

Adventure Tourism in Meghalaya

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Abstract

The world is observing fast growth in the field of adventure sports due to the wide range of scope it provides to the tourists. There is still a need to study and understand the core importance of this subject to better understand the customers' taste and preference. The research tries importance of adventure tourism in Khasi hills of Meghalaya. Every effort was made to acquire relevant data from the respondents and get a clear picture of adventure tourism in Khasi hills. This research shows that 88% of the tourist prefers to undertake adventure activities in Meghalaya. Data also shows that there have been various problems that have hindered tourists to reach important tourist destinations like problem of transportation and lack of knowledge about the destinations. The importance of trekking in Meghalaya as an important adventure tourism activity is really commendable, almost 50% of the respondent likes to participate trekking in Meghalaya.

Keywords: Adventure; Tourism; Meghalaya; Shillong; Cherrapunjee; Trekking

Introduction

Adventure tourism is a form of niche tourism which involves exploration and travelling to far-flung areas, where the traveller should expect the unexpected [1,2]. Mountaineering expedition, trekking, rafting, bungee jumping and rock climbing are often cited as examples of adventure tourism [3-6]. If looked from a theoretical perspective, all tourism activities can be defined as adventurous as they are made around the dialectic motives of escape from the normal and quest for the novel. Adventure tourism can also be described [4-8] in terms of its motivation as it is difficult to understand that why would someone risk his or her life to climb a mountain or throw oneself off a bridge with a rope tied to his or her feet. Traditional methods describe the motivation of such sports as deliberate risk and uncertainty seeking. Outdoor adventurers pursue activities that contain threats to their life, mainly for thrill and excitement [9-12].

North east has remarkable potential for adventure, environment tourism, and the setting up of finer educational institutions due to the conducive climate, environment and people, with wonderful cultural ethos. Meghalaya has the vast potentials to organise this opportunities into creative packaged tour to lure different tourists from different parts of the country and abroad [13-18]. "The quaint village of Mawlynnong now packaged as Asia's Cleanest Village and named by the locals as God's Own Garden is becoming a must-see destination for a large number of tourists. Foreigners have anyway been coming to Mawlynnong since last ten years but now we see more inland tourists coming to chill out and explore this hidden piece of heaven" [19-26].

Objective

- To find out the different adventure activities that can be carried out in Khasi hills
- To find out the preference of adventure activities of tourists

Literature Review

Meghalaya is blessed with picturesque landscape [6], conducive geo-ecological settings, legendry and mythological sites, sparkling waterfalls, rich traditional culture and warm and hospitable people. Blessed with a salubrious climate, the abode of clouds has a rich

cultural heritage which acts as a natural attraction for short sojourn by tourists. The special attractions are: Shillong Golf Course, Cherrapunjee (Sohra)-the wettest place in the world, caves, wildlife sanctuaries, biosphere reserves and Umiam (Barapani) - a high altitude lake. Some of the famous tourist spots are Umiam lake, Nohngthiang falls at Mawmsai, Kyllang rock and the monoliths of Nartiang.

There are two leading adventure tourism companies in Shillong: The Pioneer Adventure and The Cultural Pursuits Adventure. These two companies offer some exciting adventure activities and tours to the tourist, such as; camping tour, canoeing, caving, cliff jumping, local boating, mountaineering, trekking tour, river rafting, rock climbing, scuba diving, zip lining, trekking tour services, Mawphlang sacred groove natural walk, Maple pine Firm David Scott trail, Maple pine farm hiking Meghalaya and Kaziranga tour and living root bridge of Meghalaya tour.

The north east have remarkable potential for adventure, environment tourism, and the setting up of finer educational institutions due to the conducive climate, environment and people, with wonderful cultural ethos. The Khasi hills have more potential for overland travel, jungle base tourism like hiking, trekking, water based sports like water skiing, canoeing, river rafting, fishing, aero based adventure activities like hang gliding, sky diving, bungee jumping and sports related adventure activities like mountain biking, golfing and car rallying, cycling. Caving and mountaineering are also in the very ground state of development, therefore these two adventurous activities can also form huge future potentials through extensive promotions. Some of the caves like Mawmsai, Mawsynram and Syndai are visited by tourists every year.

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Meghalaya has the vast potentials to organise these opportunities into creative packaged tour to lure different tourists from different parts of the country and abroad. “The quaint village of Mawlynnong now packaged as Asia’s Cleanest Village and named by the locals as God’s Own Garden is becoming a must-see destination for a large number of tourists. Foreigners have anyway been coming to Mawlynnong since last ten years but now we see more inland tourists coming to chill out and explore this hidden piece of heaven” [5].

Overland travel is something that none of the company or tour operators in Meghalaya has ever organised into packages, therefore there is again another big opportunity of this activity in Meghalaya.

Adventure tourism has grown significantly in the recent years. Emotional and novelty value along with monetary growth were significant predictors of satisfaction and future growth [7]. Tourism industry could be a major source of employment generation in the state, but lack of vision and implementation of practicable policy leads to failure of the potential of this sector to be exploited to its fullest [8-10].

Methodology

In order to conduct the research both primary and secondary research has been conducted.

- Secondary Research: In this, books, journals, magazines and articles related to adventure tourism will be reviewed and a visit to tourism department of Meghalaya will be made to get more insights in the research.
- Primary Research: Based on the findings of secondary research, a questionnaire will be developed and a survey will be conducted to get more insights into the research.

Sampling

Sampling technique: 40 tourists visiting Shillong has been administered through an interview. Samples have been taken by probability sampling – simple random sampling.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Age

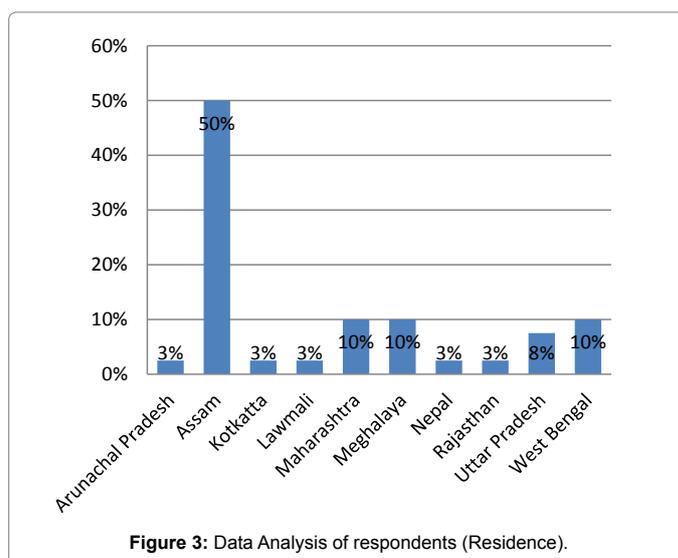
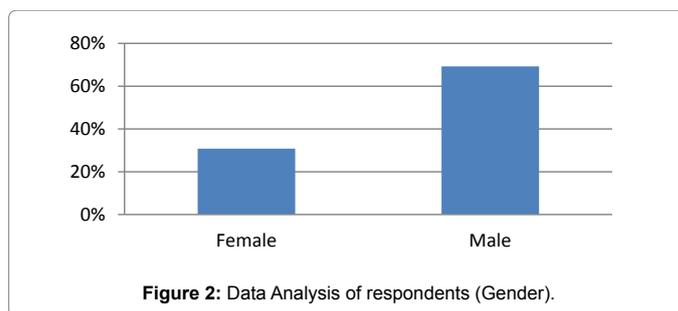
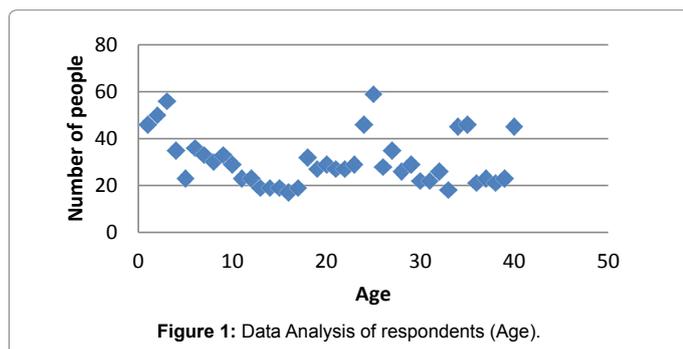
From the scatter plot we can see that the respondent were within the age group of 20-60 years (Figure 1).

Gender

31% of respondents were female and 69% were male (Figure 2).

Residence

50% of the respondents were from the neighbouring state Assam, while the other 50% accounted from the rest of India (Figure 3).



Shillong rating

23%, 15% and 63% of the respondents rated Shillong as good, best and excellent experience respectively (Figure 4).

Preference rating

Data analysis shows that maximum respondents/ tourists prefer to visit Shillong because of its favourable weather condition. There are also tourists who like the location, people and culture of this place (Figure 5).

Motivation of travelling

Majority of the tourists travelling to Meghalaya has the motivation of adventure tour which accounts 37% followed by eco-tour of 18%. Others have simultaneous motivation altogether (Figure 6).

Frequency of travelling

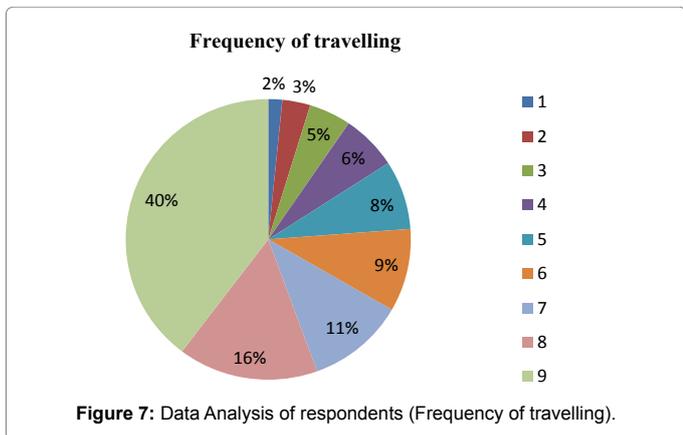
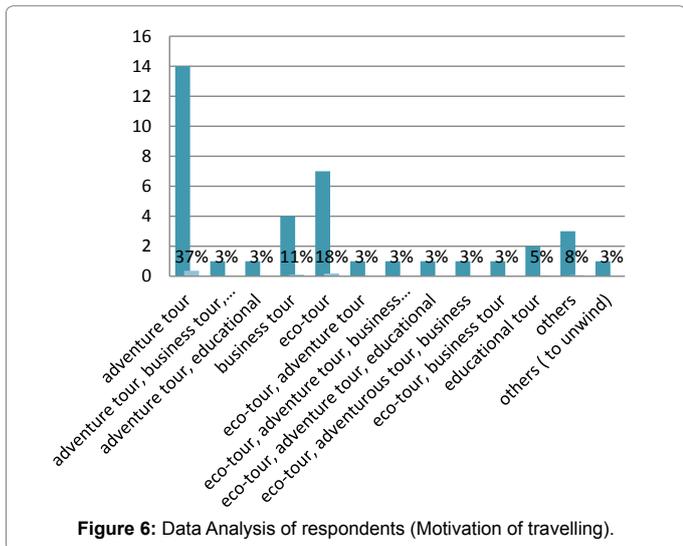
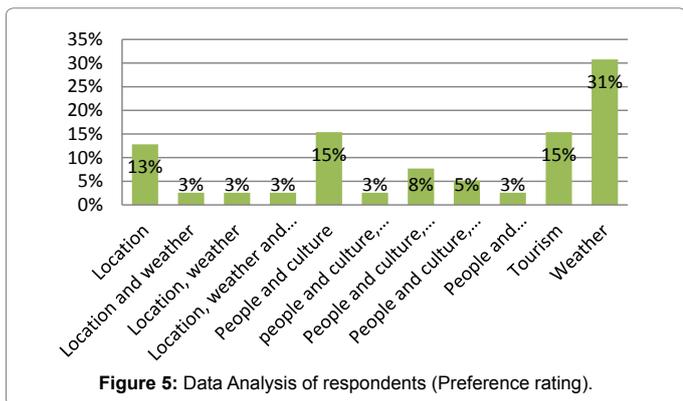
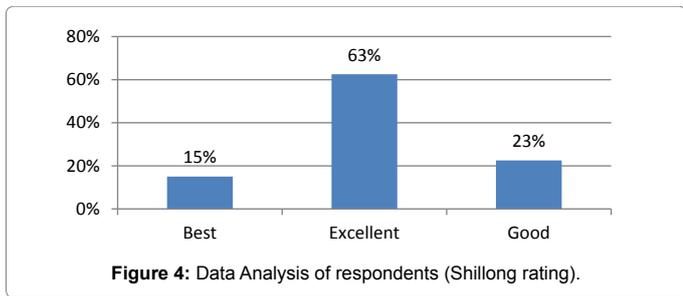
40% of the tourist are the regular travellers (Figure 7).

Preference of adventure tourism

This analysis show the potential of adventure, majority of the tourists (88%) who visited Shillong likes adventure tourism activities (Figure 8).

Meghalaya Infrastructure rating

This analysis shows quite good result about the infrastructure of Meghalaya but still quite good number of tourists has rated it as poor (Figure 9).



Overnight camping preference in Meghalaya

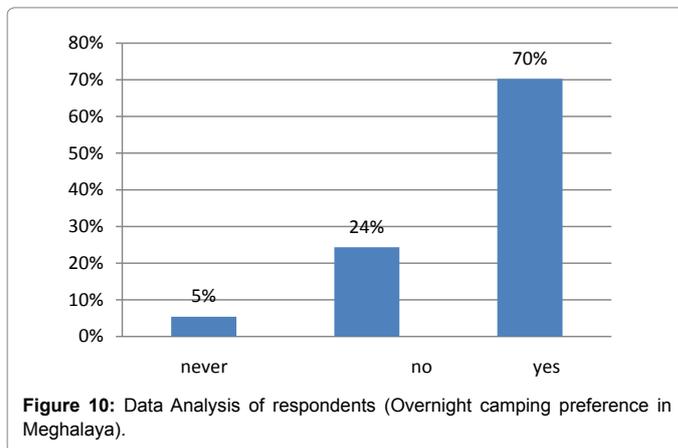
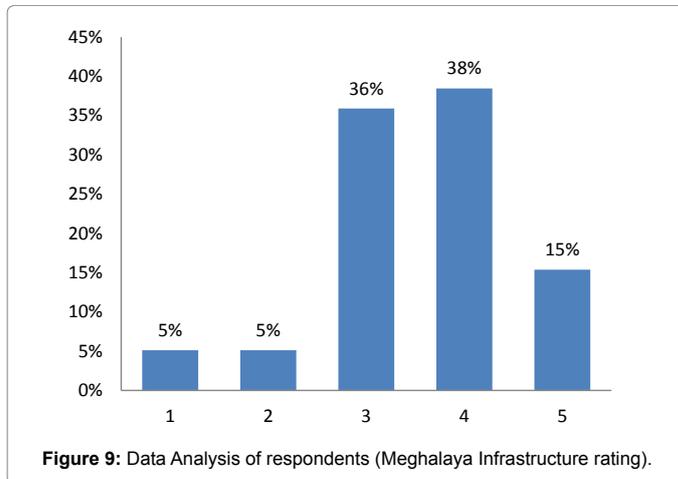
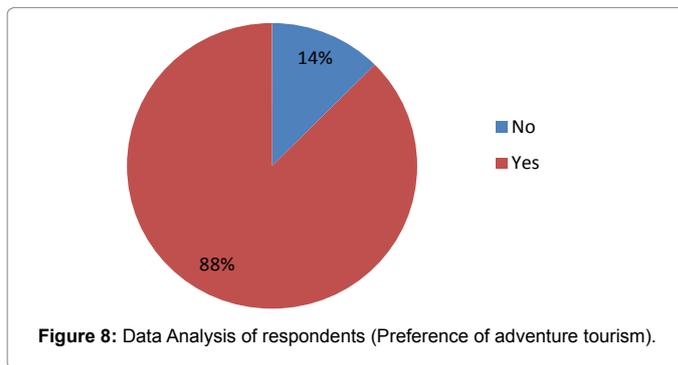
Overnight camping also shows a good potential in Meghalaya, 70% of the tourist contacted wants to undertake overnight camping (Figure 10).

Adventure tourism rating in Meghalaya

Adventure tourism has the potential to grow where majority of the tourists rated with good response (Figure 11).

Preference either DIY or TO

75% of the tourist prefers to travel by themselves whereas only 13%



shown the interest to purchase tour package from Tour Operator (TO) (Figure 12).

Overall Meghalaya tourism rating

This analysis shows that there still requires many things to do to progress in tourism sector (Figure 13).

Trekking preference in Meghalaya

71% of the respondent likes trekking in Meghalaya (Figure 14).

Preference of adventure activities

In fact trekking alone is the most preferred adventure activity in Meghalaya which accounts 28% (Figure 15).

Trekking rating in Meghalaya

Majority of the tourist contacted (38%) said trekking in Meghalaya is adventurous, followed by fun 18% and best trip 15% (Figure 16).

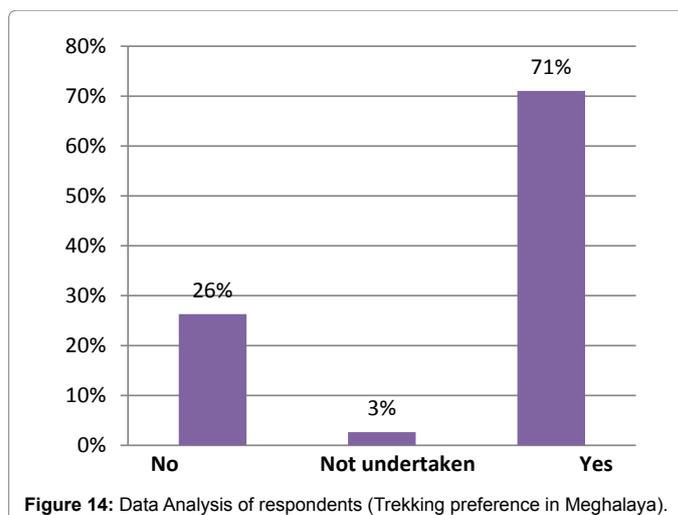


Figure 14: Data Analysis of respondents (Trekking preference in Meghalaya).

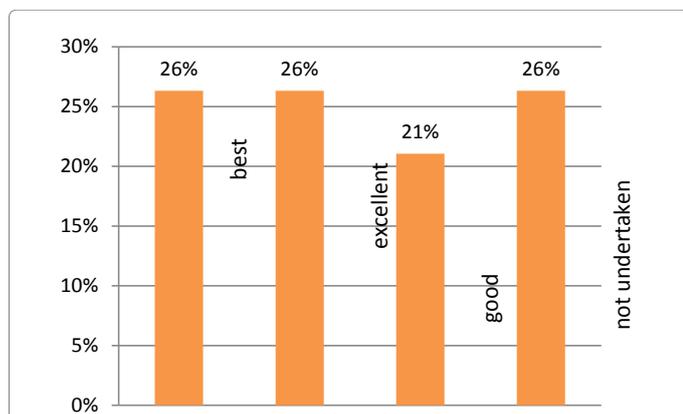


Figure 11: Data Analysis of respondents (Adventure tourism rating in Meghalaya).

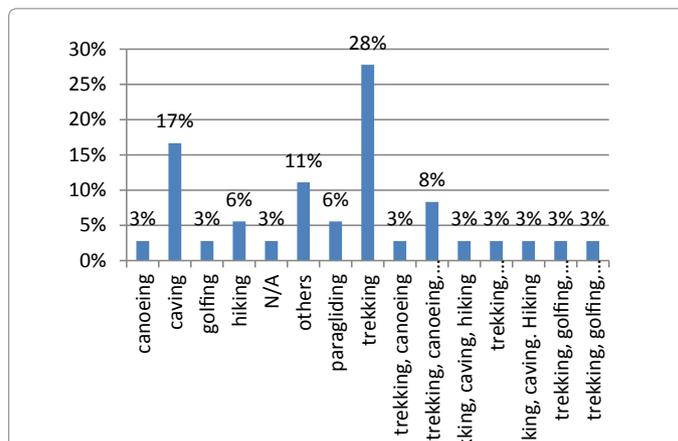


Figure 15: Data Analysis of respondents (Preference of adventure activities).

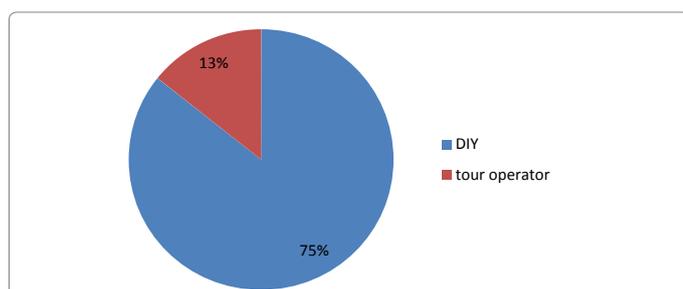


Figure 12: Data Analysis of respondents (Preference either DIY(Do It Yourself) or TO).

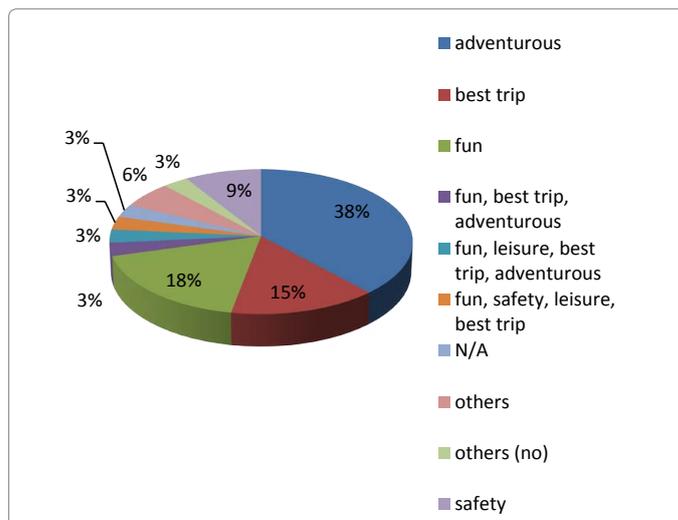


Figure 16: Data Analysis of respondents (Trekking rating in Meghalaya).

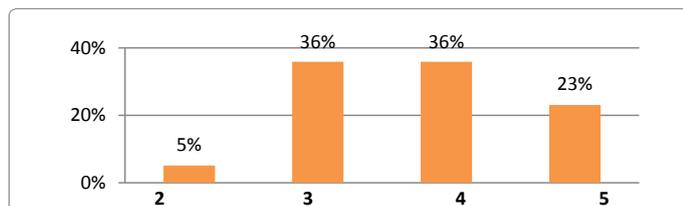


Figure 13: Data Analysis of respondents (Overall Meghalaya tourism rating).

Reason of not visiting tourist spots in Meghalaya

Transportation problem and the lack of knowledge about the

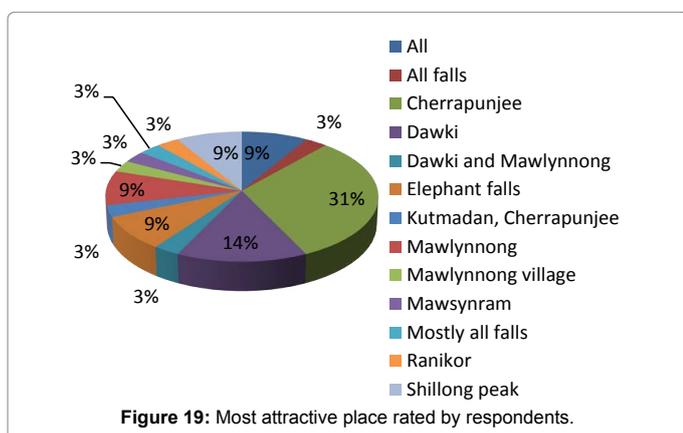
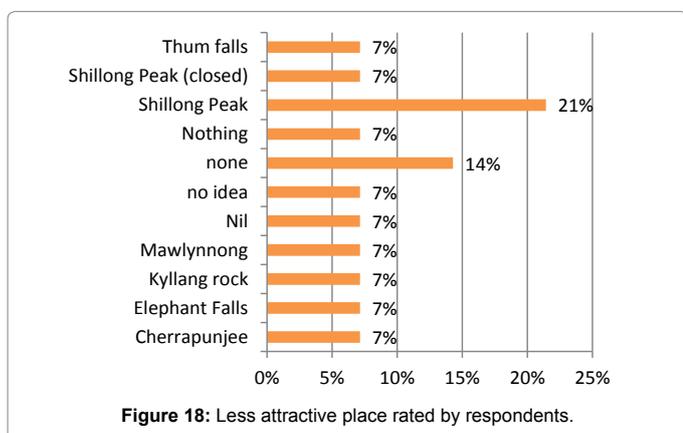
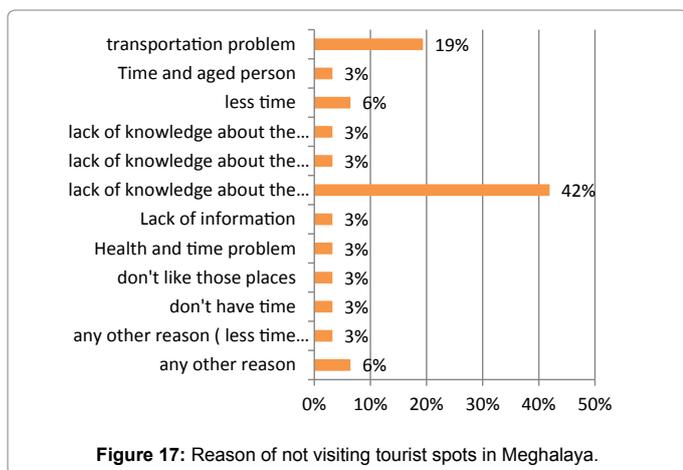
places are the two major reasons of the tourist for not visiting the tourist destination (Figure 17).

Less attractive place rated by respondent

Highest number of tourist has rated Shillong peak as less attractive tourist destination. While 14% of the tourists have also said that none of the place in Meghalaya are less attractive (Figure 18).

Most attractive place rated by respondent

Cherrapunjee, Dawki, Elephant falls Mawlynnong village and all other falls are rated as attractive tourist destination in Meghalaya (Figure 19).



Activity preference in Dawki

50% of tourist likes local boating in Dawki. This shows a huge potential to develop this particular activity in Dawki (Figure 20).

Overall hotel service rating

Hotel service providers provide average quality of service in Shillong (Figure 21).

Tour package purchase

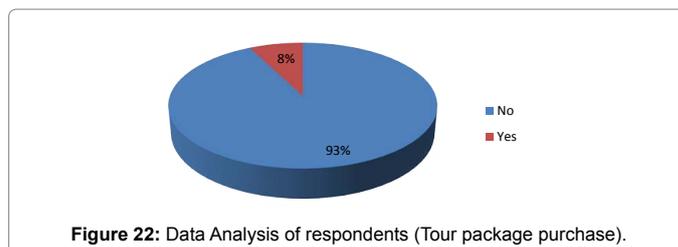
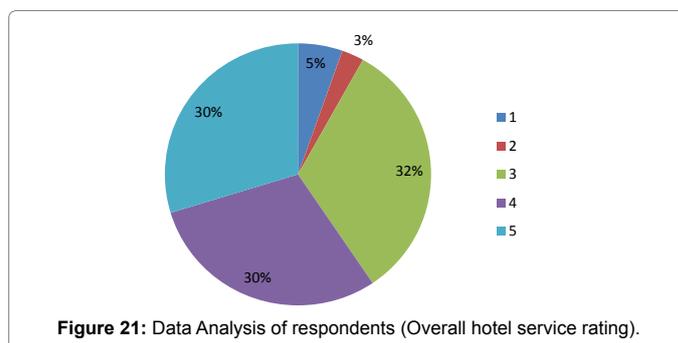
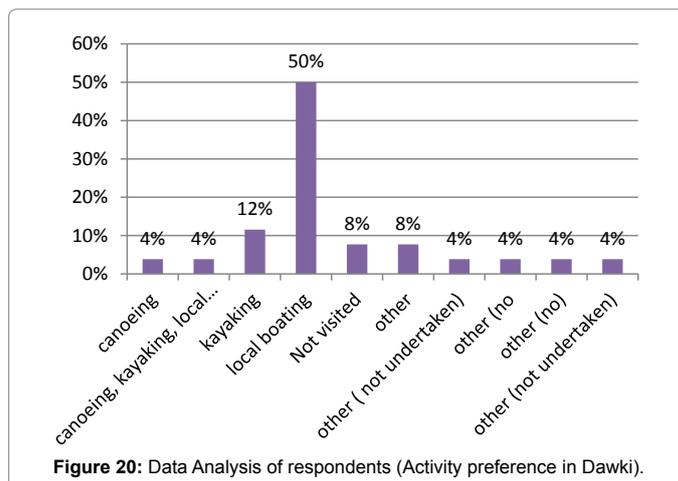
Only 8% of the tourist have purchased tour package from the tour operator whereas other 93% did not purchase any package (Figure 22).

Tour package competitiveness

Tour package are found to be very helpful by majority of the tourist (Figure 23).

Preference of accommodation in Shillong

Hotel preference 53%, is the highest preference showed by the tourist followed by resort 18% (Figure 24).



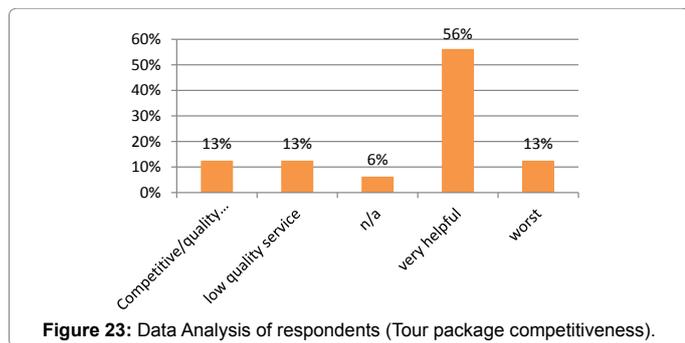


Figure 23: Data Analysis of respondents (Tour package competitiveness).

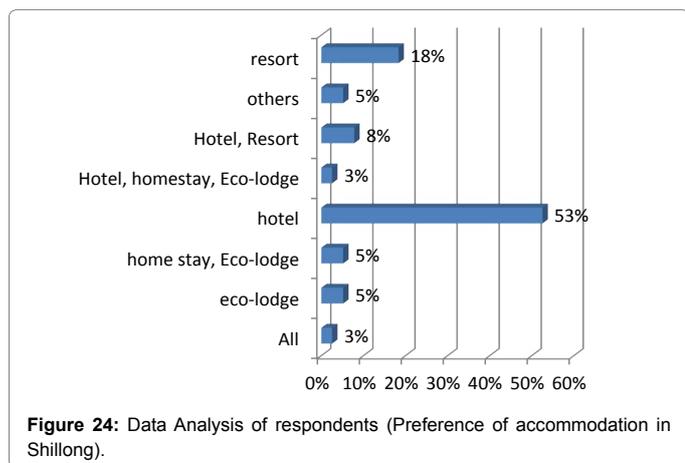


Figure 24: Data Analysis of respondents (Preference of accommodation in Shillong).

Findings and Conclusion

The above data analysis and interpretation has produced several results about the adventure tourism of Meghalaya. The main intention of the analysis was to find the various present and future trends of the adventure tourism in Khasi hills districts of Meghalaya. It is true that this particular state has got numerous potential to develop adventure tourism in future and by extensively promoting this place through various media it will reach to the top of the list in India. Presently, the state is in growing stage which still requires many cares in different entities to enhance the growing. The various finding of core issues and also the customers' taste and preference of various needs are explained below serially:

- As the data shows that majority of the tourist who visits the state falls under the age group of 20-60 years, there is a huge potential to develop and promote various soft and hard adventure tourism and activities. Trekking is one of the mostly preferred soft categories of adventure tourism. Those tourists who falls under the age group 20-30 years also showed their interest in various other activities like paragliding, parasailing, canoeing, kayaking etc. All these activities can be greatly develop and promote according to their needs. It is also interesting to mention that out the random data collected 31% of respondents were female travellers bearing exciting interest in adventure tourism, this reveal that the adventure tourism market is also opening the potentials for female travellers.
- Although tourist comes from different state of India, Assam is the most important and potential market to promote Meghalaya as adventure tourism destination in as 50% of the travellers were from Assam.

- Shillong as a hill station to visit, 63% of the tourist from the random sample said that it is an excellent place to visit. Weather, people and culture and location of this place are the main factors of their taste and preference.
- Majority of the tourists travelling to Meghalaya has the motivation of adventure tour which accounts 37% followed by eco-tour of 18%. Others have simultaneous motivation altogether. This shows the huge potential of adventure tourism in this state.
- 40% of the tourist are the regular travellers. The analysis also show the potential of adventure, majority of the tourists (88%) who visited Shillong likes adventure tourism activities.
- The analysis shows quite good result about the infrastructure and connectivity status of Meghalaya but still quite good number of tourists has rated it as poor. This must be a concern to the concern department of Meghalaya like PWD other such agencies or tourism department to take the matter into reconsideration about the infrastructure development in various remote place which have a good chance to develop adventure tourism in.
- Majority of the tourists rated with good response about adventure tourism status and recommended to bring more exposure to the market. Overnight camping also shows a good potential in Meghalaya, 70% of the tourist contacted wants to undertake overnight camping. 71% of the respondent contacted also likes trekking in Meghalaya.
- 75% of the tourist prefers to travel by themselves (DIY) whereas only 13% shown the interest to purchase tour package from Tour Operator (TO). Through encouragement and promotion the business of Tour operator can boost in future.
- Cherrapunjee, Dawki, Elephant falls Mawlynnong village and all other falls are rated as attractive tourist destination in Meghalaya and are in the top list of tourist preference The major reasons of tourist not visiting some attractive places are transportation problem; faced by 19% of tourist contacted and the lack of knowledge about the places faced by 42% of tourist contacted. Other reasons also include lack of time, lack of information, age problems. All such problems may bridge over by extensively promoting those unknown tourist destinations and by encouraging the local bodies of different villages, NGOs to initiate necessary steps to get those unconstructed place constructed for better transport and communication.
- Highest number of tourist i.e., 21% has rated Shillong peak as less attractive tourist destination. While 14% of the tourists have also said that none of the place in Meghalaya are less attractive. This shows that Shillong peak being proud destination of Shillong must have some factors to improve.
- Since Dawki is one of the most important tourist destinations it was really necessary to also analyse what kind of adventure activity is most preferable. As such 50% of tourist likes local boating in Dawki. This shows a huge potential to develop this particular activity in Dawki which will increase the local economy of this place.
- Hotel service providers provide average quality of service in Shillong. Around 60% of the tourist contacted has given the

rating of 4-5 out of 5 which shows a quite good feedback about hotel service in Shillong.

- Only 8% of the tourist have purchased tour package from the tour operator whereas other 93% did not purchase any package. Tour package are found to be very helpful by majority of the tourist.
- Accommodation in Hotel is preferred by 53%, is the highest preference followed by resort 18% and 5-10% of the tourist also preferred eco-lodge.

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