

Tourism and Rural Development with Special reference to Ziro Valley of Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract

This paper examines the interplay between tourism development and rural progress in Arunachal Pradesh, with Ziro Valley as a focal point. Using secondary data from government reports, tourism department statistics and academic studies, it highlights Ziro Valley's cultural and ecological significance and evaluates the socio-economic impacts of tourism on rural communities. The paper further explores challenges like infrastructure gaps and seasonality while proposing strategies for sustainable tourism that contribute to rural development, including income and employment generation, community participation, and preservation of local traditions.

Keywords: Rural Development, Revenue, Tourist Arrival, Homestay, Seasonality

1. Introduction

Tourism is a powerful driver of regional development, fostering economic growth, cultural exchange, and community upliftment. It serves as a catalyst for creating income and employment opportunities, preserving heritage, and promoting sustainable development, particularly in rural and underdeveloped regions. Arunachal Pradesh, known for its scenic landscapes, diverse tribal cultures, and unique biodiversity, has witnessed fluctuating trends in tourist arrivals and revenue generation over the years. The increasing popularity of destinations like Ziro Valley has led to a surge in domestic and international tourists, contributing to local economic growth. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, seasonal tourist inflow, and the impact of global events like the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly influenced the state's tourism sector. This research paper aims to analyze the trends in tourism revenue, expansion of homestay accommodations, and the tourist arrivals in Ziro Valley and Arunachal Pradesh. By examining government data, the study identifies key growth patterns, challenges, and the role of tourism in rural development. The research highlights the need for improved infrastructure, community participation, and strategic marketing to ensure long-term economic benefits while preserving the state's cultural and environmental assets.

2. Literature Review

Patowary and Borgohain (2017) examined the involvement of the Apatani tribe in tourism activities in Ziro Valley. Their study highlighted that while there is a satisfactory level of community participation, there is a need for greater awareness and inclusion in planning and decision-making processes to ensure sustainable tourism development. The authors emphasized the importance of empowering local communities in policy formulation and management to achieve long-term sustainability.

Perme et. al.,(2024) conducted a comprehensive analysis of CBT initiatives in Ziro Valley. Their research revealed a strong interest from the local community in tourism activities, contrasting with the reluctance observed in some tribal areas. The study identified various CBT initiatives, such as homestay programs and traditional artisanal practices, contributing to the cultural and economic fabric of the valley. The authors underscored the importance of comprehensive planning and management for the successful implementation of CBT activities.

Kumari and Omo (2020) explored the potential for CBT development in Ziro Valley. They noted that tourism in the area is in its infancy, presenting an opportunity to implement sustainable tourism principles that preserve the region's unique ethnicity while providing economic benefits to the local community. The study advocated for the development of CBT projects that combine aspects of community development, poverty alleviation, cultural heritage, and conservation.

Mize et al. (2016) investigated the current state of ecotourism in Ziro Valley, assessing tourist satisfaction levels, the importance of ecotourism products, and the role of local communities. The study found that while there is potential for ecotourism to contribute to rural development, differences in tourist satisfaction levels and the importance of ecotourism products need to be addressed. The research emphasized the need for community involvement in ecotourism development to ensure that it benefits the local population and aligns with sustainable practices.

Lama (2016) explores the relationship between tourism development and environmental conservation in Arunachal Pradesh. It highlights the state's vast tourism potential due to its location in the Eastern Himalayas and the rapid growth of tourist inflow. Proper infrastructure development can make Arunachal a prime tourist destination, boosting economic growth and local employment. However, excessive tourism may harm the environment, emphasizing the need for sustainable planning and management.

Thakuria (2017) study on "Stakeholders Sustenance in Tourism Progression in Ziro Valley" analyzed the roles of key stakeholders—Ngunu Ziro, ZFM organizing committee, and the tourism department—in tourism development. The study found that 60.8% of residents take pride in tourists appreciating Ziro and Apatani culture, reflecting a positive attitude. However, 81.4% felt tourism had not yet improved their quality of life. The study also highlighted a lack of awareness among residents about tourism's full impact, both positive and negative.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the growth trend in revenue generation and tourist arrival in Ziro Valley and Arunachal Pradesh.
- To Identify the various Challenges faced by the tourism sector of Arunachal Pradesh.

4. Methodology

The methodology for this research follows a quantitative approach, utilizing secondary data obtained from official government sources such as the Directorate of Tourism, the Department of Economics and Statistics, and the District Tourism Office. The data have been analysed using statistical measures such as annual growth rate to explore the relationship between increasing tourist inflow and the expansion of homestays, highlighting how tourism growth influences local economic development.

5. Growth and Performance of Tourism Sector in Arunachal Pradesh and Ziro Valley

The tourism sector in Arunachal Pradesh has experienced significant growth driven by its rich cultural heritage and scenic landscapes. Despite its immense potential, the state remains relatively untapped compared to other regions in India, providing significant opportunities for tourism development. Tourist arrivals saw steady growth from 2015 to 2019, but the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 caused a sharp decline. However, the sector rebounded strongly in the following years, with a remarkable surge in domestic tourism by 2023. Ziro Valley, a key tourist destination, has played a crucial role in this growth, attracting visitors with its unique Apatani cultural heritage and events like the Ziro Music Festival.

5.1 Growth Trend in Tourist Arrival in Arunachal Pradesh

Table 1: Year-wise Tourist Arrival Data of Both Domestic and Foreign Tourist for the Year 2015 to 2023

Year	Domestic Tourist	Growth Rate	Foreign Tourist	Growth Rate	Total	Growth Rate
2015	352176	-	6453	-	358629	-
2016	385875	9.57	6598	2.25	392473	9.44
2017	443211	14.86	7147	8.32	450358	14.75
2018	512436	15.62	7653	7.08	520089	15.48
2019	558496	8.99	7834	2.37	566330	2.31
2020	42871	-92.32	961	-87.73	43832	-92.26
2021	102915	140.06	182	-81.06	103097	135.21
2022	212281	106.27	1059	481.87	213340	106.93
2023	1040601	390.20	4496	324.55	1045097	389.87

Source: Report of Directorate of Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 2023-24

The Table 1 presents year-wise tourist arrival data for both domestic and foreign tourists from 2015 to 2023, showing their respective numbers and growth rates. In 2015, there were 352,176 domestic tourists and 6,453 foreign tourists, amounting to a total of 358,629 visitors. The following years showed steady growth in both domestic and foreign tourist arrivals, with significant growth rates recorded, especially for domestic tourists. In 2019, domestic tourists peaked at 558,496, while foreign tourists reached 7,834, bringing the total to 566,330. However, the year 2020 saw a sharp decline in tourism, primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with domestic and foreign tourist arrivals plummeting by -92.32% and -87.73%, respectively. Tourism began recovering in 2021, with domestic tourists growing by 140.06% and foreign tourists showing a decline of -81.06%. The recovery accelerated in 2022, with domestic tourist arrivals increasing by 106.27% and foreign tourists by 481.87%. In 2023, domestic tourists surged to 1,040,601, with an impressive growth rate of 390.20%, while foreign tourist arrivals increased to 4,496, achieving a growth rate of 324.55%. The total tourist count in 2023 reached 1,045,097, marking a significant rebound in tourism activity.

5.2 Growth Trend in Revenue Generation of the Tourism Department in Arunachal Pradesh

The revenue data of the tourism department of Arunachal Pradesh from 2015-16 to 2021-22 shows fluctuating trends, indicating periods of growth followed by significant declines.

Table 2: Revenue of the Tourism Department for the Year 2015-16 to 2021-22

Year	Revenue	Growth Rate
2015-16	1,02,48,797	-
2016-17	1,23,05,748	20.07
2017-18	1,16,83,137	-5.06
2018-19	78,44,936	-32.85
2019-20	78,72,484	0.35
2020-21	29,99,642	-61.90
2021-22	16,58,172	-44.72

Source: Report of Directorate of Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 2021-22

The Table 2 highlights the revenue trends of the Tourism Department from 2015-16 to 2021-22, showcasing both revenue figures and annual growth rates. The revenue peaked in 2016-17 at ₹1,23,05,748, reflecting a 20.07% growth compared to the previous year. However, from 2017-18 onward, there was a steady decline, with the most significant drops occurring in 2018-19 (-32.85%) and 2020-21 (-61.90%). The revenue hit its lowest point in 2021-22 at ₹16,58,172, marking a -44.72% growth rate from the previous year. This declining trend, particularly sharp during 2020-21, may be attributed to global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, which heavily impacted tourism. Despite a slight recovery in 2019-20, the overall trend demonstrates a consistent reduction in revenue over the years.

5.3 Trends in Tourist Inflow in Ziro Valley, Lower Subansiri District.

Among the numerous attractions in Arunachal Pradesh, Ziro Valley stands out as a beacon of natural and cultural allure. This beautiful hill station is located 1500 metres above sea level. It is famous for paddy-cum-pisciculture cultivation. Renowned for its picturesque landscapes, vibrant festivals, and the distinct lifestyle of the Apatani tribe, Ziro Valley holds immense potential to contribute to the socio-economic progress of the region. Its significance extends beyond tourism, as it plays a crucial role in fostering rural development, preserving indigenous traditions, and encouraging sustainable practices.

Table 3: Number of Domestic and Foreign Tourist visited at Ziro in Lower Subansiri District From 2018-19 to 2023-24

Year	Domestic	Growth Rate	Foreign	Growth Rate	Total	Growth Rate
2018-19	24103	-	854	-	24957	-
2019-20	24196	0.39	709	-16.98	24905	-0.21
2020-21	5033	-79.20	118	-83.36	5151	-79.32
2021-22	861	-82.89	78	-33.90	939	-81.77
2022-23	66682	7644.72	264	238.46	66946	7029.50
2023-24	204994	207.42	476	80.30	205470	206.92

Source: Statistical Handbook of Arunachal Pradesh, 2023-24

The table provides data on the number of domestic and foreign tourists who visited Ziro in the Lower Subansiri District from 2018-19 to 2023-24, along with their respective growth rates. In 2018-19, the total number of tourists was 24,957, with 24,103 domestic tourists and 854 foreign tourists. The

following year, 2019-20, saw a slight increase in domestic tourists to 24,196 (0.39% growth), while foreign tourists declined by 16.98%, resulting in a marginal overall decrease of -0.21%. The tourism sector faced a severe decline in 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with domestic tourists dropping by -79.20% and foreign tourists by -83.36%, bringing the total number of visitors to just 5,151. The decline continued into 2021-22, with only 861 domestic tourists and 78 foreign tourists, marking growth rates of -82.89% and -33.90%, respectively. A remarkable recovery occurred in 2022-23, with domestic tourist numbers surging to 66,682 (a growth rate of 7644.72%) and foreign tourists increasing to 264 (238.46% growth). The total number of tourists reached 66,946, a dramatic recovery after the previous years of decline. In 2023-24, the trend continued, with 204,994 domestic tourists (207.42% growth) and 476 foreign tourists (80.30% growth), resulting in a total of 205,470 visitors and an overall growth rate of 206.92%. This reflects a significant resurgence in tourism in the Ziro region.

Table 4: Month-Wise Tourist Statistical Data of Lower Subansiri District Ziro, 2023-24

Month	Domestic	Foreign	Total
January	14337	26	14363
February	12443	32	12475
March	16347	47	16394
April	16423	27	16450
May	17322	29	17351
June	16344	32	16376
July	15221	20	15241
August	17288	38	17326
September	34445	52	34497
October	18245	50	18295
November	14257	56	14313
December	12322	67	12389

Source: Report of District Tourism Office, Lower Subansiri, Arunachal Pradesh, 2023-24

The Table 3 presents the month-wise tourist inflow data for Lower Subansiri District (Ziro) during 2023-24, divided into domestic, foreign, and total tourist counts. The highest tourist inflow was recorded in September, with a total of 34,497 tourists, comprising 34,445 domestic and 52 foreign visitors. August also saw a significant number of visitors, totaling 17,326. May had the highest monthly domestic count of 17,322, while March recorded the most foreign tourists (47). The lowest inflow occurred in December, with a total of 12,389 tourists, consisting of 12,322 domestic and 67 foreign visitors. Overall, the data indicates seasonal variations, with peak tourist activity in September and a decline during winter months like December. The foreign tourist count remained relatively low throughout the year.

The highest tourist inflow in September in Lower Subansiri District (Ziro) is likely due to the renowned Ziro Festival of Music, which is a major attraction for both domestic and foreign tourists. This festival, celebrated annually in September, showcases a blend of music, art, and culture in the scenic Ziro Valley. The event draws large crowds because of its unique outdoor setting amidst picturesque landscapes, featuring performances by renowned artists and local talent. Additionally, the pleasant weather in September, with moderate temperatures and minimal rainfall, makes it an ideal time for tourists to visit

the region. This combination of cultural significance and favorable climate significantly boosts tourism during this month.

5.4 Current Status of Homestays in Ziro Valley

Homestays in Ziro Valley offer an authentic and immersive experience for travelers seeking to explore the region's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty. Run by local Apatani families, these homestays provide a unique opportunity to experience traditional lifestyle, cuisine, and warm hospitality.

Table 5: Number of Homestays in Lower Subansiri District

Year	Number of Homestay
2022-23	28
2023-24	42

Source: *Statistical Handbook of Arunachal Pradesh, 2023-24*

The Table 4 provides information about the number of homestays in Ziro Valley over two consecutive years. In the year 2022-23, there were 28 homestays available, while in the following year, 2023-24, the number increased to 42. This indicates a significant growth in the number of homestays, reflecting around 50% increase within a year. The rise may suggest a growing interest in tourism or local initiatives to enhance accommodations for visitors in the region. The increase in the number of homestays in Ziro Valley will positively impact rural development in the region. It promotes community-based tourism, creating new income opportunities for local residents by allowing them to host travelers. This growth can lead to improved livelihoods, as more families benefit financially from tourism. Additionally, the demand for better infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and water supply, is likely to increase, encouraging the government and local authorities to invest in these areas. Homestays also help preserve local culture and traditions by giving tourists an authentic experience, which can further boost the identity and pride of the community. Overall, the rise in homestays can drive socio-economic development while fostering sustainable and inclusive growth in Ziro Valley.

6. CHALLENGES

Despite its rich cultural heritage and rich natural beauty, the tourism sector in Arunachal Pradesh faces several challenges that hinder its full potential.

- 1. Inadequate Infrastructure:** Poor road connectivity, lack of well-maintained transportation facilities, and limited accommodation options make travel difficult for tourists. Many remote destinations remain inaccessible due to insufficient infrastructure.
- 2. Limited Digital and Promotional Outreach:** Arunachal Pradesh lacks strong digital marketing and promotional strategies to attract national and international tourists. Inadequate online presence and lack of e-booking platforms further restrict tourism growth.
- 3. Seasonal Tourism Dependence:** Tourism in the state is largely seasonal, with peak inflows during certain months, such as festival seasons or summer vacations. This creates fluctuations in income for local businesses and homestays.
- 4. Lack of Trained Workforce:** The hospitality and tourism sector suffers from a shortage of skilled professionals, including trained guides, tour operators, and service providers, leading to inconsistent tourist experiences.

5. **Environmental and Cultural Preservation Concerns:** Increasing tourism, if not managed sustainably, can lead to environmental degradation, deforestation, and cultural dilution. Unregulated tourism may disturb the ecological balance of sensitive areas.
6. **Security and Restricted Access:** Being a border state, certain areas of Arunachal Pradesh require special permits for both domestic and foreign tourists. This bureaucratic process can discourage potential visitors.
7. **Impact of COVID-19 and Economic Fluctuations:** The pandemic severely affected tourist arrivals and revenue generation. Even post-pandemic, economic instability and fluctuating tourist confidence have impacted recovery efforts.
8. **Lack of Diversified Tourism Activities:** The state primarily attracts nature and cultural tourism, but the development of adventure tourism, wellness tourism, and eco-tourism remains underdeveloped, limiting the options for tourists.

7. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the tourism sector in Arunachal Pradesh, particularly in Ziro Valley, has undergone significant fluctuations over the years. The revenue from the Tourism Department showed a steady increase until 2017-18, followed by a sharp decline, especially during the pandemic years (2020-21 and 2021-22). Similarly, tourist arrivals plummeted in 2020 due to COVID-19 but recovered rapidly from 2021 onwards, reaching record highs in 2023. The number of homestays in Ziro Valley has also increased, from 28 in 2022-23 to 42 in 2023-24, indicating a positive response to the surge in tourists. The data indicates that domestic tourism has played a crucial role in the revival of the sector, while foreign tourist inflow remains relatively low, possibly due to travel restrictions and limited international outreach. The significant increase in homestays suggests a shift toward community-based tourism, which can further enhance local economic benefits. However, challenges such as seasonal dependence, limited infrastructure, and accessibility issues still need to be addressed to ensure sustained growth.

In conclusion, Arunachal Pradesh has immense tourism potential, but strategic interventions are required to maintain and accelerate this growth. Policies focusing on improving infrastructure, easing travel restrictions, promoting sustainable tourism, and enhancing digital marketing efforts can further strengthen the state's tourism sector. By leveraging its unique cultural and natural heritage, Arunachal Pradesh can establish itself as a premier travel destination in India while ensuring long-term economic benefits for local communities.

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