



Socio-Economic Aspects Of Tourism And Covid-19: A Stakeholders Perspective In Mizoram

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has grown and it is one of the contributors to the development of many countries. It is one of the industries growing at fast pace in the world and had an immense influence in the growth of the world economy. Mizoram is one of the destinations in India and the industry is gaining more popularity day after day contributing to the economy and the development of the state but like any other state the outbreak of Covid-19 had a negative effect in the functioning of the Industry in the state. The present study evaluates the Tourism sector from the socio-economic aspect in Mizoram with reference to the perspective of the recognized and registered Stakeholders in the post covid-19 scenario. Analysis for the study was done through various statistical tools. It was found that covid19 outbreak had a negative influence towards the economic aspects of the stakeholders and further minimized the social activities towards the development of Tourism sector in the region.

Keywords: Tourism, Tourist traffic, Revenue, Destination

INTRODUCTION

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines tourism as comprising 'the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purpose' (WTO, 1990). Tourism is a key sector for economic development and job creation throughout the world. In 2016, tourism directly contributed US\$2.3 trillion and 109 million jobs worldwide from which the sector contributed US\$7.6 trillion to the global economy and supported 292 million jobs in 2016 and this was equal to 10.2% of the world's GDP, and approximately 1 in 10 of all jobs (Sofronov, 2017). Kruja, (2012) described in his study that growth in tourism sector is seen as a major contributor to the increase of economic activity for the country. It offers employment opportunities in both large and small communities and is a major industry in developed countries, and the dominant economic activity in some communities. Nayomi & Gnanapala, (2015) further discuss that the industry generates economic benefits to both host and guest countries. Especially in developing countries, one of the main motivations for a destination to promote itself as a tourism destination is the expected improvement in their economy.

Mizoram is predominantly a hilly state nestled deep in the North Eastern extreme corner of India squeezing between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Strategically this state is in higher position for tourism than some other states due to the type of topographical location (Adak & Guha, 2014). Sharma & Sharma, (2022) further in their study stated that Tourism is a rapidly expanding industry in Mizoram and is expected to give an impetus to the revenue generation in the years to come and stress on the importance of developing the sector with the assistance of latest trends and technology to attract a good number of tourists. With the assistance of various factors like its natural beauty, strategic location, scope for international trade and favorable conditions for various tourism activities, Mizoram can be considered to be an important tourist destination in the future (Deka, 2020). Tourism and Covid-19 Covid-19 was a disease that was caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS –CoV-2) which created havoc globally and led to the disruption of the normal

flow of the different aspects of life. Mishra, et al., (2020) highlights that the corona virus disease (COVID-19), was identified and declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11th March, 2020 and it had an enormous impact on the public health socially and also rigorously affected the world economically. The outbreak of the virus gave rise to numerous issues that includes the environment such as the quality of water, air, waste management and energy consumption as well as the human psychology and the education system (Miyah, et al., 2022). Due to the rise in the number and spread of the disease the governments of the world came up with various measures to tackle the outbreak. Amongst these measures lockdowns and quarantine was very much popular and effective. The global pandemic lead to destruction and downfall of many industries and it has also resulted in global challenges, economic and healthcare crises, and posed spillover impacts on the global industries which included the tourism and travel industry. This industry is amongst the most damaged and hardest hit industry indicating to a steep decline amounting to 2.86 trillion US dollars which is more than 50 per cent revenue loss (Abbas, et al., 2021). According to Huynh, et al., (2021) the COVID-19 pandemic destroyed the global tourism industry and had affected the destinations from the developing countries the hardest with minimizing the possibility of fast recovery of those destinations with more challenges. Behsudi, (2020) also elaborates that tourism-dependent countries are more affected negatively and the pandemic will create a crisis much longer than other economies, especially of the developed countries. The impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry had been estimated by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to a loss of US Dollar 910 to 1.1 trillion export revenues and 100-120 million jobs due to the wider spread of the virus (Kumudumali, 2020). The aftermath of the pandemic created deep mark especially in the tourism industry and according to Banerji, (2023), on the basis of the report given by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism's economic contribution, measured in tourism direct gross domestic product (TDGDP), was cut in half, from 4 per cent of global GDP in 2019 to 2 per cent in 2020 and 2021.

Choudhary, et al., (2023) in their study have focused on the reports given by World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India which highlights that during Covid-19 as other developing nations India also faced major setbacks economically and had led to a significant loss of revenue for the country and suffered a loss of over 40 billion US Dollars in 2020. The Tourism industry which accounts for 4.7 per cent during 2021 compared to 6.9 per cent during 2019 shows negative growth of 36.3 per cent. The Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in 2020 to India had declined by 75.5 per cent to 2.68 million. Likewise, in Mizoram it is estimated that the sector is losing Rs. 3.01 crore every month from March 2020 due to the pandemic (Mizoram, 2022).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For carrying out this study a standard procedure of research was applied. The first method will be through general observation which will be done during the stay at the destination. This is necessary as highlighted by (Kumar, 2022) it is through this process that one was able to obtain information about the environment around the study area.

The second method was through the questionnaire method. For the purpose of this study these questions was amongst the stakeholders of tourism in the destination covering the potential areas. This gave a better platform for understanding the ground reality and the present scenario of tourism and its impact in the destination.

The objective of the study is mainly to understand and highlight the influence that Covid-19 had over the Tourism sector from the socio-economic aspect in Mizoram.

Data Collection

For this study both primary and secondary data was considered and collected being the basic input to any decision in the process of a research. These data facilitated in having an in-depth understanding of the study area as (Ajayi, 2023) highlighted in his study that primary data are collected for the first time and is mainly factual and original while secondary is mainly focused on the products of others done on the basis of the primary data, which can be crucial in the process of data analysis.

Primary data was collected from a variety of respondents. These data were collected through Questionnaire and interview method.

Secondary data was collected from various published books, journals, official websites of Tourism ministry, other websites and expert's literatures.

Population of the Study

The stakeholders at the major tourist destinations in the 11 districts which are recognized by the Tourism Department, Government of Mizoram was taken into consideration. These stakeholders consist of the Travel Agents, Tour Operators, Tour Guides, Hotels, Homestays, Restaurants, Car rentals and souvenir stores near and around the destination. The details of the number of the stakeholders are as follows:

Table: Tourism Stakeholders (Tourism Department)

Sl.No.	Description	Nos.
1.	State Owned Operational Tourist Facilities (Departmentally owned and Outsourced to Private Parties)	67
2.	No. of Registered Private Hotels	75
3.	No. of Registered Homestays	30
4.	No. of Registered Travel Agents	56
5.	No. of Registered Tour Operators	8
6.	No. of Registered Restaurants & Tea Stalls	110
7.	No. of Registered Tour Guides	95
8.	No. of Registered Car Rentals	8

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Government of Mizoram

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used for this research as this research will be required to have an access to a particular subset of people or participants who were selected on basis of being fit for the studies profile. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula as mentioned by (Bukhari, 2021) is used to determine the sample size. It determined that 201 to 210 respondents are the adequate sample to represent the population which consists of registered stakeholders under the Tourism Department, Government of Mizoram and for this purpose 202 valid samples was considered and collected, this is derived from the number of registered stakeholders as per the Tourism Department i.e. 449.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The opinions of the respondents to the questionnaire regarding to understanding the socio-economic influence Covid-19 had on Tourism in Mizoram was measured by running T-test analysis on the socioeconomic variables in the pre and post covid-19 scenario which were compared using the tool on SPSS software pair by pair. The *t* test estimates the true difference between two group means using the ratio of the difference in group means over the pooled standard error of both groups; it is often used in hypothesis testing to determine whether a process or treatment actually has an effect on the population of interest, or whether two groups are different from one another (Bevans, 2023). The responses are scored using a 5-point Likert rating scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neutral and 5 = Strongly Agree. The following is a detailed report of the information obtained through the questionnaire survey of the socio-economic influence of Covid-19.

Table: Economic Aspects of Tourism in Mizoram influenced by Covid-19

Items						
		Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Source of Income	.10396	.59357	2.489	201	.014
Pair 2	Income Increase due to Tourism	.40099	.87679	6.500	201	.000
Pair 3	Spending Capacity increased due to Tourism	.44059	.85747	7.303	201	.000
Pair 4	Standard of Living improved due to Tourism	.22772	.71070	4.554	201	.000
Pair 5	Quality of Life improved due to Tourism	.16337	.68969	3.367	201	.001
Pair 6	Employment Opportunities increased due to Tourism	.38119	.89122	6.079	201	.000
Pair 7	Local Community benefits from Tourism	.21782	.75448	4.103	201	.000
Pair 8	Economy of the Region benefited through Tourism	.28218	.81319	4.932	201	.000

Source: Field Survey

The above table highlights the relationship of the economic variables of Tourism in Mizoram before and after the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus in the State in-order to have an in-depth understanding of the socioeconomic aspects of Tourism.

- i) Pair 1 show that Covid-19 has an effect in source of income of the stake holders before and after the outbreak of the virus with significant p value of .014, which is less than the level of significance at 0.05.
- ii) Pair 2 highlights that the income increase of the stake holders due to Tourism activities is affected by the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus with significant value at 0.000, which is less than the level of significance at 0.05.
- iii) Pair 3 shows the effect that Covid-19 has on the spending capacity of the stakeholders is significant at p value = 0.000, which is less than the level of significance at 0.05
- iv) Pair 4 shows that there is a difference in the standard of living of the stakeholders before and after the outbreak of Covid-19 with significance value at 0.000, which is less than the level of significance at 0.05
- v) Pair 5 highlights that Covid-19 has affected the quality of life of the stakeholders in the region with p value = 0.001, which is less than the level of significance at 0.05.
- vi) Pair 6 clarifies that there exist a significant difference in the employment opportunities in Tourism in the region in the pre and post Covid-19 scenario with p value = 0.000, which is less than the level of significance at 0.05.
- vii) Pair 7 shows that the economic benefits of the locals through Tourism is affected by the Covid-19 virus with a significance value at 0.000, which is less than the level of significance at 0.05.
- viii) Pair 8 shows that Covid-19 outbreak has created a significant difference on the benefits of Tourism to the economy of the region which is at p value = 0.000, which is less than the level of significance at 0.05.

Table: Social Aspects of Tourism in Mizoram influenced by Covid-19

Items						
		Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Privacy hampered through Tourism	.00990	.47829	.294	201	.769
Pair 2	Tourism increases the safety and security issues	-.17822	.70388	-3.599	201	.000
Pair 3	Tourism adheres to the peaceful environment of the region	.00495	.56865	.124	201	.902
Pair 4	Local community participation in Tourism activity	-.03465	.52194	-.944	201	.346
Pair 5	Tourism leads to Cultural Clash	.04455	.53994	1.173	201	.242
Pair 6	Societal norms are respected by Tourism	-.05941	.49519	-1.705	201	.090
Pair 7	Tourism is welcomed by the Society	.10396	.61010	2.422	201	.016
Pair 8	Proper Interaction between the Locals and Tourist	-.02970	.39789	-1.061	201	.290

Source: Field Survey

The above table highlights the relationship of the social variables of Tourism in Mizoram before and after the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus in the State in-order to have an in-depth understanding of the socio-economic aspects of Tourism.

- i) Pair 1 show that Covid-19 has no significant effect on the privacy of the people being hampered through Tourism before and after the outbreak of the virus with significant p value of 0.769, which is much higher than the level of significance at 0.05.
- ii) Pair 2 highlights that the Covid-19 virus with significant value at 0.000 has led to the increase in the safety and security issues in the region, which is less than the level of significance at 0.05.
- iii) Pair 3 shows the effect that Covid-19 has on Tourism adhering to the peaceful environment of the region is insignificant at p value = 0.902, which is higher than the level of significance at 0.05
- iv) Pair 4 shows that there is no difference in the locals participation in Tourism activities before and after the outbreak of Covid-19 with significance value at 0.346, which is more than the level of significance at 0.05

- v) Pair 5 highlights that Covid-19 and Tourism leading to cultural clash has no significant relationship with p value = 0.242, which is higher than the level of significance at 0.05.
- vi) Pair 6 clarifies that there exist a slight significant difference in the societal norms being respected by Tourism in the region in the pre and post Covid-19 scenario with p value = 0.090, which is more than the level of significance at 0.05.
- vii) Pair 7 shows that Tourism being welcomed in the society or region is affected by the Covid-19 virus with a significance value at 0.016, which is less than the level of significance at 0.05.
- viii) Pair 8 shows that Covid-19 outbreak has created no significant difference on the interaction between the tourists and the locals of the region which is at p value = 0.290, which is higher than the level of significance at 0.05.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

According to the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, United Nation World Tourism Organization, 2023), Tourism sector is one of the major economic sector and is accounted for 7 per cent of global trade as of 2019, but with outbreak of the Covid-19 virus the sector has become one of the sectors which was most affected by it mainly in a negative nature. For the purpose of safety and security of the people many sanctions were laid down like lockdown by the Government of India which was followed by the States of the country (Kakkar, Chhetri, & Dambhare, 2020), this also included the State of Mizoram. The pandemic had vast impact on the global economic, political, socio-cultural systems and tourism being a vulnerable industry it can easily lead to many changes especially in the socio-economic structure and activities of the sector. So, understanding its effect from the Tourism perspective can play a crucial role in curbing the long term structural effect that the pandemic can have in the tourism sector (Sigala M. , 2020).

Economic aspects of Tourism in Mizoram influenced by Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has lead to a substantial economic and social impact across the world and the tourism industry became one of the most affected industries. The pandemic has incurred financial losses to disruption of business to many stakeholders of the industry at the same time it has created mental health issues especially to the business holders of the tourism and hospitality industry (Al-Mughairi, Bhaskar, & Alazri, 2021). The tourism industry in Mizoram also faced certain issues especially in the economic aspects of the stakeholders and the tourism destinations.

Tourism sector in Mizoram from the findings suggests that the pandemic had negative impact especially interms of the economic aspects of the industry and its stakeholders. The pandemic has lead to the downfall of income of stakeholders as well as the other intermediaries and components of the industry. The major stakeholders shifted their resources towards other forms of business as the sector could not provide them with sufficient income for sustaining their business in the sector as travelling restrictions were levied by the government across the borders which lead to the downfall of the inflow of the tourists. With the main source of income being restricted it lead to the downfall of their standard of living as their spending capacity plummeted due to the pandemic. Covid-19 pandemic further affected the generation of employment in the industry with the businesses closing down and falling short on the financial resources this drastically impacted the local communities especially those who depended on the sector for their main source of income. The highlight here is that the economy of the destinations/regions and the state as whole in the tourism aspect was hit hard by the pandemic as the economic benefits through tourism and its activities fell for the stakeholders and the local community which gave a halt to the improvement of the quality of life of the regions.

Social aspects of Tourism in Mizoram influenced by Covid-19

Tourism and its activities tends to have both positive and negative impact in terms of long term and short term socio-cultural effects towards the local communities especially in the rural regions. This pandemic also had both impacts such as the disruption of the local societal and cultural norms were not disrupted due to low inflow of tourists while it created issues as people were not allowed to conduct activities and were locked in their homes (Eslami & Namdar, 2022).

Mizoram also faced certain issues caused by the pandemic towards the local people of the tourist destinations and different regions of the State. The Tourism sector with its developmental works and other activities in the society was also influenced by this pandemic as the fear of the virus loomed large amongst the people there were concerns towards the safety and security of their loved and dear ones especially in those destinations where the development of the sector was at large and because of this fear the sector and its activities were not largely welcomed by the local people as it will include inflow of people from other regions who can or may have been the carrier of the virus. The industry came to a halt during the pandemic period which restricted tourist from visiting the destination and because of this the privacy and the peaceful environment was not disturbed and socio-cultural issues like cultural clash was not matter of concern by the people as there were no tourists to interact with during this period. The active participation of the local community of the tourist destinations depending on the sector for their economic benefits was also minimized.

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