



## Promoting Sustainable Marketing in Tea-Estates of Cachar District, Assam: Challenges and Prospects

Jayeeta Bhattacharjee and Dr. K.N Lokesh Kumar\*

Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Assam University (Central University), Silchar

### Abstract

The paper focuses on the challenges and prospects associated with sustainable practices, along with their marketing, in promoting the tea estates of the Cachar district in Assam. It highlights the economic, environmental, and social aspects, as well as the technological advancements required for the management and development of the tea regions. Additionally, it emphasizes community engagement and awareness among the local populations in the tea estate regions. The paper also analyzes the importance of digitalization in the tea estates for the economic upliftment of these areas. It seeks to address the challenges and harness opportunities in the tea estates to achieve sustainability, contributing to economic growth, social well-being, and environmental preservation. Based on secondary data, the paper identifies the key factors that hinder the promotion of sustainable practices in the tea regions of the Cachar District.

**Keywords:** economic, social, sustainable, tea estates.

### 1. Introduction

India comes second after China in tea production globally. The tea produced in India has the sheer quality inhabited with a good geographical condition. According to reports as per government agencies, the production of tea in India stood at 1,382.03 million kilogram in 2023-2024. The North-Eastern state of Assam has the major production in tea. It contributes significantly to the economy of Assam. Tea industry in Assam can be traced back to almost 200 years back. In 1823, for the first time, tea plants were discovered in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam by Robert Bruce. After 10 years, a tea garden was started in 1833 at Lakhimpur district. To administer the tea gardens, Assam Company was formed in 1839 to govern the commercial production of tea. Another company was also formed in the year

1859, Jorhat Tea Company to uplift the tea plantation in the region. Then in 1911, Tocklai Research Station was established near Jorhat for the research purpose. With more civilization and improvements, various other initiatives were taken to promote tea production in Assam. With passage of time, various tea gardens were established, with that difficulties were also emerged and the major obstacle was the labour immigration and adjustment within the specific habitat. Though it helped in more production but due to diverse cultures, there was a lot of reluctance. The local communities were not sufficient for the diversification that was needed for the development in the region. Barak Valley is comprised of 3 districts. There are 98 tea gardens in the valley. 23 tea estates in SriBhumi District, 19 tea estates in Hailakandi District and 56 tea estates in Cachar district.

\*Corresponding author Dr. K.N Lokesh Kumar, hailoks@gmail.com

The mass production of tea is contributed from Cachar district in Barak Valley. Tea produced is exported to various parts of India. Even there are board meetings in every financial year to boost the economy of the region. The labourers here are from various tribes and communities that can foster various tourism activities in the region by attracting the tourists and visitors from all over the world. Even the nature lovers, can find rejoice in the lush greenery tea plantations in the valley. Sustainable marketing would lead to development of tea tourism in the region, sustaining the environment and preserving the heritage and culture of the state. This would lead to employment opportunities and boosting the economy of the region.

### **1.1 Problem statement**

The state of Assam is blessed with natural scenic beauty. The tea estates have a high potential for attracting tourists. The policies are not implemented as directed by the Government of Assam, specially in the tea-estates of Assam, as a result tourists are not able to connect to these places. For this, promotion is needed, proper marketing is required with keeping in mind the sustainability of the tea-estates.

### **1.2 Objectives of the study**

- 1) To identify the economic, environmental, and social challenges faced by tea estates in Cachar district.
- 2) To assess the role of technology in promoting sustainable marketing practices.
- 3) To analyze the importance of community engagement and awareness in achieving sustainability in tea estates.
- 4) To propose strategies for overcoming challenges and harnessing opportunities for sustainable marketing in tea estates.

## **2. Review of literature**

### **2.1 Tea Industry and its impacts**

Kumar, et.al (2008) assessed the tea industry of India. Its current state being in declination and the steps for remedy is essential for the sector to be developed. Aggressive marketing and

promotional activities with the product diversification would be a game changer to boost the Indian tea exports.

Gupta, et.al (2011) explored the organic tea gardens in the Cachar district of Assam. It was tried to find out the chemical substances that flowed into the tea gardens, so to adopt the organic farming practices in those regions. It also emphasized on the water quality status and harbour significantly higher biodiversity.

Samantaray, et.al (2012) aimed to provide insights into the tea industry that contributes to the economy. It mentioned how the tea industry in India is declining and there is not enough revenue and resources for the long-term stability.

Shah (2013) stated the potential of tea sector of India in the global scenario. Despite its challenges, it is generating employment opportunities in the country. If given utmost care and proper attention, this sector would surely flourish.

Sutradhar (2013) explored the causes for exclusion of the women workers of tea estates in Cachar district. It recommended on how they could be included in the tea production process for a social change and the challenges would be overcome.

Borah and Das (2015) explored the right set of circumstances for entrepreneurship in the tea-estate regions and its impact on the state. The paper observed how the residents of the region, don't have access to resources and are not having proper education due to which there is a downfall in the tea-estate regions. Some recommendations are given to rebuild the socio-economic structure for development in the region.

Magar and Kar (2016) emphasized on the importance of tea plantation and the people associated with it in the state of Assam. It also focused on the socio-cultural transformation and its impact on the growth of the region through tea festivals, tea tourism, tea folk songs and dances.

Biggsa, et al. (2018) explored the socio-environmental factors that impose a threat in

the tea productivity and the workers in the tea garden regions of Assam. They highlighted on the necessity for a versatile and climate-smart landscape activities with the suggestions from the tea advisory expert committee to promote sustainability for long term socio-environmental cultivation of tea under changing climatic conditions.

Das and Zirmire (2018) stated that India holds the second in the production of tea. The paper provided an insight into the detailed analysis of export and import of tea by focusing on the product segmentation, its current scenario in the global market and the barriers to it.

Ekka and Joseph (2022) examined the health of the youths residing in the two tea estates of Cachar district to achieve community engagement for a sustainable environment. It tried to focus on the tea culture, engrossing the fact that if the youth workers are maintained well in a healthy life style, it would raise the willingness to work more, arising more productivity in that region.

Choudhury and Daulagajao (2024) analyzed the complex relationship of colonialism and the dynamics that contributed to Cachar's forest landscape. Tea plantations in the region influence the transformation of nature and high protection by the forest department causing workers to mitigate and migrate for work.

## **2.2 Sustainable development and marketing**

Jabareen (2008) analyzed the theoretical framework on sustainable development through multidisciplinary literature, where each concept representing different meaning of their own. It tried here synthesizing different categories by elaborating it together focusing on its all aspects of sustainability.

Obermiller, et.al (2008) illustrated the capabilities of sustainable marketing strategies to generate the value of an organization by selecting appropriate initiatives. A framework has been developed for using sustainability as a tool for marketing strategy.

Hastings, et.al (2011) assessed the power of social marketing that has an impact on the

preferences of the consumer in selecting a sustainable way of commercial marketing. This paper provides a framework for sustainable business practices and the ways to fulfill them.

Baruah (2017) focused on the marketing of tea in Assam due to its unique traditional handmade process of production. The potential of tea is such that diversification of tea products, with proper strategies can lead to a development in the region, making it flourish in the world tea market.

Kemper and Ballantine (2019) stated that auxiliary, reformative and transformative sustainable marketing are the three main perceptions for implementing sustainable marketing.

Bhuiyan (2022) discussed the digitalization and the cost-effective global power transformation. It also tried to emphasis on the sustainable resources in various sectors and recommended for a green environment for the future generations.

Park, et.al (2022) explained the role of sustainable marketing in the development of a product. It is a pivotal part of the transformation process. The companies could sustain by focusing on long term financial stability that would represent capital gains in stock prices.

Kalogiannidis, et.al (2023) emphasized on sustainable marketing through advanced technology. It concentrated on the positive relationship between sustainability and technology. It enabled on expanding the dynamic nature of marketing leading to technological innovation, influencing the sustainability of markets.

## **2.3 Tea Tourism in Assam**

Das (2012) explored that Assam being blessed with natural resources having the potentiality of attracting tourists can contribute to the growth in the area. The state is known for its valuable natural resources along with its various economic resources. It also generates income and employment opportunities. With proper tourism development policy, the tourism industry would boost up.

Kumari, et.al (2017) highlighted the impact of host community from tea tourism. A study was conducted in the tea regions through surveys and questionnaires. It recommended developing a strategic model with massive promotional campaign to popularize the tea brand along with sustainable tourism practice.

Bezborah (2023) stated that Assam as a tourist destination somehow has not been able to mark its presence on the global tourism map so far. Though the government has recently adopted various steps to rejuvenate the tourism of the state, however, one major sector it has disregarded is the potentiality of Agri tourism. This study focuses on the Tea sector of the agricultural aspects of the state. Tea in Assam is one of the major contributors to its economy and employment. With more than 800 major Tea estates, Assam has the highest potential to develop itself as a Tea Tourism destination in the nation. It tries to focus on the potentiality of tea tourism in the state and discuss the various approaches that could uplift the same and the challenges that tea tourism is currently facing and list out few solutions to eliminate those challenges.

Sharma and Salma (2023) highlighted on Assam's agricultural sector for pertaining a pivotal part of the state's GDP and having an impact on the economy. The tea cultivated and produced in Assam have a significant factor in the global tea market due to its uniqueness, that contributes to the foreign exchange reserve, generating employment opportunities in the state.

Hazarika, et.al (2024) aimed for intensifying the involvement of tourist in the tea estates of the state of Assam. The focus was made on the factors that would enable development in the region through tourism activities. The paper also gave importance on the challenges how it could be resolved to bring stability and sustainability in those regions.

## **2.4 Research Gap**

From the existing reviews, it could be found that though work is done on the tea-estates of Cachar as well as other states of Assam. Development of tourism in the tea estates needs

to be implemented with policies and promotion needs to be done with proper marketing and through sustainable means. The tea-estates in Cachar, does not have much work related to tourism development and sustainable marketing.

## **3. Research methodology**

The study is descriptive research in nature. It used secondary sources of data. Data gathered and collected from academic journals, government reports, reliable internet sources. It tried to analyze the research work done in the tea industry along with sustainable marketing and tea tourism of Assam.

## **4. Discussions**

### **4.1 Economic, environmental and social challenges in the tea estates**

The tea estates of Cachar district is delved with a lot of potential. However, the tea estates face several barriers in its economic, environmental, and social aspects. The economic challenges include fluctuation in market prices, cost of production being too high and limited access to financial resources. All the factors affect the production process of tea leaves in factories, also hampering the labourers in their wages being distributed economically. Environmental challenges include deforestation, soil erosion, overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides; degrade soil quality which harms the biodiversity of the tea estate regions. This poses a threat to the environment but by stringent measures, it can be identified. Social challenges encompass poor working conditions, low wages, inadequate health care, education facilities, and low standard of living. All the factors if addressed and comprehensive strategies that mitigates round the economic, social, and environmental dimensions by sustainable ways and suitable framework being deployed for promoting sustainable marketing then tea products can be made economically viable, environmentally friendly, and socially equitable. West Jalinga tea estate is one of the largest organic tea estates in Barak Valley. The

tea crops being collected and processed in an organic way, chemicals are not being preferred, thus by sustaining the environment. Also, the branch of Tocklai tea research centre in Silcoorie tea estate in Cachar, provides an insight to the tea researchers as well as the extreme tea lovers along with the tourist to have them an idea of how actually the process of preparing tea leaves from crops and other factors associated with it are carried out in a sustained way.

#### **4.2 Role of technology in promoting sustainable marketing practices**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, being in the digital era, it is convenient to relate to the rest of the world through internet connectivity. Digital platforms enable direct communication between producers and consumers and ensure fair prices of the tea products. It also reduces the middlemen effect that used to exploit the market beforehand. With good internet connectivity, advanced agricultural techniques can be adopted minimizing the negative environmental impact. Digital tools can aid in monitoring environmental parameters, optimizing its use of resources and improving supply chain transparency. It would enhance traceability and creditability of sustainably produced tea, attracting consumers who are environment conscious and boost market demand. By this process of digitalization, various sustainable practices would be promoted how the market would grow in a sustained way. For example, sensors within the tea gardens would help in detecting whether the tea leaves are being infected by the pesticides, whether they need watering or needs to be plucked those needs for processing into consumable tea. Through digital intervention, the consumers can buy tea packets according to their preferences in various online apps. Through forecasting, it would enable the tea estates to determine the target market and the fluctuations that arise in the market. Various online platforms enable the traders, investors, stockholders, government organizations and non-governmental organizations to collaborate with the tea-estates to facilitate the production of tea estates as well as the development of tea

estates in a sustained manner. They can be promoted and marketed through digital platforms; advertisements would be cost effective without wasting resources.

#### **4.3 Community engagement in achieving sustainability in tea estates**

The local communities of the tea estates play a major role in the success of sustainable marketing initiatives. Raising awareness among the local communities about the benefits of sustainable practices can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility towards environmental preservation. Workshops, skilled based training programs can educate the labourers about sustainable tea production techniques, waste management and biodiversity conservation. The decisions taken by host communities to ensure sustainable practices would be culturally appropriate and economically viable. Empowering local communities through education and skill development can also improve their socio-economic status, contributing to the overall wellbeing of the region. The host communities also can showcase the traditional items made from natural resources without using any artificial resources which may deplete the environment. The local communities also can arrange sustainable green homestays for the tourists who come to stay and explore the tea estate regions. The tourists can enjoy the natural landscapes, the lush greenery of beautiful tea-estate regions.

#### **4.4 Strategies to overcome challenges for sustainable marketing**

To overcome the identified challenges and harness opportunities for sustainable marketing, several strategies can be proposed:

- Implementing fair trade practices, providing financial incentives for sustainable practices, and improving access to credit and insurance for tea labourers.
- Promoting organic farming, reforestation, soil conservation techniques, and reducing the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

- Improving labor conditions, ensuring fair wages, providing healthcare and education facilities, and promoting gender equality in the workforce.
- Adopting precision agriculture, leveraging digital platforms for market access, and using data analytics for resource optimization.
- Conducting awareness campaigns, organizing training programs, involving local communities in decision-making, and fostering partnerships with NGOs and government agencies.

#### 4.5 Recommendation for development of tea estates

- Sustainable marketing in the tea estates of Cachar district can lead to several avenues for future exploration and growth of the region. Further development will lead to the integration of advanced technologies. It would be helpful in guiding the real time monitoring of environmental conditions. It can optimize the use of resources and predict market trends and enhance supply chain transparency, thus enabling the consumer trust in sustainably produced tea.
- It is recommended that research should be conducted. It would help to focus on the long-term assessment of sustainable practices and its high impact on the economic, environmental, and social aspects of tea estates including the effectiveness of organic farming, reforestation effects and the involvement of host communities.
- Sustainable marketing practices would drive the economic growth and explore the potential markets both for domestic and international trade of organic tea products produced in the region. This would enable to explore the unexplored and develop marketing strategies to highlight the unique value proposition.
- As the climate is vulnerable in the tea estates, future studies can focus developing and implementing climate

change adoption strategies with sustainable water management practices and alternative livelihood options for tea workers affected by climate related disruptions.

- Education and training programs based on sustainable practices for tea estate workers, managers and local communities should be conducted in the tea-estates of Cachar District and that shall be crucial for the sustained adoption of sustainable practices.
- Implementing new models can help to identify the opportunities for synergies among different stakeholders, tea-estate owners, tourism operators and policymakers to promote sustainable marketing practices.

## 5. Conclusion

Promoting sustainable marketing in the tea estates of Cachar district, Assam, presents both challenges and opportunities. By addressing economic, environmental, and social issues through comprehensive strategies, it is possible to achieve sustainability and contribute to the economic growth and social well-being of the region. Technology and digitalization, along with community engagement, play crucial roles in this endeavor. Sustainable marketing not only enhances the marketability of tea but also ensures the preservation of the environment and the improvement of the quality of life for the local community.

## References

- Baruah, P. (2017). Types of Indian tea, production and marketing of traditional and handmade teas of Assam, India. *Journal of Tea Science Research*, 7.
- Bezborah, C. J. (2023). Tea tourism, the way forward to promote agritourism in the state of Assam: Prospects And Challenges. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Trends*, 5(9), 1-4.
- Bhuiyan, M. R. A. (2022). Overcome the future environmental challenges through sustainable and renewable energy resources. *Micro & Nano Letters*, 17(14), 402-416.
- Biggsa, E. M., Guptac, N., Saikiad, S. D., & Duncana, J. M. (2018). The tea landscape of Assam: Multi-

- stakeholder insights into sustainable livelihoods under a changing climate. *Environmental Science and Policy*, 82, 9-18.
- Borah, K., & Das, A. K. (2015). Growth of small tea cultivation and economic independence of the indigenous people of Assam. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(1), 82-93.
- Choudhury, M. S. H., & Daulagajao, R. (2024). Altered Terrain: Colonial Encroachment and Environmental Changes in Cachar, Assam.
- Das, D. (2012). Prospects and problems of tourism industry in Assam. *Global Research Methodology Journal*, 2(7), 1-6.
- Das, P., & Zirmire, J. (2018). Tea Industry in India: Current trends and future prospective. *Journal of pharmacognosy and phytochemistry*, 7(1), 407-409.
- Ekka, B., & Joseph, G. A. (2022). Well-being and Tea Garden Youth Engagement: A Study in Cachar District of Assam. *Editorial Board*.
- Fernando, I., Kumari, K. W. S. N., & Rajapaksha, R. M. P. D. K. (2017). Destination marketing to promote tea tourism socio-economic approach on community development. *PIN Fernando, KWSN Kumari and RMPDK Rajapaksha, Destination Marketing to Promote Tea Tourism: Socio-Economic Approach on Community Development, International Review of Management and Business Research*,(2017), 6(1), 68-75.
- Gordon, R., Carrigan, M., & Hastings, G. (2011). A framework for sustainable marketing. *Marketing theory*, 11(2), 143-163.
- Gupta, A., Bhattacharjee, M., & Jyrwa, E. (2011). Water Quality of Tea Garden Streams in Cachar, Assam, India: Importance of Organic Practices. *Proc. ICB47 pp*, 74, 78.
- Hazarika, B., Dutta, P., Gogoi, M., Gogoi, A. S., & Bora, D. K. (2024). Tea tourism: Navigating the future of Assam's agritourism. *Journal of Scientific Research And Reports*, 30(4), 77-88.
- Jabareen, Y. (2008). A new conceptual framework for sustainable development. *Environment, development and sustainability*, 10, 179-192.
- Kalogiannidis, S., Kalfas, D., Loizou, E., Papaevangelou, O., & Chatzitheodoridis, F. (2023). Smart Sustainable Marketing and Emerging Technologies: Evidence from the Greek Business Market. *Sustainability*, 16(1), 312.
- Kemper, J. A., & Ballantine, P. W. (2019). What do we mean by sustainability marketing?. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 35(3-4), 277-309.
- Kumar, P., Badal, P. S., Singh, N. P., & Singh, R. P. (2008). Tea industry in India: Problems and prospects. *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 63(1).
- Magar, C. K., & Kar, B. K. (2016). Tea plantations and socio-cultural transformation: the case of Assam (India). *Space and Culture, India*, 4(1), 25-39.
- Obermiller, C., Burke, C., & Atwood, A. (2008). Sustainable business as marketing strategy. *Innovative Marketing*, 4(3).
- Park, J. Y., Perumal, S. V., Sanyal, S., Ah Nguyen, B., Ray, S., Krishnan, R., ... & Thangam, D. (2022). Sustainable marketing strategies as an essential tool of business. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 81(2), 359-379.
- Samantaray, M. N., & Ashutosh, K. (2012). An analysis of trends of tea industry in India. *The International Journal of Management*, 1(4), 1-8.
- Shah, S. K. (2013). Prospects of Indian Tea Industry. *International Journal of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine*, 1(1), 18-25.
- Sharma, D., & Salma, U. (2023) A Study on the contribution of Tea industry towards the Economic Development of Assam.
- Sutradhar, R. (2013). What caused marginalization: A study of the tea plantation women of Cachar. *International Journal of Science and Research*, 4 (5), 2771, 2775.