



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI
SHORT ABSTRACT OF THESIS**

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Thesis Title:

A study on indigenous cultural exposition and interaction at touristic destinations: Reference Meghalaya in Northeast India

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SHORT ABSTRACT

The Thesis encompasses a broad area of design intervention in the field of Tourism. It emphasises on the possibility of conceptualising micro-tourism from the view point of cultural interaction with the natives. Because of the involvement of products and services in the tourism industry, the role of designers and marketers is crucial in every stage of the customers' or travellers' journey map. The tourism industry and research has always place its focus on the destination which is an imperative decision in improving tourists' experience, however there are key features that can be refined to add up to a more rewarding experience, if much attention is given to the journey that leads to the destination. It is also noted that there has been a stereotyping of culture particularly in the unexplored destinations that give an absolutely disparate and modified view of the actual and ethnic lifestyle and traditions of a particular society. The Thesis attempts to accomplish in filling the gaps by providing a framework that can encapsulate the various cultural elements of a destination not only at the destination but also throughout the journey experience.

On a fair literature study and identifying the research problems and research gap, the aim, objectives and the hypothesis of the thesis were constructed. Following this the research methods were framed which structures the study into four main phases. The first phase includes a survey intended for studying the perception of tourists and natives on unexplored destinations and comparing the same with the well-known destinations in the country of India. This phase centers itself on one of the seven Northeastern states of India, Meghalaya a hill-station which also means the Abode of clouds. The state has attracted a considerable amount of tourists but its culture and traditions remain unexplored. A qualitative survey was conducted with two two-structured questionnaires using Likert scale were designed, of which one was given to the tourists visiting the state and another to the natives belonging to the state. A sample size of 150 tourists and 145 natives was taken for the survey. The second phase was conducted on three areas of study viz. Kerala, Meghalaya and West Bengal. This was done to obtain a comparative result of the perception of tourists and natives on other states of the country. The responses of the participants for both

the phases of the study were analyzed by statistical methods using SPSS to achieve the significant research findings.

The third Phase of the study was carried out to identify the significant cultural elements pertaining to the three states. It is to be noted that these elements are applicable or relatable in some extent to various other contexts of cultural domains in any other society. Two models of culture coined by social psychologist Geert Hofstede and anthropologists Edward T. Hall were studied. Various aspects of culture and cultural layers were extracted from the models for building the framework. The card sorting method was applied to categorise the different cultural elements into a certain set of categories. Two exercises were carried out, one requires the participants to sort cards into Cultural Layers and the other to sort the cards into Cultural Representations. The sample size is 30, with participants having background of Design, Art and others. Subsequently, an interview was conducted which was analysed using content analysis, to understand the mental models of participants categorizing the elements and extracting meanings and relationships of each categories. Cluster analysis using Dendograms of Ward Linkage was used to analyse the results of the data obtained from the card sorting exercise.

The fourth phase is a study on the symbols of Culture that can be viewed from an outsider's perspective. This tool use for this is a questionnaire with semantic scale which was later analysed using the statistical techniques to categorise and group symbols that have affinity towards one another and also a to find out any significant correlations among the symbols.

The study attempts to provide an approach that would help designers working in a Cultural Space at any tourist destination that can be a communication ground between the natives and the tourists. The salient features of the Thesis include a framework design that can be implemented in the design of cultural spaces which would expose deep cultural aspects as well as interaction with the locals. These interactions can be achieved through the involvement of local artisans and performers who would provide a hands on experience with the authentic features of the destination. The framework would also assist designers to draw inspiration from the culture of a place, particularly those cultural elements which are essential yet not commonly visible. Through these initiatives there is scope for local employment and appreciation of each other's culture. The study therefore intends to nurture the deep cultural roots untouched and unexplored for preservation, enhancement and embracement.