

# Potential and Forms of Sustainable Village Tourism in Mizoram, Northeast India

Vishwambhar Prasad Sati\*

## ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**  
Village Tourism,  
Tourists' Inflow,  
Carrying Capacity,  
Farm Tourism,  
Health Tourism,  
Peace Tourism,  
Mizoram

*This paper examines the potential and forms of sustainable village tourism in Mizoram, Northeast India. This study was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data was gathered from the primary and secondary sources. Tourism survey report of India 2018 for Mizoram was used to collect data on tourists' inflow, purpose and duration of stay and level of accommodation from 2016 to 2018. A case study of village Sialsuk was conducted through household level survey using purposive random sampling method. The author surveyed 240 households (48%) of the village. The major questions were asked of on the main options of livelihoods and carrying capacity of village tourism. The result shows that Mizoram has the tremendous potential, as it has the number of villages, which has feasible climate, spectacular landscape, wilderness and abundance local food products and beverages. These abundance bases support for the sustainable village tourism. Meanwhile, tourists' inflow is less in Mizoram. Further, accommodation, transportation and institutional facilities are insufficient. There are number of drivers, affecting development of village tourism in Mizoram and among them, the inner line permit and remoteness/inaccessibility of the villages are the main drivers. It is suggested that the inner line permit system should be abolished. Roads should be constructed, publicity of the tourists' destination should be ensured and the tourism department should be strengthened so that the village tourism in Mizoram can be developed*

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## 1. Introduction

Village tourism is a new and emerging concept, which refers to stay of tourists in the villages for leisure, improving health and understanding traditional knowledge. It is defined as the tourist typology, which has seen greater growth in recent decades (Lane 1994). It is an alternative of great interest for different segments of tourism (Frochet 2005) and it is being observed as a catalyst of development and regeneration as far as the socio-economic issue is concerned (Sharpey 2001). Village tourism is referred to a kind of tourism in which tourists stay in the villages for leisure, peace, improving health and understanding

traditional knowledge. It helps in the development of infrastructural facilities such as transportation, accommodation and institutions, promotes local culture and products, augments employment and generates income. It has been observed that the diversifying traditional agricultural activities is essential for the development of farm based village tourism (Panyik et al. 2011), which will enhance economic development of the rural areas. Further, high environmental quality can enhance leisure tourism (Ciolac et al. 2012)).

Village tourism provides sustainable use of natural resources, development of cultural heritage, village traditions, agricultural products and food

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items and paves a way for the sustainable village development (Brown 1997). Village tourism can be seen as one of the promising solutions to promote rural development (McAreevey and McDonagh 2010; Matarrita-Casante 2010; Saxena and Ilbery 2008; Terluin 2003; Dong et al. 2013). It takes place in rural areas, which are characterised by low population densities, open spaces, sparse settlements and population less than 10,000, land use mainly dominated by farming, forestry and natural areas (Lane 1994). It has become a popular concept in a number of countries in the developed world including China (Su 2011).

The word 'tourist village' was first coined in France, as France has long traditions to promote rural tourism (Ciolac 2016). The first rural tourism was based on the holiday concept to counter urbanization, began after World War II (Lane 2009). In the Western societies, industrialization, urbanization and developed transportation have directed people to move to rural areas for different experience (Nulty 2004). Although, village tourism is practiced mainly for improving health, recreation and leisure yet, is has seen for as an alternative to development of rural societies (Briedenhann and Wickens 2004). The characteristics of the village tourism is nature holidays, special services like accommodation, festivities, leisure, recreation and production and the sale of local products/handicrafts (Kulcsar 2009).

A number of studies have been conducted on village tourism and its role in socio-economic development and cultural strengthen. Some scholars state that village tourism is a key strategy for regional development (Cawley & Gillmor 2008; Saxena et al. 2007; Fleisher & Falenstein 2000) and it helps in conserving nature and promoting region-specific products (Van der Ploeg et al. 2000). It is valuable in areas where traditional agricultural activities are in decline (Cavaco 1995; Hoggart et al. 1995). In many areas or the world, mass tourism has been increasing, which has resulted in environmental degradation. Village tourism can be promoted as an alternative to mass tourism (Sharpley 2000). It is also a major

tool for destination development (Holland et al 2003) and a complementary alternative in certain areas to other traditional works, such as agriculture, livestock and other primary industries (Fleischer & Tchetchik 2005; Sharpley 2002). Village tourism is promoting economic development across the globe (Mili 2012). It is a multifaceted activity, developing small scale tourism business (GOI 1994).

Village tourism can be promoted as primary tourism and the benefits coming out from it can be used for socio-economic and infrastructural development of rural areas. It brings awareness to conserve environment, local culture and heritage and improves accessibility. In the developed countries, village tourism has become a new style of tourism to experience and live a relaxed and healthy lifestyle. Village tourism is a form of tourism, which showcases the village life, its art, culture and heritage, develops rural natural locales and enhances rural livelihoods. It is a form of tourism, where all touristic activities take place and sometimes which includes wilderness tourism and temporary stay in the second homes in rural areas (Oppermann 1996).

Disparity in rural and urban areas has been widening, because of urbanization and urban centric economic development. On the other hand, rural areas are facing developmental dilemma. Development of village tourism is vital in bridging the gap between urban and rural areas. In India, about 70% population lives in its 7 million villages. Village tourism provides base for employment augmentation and income generation. It also leads to enhance infrastructural facilities such as transportation, accommodation and institutions. The primary products from the farmlands, dairy farming and small-scale village industries further enhance socio-economy of the rural areas. Conservation of culture, customs, monuments and heritage sites are the other dimensions of village tourism.

Rural environment constitutes above 90% area and 48% of the total population in Mizoram. Further, 86% area is forested, comprising a number of wild life sanctuaries and national parks. Village tourism therefore is the best form of

tourism here. However, as of now, village tourism is practiced at small-level and number of tourists is comparatively less. The people of Mizoram are the nature's lover and they conserve natural environment. In Mizoram, the outsiders cannot acquire/buy land and houses, because of the state's policy. Tourists visit here maximum for two to three days. Tourists' inflow is very less whereas, natural and cultural carrying capacity of tourism is substantially high. For the successful and sustainable development of village tourism, the measures – community support, accessing market and publicity, social and economic support, collaborative projects and external support through development agency and non-governmental organizations are required to be well taken (Nepal 2007).

Although, Mizoram has tremendous potential for tourism, especially for village tourism, as it has spectacular landscape, feasible climate, sparse population, high biodiversity, organic food products, local handicrafts, wilderness, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, panoramic river valleys, waterfalls and beautiful lakes yet, they are not harnessed optimally/sustainably. Infrastructural facilities – transportation, electrification of villages, educational institutions and institutional development in Mizoram are lagging behind. As a result, socio-economic and tourism development could not take shape and the rural areas have been suffering from food insecurity and malnutrition. Development of village tourism is therefore a potential way for the sustainable development of rural areas.

There is almost no work carried out on development of village tourism in Mizoram so far. This study is an original, innovative and a new initiative to village tourism. The overall purpose of the study is to explore the potential and possibility of village tourism in Mizoram, keeping its spectacular landscape, feasible climatic conditions and peaceful society in mind. It examines the major forms of village tourism in Mizoram. It also aims at to develop the villages as tourism destination through analyzing the major livelihoods options, carrying capacity and future prospects of village tourism, so that their tourism

carrying capacity can be harnessed for vital economic development.

## 2. The Study Area

Mizoram, nomenclature as the nightingale of India, the land of highlanders and a land of rolling hills, is remotely located (Sati and Lalrinpuia 2017 a). One of the eight sister states of the Northeastern India and sandwiched between Myanmar in the East and South and Bangladesh in the West, Mizoram is one of the peaceful states of India. Tripura, Assam and Manipur states delimit it from the Northwest, North and Northeast direction, respectively (Figure 1). It has about 537 km long international boundary with tremendous geo-strategic importance. About 97% of the Mizoram's landscape is hilly. The landscape is comprised by structured hills, valley fills, flood plains, highland lakes, waterfalls and dense forest areas. The state has 10 major national parks and wildlife sanctuaries and it is one amongst the world's mega biodiversity hotspot. It has a trans-boundary river basin named Kaladan. The landscape is spectacular and climate is very feasible. Average temperature of the state is about 23°C and average rainfall is 2400 mm. Environmental sustainability index is above 95%, which is suitable for healthy life. Total area of Mizoram is 21,087 km<sup>2</sup> of which, forest area is about 86% (2017), which is evergreen – tropical, subtropical and temperate. Bamboo grows largely upto 500 m (Sati and Lalrinpuia 2017 b).

Mizoram has eight districts and 16 rural development blocks. Total number of villages is 853 with total 525,435 populations (48% of the total population). The rural and urban settlements are mainly located sparsely on the hill tops. Total population of the state is 1.09 million with 52 people living/km<sup>2</sup>. Out of the total population of the state, about 0.29 million populations live in Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram. In other towns, about 0.25 million populations reside and as a result, about 52% population of Mizoram is urban. Mizoram obtains the second rank in literacy in India after Kerala with 92% literacy rate. More than 50% workforce is engaged in agriculture and livestock farming however, area sown is only 5.5% (Sati 2015). Of which, above 54% area sown

is under shifting cultivation. Economic viability of agricultural crops is quite less and the people living in rural areas are poor and many of them (52%) are living under poverty line.

Mizoram is one of the most peaceful states of India, where peace prevails everywhere. It has numerous tourists' destinations. Among them, the main destinations are Reiek heritage village, Rock Park and Dampa Tiger Reserve (Mamit district), Sialsuk village, Hmuifang village and Temdil<sup>1</sup> (Aizawl district), Vantawng waterfall, Thenzawl town and Biate village (Serchhip district), Palakdil (Saiha district), Khawnglung wildlife sanctuary (Lunglei district), Phawngpui peak (Blue Mountain, Lawngtlai district) and Chawngtlai historical village (Champhai district). In addition, Black Man

Mountain lies in Aizawl district. Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram, is known as the city of Churches and a popular tourists' destination. Villages are located in the serene environment, mainly on the top of the hills, surrounded by dense forests. Small to big patches of *Jhumlands* can be seen here and there, which make the landscape panoramic. All these natural attributes promote village/wilderness tourism in Mizoram.

### 3. Data Collection and Survey Method

A participatory observation/case study approach was employed to conduct this study. Data were gathered from the mixed set of sources – primary and secondary. On tourists' flow and accommodation, data was gathered from the 'Tourism Survey of India Report for Mizoram State' (2018). Further, data on age group of tourists, their education and occupation, source area, purpose of visit, duration and places of stay, income level and gender ratio of tourists and mode of transportation was gathered between March 2017 to February 2018 from the same source. Data on both domestic and foreign tourists' flow was gathered. These data were in number and monthly bases, which the author transformed into percentile, averaged them and shown through graphic and tabular form. Secondly, the author conducted a case study of village Sialsuk in the month of October 12-15, 2018 and surveyed 240 households (48% of the total households). A structured questionnaire was constructed and questions were framed on the major sources of livelihoods, socio-economic status of the people and the role of village tourism in enhancing livelihoods. Interview of the heads of surveyed households was conducted to understand their perception about the development of village tourism in Mizoram. Average age of the interviewees was 42 years and all of them were literate. Participatory approach was employed through rapid visits of the study village in different times to find out possibility of development of village tourism. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical method and presented them through diagrams and models. Natural, social and economic carrying capacity of

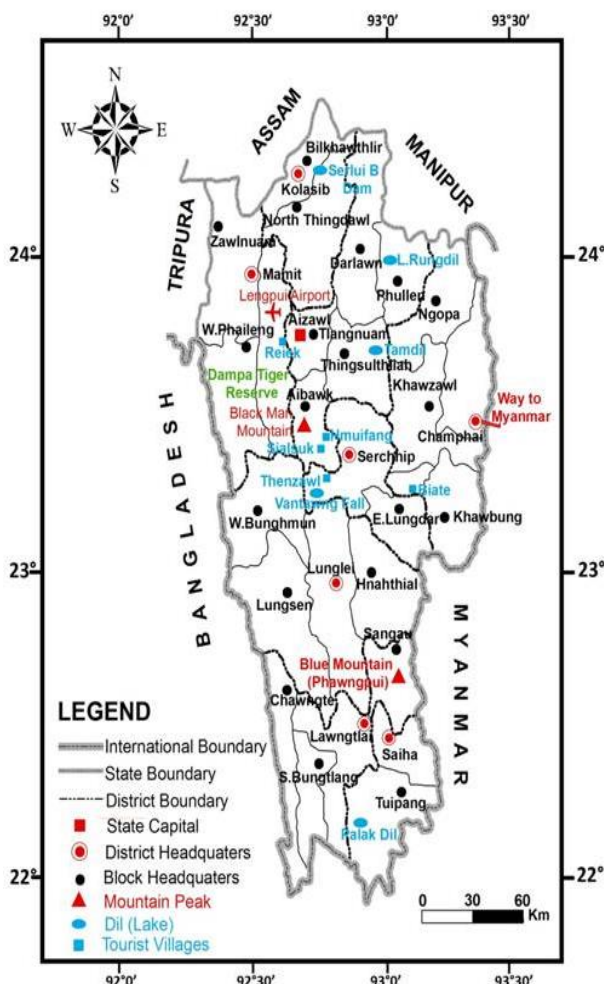


Figure 1: Location map of major tourists' destinations in Mizoram, Source: by author

<sup>1</sup> Dil is nomenclature of lake

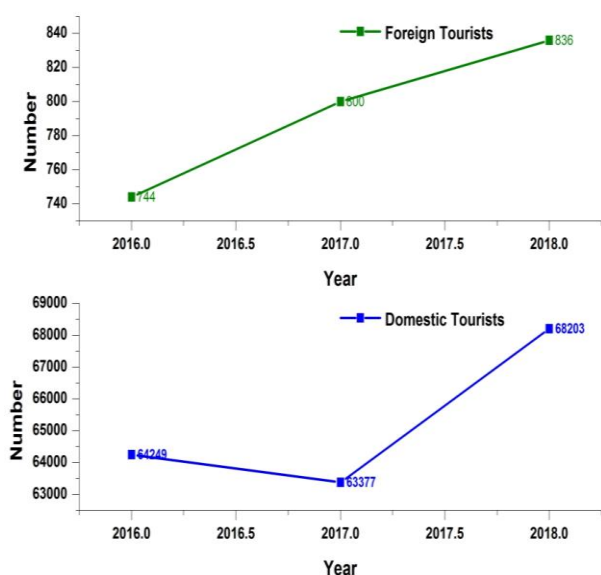
tourism in village Sialsuk was analyzed and presented. The author identified the potential forms of tourism – farm, leisure, health and peace – that can be developed as the village tourism in Mizoram. Further, the author proposed the development of a tourists' circuit of three villages.

#### 4. Results

The result section has been divided into two parts. The first part is related to data, which has been collected from the annual tourism report of Mizoram, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India 2018. It shows annual flow of tourists (foreign and domestic) and accommodation facilities. Further, personal details of tourists such as age, employment, income, places of source, mode of transportation, duration and places of stay and purpose of tourism are described. In the second part, case study of Sailsuk village, which is one of the tourism hotspots in Mizoram, was carried out.

##### a) Tourists' Inflow and Accommodation Facilities

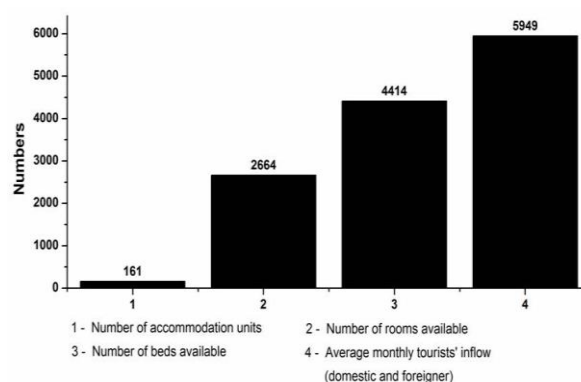
Tourists' inflow is quite low in Mizoram in comparison to the other mountainous states and the mainland of India. Figure 2 shows annual tourists' inflow in Mizoram from 2016 to 2018. Domestic tourists' inflow was 64,249 in 2016 which decreased to 63,377 in 2017. Meanwhile,



**Figure 2:** Tourists' inflow in Mizoram from 2016 to 2018  
**Source:** Tourism Survey of India Report for Mizoram State,

little increase 68,203 (7.6%) in tourists' inflow was observed in 2018 (Total tourists 68,203). In terms of foreign tourists, it is consistently increasing, although tourists' inflow is comparatively low. In 2016, total number of foreign tourists was 744, which increased to 836 in 2018 with 12.4% increase.

Accommodation facilities are available in the form of star hotels, which are quite few in number, non-star hotels, government guest houses, friends and relatives houses and others including Dharamshalas (society's common staying area) and accommodation provided by Young Mizo Association (YMA). A number of domestic tourists stay in non-star hotels whereas foreign tourists stay mainly in the star hotels. Data on accommodation and average monthly tourists' inflow (March 2017-February 2018) was gathered and compared. Total number of accommodation units was 161 with 2,664 rooms and 4,414 beds. In the meantime, tourists' inflow (domestic and foreign) was 5,949. It shows that tourists' inflow is higher than available accommodation (Figure 3). Further, maximum accommodations are available in Aizawl city followed by Lunglei town. Both are the main urban centres in Mizoram, where about 40% of the population of Mizoram lives. Further, substantial number of tourists visit in these towns.



**Figure 3:** Accommodation facilities and average monthly tourists' inflow

**Source:** Tourism Survey of India Report for Mizoram State, 2018

**Table 1:** Age, education and occupation of tourists  
Age distribution of tourists

Age group (Years)	Domestic visitors	Foreign visitors
15-24	21.15	13.2
25-34	36.1	42.8
35-44	31.75	30.25
45-54	6.6	8.3
+55	4.4	5.45

Education level of tourists		
Illiterate	0.5	0
Primary	1.8	0
Secondary	47.1	19.2
Higher	50.6	80.8

Occupation of tourists		
Business	13.2	18.7
Service	51.4	67.8
Students/researcher	6.4	7.1
Agriculture	10.7	0
Others	18.3	6.4

**Source:** Tourism Survey of India Report for Mizoram State, 2018; analyzed by author

*b) Age, Education and Occupation of Tourists*

Table 1 shows age, education and occupation of tourists. The highest number of tourists visit Mizoram is from age group between 25 and 34 (36.1% domestic and 42.8% foreign). It is followed by age group between 35 and 44 and between 15 and 24. The lowest number of tourists visit Mizoram is from >55 years age followed by age group 45-54 years in both domestic and foreign tourists. Education level of tourists varies from illiterate (only 0.5%) to highly educated (50.6%) among domestic tourists, seconded by secondary educated people (47.1%). Whereas, education level of foreign tourists varies from graduate (80.8%) to secondary educated (19.2%). It means that education level of tourists, visiting Mizoram is high. In terms of occupation of tourists, the highest is from service sector with 67.8% foreigners and 51.4% domestic. It is followed by tourists, who are engaged in business (18.7% foreigners and 13.2% domestic). Among domestic tourists, agricultural workers stand for

third position whereas among foreigners, students/researchers obtain third place.

*c) Tourism Purpose, Duration and Place of Stay*

A descriptive statistics was used to describe tourism purpose, duration and place of stay (Table 2). There are total 10 variables, which are related to duration of stay overnight and for same day, tourisms for leisure and non-leisure and place of stay – star hotels, non-star hotels, stay in friends/relative house and other places such as government guest houses and accommodation provided by YMA. This analysis has been carried out for both domestic and foreign tourists. Tourists, visit for leisure and overnight are outnumbered (mean value is 4807), while for non-leisure, it is less. Further, leisure tourism for same day is higher (2125 mean) than non-leisure tourism (685 mean). Foreign tourists only visit for overnight and for leisure. Hotels are the main place for accommodation for domestic (5448 mean value) and foreign tourists. Tourists stay with friends and relatives and other places are less in number.

In Table 3, percentile of domestic and foreign tourists in terms of purpose of visit, duration and place of visit and accommodation facilities are given. The highest number of tourists visit Mizoram for holidays, leisure and recreation which is 60.2% among domestic and 72.7% among foreign tourists. For education/training, about 11.4% domestic tourists visit while, 8.8% foreign tourists visit for business. Domestic tourists also visit for pilgrimage/religious activities (7.8%), social activities (6.9%) and for health and medical facilities (4.9%). About 6.1% foreigners visit Mizoram for health and medical.

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics of variables related to stay of tourists for leisure and non-leisure and the place of stay

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overnight stay for leisure (domestic)	4100	5959	57688	4807	564.1
Overnight stay for non-leisure (domestic)	875	1323	12804	1067	150.2
Same day stay for leisure (domestic)	1579	2579	25502	2125	258
Same day stay for non-leisure (domestic)	517	982	8221	685	145
Overnight stay for leisure (foreign)	0	133	896	74.7	33.5
Stay in hotel (domestic)	4558	6332	65385	5448	583.6
Stay with friends and relatives (domestic)	179	573	3437	286.4	102.9
Stay other (domestic)	72	226	1670	139.2	47.4
Stay in hotel (foreign)	0	133	879	73.3	32.7
Stay with friends and relatives (foreign)	0	7	17	1.42	2.39

**Source:** Tourism Survey of India Report for Mizoram State, 2018; analyzed by author

**Table 3:** Tourism purpose, duration and place, and modes of transportation

<b>Purpose of visit</b>		
Variables	Domestic	Foreign
Business	3.1	8.8
Holidays, leisure and recreation	60.2	72.7
Social activity	6.9	0
Pilgrimage/religious activity	7.8	3.4
Education/training	11.4	4.8
Health and medical	4.9	6.1
Other	5.7	4.2
<b>Duration of visit</b>		
One night	62.7	39.8
Two nights	28.5	57.8
Three or more nights	8.8	2.4
<b>Places of stay</b>		
Star hotel	15.2	63.4
Non-star hotel	43.8	31.5
Government guest houses	14.5	0
Friends and relatives	8.9	5.1
Others	17.6	0
<b>Mode of transportation of visitors</b>		
Bus	33.1	11.7
Air	21.5	32.5
Personal vehicle	9.8	0
Taxi	35.6	55.8

**Source:** Tourism Survey of India Report for Mizoram State, 2018; analyzed by author

About 62.7% domestic tourists (highest) stay for a night, followed by 28% tourists for two nights, only 8.8% stay for three and more nights. In terms of foreign tourists, 57.8% stay for two nights, 39.8% for a night and only 2.4% stay for two or more nights. Maximum foreign tourists stay in star hotels (63.4%), followed by non-star hotels (31.5%). Only 5.1% foreign tourists stay with friends and relatives. Among domestic tourists, maximum (43.8%) stay in non-star hotels, followed by star hotels (15.2%) and government guest houses (14.5%). With friends and relatives, only 8.9% domestic tourists stay. Other accommodation facilities include Dharmshalas, beds and breakfast and YMA provided accommodation.

Mizoram state has two types of transportation facilities that are by air and by road. About 35.65% domestic tourists travelled by taxi, followed by bus (33.1%) and by Air (21.5%). Tourists come by personal vehicle are only 9.8%. Among foreign tourists, 55.8 travelled by taxi, followed by air (32.5%) and by bus (11.7%).

Data on source of tourists, both domestic and foreign, shows that among domestic tourists, about 24% tourists are from Mizoram itself. Tourists from the states of Northeast India represent about 41% and from other states, tourists' percentage is 35%. Foreign tourists

include Americans (22.2%), Britishers (15.1%), Australians (7.9%) and Canadians (6.7%). Tourists from other European countries are only 2.9%. From Asian countries, it is 6.8 from Bangladesh, followed by Nepal (6.4%). Tourists from other countries are very less in proportion.

The highest number of domestic tourists (32.5%) belongs to annual income level between Rs. 200,000 and Rs. 500,000, followed by 30.4% from the income group between Rs. 100,000 to Rs. 200,000. About 19.1% tourists have above Rs. 500,000 income whereas tourists, who have income level below Rs. 100,000 are 18%. Among foreign tourists, the highest number (62.5%) belongs to USD 60,000-80,000, followed by 26% tourists have below 60,000 USD. About 11.5% tourists have above 80,000 USD annual incomes. In gender distribution of visitors, male visitors are outnumbered than female visitors in both domestic and foreign visitors, which are 69.3% and 71.4%, respectively.

#### *d) A Case Study of Sialsuk Village*

Lies in a serene environment and spectacular landscape, village Sialsuk is one amongst the popular tourist destinations of Mizoram. The most developed village of Mizoram, the state government has adopted it and has given the status of model village. Leipan Zau Jhumland, located

about 5 km from the village in the down slope, is one amongst the biggest Jhumlands in Mizoram. It has total 24 acre arable land and it is a place of touristic interest. The village spreads between 23°23'47'' N latitude and 92°45'12'' E longitude with average altitude of 1,254 m and area of about 4,000 acres. It connects the two major cities of Mizoram – Aizawl in the north (63 km) and Lunglei in the south (80 km). Climate is feasible with 18° C average temperature in summer and 6° C average temperature in winter. Average annual rainfall is 2400 mm. Rain occurs during the eight months of summer and rainy seasons, whereas, the four months (November, December, January and February) of winter are sunny and dry. Total 500 households reside in the village with 2,000 populations (average family size is 4 persons). The village has 10 tribal groups, dominating by Chakchuak tribe. Literacy rate is high (above 95%) and the level of education is substantial. Total nine educational institutions are located in the village. About 20 households (5%) are living below poverty line. Per capita income is comparatively higher than the national average, which is about 96,000/year.

Data was collected on occupational structure of the households. Out of total households, 60 (12%) households are involved in government service, 20 (4%) households are practicing permanent farming, 30 (6%) are practicing wet rice cultivation, 60 (12%) are practicing shifting cultivation, 10 (2%) households are involved in oil palm plantation, 20 (4%) households are involved in livestock farming, 12 (2.4%) households have hotel business, 20 (4%) households are running shops and 14 (2.8%) households have driving as the main occupation.

Farmers practice organic farming. The major fruits grow in the village are lemon, banana, orange and papaya. Among vegetables, egg plants, beans, cucumber, bottle guard, pumpkin, tomato, capsicum, onion, chili, zinger and lady fingers are the major crops. In food grains and pulses, the major crops are paddy (the staple crop with high yield) and soya beans. Livestock is one amongst the major livelihood options and an allied economic activity. The major livestock are cow

(40), hens (1000) and pig (2000). Milk is sold within the village while chicken and pork is supplied to the hotels and restaurants.

A question on ‘what is the best option to enhance livelihood and economy of the village’ was asked of. About 92% responded that tourism development is the best way for enhancing rural livelihoods, because, the village has substantial potential for tourism development.

#### *e) Tourism Carrying Capacity in Sialsuk Village*

The author assessed tourism carrying capacity – physical, socio-economic and institutional – of village Sialsuk. Physical carrying capacity has three components – landscape, climate and environment – in the village and all the three components have huge potential for tourism development (Table 4). Landscape is spectacular, covered with lush evergreen forests – temperate and sub-tropical. The Jhumlands, in surroundings of the village further enhance landscapes’ beauty. Climate is very feasible for the whole year. The entire Mizoram has pollution free climate and the environmental sustainability index is high, which is above 95%. In socio-economic carrying capacity, the major indicators are culture, accommodation and transportation. The village has rich culture and customs. Welcoming guest is the tradition. In terms of accommodation, the village has substantial facility to accommodate about 100 tourists/day. In the mean time, tourists’ inflow was average 20 persons/day. Road transport is available from Aizawl, which is well connected by airways from Delhi, Guwahati and Kolkata. Number of buses and taxis are available from Lunglei and Aizawl cities. However, institutional facilities, on account of tourism development, are minimal. Human development index (0.71) of the village is higher in comparison to the state average. There are three full furnished guest houses.



**Table 4:** Tourism carrying capacity in Sialsuk village

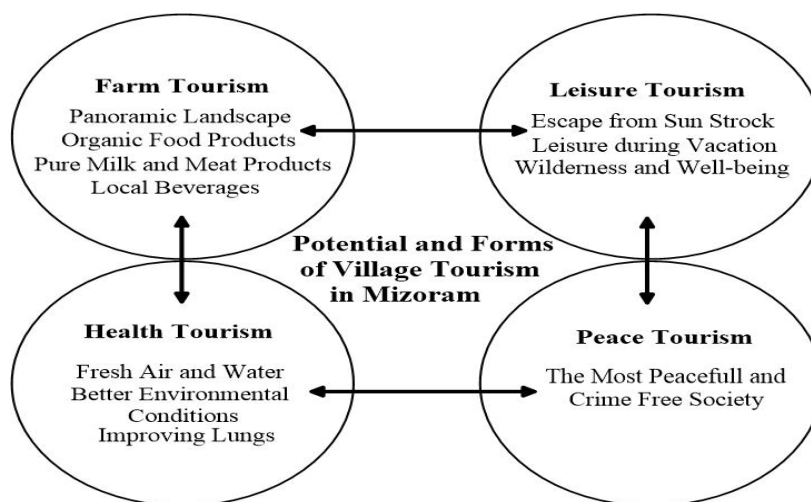
[A] Physical carrying capacity	Potential
Landscape	Sialsuk village has spectacular landscape in the forms of beautiful hills, pasturelands and evergreen forests – temperate in the upper reaches and sub-tropical in the lower reaches.
Climate	Temperate climate – average annual temperature is 18°. Substantial rainfall and cloudy weather keep temperature cool.
Environment	Mizoram has pollution free environment. ESI is above 80%. Sialsuk village has above 95% ESI. The good quality of environment cures asthma and lungs related diseases.
[B] Socio-economic carrying capacity	Potential
Culture	Culture is rich and people celebrate a number of fairs and festivals in a year.
Accommodation and Transportation	Accommodation facilities are enough to accommodate above 100 tourists/day. Meanwhile, average tourists’ flow is only 20/day. The village has three guest houses and 12 hotels. Hmui-Fang is located 15 km in distance from Sialsuk village towards Aizawl, having a number of accommodation facilities. The village is connected by a road, connecting Aizawl and Lunglei towns.
[C] Institutional carrying capacity	Potential
Institutional support	Institutional support is insufficient in terms of promoting tourism. The inner line permit is the major hurdle on the way of tourism development. The village does not have any tourism extension department.
Human Resource Development	Literacy rate is above 95% along with high educational level.

Source: by author

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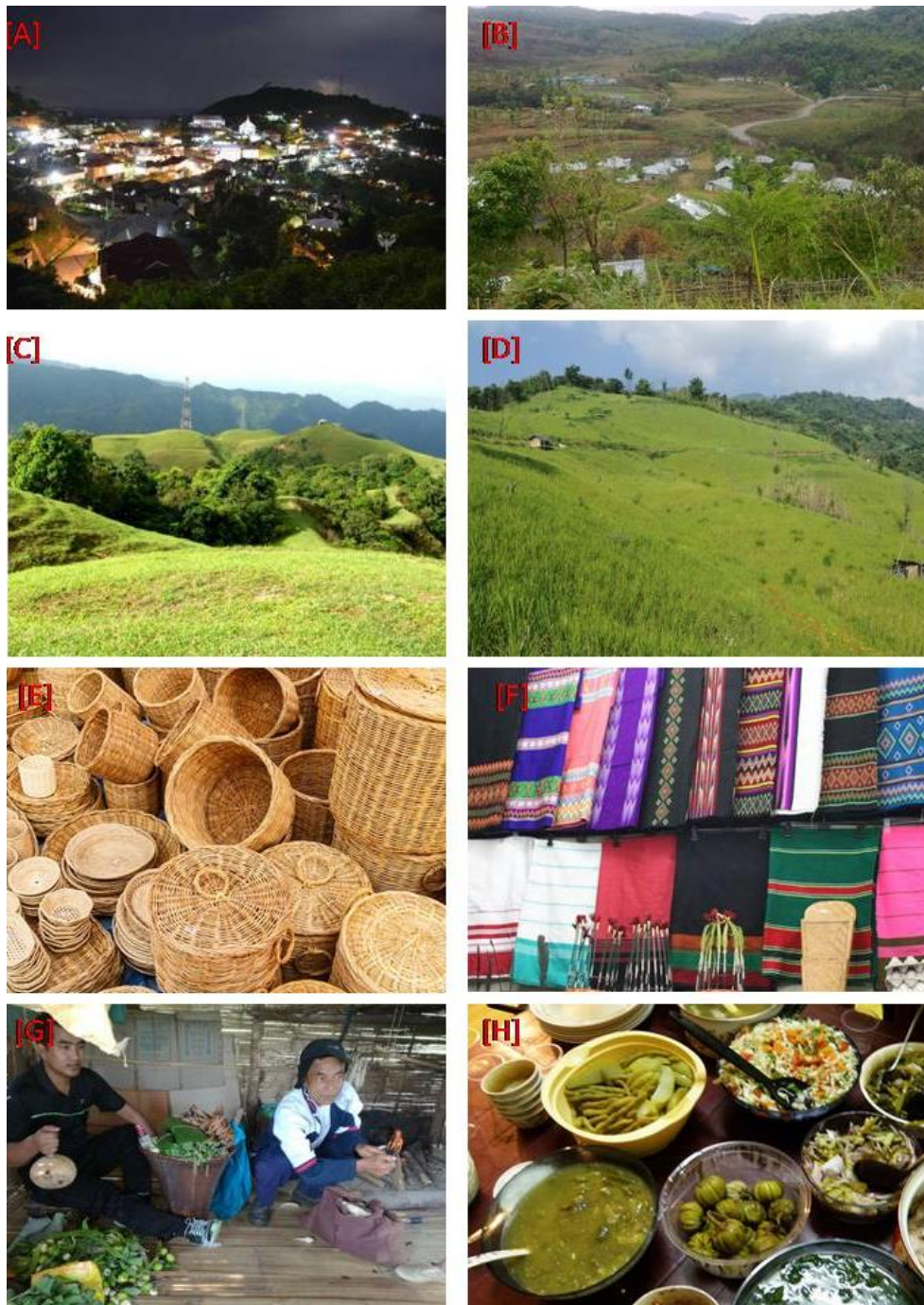
Village tourism has high potential and numerous forms in Mizoram. Among them, farm tourism, leisure/wilderness tourism, health tourism and peace tourism dominate (Figure 4). Farms – Jhumlands and WRC fields have the panoramic landscape. While, Jhumlands are found on the hilly slopes, WRC is practiced along the valley fills and flood plains and the food products are organic. Mizoram is one amongst the states of India, where agro-diversity is high and where all the food/fruits/vegetables crops/cultivars grow as organic farming. Further, milk and milk made products are pure and fresh. Villages of Mizoram produce local beverages and varieties of food of high quality, which are consumed domestically.

These organic products can attract tourists. High quality of bamboo and woolen handicrafts are made in the villages (Figure 5). The villages of Mizoram are located on the hill tops, surrounded by dense vegetal cover with rich biodiversity, which provide conducive and stress free environment for leisure/wilderness tourism. It has serene environment, which can be developed as leisure tourism destination. Mizoram state has 86% evergreen forest area, sparse population and pollution free air and water for better health and for stretching lungs. All these healthy components of environment provide opportunities to health tourism. In the last but not the least, Mizoram is the most peaceful state in India, where crime rate is minimum, is the best place for peace tourism.



**Figure 4:** Potentials and forms of village tourism in Mizoram

Source: by author



**Figure 5:** [A] Panoramic view of Sialsuk Village at night [B] Thenzawl town on the way to Lunglei [C] Spectacular landscape just above the Sialsuk Village [D] One amongst the largest Jhumlands (paddy field) in village Sialsuk [E] Furnished bamboo products [F] Woolen crafts ready for sale [G] Jhumias in bamboo hut, roasting maize and organic vegetables are grown in the Jhumland [H] Varieties of traditional dishes; Photos: by author

## 5. Discussion

Village tourism has substantial potential/prospect in the economic development of Mizoram, because of the feasible climate, spectacular landforms, peaceful society and rich biodiversity, however, this study revealed that tourists' inflow is not substantial. Although, there was a little increase in tourists' inflow between 2016 and 2018 (both domestic and foreign tourists) yet, this proportion is very less for sustainable tourism development. The author has observed various drivers that have been adversely affecting tourists' inflow. Among them, inner line permit and lack in business activities/avenues are prominent. Further, Mizoram has peculiar society - different food habits and culture and customs - which generally does not permit anyone to easily mixed-up and influence them. This is also a reason that people living in rural environment are very poor, many of them living below poverty line. Imposing inner line permit on the visitors are also due to geo-strategic location of the state, as the state is delimited by Myanmar and Bangladesh from three directions. In addition, accommodation facilities are scanty; even it is less for the limited number of tourists. The data shows that Mizoram lacks about 34.8% shortage in accommodation facilities. The star hotels are only located in Aizawl city.

About 70% of the total tourists visits Mizoram are young. Their education level is high and their occupation is service sector. The study revealed that although, maximum number of tourists visit Mizoram for leisure, holidays and recreation, yet, their duration of stay is overnight and they mainly visit Aizawl city and Lunglei town and stay mainly in non-star hotels. Very few tourists stay in the villages. In the meantime, the villages have more potential in terms of leisure, farm, health and peace tourism along with substantial accommodation facilities. One of the reasons of minimum stay is the inner line permit as under the provision of it, longer stay is prohibited and payment to stay for longer period is high. Because, the maximum star hotels are located in Aizawl city with their limited number and high price, either the foreign tourists or the domestic tourists, who work in the higher position in the government sector stay in these hotels. Transportation facilities

in Mizoram are lagging behind. Frequency of flights is less and further, maximum tourists visit Mizoram are from the northeastern states (called eight sisters' state) thus, they prefer to travel either by taxi and bus, even foreign tourists also prefer taxi to travel. The other finding is that number of male tourists is higher than female tourists.

The villages of Mizoram have serene environment and healthy climatic conditions. They are sparsely located and are much closed to the nature with full of basic amenities. Mizoram is only the state of the Republic of India, where 100% toilet facilities are available in rural areas. Biata village of Champhai district has received the best award in cleanliness in India and the village has 100% literacy rate. These drivers manifest for the sustainable village tourism in Mizoram. Further, total peace prevails in the entire Mizoram, which further supports tourism development. Meanwhile, practicing agriculture is the main occupation of the people in rural areas, which output is low and thus, food insecurity and malnutrition is common phenomenon. Village tourism, on the other hand, can enhance livelihood and generate substantial income and economy of the rural people. The local organic products and traditional foods and beverages can also pave a way for the development of village tourism. Fruits and vegetables processing centres can be established at village level to process the organic products and serve them to tourists during their state in the villages. The case study of the Sialsuk village depicts that the village tourism has high potential in economic development. Unlike accommodation facilities in Mizoram, Sialsuk village has substantial facilities to accommodate tourists, although, tourists' inflow is very less. It has been observed from the data that the practice of home stay in the rural areas of Mizoram has not been started so far while, its potential is enormous that can develop sustainable village tourism. People of the village Sialsuk also perceived that village tourism may be the major livelihood options.

Development of tourist circuits may be one amongst the motives of village tourism in Mizoram. Hmuifang village is located in the vicinity of Sailsuk village about 15 km towards

Aizawl, which has the similar geography, climate, landscape and ethnic groups, as it is of Sailsuk village. The other village, lies in the vicinity of Aizawl, is Reiek in Mamit district. Reiek has been developed as the traditional village of Mizoram. These three villages can be developed as a circuit for village tourism with Aizawl city as the centre place. Similarly, there are several other villages in the eastern and southern parts, which have capacity to be developed as tourists circuits. Package tour for a week and so of Aizawl city and Sailsuk, Hmuifang and Reiek village tourists' circuit can be arranged that will help in developing remote villages and will enhance economy and income of the local people.

The author observed that the physical carrying capacity of the village tourism in Mizoram is enormous. Landscape, climate and environment are the major components of physical carrying capacity, which are in suitable conditions. Climate of Mizoram is healthy. It is said that one who spends one week in Mizoram, increases one week life span and consequently stretches his lungs. Tribal culture is very rich and people perform folklore and folkdance at every auspicious occasion. These natural and cultural carrying capacities can manifest village tourism development. On the other hand, infrastructural and institutional facilities are lagging behind, which are needed to be developed. People's perception on development of village tourism is optimistic. As of now, agriculture is the main occupation of people whereas output from it is quite low. Development of village tourism is therefore inevitable for sustainable rural development.

Village tourism has emerged as the major socio-economic activities and a major source of income in many countries. Several countries of northeast Asia have attained sustainability in village tourism. For instance, in China, rural development initiatives were led by the government and thus, village tourism has become economically sustainable (Zhou 2009; Wang et al. 2012). Further, village tourism has largely developed in Vietnam by the initiative of both the government and communities (Pham Hau and Vu Anh Tuan

2017). The author has visited several traditional villages of Maoxian county of China and a village named Chua Khmer of Vietnam and observed that the respective governments have preserved the traditional culture and custom of villages for tourism development. As a result, these rural areas have become the major attraction for tourists. Mizoram state has about 16 major ethnic groups, who have different culture and customs. Their traditional culture and custom can be preserved for tourism development. Further, the abundant natural resources of the villages can be harnessed for sustainable village tourism. Government support, in development of accommodation and transportation facilities in rural areas, where potential of village tourism is substantially high, is noteworthy. The state of Mizoram needs substantial infrastructural facilities in the form of accommodation, transportation and institutional.

## 6. Conclusion

It has been observed from the study that Mizoram state has very high potential for development of village tourism. Here, panoramic landscape, lush green forests, suitable climatic conditions and rich culture promote village tourism. In the meantime, economic development and infrastructural facilities are lagging behind in the villages. Rich climate and spectacular landscape can be harnessed for village tourism through framing and implementing policies. The inner line permit largely impedes the tourists' inflow. It is highly inevitable to abolish inner line permit system so that tourists can freely move and can stay for a longer time for peace, leisure and health tourism. Roads can be constructed to connect the villages, which are remotely located and inaccessible. All ranges of hotels, motels and guest houses can be constructed in all the tourists' destinations. Besides, home stay in the rural areas can be provided to tourists. Tourists' potential in Mizoram should be publicized and the major tourists' destinations of Mizoram should be developed. For that offices should be opened in the major airports and railway stations at the regional and national level. The state government role in the sustainable development of village tourism – farm tourism, leisure tourism, health

tourism and peace tourism – is inevitable. Further, the State Tourist Department can impart training to the tour guides in terms of to disseminate the information about local culture, customs, fairs and festivals. The major tourist destinations such as lakes, river valleys, waterfalls, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries should be well connected by roads and should be developed sustainably. Organic food products and local made beverages can be used for promoting village tourism. Similarly, local handmade crafts of bamboo and woolen can be made available for tourists. Folk culture can be promoted through performing folklore and folkdances at village level. The three villages – Sialsuk, Hmui-fang (Aizawl district) and Reiek (Mamit district) can be developed as a village tourists' circuit. A sustainable approach for the development of the village tourism in Mizoram will generate income, augment employment and overall development of the rural areas and the state as a whole.

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