

The Promotion of Cultural Tourism in Lower Subansiri District of Arunachal Pradesh: An Evolution of Accommodation Facilities and Tourists Arrivals

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Abstract

The Lower Subansiri district is one of the oldest district of Arunachal Pradesh with an area of about 3460 sq.km and about 83,030 population (2011) spreading in 536 villages. Geographically, it is an undulating terrain, altitude varies from place to place. The greater part of it falls within the higher mountain zone consisting of tangled peaks and enthralling valleys. The district is lying approximately between 26°55' to 28°21' N of latitudes, and 92° 40' to 94° 21' E of longitudes. The name of the district derived from the Subansiri River, a tributary of mighty Brahmaputra. The district is rich in natural as well as cultural aspects. Nature has nurtured and groomed the district in the form of superb scenery of majestic mountainous landscape, inter-montane plateau and wonderful sights of colourful tribal cultures which attracts the tourists from within and outside the country. Thus, there lie possibilities for promoting cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is one dimension of such development which can provide benefit to local people both financially and socially. But certain regulatory constraints, lack of basic infrastructure as well as trained manpower hindering the development of the tourism in the district. Through this paper an attempt has been made to examine the trend of tourist flow and changes in accommodation facilities as a result of promoting cultural tourism based on field investigation and documentation.

Key words: *Lower Subansiri, Cultural tourism, Accommodation facilities, Tourist flow*

Introduction:

Tourism is a social activity which led the development of economic condition of a particular area. Tourism as a form of education is a part of civilised existence. Tourism is the sum of the phenomena and relationship arising from the travel and stay of non-residents in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity (Ghosh, 2005). So, tourism includes the activities of persons travelling to and staying in a place outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. The contemporary world considered tourism as an emerging and highly organized industry. In some countries, tourism is a prominent sector of national economy which ranks much higher and earns much more foreign exchange than many of the historically dominating industries. It thus exerts a strong impact on the socio-cultural, economic and natural systems of the concerned areas (Bhattacharya, 2011).

The Lower Subansiri district inhabited by Apatani and Nyishi tribes have been able to preserve much of their cultural heritage as embodied in certain rituals, uniqueness in paddy cum fish culture practices, tattooing systems, scenic or aesthetic beauty of land, rich flora and fauna, pleasant climatic conditions and hospitable nature of people.

The district is rich in cultural as well as natural aspects. However, lack of sufficient infrastructure facilities like the network of transport and communications and other tourism amenities and pathetic conditions of the existing facilities make this wonderful land less accessible to the tourists. The unique geographical characteristics of the area can make it favourite destinations for tourists, if all the basic requirements are established. Nature has nurtured and groomed the district with superb scenery of majestic mountainous landscape and intermount plateaus. Hence, by virtue of its diversified physical and cultural features, the valley is quite in line with the national/state policy which is very ideal for tourism promotion.

Objectives of the study:

The main objective of this paper is to analyse the flow of tourists and assess the accommodation facilities in Lower Subansiri district.

Database and methodology:

The present study is based on secondary data of tourist flow in Lower Subansiri district availed from the District Tourism Office, Ziro. The primary data were collected from various accommodation facilities like hotels, resorts, guest house, circuit house and home stay in the district to detect the change in the accommodation facilities, correlating it with the tourist flow. All the data have been processed and analysed to identify the trend of tourist flow and evolution of accommodation capacities in the promotion of cultural tourism of the district. And finally analyse the data to identify the constraints and to generate the suggestive measures.

Results and discussion:

The Lower Subansiri district is as known for Apatani and Nyishi community, who are impregnated with colourful culture of their own in the forms of folksongs, hymns and dances. In spite of strong influences by the modern civilization, the pristine beauty, culture and traditions are still maintained in the district. The festive season of the Apatanis start in January when 'Murung', the festival of prosperity is celebrated. It is followed by 'Myoko' in the month of March which is festival of well-being friendship. In July, "Dree", the agriculture festival of the Apatanis is celebrated. It is also the blooming time for the plants as the winter chill give way to pleasant summer, for the valley. The Apatanis rejoice the day with folk dances; depicting the age old traditional culture and competitions in the field of culture, sport and literature.

Apatani villages are distinct and typical in many respects which make them worth visiting. The Lapang in every village where the *Bulyangs* (village council) gather to discuss all important issues of the village is one of the many unique traditions. The typical Apatani bamboo houses, *Babos* and 'Lapang' are few other traditional structures which attract the cultural tourists a lot. Another culture practiced by the community is the paddy cum fish culture of Apatanis. The rearing of fishes in the paddy fields has drawn the attention of many scholars and researchers. The one of the tourist attraction of the district is the world's largest 'Shiva linga' measuring 25feet high and 22 feet in circumference, this divine and crave of nature bring solace to the mind of tourists.

The best time to know the rich culture of the Nyishis is in February, when they celebrates the 'Nyikum Yullo' a agriculture based festival where various deities are invoked and offered sacrifices to bless the people with bumper crops and prosperity. Besides it also offers an opportunity to showcase their talent in every field-cultural, art, sport, literature etc.

Tourist arrivals in Ziro Valley:

As the district is rich in natural as well as cultural aspects. The tribal cultures, wildlife and scenic beauty of natural landscape attracts tourists from within and outside the country.

Table1: Tourist Arrivals in Ziro Valley

Year	Foreign		Domestic		Total Tourist Flow
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	
2009	485	48.0	522	52.0	1007
2010	600	26.0	1735	74.0	2335
2011	1217	22.0	4284	78.0	5501
2012	579	6.0	9847	94.0	10426
2013	258	3.0	9284	97.0	9542
2014	267	2.0	10960	98.0	11227
2015	603	5.1	11150	94.9	11753
2016	551	4.6	11383	95.4	11934

Source: Department of Tourism, Lower Subansiri District, Ziro

Development of tourism activities in the district valley is recent one, compared to the some other tourist destinations of the state. The slow progress of this area regarding tourism is the result of geographical location and the poor development of tourism infrastructure particularly in the district and in generally in the state as a whole. However, the latest figure of tourist arrivals especially foreign tourist are quite unimpressive.

The data on tourist arrivals in the district was collected from the Department of tourism, Lower Subansiri district. Table shows that during the period of 2009 – 2016, trend of foreign tourist arrivals in the district has fluctuated, which discourage the tourism in future. In the year 2009, the total foreign tourist arrivals in the district were 485 (48%) and 522 (52%) domestic tourist from the total of 1007 tourist arrivals. In the year 2010 and 2011 number of foreign tourists increased 600 (26%) and 1217 (22%) and domestic 1735 (74%) and 4284 (78%) respectively, but after 2011, the visitations of foreign tourists started declining which was 579 (6%) in 2012 and 258 (3%) in 2013, and 267 (2%) in 2014 respectively. After which it shows little increase in tendency of flow of foreign tourist in the year 2015 with 603 (5.1%) and 551 (4.6%) in the year 2016. Though foreign tourists is not encouraging from the view point of tourist arrivals, it is fortunate in having a comparatively visit of good numbers of domestic tourist. As domestic tourism is an important segment of tourism development in any area. It was observed that the district has been receiving increasing number of domestic tourist arrivals in recent years. During the period of 2009-2016 the domestic tourist arrivals in the area grew from 52% to 95%. Although, due to the increasing share of foreign tourist, the percentage of domestic tourist was fluctuated, but in absolute number the domestic tourist flow enhanced. It is important to note that domestic tourist constitute a very good percentage of the total tourist arrivals in the district.

Accommodation facilities in Lower Subansiri district:

As far as tourism is concerned, the people of the district have learned the concept of home stays as most of the foreign tourist preferred it. The tourist gets a chance to have a closer view of rich Apatani and Nyishi culture and experience tribal lifestyle in true sense. It helps local youth in getting employment opportunities. Hotels, Lodges, and Tourist Resorts are coming up to cater the need of the tourists.

Table 2: Accommodation facilities in Lower Subansiri district

Year	Hotels/Resorts/Guest House	Govt. Circuit House/Guest House	Home Stay
2009	09	02	01
2010	09	02	01
2011	09	02	03
2012	09	02	05
2013	09	02	07
2014	09	02	07
2015	09	02	18
2016	09	02	24

Source: Survey Data 2009-2016

The data shows the increasing growth of the concept of home stay during 2009 to 2016 as comparison to hotels, tourist resorts and private guest houses. During the survey it is established that accommodation amenities in the existing facilities increase a lot like more number of suites, executive rooms etc. The following table 3 reveals the increase in facilities during the surveyed period.

Table 3: Accommodation Facilities in Lower Subansiri district

Year	No. of Rooms	No. of Beds.
2009	46	84
2010	58	105
2011	113	207
2012	117	215
2013	147	274
2014	155	286
2015	173	358
2016	191	430

Source: Survey Data 2009-2016

The rise of the tourist flow as well as expansion for accommodation facilities results effective promotion of the industry. Besides splendid beauty and warmth hospitality of Apatani and Nyishi people which attracts tourist. The Apatani Cultural Landscape is also one amongst the 55 sites selected from India in the tentative list of World Heritage Site by UNESCO. It captured the attention and imagination of the world and as a result boosts the industry at large. Along with this construction of Advance Landing Ground (ALG) and two-lane Highway will gear up tourist flow in the coming years.

Conclusion:

The people of the district are able to conserve much of their cultural heritage as embodied in certain rituals, various festivals like *Murung, Myoko, & Dree, Nyokum yullo* and uniqueness in paddy cum fish producing culture and welcoming nature of the people have intensified the importance of the district as a potential tourist destination.

Thus, to promote the cultural tourism of the district, it is high time to keep pace with conserving the cultural heritage, natural beauty and enhance the tourism infrastructure in line with the standard accommodation facilities.

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