



E-ISSN: 2706-9591

P-ISSN: 2706-9583

[www.tourismjournal.net](http://www.tourismjournal.net)

IJTHM 2025; 7(2): 46-49

Received: 19-05-2025

Accepted: 21-06-2025

**Jupitara Goswami**

Research Scholar, Department  
of Commerce, Assam Don  
Bosco University, Assam,  
India

**Dr. Harjyoti Kalita**

Assistant Professor,  
Department of Commerce,  
Assam Don Bosco University,  
Assam, India

## Opportunities and challenges in pilgrimage tourism with reference to Guwahati city, Assam

**Jupitara Goswami and Harjyoti Kalita**

**DOI:** <https://www.doi.org/10.22271/27069583.2025.v7.i2a.162>

### Abstract

In the socio-economic landscape of Guwahati city Pilgrimage Tourism plays an important role most significantly during seasonal religious events such as the Ambubachi Mela which is held at Kamakhya temple yearly. The study tries to find out the various opportunities and challenges faced in the sector of pilgrimage tourism. It tries to find out and analysis the direct and indirect economic impact of pilgrimage activities. Pilgrimage tourism provides multiple opportunities for different types of developments such as cultural, economic and social. Hospitality, transport, craft and food service are the main areas where opportunities were being generated by this sector. Opportunities also bring challenges that need proper planning and handling. Overcrowding, inadequate waste management, poor sanitation, traffic congestion uneven distribution of benefits and environment concerns particularly during the high-footfall periods are some of the major challenges faced. This paper also emphasizes the role of Government in improving long term tourism potential. The study aims at ensuring that pilgrimage tourism contributes to inclusive, sustainable and resilient economic growth in Guwahati. Also it highlights the relationship that exists between pilgrimage tourism and seasonal economic growth in Guwahati city.

**Keywords:** Pilgrimage, tourism, economy

### Introduction

In the global travel industry pilgrimage tourism plays an important role. Pilgrimage tourism contributes predominantly to regional economies, particularly during specific religious festivals and periodic gathering in Indian context. Spirituality, cultural up liftment and economic support are some of the important aspects of Pilgrimage tourism. Apart from spiritual satisfaction pilgrimage tourism helps in the preservation of traditional customs and heritage binding people through the thread of religious harmony. From the economic perspective it is acting as the generator of various portfolios of opportunities such as job creation, infrastructure, local business of food transport, handicraft etc. Guwahati which is known as the gateway of Northeast India is a hub of pilgrimage destination, among the many important pilgrimage spot Kamakhya temple is one of important Shakti Peetha that attract many devotees annually. Ambubachi Mela which take place during the month of Ahaar (June) is one of the most important period for pilgrimage incoming in Guwahati. It attracts many pilgrims from all over the world. This festival is celebrated annually as menstruation cycle of Goddess Kamakhya. The flow of tourist not only created a spiritual environment but also helps in improving the local economy

### Objectives of Study

- To find out the important opportunities arising from pilgrimage tourism.
- To understand the cyclical nature of pilgrimage tourism on local economy.

### Review of literature

In Pilgrimage Tourism in India: A Socio Perspectives Singh (2004) <sup>[7]</sup> explores how religious tourism contributes to local economies through temporary employment, transport services and hospitality industries. In "Entrepreneurship and Indigenous Tourism: Case of Religious Tourism in India" Shinde (2010) <sup>[6]</sup> examines the role of local entrepreneurship in pilgrimage destination and how religious sites like Kamakhya temple in Guwahati have supported small business, guesthouse and informal sector employment during peak seasons. While Bora, N. & Deka, P. (2016) <sup>[1]</sup> in their paper on "Seasonal Tourism and Regional Economic Growth in

**Corresponding Author:**

**Jupitara Goswami**

Research Scholar, Department  
of Commerce, Assam Don  
Bosco University, Assam,  
India

Assam" has mentioned that Guwahati witnesses a surge in economic activity during Ambubachi Mela. Tourism Department of Assam (2018) reports published by the department reveals that pilgrimage sites such as Kamakhya temple attract over 20 lakh visitors annually. This report also points out the challenge of crowd management and waste generation during peak festivals.

It has been well realized that the tourism industry in India and especially Assam has been witnessing a significant growth over the last few years. Assam has plenty to offer to the tourists ranging from natural attractions to pilgrimage sites. However, the attractions must be managed and mobilized optimally in order to develop tourism industry (Deb, Kumar and Ramsamy 2023:111) <sup>[12]</sup> Opportunities and challenges are part and parcel of seasonal nature religious tourism which can increase revenue for local business, increase employment opportunities and also encourage infrastructural development. Unevenly distributed of economic benefits also often seen where local communities are receiving limited returns compared to larger stakeholders. The study aims to look economic changes of pilgrimage tourism in Guwahati city with special importance to seasonal patterns. The study focuses on variety of opportunities arising from pilgrimage tourism and the various challenges associated with it.

**Study area:** The area that was taken for the study purpose is

Guwahati city and its main main pilgrimage tourist spot that is Kamakhya temple.

### Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the economic patterns, challenges and opportunities associated with pilgrimage tourism. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate as it allows for in-depth insight into the experiences and perspectives of various stakeholders involved in pilgrims, local vendors and hotel operators

**Data collection Methods-** To gather comprehensive data both primary and secondary sources were used-Primary data were collected using interview method, allowing direct interaction with respondents to obtain detailed and context specific information. Secondary data were obtained from academic journals, government reports, tourism department publications and online sources related to pilgrimage tourism and local economic activities.

### Sampling Method and Sample size-

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who are actively involved in or affected by pilgrimage tourism. This non-probability sampling method was chosen to ensure that only relevant and informed individuals were included in the study the final sample included: 60 pilgrims visiting the religious site.40 local vendors/traders operating in the pilgrimage area and 20 hotel operators catering to tourist and pilgrims

**Table 1:** Income of local vendors during Ambubachi mela

Types	Monthly average income during normal days	Monthly average income during Ambubachi mela
Street vendors	21000	60000
Hotel operators	90000	2lakh
Transport operators	26000	65000
Dhaba operators	36000	95000

**Source:** Field survey (May and June 2025)

**Analysis** The table shows that there is increase in income in different sector during Ambubachi Mela which acts as a seasonal economic engine. The rise in Income show the

strong positive potential for pilgrimage tourism which will to uplift local livelihoods.

**Table 2:** Number of Tourist month-wise at Kamakhya Temple (Estimated)

Months	Numbers of visitors	Time
January	2 lakh	Winter tourism
March april	2.5 lakh	Navaratri and regional festival
June	9-10 lakh	Ambubachi medla
July-August	1.5 lakh	Manasha puja and Shravan
October-November	3 lakh	Durga puja and Kali puja
December	1.8 lakh	Winter holidays

**Source:** Assam Tourism Dept. Reports (2023-24), field estimates during Ambubachi Mela 2024.

**Analysis:** The table reveals that Kamakhya temple have a huge number of tourist although the year specially during

festival time which has been a good source of income generation for the local vendors

**Table 3:** Challenges Faced during festivals

Challenges	Percentage of respondents
Traffic and overcrowding	75%
Sanitation problem	65%
Inadequate Public transport	58%
Theft risk	45%
Waste management	55%
Parking problem	65%

**Source:** Survey among pilgrims, residents, and vendors

**Analysis:** The table reveals that several major challenges were faced by devotees during festival time which is a

major hindrance in pilgrimage tourism

**Table 4:** Opportunities from Pilgrimage tourism in Guwahati city

Opportunities	No. of people benefited(out of 100 individuals)	percentage
Employment(security guard, cleaners, supervisor, cook etc)	78	78%
Local Entrepreneurship	63	63%
Local Handicrafts & handloom center	65	65%
Hospitality and accommodation (Hotels and homestay	72	72%
Transport sector(taxi driver, e-rickshaws, bus, traveller, local taxi service)	73	78%
Food restaurant and food stalls	82	82%
Parking facilities	68	68%
Religious Goods and souvenirs (puja items, religious book and idols)	62	62%
Tour and Guide service	55	55%
River cruises	69	69

Source: Field survey

**Analysis:** The table point outs different types of opportunities. It is seen that 78% were benefited with employment opportunities while 82% were benefited from providing food service to the tourist. Local handlooms and entrepreneurship were also benefited from pilgrimage tourism. River cruises have also benefited from religious tourism. Religious tourism also supports local transport

sectors.

In seasonal economic growth pilgrimage tourism plays a very significant role but it is not always evenly distributed. Pilgrimage tourism has much potential in Assam. Guwahati city which is one of the oldest and historical places has many important sites which if properly developed will definitely enhanced in tourism development of the region.

**Tables 5:** Category of Challenges in Pilgrimage Tourism in Guwahati city

Category	Challenges	% (out of 100 respondents)
Major	Overcrowding during festivals	85%
	Traffic congestion and lack of parking	67%
	Poor waste management and pollution	72%
	Inadequate sanitation and pure drinking water facilities	69%
	Lack of space for setting business setup	65%
Moderate	Seasonal nature of income and employment	72%
	Limited tourist information	53%
	Over commercialization of religious place	57%
	Inconsistent quality of service(Food,transport and lodging)	55%
Low	Pilgrimage awareness and behaviour	46%
	Seasonal weather disruption	65%

Source: Field survey

**Analysis:** The above table reveals different types of challenges that is major, moderate and low. Major challenges have over 65% impact on infrastructure, sanitation, environmental management and crowd control. Moderate challenges also reflect the need and importance for proper planning of tourism, development of local skill and cultural preservation policies. Seasonal weather disruption and lack of awareness of pilgrimage and behaviour are another types of challenges of pilgrimage tourism.

### Findings and Analysis

Ambubachi mela has an important impact on increasing economic status of the Guwahati city. The mela and festivals acts as a boon for different types of vendors, hotel owner, transport operator. Hotels and home stay were full especially during festivals which is a good source of income for local people. But there are many problems associated with it such as overcrowding, parking space, toilet facilities, drinking water facilities, waste disposal and many more. Pilgrimage sites are thus not only providing religious opportunities for devotees to fulfill their desire for salvation but it also provide an important source of income generation specially for local people. Many families were run on the basis of income from the pilgrimage sites. Pilgrimage tourism thus provides lots of opportunities for the local people. It has provided employment opportunities in different sectors such as tourist guide, security guard, supervisor, cleaner etc. Local business was much benefitted such as food industry, hotels and home stay. Even a small

stall owner selling puja items such as flowers, aggabatti etc have been able to run his/her family due to the Pilgrimage sites. Pilgrimage tourism has been a boon for local handicraft and handlooms which has given Assamese attire its new identity. Transport sector have also benefited from it. Youths of Guwahati have been engaged in different work related to transport sector and in this regard pilgrimage sector provide a positive scenario. The more the popularity of an area means more tourists which will indirectly increase the economy of that region. Pilgrimage tourism has definitely been able to improve the living standard of the local people. Even a small business man can survive in this materialistic word if he/she runs business around pilgrimage tourism sites.

### Conclusion

The study reveals that the Pilgrimage site particularly around the Kamakhya temple has an impact on socio-economic and infrastructural landscape of Guwahati city. Annual festivals such as Ambubachi Mela provides an economic uprising offering local business especially in sectors like hospitality, transport, food etc to increase their income. The different pilgrimage events in Guwahati city including the Ambubachi mela acts as a strong catalyst for the economic development and upliftment of the city. Pilgrimage tourism extends its hands of benefits not only on spiritual sides but also in revenue generating sides for its local population. It encompasses large to small scale business and vendors in its route-from hotel owners, transport and tour operators to artisans and craftsman. The

standard of living and livelihood of many families has shown significant rise due to the employment opportunities they have gathered from the pilgrimage site. However, to sustain and maximize these benefits, attention must be paid in resolving the critical challenges such as overcrowding, poor sanitization, parking management, waste management etc. Thus, with proper planning and infrastructural development pilgrimage tourism can continue to serve as a sustainable driver of economic growth and cultural preservation in Guwahati. Thus pilgrimage tourism boost employment, promotes cultural identity and strengthens the spiritual fabric of the city, making Guwahati a prominent node in India's religious scenario

## References

1. Bora N, Deka P. Seasonal tourism and regional economic growth in Assam: A study on Kamakhya Temple. *Guwahati University Journal of Economics*. 2016;9(2):45-58.
2. Das A, Sharma B. Tourism in Northeast India: A potential economic driver. *Journal of Regional Development and Planning*. 2019;8(1):112-127.
3. Gogoi R. Pilgrimage tourism in Guwahati: A case study of Kamakhya Temple. *International Journal of Tourism and Cultural Studies*. 2021;6(3):78-89.
4. North Eastern Hill University (NEHU). *Cultural and Environmental Impacts of Pilgrimage Tourism: A Case Study on Kamakhya Temple*. Shillong: Department of Cultural Studies; 2020.
5. Mishra P, Barua S. Sustainable pilgrimage tourism in Assam: Issues and perspectives. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism Studies*. 2022;5(4):134-150.
6. Shinde KA. Entrepreneurship and indigenous tourism: Case of religious tourism in India. *South Asian Journal of Tourism and Heritage*. 2010;3(2):1-15.
7. Singh S. *Pilgrimage tourism in India: A socio-economic perspective*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House; 2004.
8. Sharma R. Pilgrimage tourism and its economic impact on local communities - A case study of Kamakhya Temple. *International Journal of Tourism Studies*. 2021;12(3).
9. Tourism Department of Assam. *Annual tourism report 2017-2018*. Dispur: Government of Assam; 2018. <http://tourism.assam.gov.in>
10. Tourism Department of Assam. *Economic Survey of Pilgrimage Tourism in Assam*. Dispur: Directorate of Tourism, Government of Assam; 2021.
11. United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). *Religious tourism in Asia and the Pacific*. Madrid: UNWTO; 2015.
12. Deb S, Kumar R, Ramsamy P. Cultural heritage and sustainable pilgrimage: Revisiting temple tourism in Northeast India. *Journal of Tourism Studies*. 2023;15(2):111-125.