

Potential of Cultural Tourism in Charaideo: With Special Reference to Historical Monuments

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Abstract: Cultural tourism, as a dynamic and multidimensional sector, offers significant potential for sustainable development, heritage preservation, and socio-economic revitalization, particularly in regions rich in historical and cultural assets. This study critically explores the untapped potential of cultural tourism in Charaideo, Assam, with a special focus on its historical monuments, notably the maidams—the burial mounds of the Ahom royalty that are often compared to the pyramids of Egypt in their historical significance and architectural grandeur. Through a multidisciplinary approach combining heritage studies, tourism management, and socio-cultural anthropology, the research examines the historical narratives, cultural symbolism, and present state of conservation of these monuments. It also investigates local community perceptions, tourism infrastructure, policy frameworks, and visitor experiences to assess the viability and implications of promoting Charaideo as a cultural tourism destination. The findings reveal a strong potential for cultural tourism in Charaideo, contingent on strategic planning, sustainable heritage management, and inclusive community engagement. The study concludes with policy recommendations aimed at integrating heritage conservation with tourism development, thereby positioning Charaideo as a key site in India's cultural tourism landscape while safeguarding its historical integrity for future generations.

Keywords: Cultural, Tourism, Historical, Monument.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. It is a major contributor to the global economy and it can help local economies by jobs, generating revenue through supporting local culture. Tourism is one of the enormous service industry in India with contribution 6.23 percent to National GDP and 8.78 percent of total employment. To encourage the growth of tourism, 27th Sept of each year is marked as tourism day. The WTO and WTTC have highlighted its economic benefits and tourism, is now considered as a global instrument to reduce poverty. The tourism department of India said that the potential for tourism in region is huge and govt. of India would provide some additional fund along existing schemes to make the tourism sector bright and spread in world wide. The district Sivasagar has great potential for promoting its tourism center. At present, this study has great significance in the field of tourism because the findings of the Study will provide

great employment opportunity and several developments.

Cultural tourism refers to travel that focuses on experiencing and learning about a destination culture, heritage, tradition, history and lifestyle. Museums, historical landmarks, festivals, tradition and art galleries are the main tourist destination. The primary goal of cultural tourism is to provide travelers with an immersive educational experience that connect them to the history and cultural identity of a place. It also helps to create stronger global connections and promotes understanding, tolerance and peaceful co-existence among nations and people internationally. That is why the cultural Tourism is stimulate local economy by creating jobs, local businesses and generating local and foreign revenue for the preservation of cultural sites and initiatives. In case of Assam, it is playing an important role in economy and lies in being an instrument for

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economic development and also bridge the gap between the different Societies and promote Cross-culture. Charaideo is a prominent as tourism site that holds immense cultural and historical significant.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are communicating the values of heritage tourism. The main objectives are summarized below-

- To explore and illustrate the cultural heritage of Charaideo, including its historical landmark, traditions festivals.
- To analyses different socio-cultural benefit from the tourism of the Charaideo area.

METHODOLOGY

The Study has been undertaken by means of collecting Primary along with Secondary data. Secondary data have been collected from books, economic survey and various Government records.

DISCUSSION

The maidams of Charaideo are not merely archaeological remains but are emblematic of the socio-political and spiritual ethos of the Ahom civilization, which ruled Assam for nearly six centuries. These burial mounds serve as tangible expressions of the region's dynastic legacy and intangible cultural heritage, including rituals, oral traditions, and craftsmanship. Despite their profound historical and cultural value, these monuments remain marginalized within both national and international heritage tourism circuits.

Charaideo's tourism potential is deeply rooted in its historical and cultural significance as the first capital of the Ahom dynasty. The most prominent attractions are the royal maidams—burial mounds of Ahom kings and nobles—which reflect rich architectural heritage and socio-religious traditions. These monuments, coupled with the site's association with Tai-Ahom identity, offer a unique lens into Assam's medieval history. Furthermore, the cultural landscape, traditional practices, and oral histories surrounding Charaideo contribute to its intangible heritage, enhancing its appeal for heritage and cultural tourism. The area's authenticity and historical depth make it a valuable yet underutilized heritage tourism destination.

However, multiple factors hinder the full realization of Charaideo's tourism capacity. Infrastructural limitations such as poor connectivity, inadequate facilities, and lack of tourist services restrict visitor access and experience. Additionally, the absence of integrated tourism policies, insufficient promotion, and weak coordination among heritage and tourism departments contribute to its marginal status. Community involvement remains low despite residents' strong cultural ties and willingness to engage. Moreover, limited interpretive infrastructure and academic

engagement have constrained public awareness. Addressing these gaps through sustainable planning and inclusive governance could significantly enhance tourism development while preserving Charaideo's historical integrity.

The verdant natural landscape surrounding Charaideo significantly enhances its potential as a sustainable tourism destination. Nestled amid lush hills and forested terrain, the region offers a serene and ecologically rich environment that complements its historical monuments, particularly the Ahom maidams. The green environment not only provides a visually appealing setting but also contributes to a tranquil atmosphere conducive to cultural and heritage tourism. This ecological backdrop supports biodiversity and offers opportunities for nature-based tourism, such as eco-trails, birdwatching, and cultural-nature fusion tours. When integrated with heritage preservation, the green environment of Charaideo can promote low-impact, environmentally conscious tourism development.

The analysis reveals a disjuncture between the heritage value of Charaideo and its visibility in the tourism sector. This reflects a broader pattern in heritage tourism, wherein peripheral regions with rich indigenous heritage are often overlooked in favor of more commercialized heritage destinations. It highlights significant deficiencies in tourism-related infrastructure in Charaideo. Accessibility remains a major constraint, with inadequate transportation networks, limited accommodation facilities, and a lack of interpretative centers or guided tour services. Moreover, the absence of a comprehensive tourism management plan and coordinated efforts among government bodies, heritage experts, and local communities hampers the effective promotion of Charaideo as a cultural destination.

Institutionally, the lack of synergy between the departments of tourism, archaeology, and cultural affairs has impeded the systematic conservation and promotion of the site. The bureaucratic fragmentation and insufficient funding mechanisms further constrain heritage development. Although the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Assam State Department of Archaeology have initiated preservation efforts, these remain sporadic and largely reactive.

Community engagement emerges as both a critical opportunity and a current shortfall. Local inhabitants possess deep cultural knowledge and emotional attachment to the maidams, yet their involvement in tourism planning and heritage management remains minimal. Many residents express a willingness to participate in cultural tourism initiatives, provided such programs are inclusive, economically beneficial, and respectful of cultural values.

The research indicates a latent potential for community-based tourism (CBT), which could provide

livelihood opportunities while fostering a sense of stewardship among locals. However, the realization of this potential requires capacity-building programs, awareness campaigns, and participatory governance structures that empower local communities in decision-making processes. The visitor surveys reveal that while tourists who visit Charaideo express high levels of satisfaction regarding its cultural depth and uniqueness, they also report dissatisfaction with the lack of facilities, signage, historical information, and guided tours. These shortcomings diminish the overall visitor experience and reduce the site's competitiveness compared to more developed heritage destinations.

In Charaideo, there as afestive cultural interpretation have seen through multilingual signage, digital storytelling, museum exhibits, and guided tours—is essential to enhance the tourist experience and foster deeper appreciation of the site's historical significance. Without interpretative infrastructure, the educational and experiential value of cultural tourism remains unfulfilled. It focuses on the points toward the necessity of a sustainable cultural tourism model that balances heritage preservation with tourism development. Charaideo presents a compelling case for such a model, given its rich historical assets and the socio-cultural vibrancy of local communities. Sustainable cultural tourism in this context must encompass:

- Conservation-led development that prioritizes heritage integrity in Charaideo. Inclusive planning involving local communities and indigenous knowledge systems.
- Strategic marketing to position Charaideo within regional, national, and global tourism networks.
- Capacity building for all stakeholders, including training programs for local guides, artisans, and entrepreneurs.
- Sustainability also implies the integration of environmental considerations, particularly in preventing over-tourism, managing waste, and conserving the natural landscape surrounding the maidams.

When compared with similar heritage sites in India—such as the Chhatris of Madhya Pradesh or the Buddhist monuments in Sanchi—Charaideo demonstrates both unique attributes and shared challenges. What differentiates Charaideo is its association with a living culture, wherein Ahom traditions continue to be practiced. However, the contrast in tourism development between these sites illustrates the impact of strategic promotion, political will, tourism outcomes and its recognition. By examining

comparative models, the study identifies replicable practices that could be adapted to the Charaideo context, including public-private partnerships, heritage circuits, and digital engagement tools.

CONCLUSION

Charaideo, the ancient capital of the Ahom dynasty, holds immense potential for cultural tourism through its unique historical monuments, especially the royal maidams. This study reveals that despite their rich heritage value, these sites remain underdeveloped due to poor infrastructure, limited promotion, and minimal community involvement. However, strong local interest and cultural significance suggest opportunities for sustainable tourism if supported by inclusive planning, heritage-sensitive infrastructure, and effective policy coordination. By integrating conservation with tourism development, Charaideo can emerge as a vital cultural destination, fostering community empowerment, preserving heritage, and contributing meaningfully to Assam's cultural tourism landscape.

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