

IMPACT OF TOURISM IN THE HIMALAYAN STATE OF MIZORAM, INDIA: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The Mizoram is situated at the southernmost part of North-East India where melodramatic beauty of sun rise and sun set can be experience through the hills and mountain peaks along with exciting wildlife, sheer cliffs, and lovely waterfalls. Dedicated Mizoram tourist information centres can cater a booming publicity of tourist in all major airports, bus terminals and cities to attract national and international tourists. Necessary improvement in policies and tourist regulations can create a suitable environment for sustainable tourism development in Mizoram which will directly enhance the livelihood and income of the local people of Mizoram. The pleasant passion and the social essence of the local tribes are the foremost motives for creating some of the exotic attractive tourism structures in this beautiful breath-taking Mizoram state.

Keywords: Mizoram, Tourists, Sustainable Tourism, Tribal, Northeast.

Introduction

Tourism makes a place to recognize its importance and marks a country's geographical landmark. The above benefits have also generated both direct and indirect employment opportunities for the people residing there. Even though tourism has many benefits, it should consider the maintenance of the place's ethnic/specific identity. Tourism is one of the most emerging industries and the highest growing sector of the market. It enables an area or region to explore its true potential. Tourism is a phenomenon that has a direct bearing on the socio, economic and political condition of a region/state/country. With increasing globalization and a boom in air, connectivity has boosted humans' ability to reach far off places. Thus, touring sites has become one of the most cherished desires of humanity. Tourism can be of significant importance when it comes to providing employment and contributing to society's socio-economic growth.

Nonetheless, even though tourism has many good things to offer, it shouldn't come at the cost of environmental integrity and endangering an existing vulnerable ethnic community's identity. Particular emphasis on tourism should focus on thrust areas like demographic, geographic, and social aspects. Tourism is presently one of the world's principal industries and the fast-rising sector. It reflects the socio-economic and cultural heritage of the people and places which motivates the tourist to visit. Mizoram has the highest density of clouded leopards and marbled cats in South-East Asia inside the wild, especially inside the Dampa Tiger Reserve. The cult of Chana (Chana Pawl) dwelling in Baktawng is recorded within the Guinness e-book of world file as its most significant own family, with 162 members. Tourism is a unique form of leisure activity that is both dynamic (travel) and components which are static (temporary stay).

The scenic beauty of Mizoram

Mizoram is in the Northeast of India; its capital is Aizawl, which is well connected through air and road communication. The work for railway connectivity is going on in full swing, and it will be connecting Aizawl with the rest of India by 2023. The name Mizoram derived from two terms, i.e., "Mizo," the inhabitants of Mizoram and "Ram" means land. It has its old legends and attractive villages of houses erected on stilts – a place where sunrise through peaks and hills makes mesmerizing view with a beautiful lake in the heart of mountains. The Prospect of tourism in Mizoram will increase with the people's movement and the stay destination at various exotic locations like Reiek, Vantawng Waterfalls, Falkawan Village, Hmuifang, Phawngpui Peak, etc. People can visit such places for recreational activities, leisure, or business purposes, and it is a set of creative events that caters mostly to visitors. Mizoram, which means "land of native peoples (Mizos)", is India's North-eastern states. Mizoram is a beautiful state with a stunning landscape, lush greenery, and pleasant climate. Mizoram is bordering with other North-eastern states such as Assam, Tripura, and Manipur. It has international borders with an ASEAN country such as Burma and Bangladesh. This makes Mizoram a potential place for excelling in the field of tourism. It is wholly blessed with a rich ecological setup where one can experience and visualize the lush green cover everywhere—Mizoram shares interstate and international borders leading to the scope of attaining the objectives of tourism.

The tourism sector in Mizoram has a potential resource to flourish with beautiful landscapes, mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, national parks, and wildlife adventures, which present a unique opportunity for tourism development. Village tourism can be marketed as dominant tourism, and its advantages can be used to improve rural areas in socio-economic and infrastructural dimensions. It makes people aware and enhances connectivity in order to protect the environment, local history, and traditions (Vishwambhar Prasad Sat., 2019). The more significant part of the area protected by green forests with dense bamboo groves, small flora and fauna, breath-taking valleys. Sustainable infrastructural facilities at tourist spot will surely contribute a larger role in tourism development in Mizoram (Vishwambhar Prasad Sat., 2014). It is the Highlanders' land, or the Mizos, who are naturally friendly and loves to welcome visitors. Mizoram Tourism Development Authority (MTDA) is a society established by a memorandum of the year 2008, under the Mizoram Societies Registration Act 2005. The society's principal goal and function are to help the Central's efforts Policy and Authority of the State in respect of tourism growth within Mizoram state:

(a) Phawngpui Hills: Phawngpui Hills is Mizoram's highest mountain peak and reported to be one of the best places to visit in Mizoram. This quaint hill station, called 'House of Gods,' is rich in vibrant orchid species, fragrant herbs, native fauna, and colourful rhododendron. (b) Vantawang Falls: It is about 137 km from Aizawl, a vibrant waterfall in the Serchhip district of Mizoram, and attracts travellers for its scenic surroundings. Vantawang Falls claimed to be the state's highest and most impressive waterfalls and surrounded by lush greenery and rocky hills. (c) Palak Lake: Located about 400 km south of Aizawl near Phura Village, Palak Lake is an oval-shaped natural lake. One of Mizoram's most famous lakes, this lovely water body, cover a zone of about one sq. km and is bounded by lavish dense forests. Besides the picturesque scenery, the surrounding lake is well-known for covering interesting flora and fauna species. Occupied by the maximum wetland birds and hilly birds, neighbouring areas to the lake are Palak Lake, which is known for stopover of Pintail Duck migration. (d) Mountain Biking in Hmuifang Hill: Hmuifang Hill is situated at an altitude of around 1524 m and provides unbeaten trails to discover by biking, and it stretches from north to south. Many tracks can explore on a bike ride in these hills. (e) Luangmual Handicrafts Centre: A famous spot to see Mizo handicrafts' grandeur located at a distance of about 7 km from the central Aizawl City. Luangmual Handicrafts Centre. *Khumbeu*, which made of waterproof wild *hnahtial* leaves, is among the most popular items that can be found. (f) Mizo Bland Food: Mizos use very little spice in their food, and soup remains part of the meal. To get the real authentic taste, Mizo cuisine, roadside food stalls are the best option. Mizo Bai is a traditional

non-vegetarian Mizo dish made by steaming vegetables and mixing them with pork, bamboo shooting, and spinach. Local *Lubrusca* grape wine is very famous amongst the beverages.

Prospects of Tourism in Mizoram

The capital of Mizoram is Aizawl. Aizawl is connected to the other parts of India mainly by Road and Air. Rail connectivity is only up to Bairabi and is expected to join Aizawl soon. Road entry to Aizawl is mostly through Vairengti via Barak Valley of Assam. Aizawl has an airport facility at Lengpui, which is well connected to most other Indian Airports. This air connectivity is of vital importance for facilitating tourism. From Lengpui, taxi facilities are there to the farthest places of Mizoram. Mizoram has nearly 17 (seventeen) tourist spots that are maintained with utmost dedication and care and among them includes Rih Dil Lake, Ngengpui Wildlife Sanctuary, Tuipui river region, and so on. The state of Mizoram has very forestland variety. It represents a key element of the Ecological Biodiversity Hotspot for Indo-Burma (Sati et al., 2014).

Mizoram is home to several hill stations such as Hmuifang Tlang, Reiek Tlang, Vanzau etc. It also has many beautiful lakes and waterfalls. The colourful festivals such as Mim Kut and Chapchar Kut celebrated by local indigenous people can also be significant tourist attractions. Indigenous tribal practices in Mizoram tell the rich culture maintained for years. That can be visualized through the places housing their residence and their day-to-day accessories that the people are using there. And over 90% of Mizos lived in the house of their friends and family when they move within Mizoram and that does not care the reason for their journey (Lalmangaihsangi., 2015).

A home stay is a mode of growth in tourism where visitors are able to rent a room and stay as a part of the family with the family member. The idea of individual 'bed and breakfast' homes called 'home stays' is where homes are properly turned into tourist houses offering both amenities and comfort. Ultimately, the idea is a modern product; it has a massive amount of opportunity to grow rural tourism (Lalhunmawii Chhakchhuak; 2013). Mizoram is mostly a hilly region located far in India's extremely north-eastern corner between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Tactically, owing to this form of geographical position, this region is in a great spot for tourism than other states (Adak and Guha; 2014).

Apart from the culture and natural beauty of Mizoram, Churches of Mizoram can also play an essential role in boosting its tourism industry. Mizoram is mainly a Christian state where people observe a variety of denominations of Christianity. Church in Lunglei is one of the first church in Mizoram, and it is of heritage importance. Mizoram means "land of native peoples (Mizos)".

Mizoram also has an International standard *Golf Resort* at Thenzawl, which was inaugurated virtually by the Union Minister of State for Culture & Tourism (I/C) Shri Prahlad Singh Patel. Some of the exotic beauty of Mizoram has been presented through Figures 1 to 8, respectively.

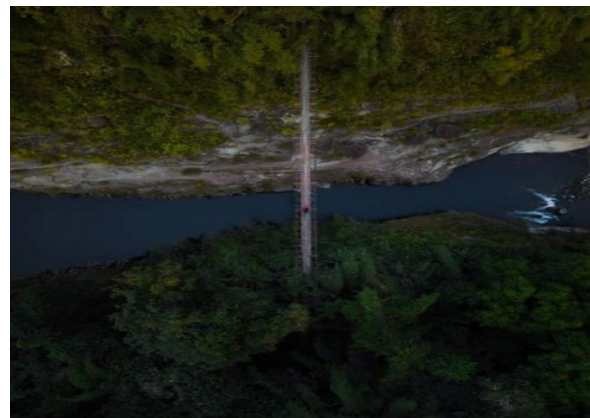


Fig 1: Aizawl, Mizoram



Fig 2: Sihhmui, Mizoram



Fig 3: Lengpui, Mizoram



Fig 4: Ailawng, Mizoram



Fig 5: Champhai, Mizoram (Sunrise View)

Fig 6: Aizawl, Mizoram (Sunset View)



Fig 7: Aizawl, Mizoram (Mizo Traditional Village)

Fig 8: Aizawl, Mizoram (Night View)

Problems of Tourism in Mizoram:

- Inner Line Permit obtaining process is of age-old offline practice that makes the tourist people wait for long duration leading to the changes in their tour plans.
- The tourism industry should be cautious enough to maintain the ethnic identity of Mizoram. Compromising the ethnic identity by the action of the tourist is a significant threat to the place.
- Check post or points at the state's borders should have some emergency facilities like medical facilities that are not seen in any of the borders in Mizoram, including international and domestic boundaries because the pandemic situation demands the immediate need of permanent medical checkpoints at the barriers to avoid community spread of diseases within the state.

- Road connectivity, as well as road maintenance to the places of Mizoram, is inferior. Tourism highly depends on the connectivity to the sites.
- The frequency of share taxis, buses and other public transportation modes accessing Mizoram roads is significantly less and time bound.
- Private computing facilities are available, but their tariff charges are dynamic, and it has to be monitored by the tourism department.
- Mizoram state is wholly situated in an earthquake-prone area, and also the weather condition prevailing in the place quickly changes.
- Due to many associated issues, the tourism industry in Mizoram is not able to grow to the extent desired for all its potentialities.
- Uneconomical preservation of cultural heritage and assets.
- Unsatisfactory tourism policies.
- Transport and communication are difficult and expensive in the over-all aspect.
- Public and Private organized tourism involvement is mostly absent within the state.

A potential Solution to Overcome the Problems of Tourism in Mizoram:

- The government should prioritize solving road connectivity and maintenance issues, which is the first step to realize its true tourism potential. The main focus should be to develop all-weather road connectivity.
- Municipal authorities in different Mizoram districts should develop shopping mall projects that are the most preferred one-stop shopping destination for tourists.
- The lack of modern, well equipped medical facilities is another concern. Apart from tourist lodges, permanent medical facility arrangement should be housed at all prime tourist spots.
- To ensure the tourists' safety, different measures, including GPS technology, can be implemented.
- The tourism industry should notify the tourist people about the natural calamities data beforehand before their journey. Tourist people's safety should be the prime importance for the tourism industry.
- The government should rapidly make an arrangement and decision to build and maintain the road connectivity in Mizoram.
- Apart from tourist lodges, permanent medical facility arrangement should be housed at all prime tourist spots.
- To ensure the tourists' safety, the government can provide GPS tracking devices to the tourism industry through the tourism department to avoid any adverse circumstances to the tourists.
- Structured Prospect for resilient and sustainable tourism.

Concluding Remarks:

Mizoram has a pleasant climatic condition throughout the year with rich natural diversity of flora and fauna, which adds beauty for nature lovers. The spirit of adventure always remains at its peak due to rocky terrains, mountainous water bodies that provide a unique opportunity for outdoor sports activities and recreations. The foremost necessity to develop any tourist destination is to go for publicity of tourist destinations and establish dedicated tourist information centres in major airports and cities to attract international and national tourists. Provide proper infrastructural development concerning tourist accommodation and food by constructing nature eco-friendly guest houses, circuit houses, and tourist lodges. Coordinating efforts among governments at all levels and the scope of the private sector is essential. The Mizoram government should put forward policies such as online application and approval of

Inner Line Permit. Such combined action will improve the tourism sector of Mizoram and enhance the livelihood and significant source of income for local people of Mizoram and shape tomorrow's tourism. Therefore, it may be concluded that Mizoram has the true potential of flourishing in tourism and So the prospects of tourism given its national and international significance.

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