

Transition towards Diversification: The Imperative of a Balanced Startup Ecosystem in Assam

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Abstract

In India, Assam is the leader in the northeastern region's startup ecosystem. According to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), there are currently 1,487 startups in Assam, accounting for approximately 73% of all startups founded in the northeastern region. However, the growth of startups in Assam is uneven. It was found that most startups remain clustered in urban areas, particularly in districts like Kamrup Metropolitan, whereas rural and remote areas of the state see much less entrepreneurial activity. Existing studies show that regional, institutional, and socioeconomic factors strongly impact entrepreneurial activity and startup location. Areas with knowledge infrastructure, top educational institutions, and supportive business environments have more prevalent technology-based businesses that support entrepreneurial activity and vice versa. Thus, this study focuses on the uneven distribution of DPIIT-recognized startups across Assam's districts. It also examines the concentration of startups, their stages of development, and the reasons behind the uneven growth across the state. This study is primarily based on secondary data collected from various sources, including DPIIT, Startup India reports, government policy documents, and other institutions. The results show that regions with strong educational institutions, adequate infrastructure, financial and digital access, market opportunities, and business support have more startups and greater entrepreneurial activity. However, economically or geographically disadvantaged regions fall behind due to a lack of support, infrastructure, and investment. Therefore, disparities in infrastructure, support systems, market opportunities, and institutional networks are closely tied to the uneven growth of startups in Assam. It is suggested that regions with lower levels of entrepreneurial activity require stronger institutional support, localized policies, and improved innovation infrastructure to ensure balanced and inclusive development in Assam. These steps are important for making startup growth more balanced and ensuring that it includes all regions of the state. In the future, new research can be designed to study the uneven distribution of startups within the same industrial sector or across different sectors using primary data. Similarly, the issue of limited scalability can be studied comparatively across industrial sectors to gain insights into this aspect.

Keywords: Startup Ecosystem, Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Institutions, Balanced growth, Scalability, Regional Development, Assam.

Introduction

The concept of a startup in the context of the Indian economy is relatively new. Startups are businesses with a clear vision of developing innovative and marketable products or services in uncertain, resource-constrained environments to meet growing consumer needs.

These businesses play a vital role in promoting economic growth, fostering innovation, and generating employment across different spheres of the economy. Startups' growth and development are facilitated by a range of external factors, including venture capital, technological innovation, digitalization, and policy interventions. Entrepreneurial development in modern India can be traced back to 1991, when economic reforms paved the way for private investment, liberalized local industries, and integrated the national economy into the global economy. In later years, the growth of the information technology sector further fostered the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem, especially in popular cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai, and Mumbai.

After 2010, an increase in the use of smartphones, the Internet, social media, and digital payments has influenced the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem. New-age business ventures such as Flipkart, Paytm, Ola, Swiggy, and Byju's have made their presence felt in the fintech, edtech, logistics, and e-commerce sectors of the country. With the increase in the number of such new-age businesses, parallel growth has also been witnessed in venture capital, angel investing, and private equity, which can meet the funding requirements of emerging entrepreneurs.

In addition, government initiatives exist that aim to foster innovation, skills, and new-age entrepreneurs. The Startup India initiative, launched in 2016 by the Government of India, aims to promote the startup culture and establish a robust and inclusive ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship in the country. Apart from Startup India, Make in India, Skill India, and Digital India, the Atal Innovation Mission is also on the scene. These initiatives by the Indian central government motivated various state governments to plan, develop, and promote entrepreneurial ecosystems in their respective regions.

The wave of these startup policies also touched the North-Eastern region of the country. Earlier characterized by geographical isolation, poor infrastructure, and limited industrialization, the North-Eastern region has seen steady yet notable entrepreneurial growth. Recent improvements in infrastructure, connectivity, digitalization, and government policy support have nurtured

entrepreneurial development in the region. Entrepreneurial development is essential for every economy to reduce unemployment and poverty. It is the key driving force that can thrive on inclusive growth, innovation, and solution-oriented outcomes in an economy. These, in turn, aid in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of decent work, economic growth, and inclusive and sustainable industrialization.

Among the states of India, Assam has taken pride in being the first to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016 (SDGs Implementation Status in Assam; Assam State Portal, n.d.). To achieve SDGs 8 and 9 (productive employment and decent work for all, inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation), startups are recognized as key performance indicators in the Assam Government's Assam SDG State Indicator Framework for 2022-23. The SDG Index Report of the North Eastern Region for the year 2023-24 showed that, in the goal-wise performance assessment, all districts of Assam were placed in the front-runner category for SDGs 8 and 9. This indicates that all districts in the state are close to achieving the targets for productive employment, decent work for all, inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation.

Assam ranked among the leaders in the DPIIT's state startup rankings for two consecutive years (2021 and 2022). This indicates the momentum gained by the startup ecosystem in Assam. Moreover, according to the Ministry of Development of the North-East Region, GoI, the region had a total of 2,054 startups recognized by the Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT) as of December 31, 2024, with Assam accounting for approximately 73%. These achievements are solely credited to the Assam Government's strong policy interventions, which laid a solid foundation for its startup ecosystem.

The 'Leader' rank in DPIIT's state startup rankings for two consecutive years and the performance of all districts of Assam regarding SDG 8 and 9 in the SDG Index Report of the North Eastern region of 2023-24, showed the wonder that Assam had made. In 2025, Assam shifted to the position of an 'Aspiring leader' in the state's startup ranking report, a clear demotion in its startup status. Earlier

literature at the national and regional levels has revealed various issues faced by the startup sector, such as limited market access, insufficient funding, limited scalability, and the confinement of the startup ecosystem mostly to the country's urban areas. These issues may have contributed to Assam's demotion from its startup status over the past five years.

The growth of startups is not uniform across all districts of Assam, while the SDG Index Report shows that all districts of the state are close to attaining the targets of productive employment, decent work for all, inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation. Together, these findings present a contradictory picture. Previous studies on the startup sector in Assam did not discuss the urban-centric startup ecosystem, uneven growth of startups across districts, and limited scalability of startups. At this juncture, the novelty of the present study appears, as it attempts to address these research gaps by synthesizing all available domain-specific studies and government reports, with a view to providing vital insights into these facets of the subject.

Accordingly, this study examines the geographical disparities in DPIIT-registered startup concentrations across Assam's districts. Moreover, this study aims to explore the level of development and maturity trends of these registered startups in the state. The findings of the present study may prove vital for formulating policies in the coming days to promote an inclusive, balanced entrepreneurial ecosystem across Assam.

Literature Review

The existing literature shows that regional, institutional, and socioeconomic factors strongly impact entrepreneurial activity and startup location. Areas with knowledge infrastructure, top educational institutions, and supportive business environments have more prevalent tech-based businesses that support entrepreneurial activity and vice versa. Startup growth and activity are shaped by differences in infrastructure, education, finance, innovation capacity and local economic conditions. These findings show that startup development is unevenly distributed among regions.

The existence of universities and other knowledge-generating institutions is identified

in the literature as a key determinant of startup concentrations. The location decisions of startups are strongly affected by the availability of infrastructure for new businesses and proximity to knowledge centers (D. B. Audretsch & Lehmann, 2005). Regional demographic and socioeconomic conditions affect entrepreneurial activity, and the formation of startups and the development of businesses are influenced by urbanization, educational structure, and demographics (BOSMA & SCHUTJENS, 2007). Regional financial conditions and economic development influence the growth patterns of startups. (D. Audretsch and Tamvada (2008) found that advanced regions produce higher-quality startups because of their sophisticated markets, robust infrastructure, high literacy rates, and easy access to capital. Chandiok (2016) showed that improving access to affordable capital, simplifying patent filing procedures, providing research and development incentives, and reducing barriers to market entry are essential for the success of Startup India in a growing economy. Lai and Vonortas (2019) emphasize innovation, collaboration, and knowledge spillovers, making research universities a positive force in regional entrepreneurial ecosystems. These universities foster an environment that promotes innovation-based entrepreneurship. In addition to universities, incubators, and education, other factors shape startup birth rates. Del Bosco et al. (2021) identified that regions with higher levels of education and more incubators have more innovative start-ups. Incubators offer mentoring, technical assistance, networking opportunities and financial support. These services enable startups to thrive. Higher Education Develops Entrepreneurial Skills, Creativity and Innovative Thinking. (Zhang & Roelfsema, 2022) found that markets, demand, culture, expertise, and financial availability influence entrepreneurial activity. Innovation and company formation are encouraged in areas with vibrant markets and strong entrepreneurial cultures. (Dalal, 2023) shows that innovation is a driving force behind startup growth. Maradi (2023) finds that the rising number of incubators and a steady inclination among young people towards starting their ventures

are propelling entrepreneurship and early stage startups in India. (Chetia, 2024) highlights the increasing prevalence of startups in the northeastern regions, noting their contributions to job creation, regional development, and innovation in sectors such as agri-tech, eco-tourism, crafts, and clean technology. It identifies significant challenges to entrepreneurial growth, including the uneven distribution of startups across states, inadequate digital and transport infrastructure, limited access to risk capital, a shortage of skilled professionals, and inconsistent policy implementation. Aliyari (2024) finds that market access, government support, entrepreneurship education, support systems, and a favorable business environment significantly enhance both entrepreneurs' perceptions and startup success. Varalakshmi (2025) emphasizes the uneven distribution of startups, with a few states emerging as dominant hubs owing to stronger policy support and more mature entrepreneurial ecosystems. Tahir (2025) finds that while a few states dominate startup numbers, many smaller states possess strong sector-specific strengths, highlighting the need for tailored regional policy intervention. Okorie and Makanjuola (2025) address this gap by examining the role of entrepreneurial competencies as a bridge between resources and performance. (Sarkar, 2026) focuses on the impact of government initiatives, such as startup initiatives, digital growth, and venture capital, which have transformed the Indian economy from a job-seeking to a job-creating economy, identifying Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Delhi, and Karnataka as leading states generating substantial direct employment through startups. Roy and Shakya (2025) emphasize the need to move beyond symbolic support toward the sustained, long-term empowerment of women entrepreneurs, positioning Kamrup as a promising model for inclusive entrepreneurial development in India. (Patowary et al., 2025) identified the significance of business incubation centers such as NEATEHUB, IIT Guwahati Technology Incubation Centre, Guwahati Biotech Park, Atal Incubation Center-NIPER, and Assam Startup – The Nest in Assam. Kumari (2026) highlights large regional

gaps in startup development across India and shows that entrepreneurial growth occurs primarily where institutional and infrastructural support is available.

(David. D. et al., 2020) stated that the startup ecosystem in India primarily covers Tier 1 cities and states with strong financial systems and developed IT-enabled sectors. (Kamaluddin. F. et al., 2021) analysed the pattern of investments in startups and found that a large share of investment is concentrated in startups in Bengaluru and Delhi-NCR. (Tiwari. A., 2023) through his work, he showed that in India, startups remain concentrated in three prominent clusters: Delhi NCR, Bengaluru, and Mumbai. (Hazarika. A. et. Al, 2024) showed that the major portion of MSMEs in each state of the region is confined to only a few districts. The researchers emphasized the need to study the geographical distribution of MSMEs and startups in the northeastern states of India in future research to answer the question of why they are concentrated in only a few districts. (Devi. D et. al., 2025) analysed and studied the issues of the startups in Assam. Researchers observed that the constituent elements of Assam's startup ecosystem have changed over time, and in light of this change, the Assam Government should design its future policies to put startups in motion earlier. (Sivaram. K, 2026) In his work, he analyzed the regional distribution of startups in India and found that, owing to better infrastructure, financial facilities, and skilled human resources, startups are concentrated in developed states such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat. (Pavani. P. et. al., 2026) unveiled one of the interesting facets of the startups in India. Two-thirds of the nation's recognized startups are located in Tier-2 cities.

The findings of the above study show that advanced and urban areas experience high entrepreneurial growth due to the presence of quality infrastructure, research-oriented knowledge centers, higher levels of education, market and financial accessibility, and investor networks. In contrast, rural regions face obstacles, including poor infrastructure, a lack of research-oriented knowledge centers, limited awareness, and scarce funding.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the incidence of unevenness in the growth of startups across the districts of Assam.
2. To examine the stages of development and maturity of registered startups in selected districts.

Methodology

This study was based on a descriptive research design. It depends on secondary data obtained from the DPIIT (Govt. of India) reports, and published statistics. These secondary data are then categorized, summarized, and presented through comparative tables showing district-wise percentages of startups in descending order. For data analysis, quantitative techniques such as percentages, bar charts, and pie charts were used. Relevant charts (diagrams 1–4) were constructed using the MS Excel application. For percentage calculations, the total number of startups in the state and districts was considered.

In the interpretation, descriptive data presented in tables (as shown in Tables 1–4) are compared and linked to the defined objectives of the present study, and patterns and discrepancies are sought to identify.

The present study focuses on seven of the 35 districts of Assam. The majority of startups in the state are concentrated in these 7 districts: Kamrup Metropolitan, Kamrup, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Sonitpur, Dibrugarh, and Cachar. Information on registered startups in these seven districts was sourced from the DPIIT, GoI database for the period from 2016 to May 2026.

These secondary data, collected from different sources, are quite reliable and valid but have some limitations. The relevant data for the present study were sourced from the DPIIT database of the Government of India. Standardized protocols have been established for maintaining the startup database and for timely updates by the DPIIT. The DPIIT's startup database is maintained in accordance with the provisions of the Digital Data Protection Act of the Government of India. DPIIT databases on foreign direct investment, startups, and logistics costs have been used and validated in several studies to date. The limitations of these secondary data are as follows:

1. The data obtained from DPIIT(GoI) only cover registered startups.

2. Apart from DPIIT, other registration mechanisms for startups exist in India. Startups registered under other authorities or ministries of the Government of India were not included in this study.
3. Startups developed by a single owner do not come under DPIIT-recognized startups.

Results

Assam's startup ecosystem has developed significantly in recent years, indicating a major shift in the state's entrepreneurial and economic environments. Currently, there are 1,487 startups in Assam, accounting for approximately 73% of all startups founded in the northeastern region. Consequently, Assam rose to the top of the northeastern states' startup drive.

Kamrup Metropolitan and Kamrup are Assam's main startup districts, followed by Jorhat, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh, Cachar, and Sonitpur. The Kamrup Metropolitan District serves as Assam's startup ecosystem, commercial, financial, and educational hub. The Kamrup district benefits from its proximity to Guwahati and ongoing industrial growth. Urbanization, academic and knowledge centers, and the tea industry drive the growth of startups in Dibrugarh and Jorhat. Cachar, with Silchar, is an emerging region due to expanding trade and connectivity. Sivasagar and Sonitpur's startup growth stems from tourism, educational centers, the tea industry, and increased youth entrepreneurship.

Table 1 District-wise Percentage of Startups in Assam

Districts	Percentage of Startups
Kamrup Metropolitan	35
Kamrup	19
Dibrugarh	4
Jorhat	4
Cachar	4
Sivasagar	3
Sonitpur	3

(Source: <https://www.startupindia.gov.in/content/sih/en/search.html?roles=Startup&page=0#>)

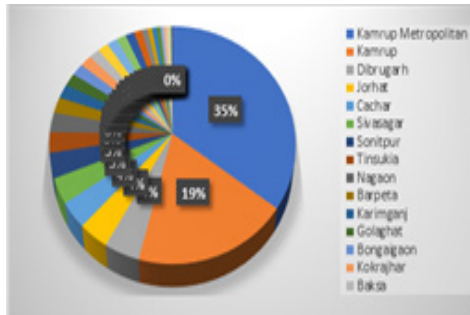


Diagram 1 District Wise Distribution of DPIIT Registered Startups of Assam

The data in Table 1 show an uneven distribution of startups in Assam. The Kamrup Metropolitan district has the largest share of the total number of registered startups in Assam. This accounts for 35 per cent of the state's startups. This was followed by Kamrup with 19 per cent. Together, these two districts account for more than half of Assam's total startups. Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Cachar, each of these districts, account for 4 per cent of the state's total startups. Sivasagar and Sonitpur each have 3 per cent of the state's total startups. There is a marked concentration of registered startups in Kamrup Metropolitan and Kamrup compared to other districts.

In addition to the uneven concentration of startups, the stages of development and maturity trends among startups significantly influence Assam's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Hence, the present study also covers this aspect of startups. There are three distinct stages in the startup life cycle: ideation, validation, and scaling. In the ideation stage, startups focus on conceptualizing innovative ideas and refining business models.

Startups in the validation stage have tested product feasibility, validated market potential, and gathered customer feedback. The scaling stage comprises mature startups that have already expanded their operations, generated revenue, created employment opportunities, and are seeking additional funding. Concerning these stages of the startup life cycle, the data on DPIIT-registered startups in the selected districts of Assam revealed the following:

Table 2 District-wise Percentage of Startups at the Ideation Stage in Assam

Districts	Startups at the Ideation stage (in percentage of the total startups of the concerned district)
Kamrup (M)	25%
Kamrup (R)	33%
Cachar	36%
Dibrugarh	53%
Jorhat	33%
Sivasagar	50%
Sonitpur	32%

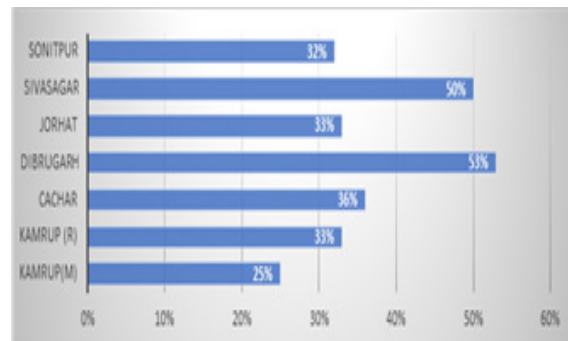


Diagram 2 Startups at Stage of Ideation

Table 2 shows that Dibrugarh has the highest share of startups at the ideation stage, 53% of its total registered startups, followed by Sivasagar at 50%, implying that many startups are still in their early stages and the startup ecosystem is less mature. Kamrup and Jorhat each accounted for 33%, followed by Sonitpur at 32% and Cachar at 36%. Kamrup Metropolitan has the lowest share at 25% of the total, indicating that many of its startups are more operational or growth-oriented and have advanced past the ideation stage. The ventures in this region have entered the validation or scaling stage due to enhanced digital infrastructure and greater awareness of Startup India's activities.

Table 3 District-wise Percentage of Startups at the Validation stage

Districts	Startups at the Validation Stage (in percentage of the total startups of the concerned district)
Kamrup (M)	33%
Kamrup (R)	38%

Cachar	32%
Dibrugarh	22%
Jorhat	26%
Sivasagar	30%
Sonitpur	39%

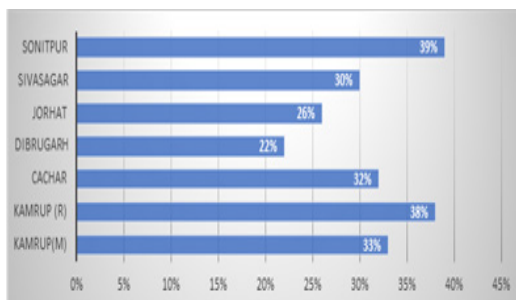


Diagram 3 Startups at the Validation Stage

The data in Table 3 show the share of startups in the validation stage across the selected districts in Assam. This distribution sheds light on startups that are moving beyond ideas and are focusing on developing and testing viable business models. Notably, Sonitpur and Kamrup lead the pack, with 39% and 38% of their total registered startups in the validation stage, respectively. This suggests that a considerable number of startups in these districts are actively refining and validating their business concepts. In contrast, Dibrugarh has the lowest share at 22%, indicating that fewer startups in this district are in the testing and validation phases. Meanwhile, Kamrup Metropolitan, Jorhat, Cachar, and Sivasagar have moderate shares of startups in the validation stage.

Table 4 District-wise Percentage of Startups at the Scaling Stage in Assam

Districts	Startups at the Scaling stage (in percentage of the total startups of the concerned district)
Kamrup (M)	9%
Kamrup (R)	6%
Cachar	0%
Dibrugarh	9%
Jorhat	14%
Sivasagar	11%
Sonitpur	7%

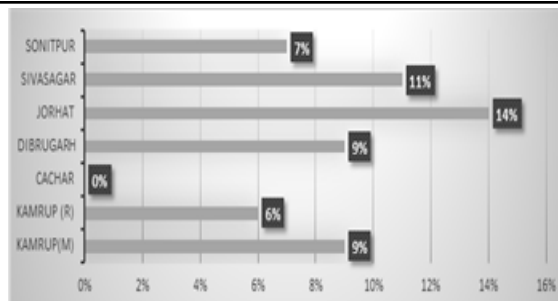


Diagram 4 Startups at the Stage of Scaling

The data in Table 4 reveal that only a small fraction of startups achieves significant growth and operational stability. Jorhat has the highest share of scaling-stage startups at 14% of the district's total, followed by Sivasagar at 11%, indicating that both districts have relatively higher levels of startup maturity and business expansion. Sonitpur has only 7%, and Kamrup has only 6% of the district's total startups at the scaling stage. Kamrup Metropolitan and Dibrugarh account for 9% of the district's total startups at the scaling stage. Cachar accounts for 0% of the total, indicating that none of its startups has advanced to the expansion phase.

Among all the districts, Kamrup Metropolitan has a comparatively balanced and mature startup ecosystem. The presence of scaling-stage ventures and the smaller share of ideation-stage startups indicate a comparatively higher level of startup maturity and stronger growth prospects in the region. In contrast, Dibrugarh and Sivasagar show a high number of startups in the ideation phase, indicating a less developed entrepreneurial ecosystem. Meanwhile, Jorhat leads the pack with the highest percentage of scaling-stage startups, signalling robust business expansion. Districts such as Sonitpur and Kamrup are also making their mark with strong participation in the validation stage. However, the absence of scaling-stage startups in Cachar underscores the regional disparities in startup development. Overall, these findings reveal a patchy landscape of startup growth across districts, with significant variations in the stages of ideation, validation, and scaling throughout Assam.

Discussions

The uneven growth of startups across Assam's seven districts can be better understood by examining

how they stack up at various stages of development: ideation, validation, and scaling. As highlighted in the existing literature, disparities in knowledge infrastructure, educational institutions, incubation support, connectivity, and the overall business climate across these districts have created noticeable differences in Assam's startup ecosystem.

The study's findings reveal that the concentration of startups varies significantly across the selected districts, with Kamrup Metropolitan having the highest concentration of startups and Sivasagar and Sonitpur having the lowest. Startups in these districts—Kamrup Metropolitan, Kamrup, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Sonitpur, Dibrugarh, and Cachar—experience different phases of development. The ideation stage is the first stage of startup development. At this stage, entrepreneurs brainstorm business ideas, identify opportunities, conduct market research, and plan the launch of their products or services. Notably, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, and Chachar have the highest startup concentrations at this stage. This indicates that startups are still focused on generating ideas and have not yet advanced to the validation and scaling stages.

In Dibrugarh, institutions such as Dibrugarh University play a significant role in fostering research and higher education, helping raise awareness and understanding of entrepreneurship among young students and aspiring entrepreneurs in the region. However, despite this academic support, the region struggles with a lack of supportive incubation ecosystems, startup accelerators, access to venture financing and formal business mentoring.

Sivasagar's economy mainly hinges on the oil and tea sectors, which has led to a less vibrant entrepreneurial scene in the region. Unfortunately, the growth and transformation of startups are stifled by a shortage of incubation facilities, inadequate funding, and limited networking opportunities. Consequently, many startups in these regions find it challenging to move beyond the idea stage.

In contrast, Cachar benefits from institutions such as Assam University and the National Institute of Technology Silchar, which foster entrepreneurial opportunities through technical education and innovation. However, the entrepreneurial landscape still faces challenges, including weak market

networking, limited incubation support, limited collaboration between industry and academia, and a lack of investor engagement in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Consequently, numerous startups remain trapped in the ideation phase, struggling to validate and scale their concepts.

In the validation stage, districts such as Sonitpur and Kamrup showed a stronger presence of startups. This indicates increased entrepreneurial experimentation and market engagement. The entrepreneurial ecosystem in Sonitpur benefits from the presence of a Central University, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, and other research centers. The Central University, Tezpur University, plays a key role in fostering entrepreneurship through its academic programs, research opportunities, innovation initiatives, and activities that raise awareness of startups. Moreover, the Krishi Vigyan Kendra Sonitpur supports entrepreneurship and startup development among farmers, rural youth, and self-help groups by providing agricultural training, skill development, and technology transfer. Thus, this environment encourages students and budding entrepreneurs to experiment with their business ideas and enter the market.

Kamrup benefits greatly from its proximity to Guwahati and the vibrant entrepreneurial scene in Kamrup Metropolitan District. Startups in the area have access to a wealth of resources, including programs, training, mentorship, and networking opportunities offered by institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, Gauhati University, Cotton University, Assam Down Town University, and various private organizations. Additionally, incubation initiatives, such as Assam Startup – The Nest, further support these budding businesses. This indirect access to knowledge hubs and business support systems allows startups to move beyond brainstorming ideas and begin validating their business concepts.

In the scaling stage, Jorhat and Kamrup Metropolitan show comparatively stronger startup performances than the other districts. This is due to better institutional support, infrastructure, and market accessibility in these regions. Jorhat is home to several educational institutions, including Assam Agricultural University, Kaziranga University, ITI,

Jorhat Engineering College, Jorhat Medical College and Hospital, and several agricultural and tea research centers. These places play a crucial role in fostering innovation in agribusiness, food processing, and related sectors. The robust educational and research environment encourages entrepreneurship in agriculture and rural industries, helping startups reach beyond local markets. While some startups in Jorhat are making strides in scaling up, the region still grapples with challenges in attracting venture funding and advanced incubator support, as many businesses are still in the early stages of idea development.

Guwahati, part of the Kamrup Metropolitan District, boasts the most vibrant and well-established startup ecosystem in Assam. This area is home to top-notch educational and research institutions, such as the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, Gauhati University, and Assam Down Town University, as well as various private colleges and innovation hubs. These institutions produce a talented workforce and foster a culture of innovation-driven entrepreneurship. Incubation centers, such as the IIT Guwahati Technology Incubation Centre and Assam Startup – The Nest, provide essential support through mentoring, infrastructure, technical assistance, networking opportunities, and advice on funding and market access. Moreover, the region's improved transportation, digital infrastructure, banking services, investor networks, and urban consumer markets create a nurturing environment for startups to thrive and expand.

From this discussion, we conclude that differences in startup growth across Assam indicate that regions with better market access, financial resources, research facilities, educational infrastructure, incubation support, and entrepreneurial ecosystems tend to flourish. In contrast, districts lacking these vital resources experience slower entrepreneurial development. Those with strong knowledge centers and incubation support play a crucial role in helping businesses evolve from mere ideas to successful ventures.

Suggestions

The findings reveal an uneven distribution of the startup ecosystem across districts in Assam, leading to uneven development and growth of

entrepreneurial activity in the state. Therefore, to promote balanced and inclusive entrepreneurial development in the state, the following measures and policy recommendations are suggested:

In Assam, where socio-economic and infrastructure development conditions vary across districts, a decentralized, region-based startup policy should be adopted. A uniform state-level startup policy may not be adequate to address diversity across districts. Therefore, policymakers should adopt a decentralized, region-based approach that considers region-specific resource endowments, socio-economic and infrastructural conditions, and moves beyond urban-centric areas to focus on the backward regions of Assam.

The study highlights that regions with stronger knowledge institutions and innovation support have a higher startup concentration. Consequently, policymakers should establish and strengthen incubation centers, knowledge institutions, and innovative hubs to accelerate the entrepreneurial ecosystem by enhancing collaboration between universities, research centers, industry, and government agencies.

The development of funding sources, access-to-capital venture networks, and credit guarantee schemes may enhance entrepreneurial development, as limited access to funds and risk capital are major obstacles to startup progression in Assam. Apart from funding, the sustainable development of startups also requires strong marketability of their products or services. For this, the demand aspect among potential consumers also needs to be researched in depth. This, in turn, will help design and develop the desired product for the masses at an affordable price.

For the inclusive development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, special emphasis must be placed on rural entrepreneurship. The government should encourage and support rural entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, self-help groups, and youth-led enterprises, which not only help bring the desired balance and inclusive growth but also increase employment.

Policymakers should establish a rigorous monitoring and data-driven evaluation mechanism to periodically assess startup performance, such as employment generation, revenue growth, investment

patterns, and innovation outcomes, to identify bottlenecks and evaluate the effectiveness of policy interventions.

Scope for Future Research

As this study is based on secondary data, future studies may employ primary surveys to examine uneven startup growth across all districts in Assam. In addition, a sector-based study across regions may be conducted using advanced analytical and econometric techniques, such as the Location Quotient (LQ), Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI), spatial econometric models, GIS-based analysis, and regression frameworks. This study considered the knowledge-institutional aspect in examining the unevenness of startup growth across districts; therefore, further studies can consider additional factors to examine uneven startup growth across all districts of Assam.

Conclusion

This study on the startup concentration in selected districts of Assam highlights the uneven development across the entrepreneurial ecosystem. For instance, Kamrup Metropolitan and Jorhat experienced stronger startup growth due to established knowledge hubs, top-notch educational institutions, incubation centers, and a supportive business environment. Institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, Gauhati University, Kaziranga University, and Assam Agricultural University, along with incubation centers such as the IIT Guwahati Technology Incubation Centre and Assam Startup – The Nest, have played a crucial role in helping startups evolve from mere ideas to scaling up. Kamrup, being close to Guwahati, also shows moderate startup growth owing to its access to market opportunities, incubator support, and entrepreneurial networks. Meanwhile, Sonitpur has become a key hub for validation-stage startups, benefiting from the academic and research support provided by Tezpur University and other research centers.

In contrast, districts such as Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, and Cachar are still grappling with challenges due to a lack of industry connections, limited access to investors, insufficient incubator support, and a

shortage of mentorship. While academic institutions such as Dibrugarh University and Assam University promote learning and research, many startups struggle to progress beyond the ideation and validation stages because of a weak startup ecosystem. To transition smoothly from ideation to scaling, startups require better access to funding, mentoring, venture capital, and digital infrastructure. Therefore, the disparities in infrastructure, support systems, market opportunities, and institutional networks are closely tied to the uneven growth of startups in Assam.

Despite the insights and information provided in this study, it has some limitations. This study is based on secondary data gathered from the DPIIT (Govt. of India) reports, and published statistics. Therefore, the scope of the study excludes a number of unregistered, informal, and locally operating enterprises, which may not actually capture the extent of entrepreneurial activity across the districts in Assam. The study primarily covers seven districts with higher concentrations of startups and entrepreneurial activity. Consequently, entrepreneurial activity in the remaining districts is ignored. Another drawback of the study is that it is based on a descriptive research design; however, incorporating analytical and econometric techniques would provide greater depth and insight. Moreover, the unevenness of startup growth is examined by considering knowledge institutions and different stages of development, thereby overlooking other dimensions of entrepreneurial activity such as employment generation, investment patterns, revenue growth, and innovation outcomes.

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