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The Tourism Inflow in East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh: An Analysis

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Abstract:

The present paper is an attempt to analyze the tourism potentialities of the study area and to depict the true inflow of tourist over the year. Out of 100 samples 50 samples are the tourist both domestic and foreign and rest 50 samples comprise local inhabitants, tour operators and hotel owners. After analyzing the present tourism scenario it may be concluded that despite having huge potentialities, the tourism industry in the district is lacking far behind as compared to the other district in the state. The pitfall is due to various reasons like poor road condition, lack of proper infrastructures, lack of awareness about tourism and its prospect. The Siang River, Daying Ering Wildlife Sanctuary, rich flora and fauna and the presence of intact traditional and cultural richness has been favorites for the tourist. The need of the hour therefore, is to bring awareness among the local people inhabiting and also preserving the rich and potent natural resources for brighter prospect and growth of tourism in the district in particular and state as a whole.

Keywords: Tourist, Natural resources, Inhabitants, Siang River, East Siang, Arunachal Pradesh

1. Introduction

Arunachal Pradesh has a great potential and prospect for tourism which is not yet fully exploited and discovered. The state is a serene land tucked in to North East tip of India in trans-Himalayan region between latitude 26° 30' N and the Longitude 91° 30' E and has an area of 83,743 sq. km. The diverse topography with dramatic changes in altitude makes it one of the unique geographical zones in India. This climatic variation provides a very diverse ecological set up environment with rich wild life. Thus, it is the home to two National parks and seven wildlife sanctuaries. Some of the rare and endangered species are mishmi takin, hoolock gibbon, musk deer, bharal, hisbid hare, flying squirrel and a host of birds from over 500 species. Besides, the state is also well known for its orchid production, and is also rightly considered as "nature's treasure trove" (Kani 2006). Therefore, in presence of this vast scenic mountain splendor in the state ecotourism is a viable source of local income.

East Siang district is covered by ecologically very rich dense forest. The dense forest also provides proper breeding ground for diverse flora and fauna in the district. The mighty Siang River which flows through the district is one of the major tourist destinations in the district. It offers a genuine place for major water sporting events like White river rafting and angling. The district is blessed with many small and large waterfalls; one can witness series of waterfalls while travelling from Renging village till Dite-Dime. The orange orchards cultivated on the terraces of the mighty Siang River add color to the beauty of the landscape. The only Wild Life Sanctuary in the district Daying Ering Wildlife Sanctuary is home to many species of flora and fauna. Moreover, the district is an ideal place for adventure tourism like trekking, hiking, etc. Places like Pasighat, Jengging and Yingkiong are major trekking routes identified by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh. The rich ecosystem also paves way for the health tourism in the district, where tourist or the visitors will enjoy the fresh air and also can have close contact with the nature, which will result into mental peace of the visitors.

The district is inhabited by three major tribes, Adi, Galo and Mishing with rich and unique tradition and custom, festivals, life style, etc. The traditional life style and the custom and belief of the people invite growth of cultural tourism. Besides, the local art and craft like bamboo basket and traditional attire are also major sources of attraction. The district is also famous and well known for its historical and mythological importance. One can find the remains of historical monuments like those associated with the Hindu mythology, War Memorials, etc., scattered over different parts of the district. Altogether the district offers a perfect destination for eco-tourism, wildlife tourism and natural tourism thus, the district possess the rich potentials of becoming one of the major promising tourist hub in the state like Arunachal Pradesh where the tourism and its growth is in a nascent and slow stage. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the flow of tourism in East Siang district in particular and Arunachal Pradesh in general. Moreover, the problems and prospects of the tourism in the district has also discussed in length.

2. Methodology

2.1. Profile of the Study Area

The district is located in between 27° 30' to 29° 42' N latitude and 94° 42' to 95° 35' E longitudes. It is bounded by Upper Siang district in the northern side, Assam (Dhemaji district) in the South, Lower Dibang Valley in the eastern side and West Siang district in

the western side. The total geographical area of the study area is 4,005 sq km. East Siang district has been divided in to 4 (four) administrative sub division i.e., Pasighat sub division, Ruksin sub division, Boleng sub division and Mebo sub division. Further for better administration purpose the district has been divided into eleven (11) administrative circles namely; Pasighat, Mebo, Ruksin, Bilat, Nari, Koyu, New Seren, Boleng, Pangin, Riga and Rebo-Perging. The Pasighat sub-division, which is the oldest administrative centre in the state is the District headquarters and situated at the left bank of River Siang.



Figure 1: The Map of East Siang district

2.2. Data Collection

The tourist has been classified into two groups i.e., domestic tourist and foreign tourist. The visitors from different Indian states like Assam, West Bengal, Delhi, Hyderabad etc., are the domestic tourist and the tourist from outside India like Italy, Germany, France etc., are categorized as International or Foreign tourist. For the present study 100 samples were drawn that comprise of 50 tourists (out of which 25 are foreign tourist), 40 local inhabitants, 5 tour operators and 5 hotel owners during the year 2011-2012 for one-year period. The data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data are collected by visiting various places and interaction with the tourist and local people of the study area. The sample respondents were administered with structured questionnaires. The personal observation, discussion and experiences have also been supplemented as a source of primary data and secondary data have been collected from published and unpublished documents like newspaper, books, journal, government publication and research report, etc.

3. Objective of the Study

1. To study the status of tourism inflow in East Siang district.
2. To analyze the problems and prospects of tourism in East Siang district.

3.1. Tourist Arrival in East Siang District

The tourist arrival report of the district for the past four years has observed a significant difference in the arrival of domestic tourist and foreign tourist in district. The data or report of tourist arrival in the district has been collected from the year 2008 up to 2011 for better and comprehensive understanding of tourism inflow in the district.

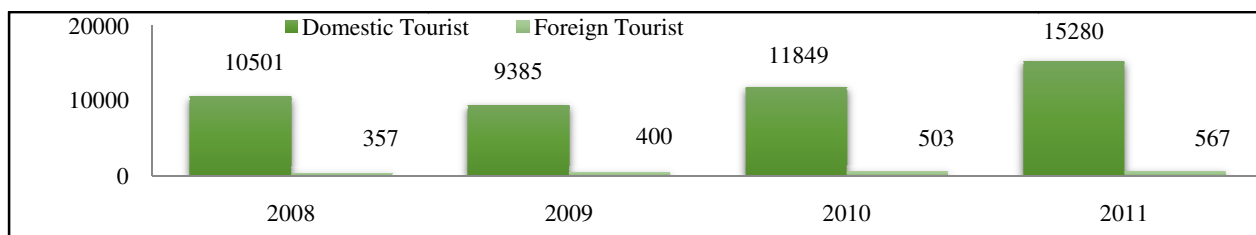


Figure 2: Graph showing year wise tourist arrival in East Siang district
Sources: District Tourism Department (East Siang District) 2012

From the figure 2, we can clearly observe that the tourist inflow in the district is showing an increasing trend but at a snail pace. In the year 2008 the total number of tourist arrival was 10858 tourists (including both domestic and foreign tourist) which increased up to 15847 tourist arrival in the year 2011. The highest inflow of domestic tourist was recorded in the year 2011 accounting for 15280 which also recorded the highest foreign tourist arrival with total 567. On the other side the least arrival of domestic tourist was recorded in the year 2009 with just 9385. And in the case of the foreign tourist, the least arrival was recorded during the year 2008 with only 357 foreigners.

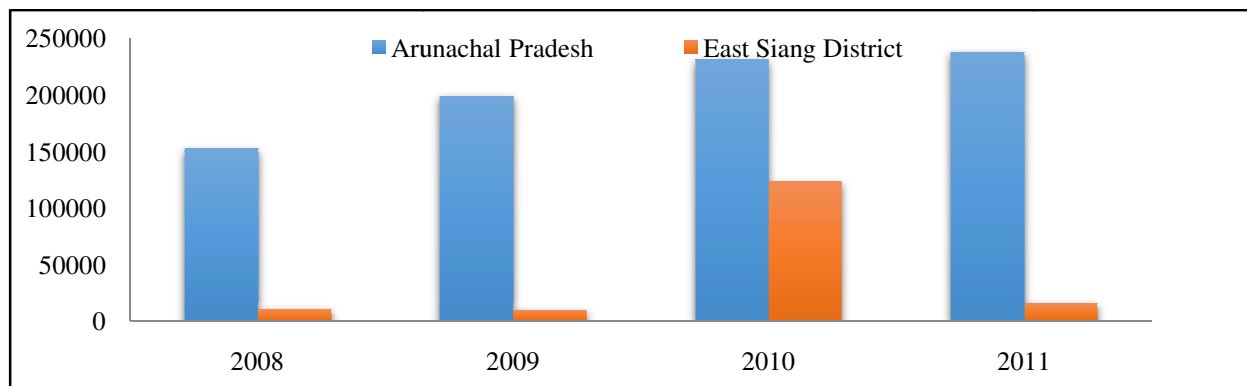


Figure 3: Year-Wise Tourist Arrival in East Siang district and in Arunachal Pradesh
Sources: Department of Tourism, Arunachal Pradesh 2012

From the Table 1, it is clearly observed that the total tourist arrival which include both domestic and foreign tourist is very less, when it is compared with the total tourist arrival in the state. The graph reveals the gradual increase in the total tourist inflow in the state and the district. The data also reflect that the district having huge and unexplored tourism potentialities has a pivotal role toward developing the district into a tourist hot spot destination and contribute the state in the tourism sector.

4. Results and Discussion

The study district is covered with green forest and surrounded by hills and mountains. The topography of study area presents a range of landscape with plains along the Assam-Arunachal border and hills and mountains in northern side. There is gradual ascending of mountain slopes which starts from Pasighat onwards. The district is also blessed with numerous waterfalls and the mighty Siang River adds more beauty to the landscape of the district.

The study area falls under monsoonal and hot-belt of climatic zone and experiences tropical climate with heavy rainfall during summer season. The season is characterized by heavy rainfall and high temperature which is influenced by monsoon where summer starts in the month of June and last till September. From October the dry season starts which continues till January. During winter season the area experiences cold waves, cold air, mists and fogs over the northern parts and high mountain ranges (Ering 2006). The area is rich in its flora and fauna. There is a great variation of flora due to difference in altitude and climate starting from grass, reeds, swamps to large trees. It is rightly said that vegetation is the index of climatic condition of an area. The luxuriant forest with thick undergrowth is the other form of humid and temperate climatic region. This dense forest is a home to various types of big and small animals, birds and reptiles which in fact adorned its beauty. The area is gifted with different species of bamboos and cane which are found in plenty. There are varied species of plants and roots such as Taan, Ridin, Rakhak, Nebir-babir etc which are used for traditional healing purpose and considered as sacred plant by the people (GOI 2005). The area has also rich variety of orchids and other flowering trees which blooms all the year round and provides a fantastic view. The Mithun (*Bos frontalis*) semi-domesticated animal is found in abundance in the forest. Numbers of wild animals like Himalayan black bear, monkey, flying squirrel, fox, leopard, tiger, wolf and jungle cat are found in abundance. Different kinds of deer of which the principal varieties are the Sāmbhar, the hog deer, barking deer are found in the thickly wooded forest. Takin and musk deer are found only in higher ranges of the mountains. Numerous birds with different size and colors are found in the area such as hornbill, bulbul, water fowls, jungle fowl, duck, mourning dove, kingfisher, black bulbul, cuckoo, eagle, kite, crow, fly catcher, woodpecker, sparrow, flower picker, wagtails, bee-eaters and owl. The forest is also rich in colorful varieties of butterflies, grasshopper, bees, crickets and many other insects. Reptiles such as lizards, snakes and tortoise are also found in abundance.

According to the 2001 census the population of the study area is 87'397 inhabited by Adi, Galo and Mishing tribes in which Adi is the majority. Rice is the staple food of the people. They are also fond of meat and fishes which are considered as delicious item. Most of the food is boiled, though meat may also be roasted and maize parched in a pan, rice or millet is boiled with vegetables and flavored with chilies and salt. The local rice beer (*Apong*) made of brewed rice and millet is popular in every household and consume by every sex and age-group. The dress and costumes of the people are simple, unique and distinct in appearance which adds beauty and gives them dignity. The traditional male dress consists of loin cloth known as *Ugon* to cover the lower part and a half coat called *Galup/Galuk* to cover the upper portion of the body. Women dress includes *Galup/Galuk* and a skirt called *Gale* to cover the lower portion. The Adis also use various types of ornaments for decoration such as *Dudap* (a necklace made of beads worn by men) and *Tampilang*, *Nokh* and *Sondrong* are necklaces worn by the women.

4.1. Demographic Status of Tourist

Out of 100 samples drawn 50 samples are the tourist that comprise of both domestic and foreign. These tourists are further classified in their respective sex, age and marital status to know the kind of tourist preferred to visit the district.

Sex		Age		Marital Status	
Male	Female	Above 35	Below 35	Married	Unmarried
31	19	18	38	35	15

Table 1: Demographic Status of Tourist
Source: Field Survey 2012

The tourist in the Table 1 comprise of both domestic and foreign tourists where 62 percent of tourist are found to be male. The maximum numbers of tourist visiting the district falls in the age group above 35 years and are married (70 per cent). Most of these married tourists are of old and adult age and are retired from their services.

4.2. Medium to Know about the District

It is observed from the respondents that maximum number of tourist were informed through internet and the tour operators which accounts for 44 per cent each and 12 per cent of tourist could managed to know about the district through friends and relatives who visited earlier. There were hardly or no tourist who has come to know the district through the mediums like newspaper, television and radio.

4.3. Purpose of Visit

The study revealed that 92 per cent of tourist visited the district for tourism purposes and only 4 per cent of tourist (mainly domestic) visited the district for business purposes. The remaining 4 per cent of tourist visiting the district are generally for other purposes like visiting friend or relatives, research work, etc.

4.4. Vehicles Preference of Tourist

It is observed that 64 percent of tourist used private vehicle for arriving and travelling in the district. The foreign tourists were the highest user of private vehicle from among the tourist. The Tata Sumo and Winger vehicle opted highest (24 per cent) among the other vehicles by the domestic tourist. The 12 per cent of tourist used bus for arriving at the district. Although the nearest helipad ground is situated in the district headquarters Pasighat, there were no respondent who arrived through chopper service.

4.5. Preferences on the Type of Tourism Activities

The study attempted to find out the interest of tourist with regard to various types of tourism like wildlife tourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, rural tourism and historical tourism.

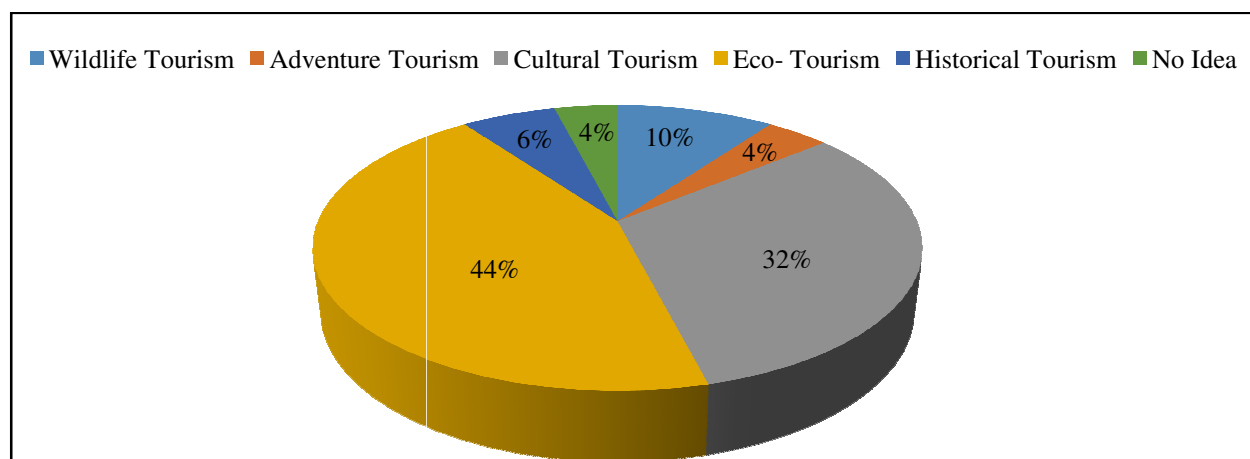


Figure 4
Source: Field Survey 2012

From the table and figure it is revealed that eco-tourism has been mostly preferred among all other tourism activities (44 per cent) in the study area which is followed by cultural tourism. The 4 per cent of tourist visited the district with no any particular tourism preferences. Among the 44 per cent of tourist found in eco- tourism were also interested in rural based and nature based eco- tourism. They have shown great interest in visiting the remote villages like Sigar, Pangin, Siluk and Kebang etc.

4.6. Tourism Benefits to the Inhabitants

While the 73 per cent of the respondents were of the view that one of the major source of income generation is by selling of local handicrafts like Galuk (a hand weaved shirt), Galeh (hand weaved skirt) and other bamboo made products; the 27 per cent of total respondents feel that selling of local food items is gainful source of income.

5. Problems and Challenges of Tourism in the District

There are so many problems that hamper the growth of tourism. For the present study, following problems are classified under the following subheads namely, the basic problems, the problem related with the localities, government lackadaisical attitude and other related problems.

5.1. The Basic Problems

The basic problems that often hamper the tourist inflow in the district are road connectivity, transportation, accommodation and Inner-line or Protected Area Permit. The details are being discussed below.

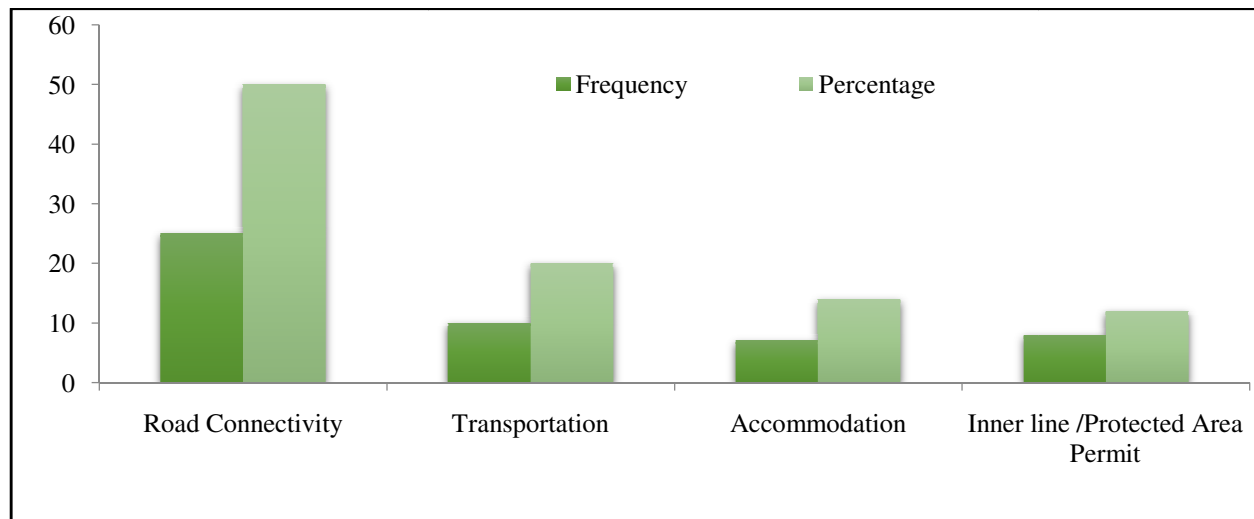


Figure 5

Source: Field Survey 2012

a. The Table 2 shows that road connectivity of the district has been witnessed as the greatest challenge of tourist in the district (50 per cent). The road connectivity problem is more prominent during the rainy season as flood, mudslides, landslides etc, are often disrupt the transportation. The 90 per cent of tourist are of the view that the district has a great prospect of tourism provided the very connectivity is good.

b. The local Sumo service, the Winger service, Arunachal Pradesh State Transport service and some private vehicles are the only transportation available in the district. However, many of these services are limited to Pasighat Township only and villages at hilly terrain like Renging, Ruttung, Yambung, Kebang, Boleng, Pangin are devoid of these facilities. Moreover, unavailability of good vehicles in the state often compels the tourist especially the foreign tourist to opt vehicles from the Guwahati itself.

c. The study revealed that 80 per cent of tourists were accommodated in the hotel and the rest 20 percent at the tourist lodge. Some of problems highlighted were lack of or frequent breakdown of electricity, network and internet unavailability, cleanliness and other facilities like warm water, restaurant etc.

d. The tourist who intends to visit the state has to be complied certain official formalities like compulsory procurement of Inner-line permit or Protected Area Permit. Foreign tourist in a group of two or more person required to obtain PAP (Protected Area Permit) for a period of thirty days for visiting different places of the state and the domestic tourist require ILP (Inner-line Permit) for visiting different places of the state. The study revealed that 76 per cent of sample tourist found problem while procuring ILP and PAP. The maximum of foreign tourist has opined that it is lengthy process in getting the permit and also the span of permit is very short. The rest 24 percent of sample tourist opined no troublesome in ILP and POP and found that is a good measure for controlling influx of visitors which can hamper the ecology of the area. In fact, they have the view that the permit made them more confident and comfortable in visiting different part of the state.

5.2. The Problems with the Localities

The inhabitants of any region to a large extend is responsible for flourishing tourism. Therefore, the state while formulating any policies and programme related to tourism should take into account the problems related to them. Following are the few problems related with the inhabitants of the area.

a. Lack of Tourism Awareness: - Though there is frequent flow of tourist in the district, some villagers of the remote area do not have any idea about the prospects of tourism. There was hardly any awareness or training programme from government and other societies in these regions.

b. Low Income generation: - During the study, it was observed that the income generated through tourism activities was very limited due to very less and seasonal inflow of tourist in the study area. Therefore, income earning avenue through tourism activities is very uncertain and shown a fluctuating trend.

c. Lack of Employment: - The study revealed that out of 40 sample of inhabitant of the study area, 10 per cent of the respondents were engaged in small business like groceries shop, vegetable vendor, craft hall etc, and only 3 per cent each of respondents were serving in the tourism department and as a tour operator respectively. The rest of respondents were engaged in agricultural activities and had no idea about tourism activities in the area.

5.3. Lackadaisical Attitude of the Government

It is the government who has the sole responsibility to identify and develop any region viable for the tourism. On the other hand, the flow of tourism activities depends on the proper maintenance and facilities of the area. The district as particular witnesses the following problems related with the government attitude.

a. Lack of facilities in government's tourist lodge: -

It was observed that the various tourist lodge constructed by the state government in the district are at the deplorable condition. There are no any basic facilities for the visitors like television, air condition room, warm water facilities, electricity etc, in the lodge.

b. Improper attention on the tourist spot: -

The district has immense potentialities of natural, cultural, wildlife and eco-tourism etc, but the acute dependency of villagers on the sanctuary for materials for construction of their dwelling houses and traditional practice of hunting and fishing often results in habitat degradation and disturbance to the wild animals.

Moreover, the young people frequent visit the spot where no maintenance is done and pollute the area by throwing away plastic wrappers, beer cans and other bottles. The indigenous practice of animal husbandry is also a major problem as large number of cattle is left free to graze in the area which litters the whole tourist spot.

c. Lack of co-ordination with other parties:

There is a lack of co-ordinate efforts by department of tourism with various like-minded parties like tour operators, private agencies, NGO's etc. There is a lack of any incentives provided by the government to these parties for the growth of tourism in the state.

d. Absence of new tourism policy: -

The Tourism department is yet to draft new tourism policy for the state. The state has been following the Arunachal Pradesh Tourism Policy-2003 till date which needs to be reviewed for the better prospect of tourism in the state.

5.4. Other Problems

Along with the problems discussed earlier, following are the few problems as mentioned by the tourist during field study.

a. The frequent Bandh Call: -

The frequent bandh call during the recent past by numerous associations and organizations of neighboring Assam and the district itself has a severe effect on the tourist due to which the tour operators and the tourist are reluctant to visit the area which has great impact on the tourist inflow in the district.

b. Hygiene and Sanitation problems: -

One of the major problems complaints by the visitors were cleanliness. The hygiene and sanitation of the study area was disappointing as there were no proper sanitation system in the area.

6. Recommendations

1. An effort should be made to boost the tourist round the year especially during summer when the tourist inflow is very less. The special and attractive packages like monsoon magic, summer holiday package etc should be launched.
2. Effective marketing and promotional strategy should be developed through various media. Creation of specific website for the respective interested area and sanctuary like Daying Ering Wildlife Sanctuary will enhance the accessibility of the area.
3. Emphasis should be given in preserving the rich tradition and culture of the area as it is found that the region can be a hotspot for rural-based eco- tourism.
4. Proper maintenance, renovation of the existing tourist spot and construction of new infrastructure in the area should be done at the earliest to meet the demand of the visiting tourist.
5. Transportation facilities should be improved along with the maintenance and construction of new road to the inaccessible villages and the tourist interest places.
6. Accommodation facilities must be improved focusing especially on the clean and hygienic sanitation.
7. Procurement of the Inner-line Permit and Protected Area Permit need to be made easy. Moreover, visiting or staying time should be increased with proper verification of the identity and purpose of the visitors.
8. Organizing seminar, workshop and other related awareness activities should be held time to time for promoting the importance of tourism in the area.
9. The government should provide certain benefits and incentives to the tour operators and the private run accommodating house for greater interest of tourism in the area.

10. An awareness and strong laws should be made to stop large scale hunting and commercialization of wild animals and bird in the area.
11. More events like Siang River Festival which draws large number of tourist both domestic and outside should be encouraged to promote tourism in the district.
12. There is an urgent need to formulate new tourism policy and effort should be made to have strategic tie-up with specialist companies at regional, national and international level.
13. Tourism department should also provide consultancy services under the banner of Arunachal Tourism at every important location such as railway station, airports and national and international exhibition.
14. The more tourist circuit should be developed, connecting new places like Aalo, Roing, Dambuk, Maryiang etc.

7. Conclusion

After analyzing the present tourism scenario in the study district, it may be concluded that despite having huge tourism potentialities, the tourism industry in the district is lacking far behind as compared to the other district in the state. The pitfalls in the district is due to various reasons like poor road condition, lack of proper infrastructures, lack of awareness about tourism and its prospect. The Siang River, Daying Ering Wildlife Sanctuary, rich flora and fauna and the presence of intact traditional and cultural richness has been favorites for the tourist. The need of the hour therefore, is to bring awareness among the local people inhabiting and also preserving the rich and potent natural resources for brighter prospect and growth of tourism in the district in particular and state as a whole.

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