Preface

The world is indeed a diverse place composed of many different people having diverse backgrounds, needs and interests. Naturally, marketers cannot speak to everyone in the same language and still hope to convince them. So, in order to communicate effectively with an individual, his distinct needs and characteristics have to be identified and the message specially tailored to appeal to him. However, this would not be practical, as the market comprises of innumerable people. This gives rise to the need for market segmentation. Simply put, segmentation refers to the division of the market into smaller groups. Through this approach people with similar needs, wants and characteristics are grouped together into distinct subgroups so as to better focus on and serve the market.

The concept of market segmentation has been used in the field of travel and tourism too. With the growth in international tourism, marketers have to deal with increased competition and more demanding travelers. To cope with such challenges, they are adopting a variety of marketing strategies including market segmentation. The tourism literature abounds in examples of segmentation studies conducted in order to identify tourists with similar needs and profiles so as to deal more effectively and profitably with them. It is, therefore, felt that utilization of this concept by the tourism marketers of North-east India could lead to better marketing of the various destinations of the region. The North-eastern part of India is a highly biodiverse region with a fascinating ethno-cultural mosaic. Undoubtedly, this region with diversity of offerings, which include various natural and cultural attractions, has immense tourism potential. However, the fact that the region has so far attracted only a negligible percentage of the tourist arrivals to the country, does not present an encouraging picture. This calls for improved promotion of the region through use of strategies such as market segmentation. It would be useful to take up studies that explore the needs and characteristics of the market for North-east India's tourist
destinations. Therefore, this study has been initiated with the purpose of providing a classification of travelers based on which the destination marketers of the region may determine the focus of their marketing efforts.

Through this study an attempt has been made to derive distinct segments of the leisure travel market of North-east India and to delineate their profiles. By examining the relative match of each segment with the chief attractions of the destinations of the region, certain attractive segments have been identified from the perspective of destination marketers. The implications of the findings have been discussed and certain broad suggestions have also been forwarded. Hopefully, the findings of the study would provide some useful insights for the destination marketers of the region and thereby contribute in some way, however small, towards effective marketing of this truly amazing 'paradise unexplored'.

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