



## The role of local communities in Development of Tourism: study of Ziro Valley of Arunachal Pradesh

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### Abstract:

Arunachal Pradesh is one of the flourishing states in North Eastern part of India. With its enchanting beauty the state has the every possibilities of satisfying the needs of varied tourists. Arunachal Pradesh literally means 'The Land of Dawn-Lit Mountains'. The unexplored lush valleys, immaculate water bodies, rich heritage and monuments, different local festivals, cuisines and life styles are some of the areas that can pull the needy tourists. Arunachal Pradesh has the potentials to become one of the best after sought tourist destination in the world by attracting different tourist from different parts of the world. This unexplored land of paradise in the eastern most part of the India not only attracts the tourist with its natural beauty and untouched tribal life styles; it has the potential and full of promises to take the tourist to a different level of spirituality journey. Arunachal Pradesh is a perfect destination for nature lover, adventurer, spiritually souls, and is a perfect gateway destination for families and youngsters alike. It is also the glory of peace from infuriating buzz of city life. Tourism here is at growing stage. The local communities are the key to success in attracting more tourists in the state. Some of the famous destinations that attracts the tourists from different parts of India and abroad are Tawang, Bomdila, Ziro, Itanagar, Pasighat, Roing, Bhalukpong, Sela Pass, Dirang, Mechuka, Malinithan Likabali, Parsuram Khund etc. The study undertaken on the above topic is an endeavour to find out the involvement of the local people of Ziro Valley and their perception towards the development of tourism and contribution to the local administration in framing guidelines for overall development of tourism activities in the area. The study is also based on literature reviews, personal visits, experience of researcher, interactions with local and tourist directly or indirectly involved in tourism activities. The outcome of this study may be helpful in decision making by authorities involving local area tourism development committee for the economic development through tourism activities.

**Key words:** Local people, participants, local authorities, sustainable tourism, Ziro Valley, North Eastern India etc

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### 1. Introduction:

Tourism is a phenomenon where people leave their usual place and travel to explore different destinations. Travel and tourism is related to pleasure, holiday and sightseeing. Tourism is a movement of people from one destination to another for varied reasons. People travel to different destinations to satisfy or explore their needs and wants. Tourism industry not only brings socio-economic development, but also improves the infrastructure of the destination. Tourism helps create numerous job opportunities in India. Tourism is considered as third largest foreign exchange earner after the Gems & Jewellery and readymade garments sector in India.

UNWTO Defines of Tourism as "*Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.*" (UNWTO International Tourism Highlight, 2019)

Tourism is a large industry today. Tourism is contributing to the growth of world economies and has grown up to a big industry. Globally, travel and tourism direct contribution to GDP was approximately 5.8 billion U.S. dollars in 2021. Earlier it was 9.6 USD in 2019 which declined to 4.7 USD in 2020 due to pandemic COVID-19.

The report of UNWTO “International Tourism Highlight 2019 Edition” shows nine consecutive year of sustained growth wherein export earnings have grown up to USD 1.7 trillion that makes tourism sector a true global economic force.

Despite great potential the state contributes only 3.71% share of tourist flow in the North Eastern Region. (Linggi, 2022)

### Community based Tourism

Community based tourism (CBT) is the one of popular strategic options adopted by various destinations in comparison to the mass tourism. Policy makers who supported mass tourism are focused on increasing the number of tourist at a specific destination and simultaneously create infrastructure, which contributed tourist satisfaction.

Community based tourism is defined at various levels by various researchers and scholars in many ways.

#### a) Definitions

- *Community-based tourism (CBT) is a form of tourism that arose to offset the negative impacts of conventional or mass tourism (Mitapuri, 2017)*
- *and it “is increasingly being promoted as a means of reducing poverty and fostering local community development” (Runyowa, 2017)*
- *suggest that CBT is not the answer to community poverty alleviation through tourism, instead, the same author propose, the need “it is working with mainstream tourism to strengthen links between tourism and local people – often indigenous populations who are located in disadvantaged regions and have vulnerable livelihoods” (Mitchell, 2008)*

### Involvement of local community in development of tourism

In tourism industry stakeholders play an important role in tourism development. Local community is a stake holder whose role in development of tourism seems inevitable and cannot be overlooked. Local community participation is one of the core elements of tourism development because it is inmost to the sustainability of tourism industry. There are several sectors which are involved in tourism development like government, private sectors, various organizations, and individuals. However, in that list of involvement, local community is probably the only legitimate and moral stakeholders in tourism development.

Involvement of local community has substantial value in tourism for locals, their lifestyle and environmental, cultural and traditional factors; which are the main attraction in tourism. Thus, the needs and aspirations of locals must be maintained. Tourism development along with the involvement of local community will result in sustainable development as well as benefit economic, environmental and cultural benefits. Active participation of community in tourism ensures the enrichment of tourism experience as well. (Doloma Eco-Tourism, 2018)

When a community is involved in tourism development, it guarantees them as an active partner, and it provides check and balance since it has a particular stake in region and commitment to environmental quality. Tourism can work for long-term and its feasibility depends on the support and involvement of local

community. In tourism role of local community is vital as his/her attitude and behaviour directly impacts the tourism activity.

There has been an argument that tourism contributes to local development by providing destination countries with economic benefits and the benefits from tourism don't disseminate to all level of society. However, local community involvement assists in the proper distribution of economy and at the very same time improve the long-term prospect of tourism. Local community involvement confirms higher employment level with reasonable pay and seasonal jobs opportunity too. Local involvement can prevent leakage of foreign currency by encouraging local ownership guiding services, transportation, accommodation, restaurants, handicrafts, and local products shop. But, there arises the same problem of irregular distribution of income; ownership by higher group of locals won't equally distribute benefits or environmental accountability.

Homestay or agro-tourism holidays are further encouragement to local involvement as it provides the tourist with enriching alternative to the mass market. Community-led projects and small-scale business in local level can contribute to a significant level to improve the lifestyle. But, commercial success and need to meet demands make it hard to avoid them are evolving into large-scale enterprises. On the other hand, the infrastructure of mass tourism can in turn help in successful small projects involving local peoples.

Tourism development provides local people time to adjust in new environmental, social and economic conditions and helps in preventing negative results of rapid uncontrolled development. Involving local people in determining their development will prevent any conflicts which would inevitably affect the sustainability of tourism. Community-based tourism have a high prospect in rural tourism development, and its success depends on better community leadership, support, and participation of local administrative groups.

Local community participation in tourism development is very vital to attain the goals of sustainability and to improve the welfare of local community. Involvement of community ensures conservation of environment and culture of the local community. So, whenever the tourism planner and policy maker are thinking of developing a destination, they always give an important role to the local community.

### **Sustainable Tourism Development**

The idea of sustainable development is measured as one of the most basic concepts, which aims at reducing the tension, differences and environmental degradation that can result from the contact and overlap amongst tourism industry and tourists on one hand and between the environmental and local communities on the other hand.

A definition of sustainable tourism from 2020 is: "Tourism which is developed and maintained in an area in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an infinite period while safeguarding the Earth's life-support system on which the welfare of current and future generations depends." (Honey, 1999)

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defined Sustainable Tourism in 2004 as tourism that fulfils the needs of current tourists and host communities while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future.

Sustainable tourism has more positive impact than that of negative impact especially relating to socio-economic, environment and communities. Truly sustainable and responsible tourism should make destinations better for people to live in as well as visit. The main focus of sustainable tourism development is

- i. To protect the environment, natural resources and wildlife.
- ii. To provide socio-economic benefits for the local communities who live in tourist destinations and raising the standard of living of the local community.
- iii. To conserve cultural heritage and creating authentic tourist experiences.
- iv. To bring tourists and local communities together for mutual benefit by creating inclusive and accessible tourist opportunities.

From the above definition and objectives it is clear that the success of tourism depends on the active participation of local community.

### **Benefits to the Local community through Tourism activities:**

The area gets benefitted through tourist spending. When more money is circulated in the area through activities; it stimulates the creation of new businesses opportunities and brings out a more positive image of the area, and reduces poverty. Economic benefits entail income creation, foreign exchange achievement, and more employment.

#### **Some of the benefits to the local communities' are-**

- i. Economic benefits; one of the major benefits to the local community through tourism activities is to provide employment opportunities which results in higher house hold income. Further it has abilities to generate individual source of income to the local people.
- ii. Social benefits: the tourism activity enhances the quality of life of local people and builds the reputation and pride for the local community.
- iii. Cultural benefits: through tourism cultural exchanges happens when the tourist and host interact with each other. The host community as well as understand each other and slowly and gradually builds respect for other community
- iv. Environmental benefits: the involvement of the local community in tourism development process they become more sensitive towards their environment and develop sense of protecting the environment and its issues. They play an important role in preservation and conservation of natural resources and management of waste disposals.
- v. Educational benefits: It creates new profession in the community and locals are motivated to acquire new skills like learning new language or new cuisine to serve and satisfy the tourist needs. They acquire new skills and knowledge and sharing of ideas take place within the communities.
- vi. Political benefits: it helps in empowerment of local community due to which the power of local community increases so that they can take appropriate decision as and when required which will be benefitted for the area.
- vii. Health benefits: local community promotes good hygiene and locals are motivated to know about tastes and preference of the tourists. This encourages host residents to adopt new cuisines which can impact the nutritional status of the local residents.
- viii. Infrastructure development: Due involvement of local community in development of tourism the locals are motivated to contribute in the infrastructure development that can be benefitted to the tourist.

### **Need of involvement of local community in tourism development.**

- a. It provides economic opportunities; Local community are engaged in tourism activities and thereby they get earning and employment opportunities in some way or others.
- b. Migration: Migration of the local people is reduced when they are engaged in tourism activities at their own place and in this way they find suitable job option for their livelihood. Thus it inhibits migration of local people in search of job and livelihood.
- c. Lessening of poverty: Due to tourism activities the locals get ample opportunities of self employment, thus can result in alleviation of poverty of the area.
- d. Women empowerment: Women being integral and important part of the society. Their involvement in decision making is needed. Thus the women should be involved in various decisions making by the government or any decision maker.
- e. Community revitalization and development: Due to tourism activities the communities get opportunity not only in social development in economic development too. Therefore it also helps in revitalization and development of community socially as well economically.
- f. Conservation of biodiversity: It helps in biodiversity conservation. Involvement of local community is very important because they understand the value of nature and biodiversity. Therefore their role is very important in conservation and protection of biodiversity.
- g. Preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage: the tourist loves to participate and enjoy with local communities at various accession like festivals, rituals, cultural exchanges etc. This may result in dilution/ pollution of local cultural importance. Therefore role of local community becomes very important in preservation of cultural heritage.

### **Area of Study; Ziro Valley:**

Ziro valley in Lower Subansiri district is well known for its lush rice paddy cum fish rearing fields, Kiwi plantation, burbling rivulets and dense bamboo pine houses. The land is inhabited by modest, friendly and hospitable Apatani tribes who have made it an attractive hill station for tourists.

It is situated at the distance of 118 km via Potin and 167 km via Kimin from Itanagar, the state capital of Arunachal Pradesh. The total population of Lower Subansiri District is approximately 83,030 as per census 2011.

The economy in the land is based on scientific agriculture practices adopted by Apatanis who have rich traditional ecological knowledge of natural resource management and conservation. They preserve the colourful culture, various festivals, intricate handloom designs and bamboo crafts skills, etc.

**2. Objective of the study:** The area and scope of study are focused on Ziro valley and the important role played by the local community in tourism development of the area. With the notion that tourism is influenced by the community or community is playing a vital role in development of tourism, the present study of Ziro Valley is undertaken to review the present scenario and analyse the factors responsible for the growth of tourism in the area.

It may be useful for planer and policy makers to reassess the actual need for promotion of tourism in the area.

### **3. Literature Review:**

- 1) Linggi, Atege & Chimey Tenzin (2022) in their study examine the community attitude towards tourism and its socio cultural impact at Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh. With suitable reviews of the related literatures on the topic conclude that attitude of local community towards tourism has multidimensional impact on it. With a brief overview of Tawang district it presents data analysis and the findings. Suitable tabulation is done. In their findings they clearly mention that tourism enhances the living standard of community through broadening thinking and skills. It also indicates that tourism helps to promote and preserve culture, cuisine, crafts, arts and festivals. The result of the study shows that Tawang has great scope of further development.
- 2) Dolma Eco-tourism (2018) in its study tries to review the actual impact of tourism on the local people. It find that negative impacts of tourism like displacement of local people, depletion of local resources, increased cost of living and commercialization of culture etc. are minimized while active participation in tourism increases positive impacts and benefits to the local people.
- 3) Gurung, Deep Jyoti and Goswami, Chandan (2015) define community development citing different authors and elaborates different aspects of community development through literature review. They agree in principle that community in area plays very important role in development of tourism. In the study Shergaon village and its community is depicted. The study highlights the importance and contribution of a non government organization formed in this village namely Thuk which means to serve the village. It is a group of educated youth and villagers working in various fields like constructing of a museum and maintenance of houses of local people for home stay etc. This NGO is also trying to explore various forms of tourism in Shergaon.
- 4) Mize, Tami and others (2016) attempt to examine the current ecotourism, perspective and potential of ecotourism, perception of tourists and way of further improvement. In the study they define tourism, ecotourism and gives an over view of Ziro valley. The data is collected through questionnaires and different sources of information. Pictures and photo plates are used to depict reality.
- 5) Kiran Kumari and Omo, Pura (2020) try to explore the potentiality of Community Based Tourism (CBT) in Ziro valley. In the paper with a brief introduction of sustainable tourism, community based tourism (CBT) they points out that because of special characteristics such as beautiful landscapes, unique construction style of Apatani juts endemic flora fauna, local agricultural products, handicrafts, ornaments, local culture including festivals, local folktales, historical monuments and so many things, tourists get attracted towards Ziro valley which is reflected through a table Tourist Inflow for a period of eight (8) years from 2008 to 2015. And at last they conclude that CBT empowers the community encouraging them to engage in planning, evaluation and control resources. At last, they point out certain bottle neck of tourism as lack of sufficient infrastructures, transportation of air and land etc.

### **4. Methodology:**

The study is based on primary as well as secondary data. The primary data is collected through field visit, interaction with local people, tourists, hotels and homestay owners, destination owners, tour operators and local authority. While secondary data is collected from government reports, reference books, articles and websites.

### **Observation:**

During the field visit of ziro valley and interacting with all the stakeholders and going through the facilities and other support system available for tourism development in the area are as given below:

**Contribution of NGOs:** *Ngunu Ziro* is a NGO established in the year 2010 focusing on community based works for sustainable development by empowering the community to shape their own future. It promotes Homestay, Ziro butterfly meet etc. It primarily encourages the women to engage in self-help groups. And encourage the men to engage to save environment and campaign for 'Zero waste Ziro' and promote various methods for garbage management with an idea to make Ziro Valley a waste free area. To fulfil the objective of the NGO, it organizes 'Nature Camp' for school students and provide them environmental education which is organized as an annual event.

**Community based organization contributions:** They promote their aged old traditional culture and heritage. They have developed natural manmade lakes namely Seeh and Sikhe lake for tourism purpose. These lakes are run and managed by cooperative society owned by clan brothers. The scheme for sustainable development of area is funded by the government. The revenue earned through these activities is shared among the land owners. Such initiatives by local community helps in revenue generation, maintaining water table of the valley, providing water used for irrigation, society and governments help in infrastructure developments.

**Ziro Festival of Music (ZFM):** The Ziro Festival of Music is a music festival held in the Ziro valley of Arunachal Pradesh started in 2012 by Mr. Bobby Hano, a local Apatani youth of Ziro valley in support and collaboration with a group named 'Menwhopause' headed by Mr. Anup Kutty, a guitarist in profession, which also taking care of the marketing of the event. The event is also supported and sponsored by Directorate of Tourism, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, North Eastern Tourism Council,

#### **Resident's perception towards tourism:**

The researcher has interacted with local residents, hotel owners, travel agents, business owners and tourists to know their perception about the positive impacts of tourism at Ziro Valley and role played by the community in tourism development.

- ❖ Residents of the valley have their positive attitude towards tourism and feel proud when visitors praise the beauty of Ziro and Apatani culture.
- ❖ Due to tourism the accommodation sector in the valley have dramatically increased to meet the needs of tourists.
- ❖ The preference for tourist visiting Ziro valley are mostly for experiencing the unique tattoo culture of Apatani, bamboo house, life style, different cuisines local cusinises, festival like Dree, Myoko etc. and Ziro festival of the music, natural beauties and bio diversity.
- ❖ With certain exception majority agreed that tourism has played positive role in fostering their values and preservation of traditions and culture.
- ❖ But deny at the same time that they do all the genuine for preservation of their values and culture and conservation of natural heritage in the valley only due to the tourism. Genetically Arunachalees are nature lovers and are attached to the nature and their values and traditions are too to preserve and conserve natural heritage and resources respectively.
- ❖ **Other observations:**

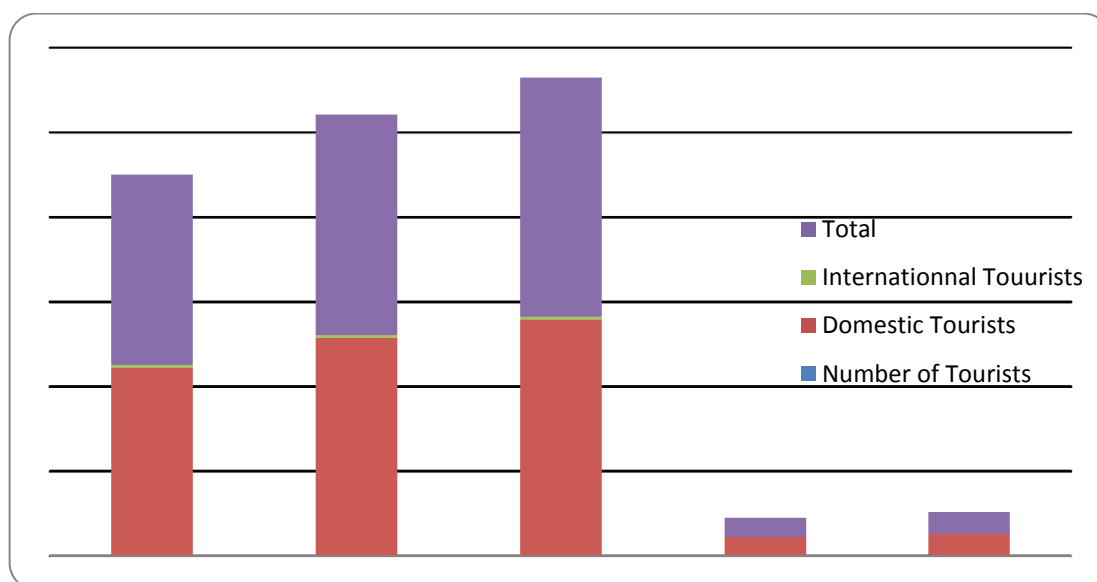
**International visitors:** as per the interactions and observations the international tourist visits Ziro from Italy, Germany, USA, Russia, Japan, Sweden, etc. They are mostly interested to experience the apatani Tatroo culture, Bamboo House, Life style, Cuisines, Ziro Music Festivals (ZFM), Dree Festivals, Myoko Festivals, etc.

**Domestic:** Tourist visits Ziro from every corner of the country almost throughout the year. They are mostly interested in visiting and experiencing the Shivling, ZFM, botanical garden, manmade lake, trekking, butterfly and bird meet etc.

**Paady cum fish cultivation in the Ziro valley is one of most demanded tourist interest.** The tourist mostly visits during the cultivation season to have glimpse of beautiful eye-catching scenario.

**Table-1: Yearly tourist influx in (Ziro) Lower Subansiri District**

Number of Tourists	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Domestic Tourists	19679	23308	25690	3015	1409
International Tourists	1126	1052	1116	382	1
Total	20805	24360	26806	3397	1410



It can be visualised from the above table-1 and graph that there is a gradual increase in the influx of the tourists from 2017-2019, but a sharp decline can be observed in the year 2020 & 2021, that is due to effect of global pandemic.

**Table-2: Percentage share of tourist influx of Ziro valley with Arunachal Pradesh**

Number of Tourists	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	%
Tourist influx in (Ziro) Lower Subansiri	20805	24360	26806	3397	1410	
% in Ziro	4.63	4.68	4.76	7.75	2.77	4.92
Tourist influx in Arunachal Pradesh	448988	520089	563464	43832	50720	100
% in rest of the Arunachal Pradesh	95.37	95.32	95.24	92.25	97.23	95.08



While Table -2 shows that percentage share of tourist visit in Ziro valley with Arunachal Pradesh is more or less static which can be interpreted as significance of Ziro valley is associated with Arunachal Pradesh and cannot be taken in isolation.

**Seasons:** International tourist visits mostly in the peak season from October to March and domestic tourist visits almost throughout the year. It is said that tourist keeps on visiting even during off season also to experience different attractions in the valley.

**Growth & Development:** Growth and development in the area have taken a drastic change in these years. This is due to frequent tourism activities happening in the area. The accommodations which were very limited with inadequate facilities have now grown almost thrice time with better facilities. Lots of resorts, homestays have contributed to this development. Roads, taxi services, shops, handicrafts and many more have seen huge growth due to the tourism. Some have told that Ziro is becoming education hub of the state. Next big thing in making. The income and employment opportunities are also seen a great change in the area. This all development is due to various activities like festivals, bird watching, butterfly meets, Ziro festival of music etc that are happening through the year.

**Connectivity:** the road is the only mode transportation available till date with very limited facilities. But the ongoing Trans Arunachal Highway project which is almost in the stage completion shall certainly improve the connectivity to Ziro from other part of the country. Also state lone Airport located about 150 KM from Ziro can be the booster from any visitors.

## **5. Results and Findings**

After visiting the area and interacting with local people, land owners, tourist, travel agents, hotel owners and the youths of ziro valley it is found that the local community are actively involved in promoting tourism in the Ziro valley. Community based organizations, NGOs and SHGs are also contributing to the development of area in somewhere or other. It is found that the Future Generations Arunachal (FGA) started Community Based Tourism with the support of Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, Bangalore in 2010. Future Generation Arunachal (PGA) began the project by imparting various trainings on tourism and the benefits of home-stay facility. They also supported in the formation of an apex community institution called Ngunu Ziro. Ngunu Ziro is playing very vital role in promotion of sustainable tourism, preservation and conservation of natural resources and heritage through organizing festival, encouraging and helping locals to develop home stay, developing festival grounds.

Some of the activities undertaken by Community based organization/ Local community for tourist are organizing various activities for tourist such as nature trekking to the forest, the Apatani heritage tour, Ziro butterfly meet, conserving, awareness and promoting the real value of the birds to the people of Arunachal Pradesh, Ziro Music Festival, training on homestay, Green Arunachal awareness camp, construction of manmade lake by local community etc.

Apatani people good in their approach with the understanding of the importance of guest and have excellent hospitality in nature. They are considered to be the most intellectual amongst the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The education system in the ziro valley has proven time and again in their contribution towards education sector of the state is immense. Ziro have the potential of becoming one of the most preferred education hubs in the state in the near future. Apatani people are nature lover. They preserve, conserve and protect the nature and bio-diversity and contributed the Ziro valley as one of the few places in the world, where nature and traditions are still alive.

As mentioned earlier the tourism activities have been flourishing in the Ziro valley even with limited facilities to the tourist. Arunachal is now connected with both air and rail service. Moreover the trans Arunachal highway is near to its completion the future prospect of tourism t is encouraging for the state.

### **Conclusions**

The study was undertaken to know about the role and involvement of local community in tourism development of Ziro valley. In the study it is found that the community based organization in the ziro valley are playing a vital role in promoting tourism with the help of various stake holders such as local people, land owners, hotel owners, and administration.

The nature, culture, traditional values, ecosystem are maintained and tourism is paced up by local community. Sustainable tourism and community based tourism should be nurtured for prosperity and economic growth of the region. Local people are in happy with the benefits they are getting through tourism activities and needs support from the authority to support build infrastructure and other requirement for area development. Local people should be directly involved in decision making while planning for tourism related infrastructure development and other activities in the area, because the local people are major stake holder and are well verged with the importance of the area. Taking decision hurriedly manner without the consent of local people may result in failure of any project undertaken by the decision maker. It is also found that due to initiative of local people for development of tourism has benefitted economically, socially and environmentally for the people of Ziro valley.

Though the government and community based organizations are doing well but it should be more focused on infrastructure development like aerial transportation, rail transportation and road transport (Honey, 1999) too, so that more and more tourist get attracted and try to visit the place.

Thus as per the study and observations made it is ascertained that the tourism in the Ziro valley shall witness major rise inflow of tourists in near future.

### **Limitations:**

As per the observation and study undertaken on the said areas the prospect of tourism in the Ziro valley is enormous but some of the respondents were reluctant to answer the queries related to the infrastructure facilities available for the tourist. The reasons as cited were unaware of the situations and not intended to answer. The data available were not sufficient and some few articles were written on this area. Moreover, due to lack of awareness programmes regarding tourism development in Ziro valley become a limitation to carry the study at fullest.

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