March 15, 2025, outlines a phased plan for the systematic development of historical sites associated with Srimanta Sankardev, an influential Vaishnav Saint. The inauguration of an infrastructural project worth Rs. 11.14 crore at key sites such as Sankardev Than, Pata-baushi Satra, and Dev Damodar Dev guru's Adi Dham, underscores a focused effort to preserve Assam's cultural heritage. Additionally, the Rs. 50 crore project planned for Madhupur Satra in Cooch Behar, West Bengal, emphasizes inter-state cultural linkages where Sankardev passed away, highlighting cross-regional heritage preservation. These projects serve as critical steps to safeguard tangible heritage while promoting cultural tourism.

Similarly, the inauguration of the Rs. 188 crore Bardowa project by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on March 15, 2024, in the birthplace of Mahapurisha Srimanta Sankardev in Nagaon district, aims to transform Butadrava Than into a hub of arts, culture, and spiritualism, spreading over 165 bighas. Such large-scale, culturally sensitive development programs symbolize the state government's commitment to protecting and revitalizing heritage sites, thus fostering cultural identity and tourism-led economic growth.

Policy Formulation and Tourism Planning

Beyond infrastructure, the government's approach includes policy formulation and planning strategies. The development of comprehensive tourism policies, master plans, and vision documents offers an institutional framework guiding cultural tourism growth. Schemes like Swadesh Darshan and PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive) incorporate significant cultural sites such as Kamakhya Temple and Majuli, enhancing their visibility and accessibility for cultural tourism. This is aligned with best practices in sustainable tourism development, where policy support ensures that heritage conservation is integrated with tourism promotion.

Integrating Preservation and Tourism Development: Insights from Cultural Heritage Research

Research in cultural heritage tourism underscores the importance of balancing preservation with

sustainable tourism development to safeguard the authenticity and integrity of cultural assets. For instance, studies have shown that heritage impact assessments are valuable tools in mitigating adverse effects of development on heritage sites, promoting tourism while conserving historical and cultural values in urban and rural settings alike (Chakraborty & Ji, 2023).

Furthermore, approaches such as creating cultural heritage routes that connect multiple sites can enhance local economic development and heritage conservation, especially in areas where individual sites may lack prominence but collectively hold substantial cultural capital (Snowball & Courtney, 2010). This concept resonates with the idea of linking Assam's diverse Sankardev-related sites and pilgrimage centers into a coherent cultural tourism circuit.

The integration of technological innovations like Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in heritage tourism has also been highlighted as a means to enhance visitor engagement and educational value while supporting preservation efforts (Shuran et al., 2024). Although specific deployments of such technologies in Assam's projects are not mentioned, these approaches could further enrich the visitor experience at newly developed sites and help preserve intangible heritage forms.

Managing Tourism Impact and Visitor Experience

Safeguarding heritage sites also demands careful management of tourism impacts. Vulnerability indicators identified in research include visitor volume, site accessibility, visitor behavior, and resource constraints for maintenance (Flyen et al., 2023). Strategies such as training tourism guides, who play a pivotal role in mediating between visitors and heritage conservation, can enhance responsible tourism and improve visitor experiences (Khater, 2025). This is particularly relevant for spiritual and religious sites associated with Srimanta Sankardev, where guided tours can educate visitors on cultural significance and conservation ethics.

Sustainable Tourism and Cultural Identity

Studies from other geographic contexts show the potential of heritage-driven tourism to reinforce cultural identity and promote community participation, thus ensuring long-term sustainability (Rahman et al., 2025). The phased infrastructure plans and policy frameworks in Assam align well with such models by explicitly linking heritage preservation to tourism development, local empowerment, and economic benefits. The Assam

government's ongoing and planned initiatives for the development and preservation of cultural heritage sites associated with Srimanta Sankardev exemplify a comprehensive approach integrating infrastructure development, policy planning, and cultural tourism promotion. These efforts align with emerging research that advocates for heritage impact assessments, coordinated heritage routes, technological integration, and effective visitor management to sustainably conserve cultural heritage while fostering tourism growth and community benefit. By leveraging such strategies, Assam can ensure its rich Vaishnav cultural heritage is preserved and celebrated for future generations while contributing to regional development goals (Chakraborty & Ji, 2023; Flyen et al., 2023; Khater, 2025; Rahman et al., 2025; Shuran et al., 2024; Snowball & Courtney, 2010).

Problems and prospects to the Development of cultural tourism in Assam:

In spite of having such a vast potentially region has not been able properly to develop cultural tourism for the following reasons:

1. Attitude of people: Hospitality is a quality which is required in cultural tourism. The poor role played by the people in this respect affects the growth of tourism.
2. Lack of imaginative organisation: Imaginative organisations of shows of traditional local act, culture, dance, drama, music session, fairs and festivals for the benefit of the tourism is lacking.
3. Inadequate infrastructural facilities: Infrastructural facilities are highly inadequate in the state for tourism, both in terms of transportation and accommodation.
4. Seasonal tourism and Poor planning: Assam experience a strong monsoon season (May-Sept), during which heavy rainfall and flooding are common. This makes travels risky or unpleasant for tourists and limit access its cultural and rural sites.
5. Limited Community involvement: Communities often do not realize the tourism potential of their culture. Locates are not always equipped with skills in hospitality, guiding or sustainable tourism practices.
6. Poor state publicity: Through the state has a lot of cultural resources, it has not been able to give due publicity in national and international arena and thus tourist mobility is restricted to only a couple of destinations.

The prospect of cultural tourism as a significant contributor to income and employment, especially

in regions like Assam, hinges on the harmonious integration of three essential components: a community's willingness to share its cultural legacy, the presence of intact cultural resources that serve as the foundation for heritage products, and accessibility to a travel market. These elements collectively enable the growth and sustainable development of indigenous cultural tourism.

Firstly, the desire and active involvement of the local community are fundamental. Communities that embrace cultural tourism often foster stronger identity and socio-economic benefits. For instance, research on the Minangkabau community in Indonesia demonstrates that cultural tourism can positively transform socio-cultural life while supporting economic sustainability and cultural preservation simultaneously. The community's engagement creates a sense of place and unique experiences connecting visitors with local culture and environment, reinforcing cultural identity and collective memory (Syafri et al., 2026). Similarly, community participation has been shown to be crucial in urban heritage tourism contexts, such as in the Braga Tourism Village in Indonesia, where government and local collaboration sustains tourism activity and preserves cultural values, although optimal outcomes require further enhancement of community capacities (Baswarani & Novianto, 2025).

Secondly, the intactness and authenticity of cultural resources provide the core upon which cultural tourism is built. These resources include tangible assets like historical sites and traditional architecture, and intangible elements such as indigenous practices and oral traditions. As noted in Vietnam's community tourism development, the rich and diverse indigenous cultures and cultural heritage form a critical foundation for that growth. The diversity and preservation of cultural heritage enable communities to attract tourism and achieve economic and social development goals (Trang, 2025). However, safeguarding authenticity is crucial to avoid commodification that undermines culture, a challenge addressed by balancing preservation with tourism development, as seen in successful community-based initiatives (Syafri et al., 2026).

Thirdly, accessible travel markets are essential to channel visitor flow to cultural sites and experiences. Effective marketing strategies informed by understanding tourist behavior are key. The case of Murshidabad in India highlights how assessing tourists' awareness, visitation patterns, and recommendation likelihood can inform better promotion and service delivery to expand cultural heritage tourism's reach. It also reveals that local

community support is strong but marketing and infrastructure need improvement to realize potential fully (Sinha & Pratt, 2021). Furthermore, leveraging digital technology enhances accessibility and visitor engagement, as demonstrated by research using Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality to create immersive experiences that increase tourist satisfaction and cultural awareness (Shuran et al., 2024). Digital innovation tailored to fulfill tourists' diverse needs—such as navigation aids, multimedia presentations, and personalized services—can further enhance cultural tourism's attractiveness and sustainability (Wang et al., 2025).

Incorporating technology is especially pertinent for indigenous cultural tourism, which faces challenges in accessing and utilizing online platforms effectively due to skills and infrastructural barriers, as noted in Australia. Yet, successful initiatives utilizing the internet can amplify cultural narratives and broaden market reach, increasing economic opportunities for indigenous populations (Sharma & Carson, 2001).

Sustainable cultural tourism also requires community empowerment and equitable benefit-sharing strategies. Research from Musina Municipality, South Africa, underscores the necessity of sound tourism strategies that incorporate cultural heritage resources to empower communities economically and socially. Despite rich cultural and natural resources, without a strategic approach to tourism development, local livelihoods may not improve significantly (Ramaano, 2022). Likewise, in Montenegro, the systemic engagement of community stakeholders and innovative frameworks enhance both heritage tourism and community development, stressing the importance of dynamic, multi-stakeholder approaches for lasting impacts (Moric et al., 2021).

Together, these factors establish a robust platform where cultural tourism transcends mere economic growth to become an instrument of cultural preservation, community empowerment, and sustainable regional development (Baswarani & Novianto, 2025; Moric et al., 2021; Ramaano, 2022; Sharma & Carson, 2001; Shuran et al., 2024; Sinha & Pratt, 2021; Syafri et al., 2026; Trang, 2025; Wang et al., 2025).

Umananda Island, situated in the heart of the Brahmaputra River flowing through Guwahati, Assam, is a compelling destination drawing numerous tourists and devotees due to its combination of natural splendor, cultural significance, and tranquil environment. Known as Peacock Island, a name given by British colonists inspired by its distinctive shape, this island offers a

multifaceted tourism experience that blends heritage, spirituality, ecology, and leisure.

Key Attractions of Umananda Island

1. **Umananda Temple** The foremost attraction is the Umananda Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva. This temple, perched on a hillock on the island, stands as one of Assam's oldest religious sites. It attracts a considerable number of devotees, particularly during major Hindu festivals such as Shivratri when religious fervor surges and the temple becomes a focal point of celebration and worship. The temple's spiritual ambiance significantly enhances the island's cultural tourism appeal and serves as a vital heritage site for local communities and pilgrims alike.

2. **Scenic and Tranquil Natural Environment** Surrounded by the expansive Brahmaputra River, the island offers picturesque views that captivate visitors, especially during sunrise and sunset. This scenic beauty provides a serene and peaceful backdrop that appeals to tourists seeking relaxation and natural aesthetics. The calm environment contrasts with the bustling city life, making Umananda Island a favored retreat for introspection and leisure.

3. **Rich Biodiversity** The island supports a diverse range of flora and fauna, contributing to its ecological richness. The lush greenery and natural vegetation enhance its attractiveness for nature lovers and botanists. Additionally, bird watchers find Umananda appealing due to its habitat supporting various bird species, making wildlife observation an integral part of the tourism experience.

4. **Historical and Cultural Significance** Beyond its religious importance, Umananda Island holds historical relevance through its temples and remnants of antiquated structures. These sites serve as cultural markers reflecting the region's heritage and provide visitors opportunities to explore Assam's historical narratives. The preservation of these historical artifacts integrates cultural heritage into Umananda's tourism framework, aligning with broader trends where heritage tourism leverages existing cultural assets to foster sustainable tourism development (Jin & Li-Ming, 2011).

5. **Adventure and Recreational Activities** For visitors inclined towards adventure, the island offers activities such as boating across the Brahmaputra and photography opportunities centered on the island's natural and cultural landscapes. These recreational options diversify the tourism experience and cater to varied visitor interests, enhancing the island's overall appeal.

6. **Peaceful Atmosphere** Unlike many tourist destinations that are densely crowded, Umananda Island provides a tranquil atmosphere conducive to relaxation and spiritual reflection. This peaceful environment amplifies its attractiveness for those desiring respite from urban noise and the hectic pace of city life, offering a unique selling point for sustainable tourism focused on well-being and mindful experiences.

Contextual Insights and Broader Implications

The tourism dynamics of Umananda Island, characterized by a blend of cultural heritage, natural beauty, and ecological significance, align with recognized sustainable tourism principles seen in other island destinations. For instance, integrating natural and cultural elements enhances the attractiveness and educational value of such locations while promoting conservation and responsible visitor interaction (Balida et al., 2024). Moreover, sustainable tourism approaches emphasize retaining authenticity and minimizing over-commercialization to maintain both ecological integrity and cultural authenticity, vital for long-term visitor satisfaction and heritage preservation (Tang et al., 2019).

The peaceful atmosphere of Umananda Island resonates with trends favoring natural serenity combined with cultural immersion, which are potent factors in shaping memorable tourism experiences and fostering repeat visitation (Chuamuangphan et al., 2025). The island's biodiversity and historic temples contribute to a layered tourism appeal that can invite experiential tourism—a model that values slow travel, cultural depth, and environmental mindfulness (Hakim et al., 2009).

Given the island's cultural and ecological assets, the future development of Umananda Island as a tourism destination could benefit from strategies that blend heritage conservation with eco-tourism, ensuring that increased visitor numbers do not threaten the fragile ecological balance or the sanctity of cultural sites. The island functions as a natural and cultural heritage hub, which, if managed sustainably, could offer a continual source of education, inspiration, and leisure for both locals and tourists while preserving its unique identity.

Umananda Island's tourist attraction lies in its fusion of the spiritual significance of the Umananda Temple, the island's rich biodiversity amidst the Brahmaputra River, its serene and scenic environment, and its historical and cultural fabric. These elements collectively form a multidimensional tourism experience suited for devotees, nature

enthusiasts, historians, and leisure travelers, reflecting a sustainable model of heritage and ecological tourism (Balida et al., 2024; Chuamuangphan et al., 2025; Hughes, 2012; Jin & Li-Ming, 2011).

The tourist flow to Umananda Island shows clear seasonal variation influenced by climate, religious-events and regional tourism patterns. From June to September because of monsoon season; heavy rains and rising, river levels the tourist flow was very low.

Seasonality of Tourist flow in the Island

Table: 2 Seasonality of Tourist flow

Season	Months	Tourist flow	Reasons
Peak Season	Oct-Mar	High	Pleasant weather, Shivartri, clear river access
Shoulder Season	April-June	Moderate	Heat, pre monsoon discomfort
Off-Season	July-Sept.	Low	Monsoon rains, floods, transport issues

Transportation System

Since Umananda is an Island, road and rail-transportation are not available. The only way to reach the island is by water transport. Several modes of transport facilitate the movement of people between Guwahati and Umananda Island.

Ferry Services: The most common and affordable way to reach Umananda Island is by Ferries which takes about 1698-1713 mint. To reach the Island. The Govt. run ferries provide a safe and cost effective mode of transport for both locals and tourists.

Private boats and Speed boats: Apart from public Ferries, private boats and speed boats are available for hire. These boats provide a faster means of transport. Reducing travel time to just a few minutes. However; they are more expensive than the government ferry. Although Umananda Island is a small and isolated location, its transport and communication system make it easily accessible to visitors from Guwahati. The ferry and boat services provides a convenient means of travel, while mobile networks ensure connectivity despite occasional fluctuations in signal strength. As tourism continues to grow there is potential for further improvements in transport and communication in fracture on the island. However even with its minimal facilities, Umananda island remains a peaceful and historically rich destination that attracts pilgrims and nature lovers alike.

Tourist Satisfaction Index

The term “Satisfaction” in tourism products and services in the area. Tourist satisfaction is a very essential part of tourism study as identifying factors

that influence satisfaction is vital for managing the sustainability and development of tourism products and services.

Tourist satisfaction Index is a statistical tool to measure the level of satisfaction of tourist visiting the study area. Tourist coming to a destination from different places may have different expectations, ideas and views about their experience in the destination. It is very essential to ones their views to calculate the tourist satisfaction index. Present encasement of tourist satisfaction of the area under study is based on primary data. Data has been collected through interview schedules designed to get an idea of the perception of tourist regarding the following factors:

- i. River natural Beauty
- ii. Transport
- iii. Food
- iv. Accommodation
- v. Attitude of local people
- vi. Attitude of officials
- vii. cleanliness
- viii. Safety
- ix. Awareness
- x. Healthy atmosphere
- xi. Boating/rafting etc.

These factors are the main indicators of tourism in an area. Higher the satisfaction of the tourists towards the attributes, greater in the pull factor of the tourists to the destination.

The indicator wise level of satisfaction is calculated and tabulated with the help of following formula:

$$TSI = \frac{\sum mi \times ni}{N}$$

Where, TSI= Tourist satisfaction Index

Mi= Numerical value for the particular level of the satisfaction level. Ni= Number of respondents of the particular level of satisfaction.

N= Total number of respondents for those factors for all levels of satisfaction.

After the calculation of the index, the satisfaction is divided into three groups:

- i. High satisfaction (Index above 3)
- ii. Medium satisfaction (Index between 2 to 3)
- iii. Low satisfaction (Index below 2)

Tourist satisfaction Index in Umananda:

The factor wise level of satisfaction of tourist visiting Umananda is shown in table 1 which is based upon tourist interview at Umananda.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of tourists' satisfaction in Umananda

Factors of tourist in Umananda	Excelent		Good		Satisfactory		Below Satisfactory		No response	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
River Natural Beauty	25	83.3	5	16.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transport	9	30	5	16.6	8	26.6	-	-	8	26.6
Food	15	50	12	40	3	10	-	-	-	-
Boating/rafting	15	50	15	50	-	-	-	-	-	-
Attitude of local people	13	43.3	12	40	-	-	-	-	5	16.6
Attitude of officials	9	30	-	-	14	46.6	-	-	7	23.3
Safety	-	-	6	20	4	13.3	9	30	11	36.6
Awareness	7	23.3	5	16.6	6	20	4	13.3	8	26.6
Weather	15	50	15	50	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cleanliness	8	26.6	10	33.3	12	40	-	-	-	-

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 3: Calculation of tourist satisfaction index in Umananda

Umanada Island	Excellent 4	Good 3	Satisfactory 2	Below Satisfactory (1)	Number of respondent (N)	Satisfaction index
						$\frac{\sum mi \times ni}{N}$
Mi×ni						
River Natural Beauty	100	15	-	-	30	3
Transport	36	15	16	-	30	2.23
Food	60	36	6	-	30	3.4
Boating/rafting	60	60	-	-	30	4

Attitude of local people	52	36	-	-	30	2.93
Attitude of officials	36	-	28	-	30	2.13
Safety	-	18	8	9	30	1.16
Awareness	28	15	12	4	30	1.963
Weather	60	45	-	-	30	3.5
Cleanliness	32	30	6	-	30	2.26

Source: Field survey, 2025.

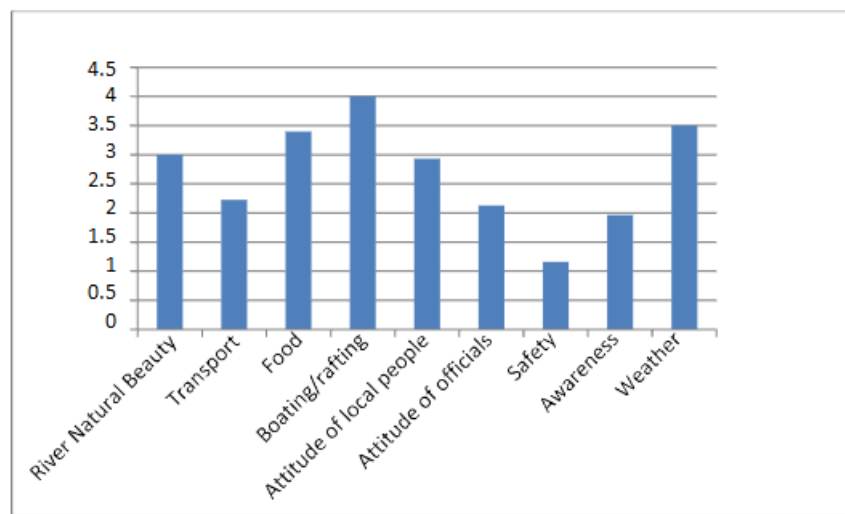


Fig: 1. Assessment of satisfaction Index of Tourists visiting Umananda.

Group composition of the tourist

Table 4: Group composition of tourist visiting the study area

Group	Umananda Island	
	Domestic	Foreigner
	%	%
Alone	10	0
Family	33.0	26.0
Friends	28.0	44.0
Both friends and family	0.0	8
Colleague	29.0	22.0
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Group composition is an important behavioral aspect of tourist to get idea of the nature of tourist demand. The table 5 reveals the majority of the tourists visiting Umananda Island comprises of groups of either friends or families or both.

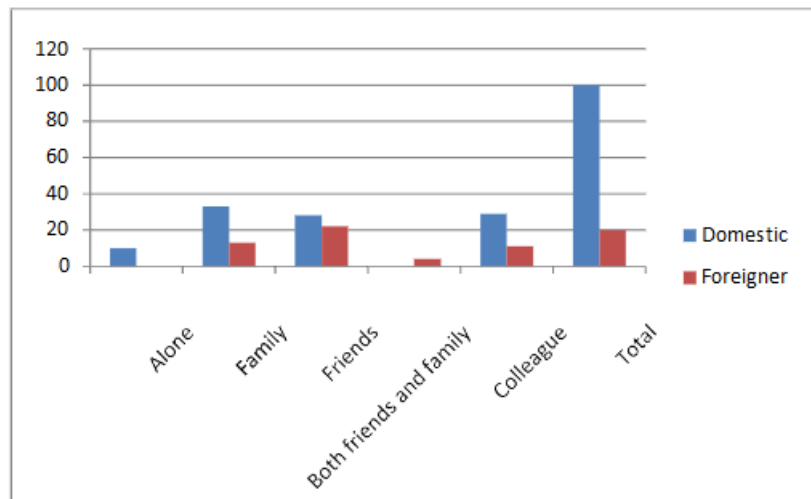


Fig: 2. Shows group composition of tourist visiting the study area

Profile of the tourist visiting the study area

This section deals with the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample of tourist visiting the study area. The section highlights the distribution of gender composition, age structure and occupational status of the sample of tourist visiting in the study area.

Table 5: Profile of the sample of tourists visiting the study area

Demographic Features	Umananda Island			
	Domestic		Foreigner	
	No.	%	No.	%
Gender				
Male	55	55.0	31	62.0
Female	45	45.0	19	38.0
Total	100	100	50	100
Age				
Less than 15				
15 to 30	38	38.0	5	10
31 to 60	58	58.0	20	40.0
61+	4	4.0	25	50
Total	100	100	50	100
Occupation				
Student	35	35.0	0	0
Service	29	29.0	24	48.0
Business	28	28.0	26	52.0
Others	7	7.0	0	0.0
Total	100	100	50	100

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The socio-demographic assessment as presented in total 5 is base on sample size of tourist in Umananda is 150 (100 domestic and 50 foreigner tourists); it is noteworthy that tourists below the age of 15 have not been included in the sample of survey as understanding of tourists perception and behaviour would not give desired result from interviewing the tourist below the age of 15.

Table 6: presents the linguistic distribution of workforce:

Linguistic Gender	Umananda Island	
	No.	Total
Assamese	8	144
Bodo	3	54
Nepali	2	36
Tea-tribe	0	0
No-indigenous	7	126
Total	20	360

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 7: Table showing the visitors security or safety.

Opinion	No. of respondents
Yes	5
No	11
No opinion	4
Total	20

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The major finding of the study is that, from October to February tourist rates are high; because of the weather is pleasant and there's less rain. This period also coincides with the tourist Season in Assam. Domestic visitors are hugely visit but foreigners and other visitors are very little. From the analysis it is observed that tourist arrival to this place increasing day by day. The influx of tourists can lead to littering, plastic pollution and other forms of pollution that damage the islands environment. Cultural Tourism on Umananda Islands brings economic benefits such as revenue generation and employment, it also presents degradation and cultural commodification.

Conclusion

Umananda Island, located in the Brahmaputra River near Guwahati in Assam. The Island is that tourism place where visitors is increasing day by day to experience the blend of Natural beauty historical importance and cultural richness. The Islands Scenic beauty, biodiversity and historic Umananda temple make it an attractive destination for tourists' pilgrims and Natural lovers. As a popular tourist, spot, Umananda Island has the potential to promote sustainable tourism; showcase Assam's rich cultural heritage. However, it is essential to balance tourism development with conservation effects to protect the island's delicate Eco-System and preserve its cultural significance for future generations.

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