

# Opportunities and Challenges of Tourism Industry in Arunachal Pradesh

## *A Case Study of Tawang District through SWOT Analysis*

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**Abstract:** *Arunachal Pradesh is blessed with magnificent and inimitable tourism resources that can be capitalized upon profitably to make it a big in tourism sector. The state has just begun to open up the doors of its treasure trove of incredible tourism resources to the tourism market across the globe. The fact that tourism as an industry in the state is in its initial stage must be welcomed as a golden opportunity to promote and develop tourism on sustainable lines. It was only in the year 2003 when the maiden and exclusive state-specific tourism policy was rolled-out. As evidenced by the ever increasing trend of tourist foot falls in the last couple of years, Tawang district of late is coming up as one of the top-most tourism hotspots in the state. Visiting the district is compulsorily on the bucket list of every traveler to the state. The district received 50,612 foreign and domestic tourists in the year 2018 which is around 14.46 percent more than that (43,294 tourists) received in the previous year i.e., in the year 2017. The district has an enormous tourism potential in the sense that varied categories of tourism can be developed which can cater to the diverse special interests of the discerning travelers. It is dotted with numerous incredible tourism attraction sites and offerings. Sooner, tourism is going to be the mainstay of livelihood of the people of the district. With this backdrop, the paper intends to study the district's vast tourism potential through Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Further, the paper intends to put forth suggestions for a successful tourism promotion and development in the district.*

**Keywords:** Tourism, Industry, Tourism hotspot, Destinations, Incredible.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. It is a multi-dimensional economic activity having a much wider and far-reaching economic impacts. It has the capacity to set in a robust economic growth by activating forward and backward linkages across the sectors in the economy. For the economies banking on tourism, it has proved to be a major engine for inclusive growth and a major source of foreign exchange earnings. It solves the pressing twin socio-economic problems of unemployment and poverty by offering multifarious opportunities of employment and income generation. It contributes to establish global harmony and peace by enhancing mutual understanding, tolerance, and awareness among the people. Further, being smokeless, the industry has the minimal ill-effects on the fragile environment (Gyana & Parida, 2019, p. 1).

Arunachal Pradesh cannot afford to miss the golden opportunity of gaining from its latent tourism sector. Tourism can be a major economic game changer for a revenue-strapped state like Arunachal Pradesh. The state recently added a yet another feather on its tourism cap when it was awarded 'The Best Emerging Green Tourist Destination' on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2019 by the Travel & Leisure Magazine ("Arunachal receives 'Best emerging green tourist destination' award," 2019, November 19). One can aptly put, "What oil is to the Arab countries, tourism can be to Arunachal Pradesh!" In the days ahead, tourism will be the largest source of revenue for the state. In fact, state's economy will be a tourism-driven (Gyana, 2018, p. 11). As of now, the promotion and development process of tourism

in Arunachal Pradesh is in its initial stage. The state has just begun to put sincere efforts to capitalize on its core tourism assets and make it big as a global tourism brand in near future. A total amount Rs. 10.5 crore has been allocated for the state tourism sector by the state government in the Rs. 731.40 crore deficit budget announced for 2020-21 (**Staff Reporter, 2020, Thursday, March 5**).

Tawang district with its headquarters at Tawang is coming up as a 365-day hot tourist destination in the state. The hill station is a treasure trove of rich, varied and incredible tourism resources. In terms of total number of tourist footprints received in the last couple of years, the district ranks among the top in the state. The district is covered under the Tezpur-Bhalukpong-Bomdila-Tawang Tourist Travel Circuit.<sup>1</sup> The district hosted a total of 50,612 tourists (Domestic Tourist: 50367 and Foreign Tourist: 245) in the year 2018, i.e., 40.5 percent over and above 20,484 tourists (Domestic Tourist: 20,219 and Foreign Tourist: 265) received in the year 2014.<sup>2</sup> In the back drop of when the state is just starting to leverage its tourism resources, it would be relevant to study tourism industry in Tawang district in the light of its opportunities and challenges through the use of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

- [1]. To highlight the prospects and challenges of tourism industry in Tawang district by analyzing its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
- [2]. To suggest measures for the growth of tourism industry in Tawang district.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The study is analytical as well as descriptive in nature. The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis is undertaken basing on both secondary and primary data. Interview and observation methods have been used extensively. The District Tourism Office, Tawang (Government of Arunachal Pradesh), the Directorate of Tourism, Itanagar (Government of Arunachal Pradesh), tourists, tour operators, hoteliers and the local community formed the major sources of data. Besides, relevant websites, books, magazines, journals, newspapers, pamphlets, brochures, etc. have also been used.

The SWOT analysis is employed to assess and analyze the factors - internal and external factors, as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats which as on date either support or act against the district's prospects as a tourist destination.

## IV. PROFILE OF TAWANG DISTRICT

Tawang district is situated in the western most part of Arunachal Pradesh. The district is bounded by Tibet (China) to the north, Bhutan to the south and the south-west, and the Himalayan range Sela to the east and the south-east separated from West Kameng. The district name 'Tawang' is derived from the grandiose of Tawang Monastery.<sup>3</sup> The name 'Tawang' was given by His Holiness, the Mera Lama Lodre Gyatso.<sup>4</sup> At the instance of the Government of India, the first administrative centre at Tawang was set up on 6<sup>th</sup> February, 1951. The Monpas are the indigenous inhabitants of the district and follow Tibetan Buddhism. They belong to the Mongoloid stock and Tibeto-Burman family of language. Agriculture and livestock rearing has been the mainstay of rural livelihood of the Monpas since time immemorial. In the modern times, the people are also engaged in other sources of livelihood such as government services, businesses, etc. Further of late, as the district is abundantly blessed with incredible tourism resources, the local people have begun

<sup>1</sup>As on date, the government has approved in all twelve (12) tourist travel circuits in Arunachal Pradesh.

<sup>2</sup>Data collected from District Tourism Office, Tawang, Government of Arunachal Pradesh on 02.10.2019.

<sup>3</sup>Tawang Monastery which is otherwise known as Gandan Namgyal Lhatse Gompa is the Asia's oldest and second largest monastery. It is India's largest monastery. It was founded as per the wishes of His Holiness, the V<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in the later part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by His Holiness Merak Lama Lodre Gyatso.

<sup>4</sup>In Monpa dialect, 'Ta' means 'horse' and 'Wang' means 'chosen' or 'blessed'. Popular legend has it that the present site of the monastery is chosen by the horse owned by His Holiness, Mera Lama Lodre Gyatso.

to capitalize up on the latent resources to explore livelihood sources in tourism sector. Also, with the state tourism sector gaining an unprecedented attention from the government and other stakeholders in the recent years, the district's economy in particular will soon going to be a tourism-driven. The **table 1** gives a brief glance into the profile of the study area.

**Table 1: A Brief Profile of Tawang District**

|                                         |                      |                                          |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>Headquarters</b>                     |                      | Tawang                                   |
| <b>Administrative Set-up</b>            | <b>Sub-divisions</b> | 3                                        |
|                                         | <b>Circles</b>       | 10                                       |
| <b>Location</b>                         | <b>Lattitudes</b>    | 90°45' to 92°15' North                   |
|                                         | <b>Longitudes</b>    | 27°22' to 27°45' East                    |
| <b>Area</b>                             |                      | 2,172 sq. km.                            |
| <b>Average Elevation</b>                |                      | 2,669 metres (8,757 feet)                |
| <b>Inhabiting Tribe</b>                 |                      | Monpa                                    |
| <b>Population (2011 Census)</b>         |                      | 49,977 [* Urban: 11,202 & Rural: 38,775] |
| <b>Population Density (2011 Census)</b> |                      | 23 persons per sq. km                    |
| <b>Sex Ratio (2011 census)</b>          |                      | 701 females per 1000 males               |
| <b>Literacy Rate (2011 Census)</b>      |                      | 60.61 percent                            |
| <b>Villages (2011 Census)</b>           |                      | 218                                      |
| <b>Museums</b>                          |                      | 2                                        |
| <b>Police Stations (2011 Census)</b>    |                      | 5                                        |

Source: District Statistical Hand Book: 2016-17, District Statistics Office, Tawang, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

#### **V. TOURIST SEASON IN TAWANG DISTRICT**

Tawang district as a tourist destination has a long tourist season spanning eight (8) months viz., January, February, March, April, September, October, November and December barring the monsoon seasons of May, June, July and August when the district experiences heavy showers. Tourists generally avoid visiting the district during the monsoons. The district experiences fair weather conditions during the months of March, April, September, October and November. However, it's extremely cold and the district experiences snow fall during the winter months of December, January and February.

#### **VI. ACCOMMODATION FACILITATES IN TAWANG DISTRICT**

With the growth of tourism as an economic activity picking up its pace in the district in particular and the state in general, a good number of accommodation facilities have come up in the district. The district has one of the highest numbers of fooding and lodging facilities available in the whole of the state. The district has in all 96 government and private facilities like hotels, tourist lodges, homestays, etc. However, it is observed that the private individuals play the dominant role (around 91 percent) when compared to the government in providing accommodation facilities. It's worth mentioning here that an unprecedented good number of home stays have come up in the rural areas facilitating the visitors to experience the Monpa socio-cultural life in the actual setting.

#### **VII. PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY OF TAWANG DISTRICT**

In terms of physical connectivity, Tawang district is connected through roadways and airways. The Trans-Arunachal Highway connecting the district with the rest of the world is still under construction. The tough Himalayan terrain and weather conditions are posing great challenge in the fast completion of the project. Presently, long stretches of bad road at various points are observed and consequently the journey to reach the district itself abnormally involves long hours of back-breaking and tiresome journey. The travel woes get aggravated during the monsoons due to the worsening road condition.

Barring few destinations located in the outskirts, almost all the destinations within the district are connected with an all-weather road network. However, there are few destinations in the district which do not have any road connectivity.

Air connectivity to the district is offered through helicopter services. However, it is observed that the services are not on daily basis but are limited to only two times a week i.e., on Monday and Friday. The **table 2** depicts the modes of accessibility to the district.

**Table 2: Physical Accessibility of Tawang District**

| Mode    | Nearest Entry Point                                                                 | Services available from thereon |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Roadway | Bhalukpong (Assam - Arunachal Interstate Border)                                    | Bus and Taxi                    |
|         | Balemu (Assam - Arunachal Interstate Border)                                        | Bus and Taxi                    |
| Airway  | Guwahati, Kamrup district, Assam (Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport) | Helicopter, Bus and Taxi        |
|         | Tezpur, Sonitpur district, Assam (Salonibari Domestic Airport)                      | Bus and Taxi                    |
|         | Naharlagun, Papum Pare district, Arunachal Pradesh (Naharlagun Heliport)            | Helicopter, Bus and Taxi        |
| Railway | Bhalukpong (Assam-Arunachal Interstate Border)                                      | Bus and Taxi                    |
|         | Naharlagun (Arunachal Pradesh)                                                      | Helicopter, Bus and Taxi        |

Source: Compiled from field survey.

### VIII. TOURIST FOOTFALL IN TAWANG DISTRICT

The **table 3** shows the tourist footfall trend in the district during the five-year period w.e.f. 2014 to 2018.

**Table 3: Tourist Footfall in Tawang District**

| Year         | Domestic Tourist Arrivals | Foreign Tourist Arrivals | Total           |
|--------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 2014         | 20,219                    | 265                      | 20,484          |
| 2015         | 23,776                    | 305                      | 24,081          |
| 2016         | 24,423                    | 279                      | 24,702          |
| 2017         | 43,059                    | 235                      | 43,294          |
| 2018         | 50,367                    | 245                      | 50,612          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1,61,844</b>           | <b>1,329</b>             | <b>1,63,173</b> |

Source: District Tourism Office, Tawang, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

It is evident that although fluctuating, there is a general increase in the tourist arrivals in the district. The bulk (99.2 percent) of the total tourists visiting the district is comprised of domestic tourists. It is observed that neighbouring states viz., Assam and West Bengal are the main domestic tourist generating markets for the district. Though foreign tourists also visit the district but their number as of now is very less and negligible when compared to that of the domestic tourists i.e., only 0.8 percent. The observation calls for more efforts and incentives so as to attract more of the foreign tourists. Foreign tourists being high-end consumers will sure benefit both the government and the communities at the destination with larger economic returns than the domestic tourists.

### IX. TOURIST ATTRACTION IN TAWANG DISTRICT

Tawang as a tourist destination is a repository of incredible attractions. It has immense potential to offer unique and rich experiences to the visitors under varied tourism categories based on its core natural, cultural, religious, historical, archaeological, etc. assets. The district is a whole new paradise for the photographers. It is dotted with numerous attraction sites. The **table 4** depicts the prominent destinations in the district.

**Table 4: Prominent Tourist Attraction Sites in TAWANG District**

| Tourist Attraction Sites                                     | Tourism Essence                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Gaden Namgyal Lhatse Gompa ( <i>Tawang Gompa/Monastery</i> ) | Heritage, historical, spiritual & religious |
| Bumla Pass, Tawang                                           | Historical & scenic                         |

|                                                                 |                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Tawang War Memorial, Tawang                                     | Historical                                            |
| Gorzam Chorten                                                  | Heritage, historical, spiritual & religious           |
| Sela Pass , Tawang                                              | Natural scenic & Adventure                            |
| Urgelling Gompa                                                 | Heritage, historical, spiritual & religious           |
| Shongatser Tso                                                  | Natural scenic & Adventure                            |
| Taktsang Gompa                                                  | Heritage, historical, spiritual & religious           |
| Phong Phongma Phazar ( <i>Jang/Nuranang Water Fall</i> )        | Natural scenic                                        |
| Jaswant Garh                                                    | Historical                                            |
| Panga Teng Tso                                                  | Natural scenic & Adventure                            |
| Sang-ngag Choekhorling Gompa ( <i>Khinmey Gompa/Monastery</i> ) | Heritage, historical, spiritual & religious           |
| Chagzam ( <i>Iron bridge</i> )                                  | Heritage & historical                                 |
| BabTeng Kang Water Fall                                         | Natural scenic                                        |
| Zemithang Valley                                                | Wildlife ( <i>Black-necked crane wintering spot</i> ) |

Source: District Tourism Office, Tawang, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

#### **X. STRENGTH, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS OF TOURISM IN TAWANG DISTRICT**

The opportunities and challenges of tourism industry in Tawang district is studied through the use of tool of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis as discussed:

**STRENGTHS:** The following are the tangible and intangible factors which stand as the district's strengths in terms of a potential tourist destination:

- 1. Peerless and implausible natural landscape beauty:** The district is truly a treasure house of natural beauty consisting picturesque landscapes, large forest areas, with numerous and beautiful mountains, peaks, hills, valleys, rivers, waterfalls, hot springs, etc. The natural landscape beauty gets even more enhanced under the snow cover during the winter seasons. The nature has blessed the district with all its mesmerizing beauty and freshness.
- 2. Religious and spiritual sites:** There is a good scope for religious and spiritual tourism in the district. Tawang is considered as the major Buddhist pilgrimage destination not only in the state, but also in the entire North East India. Asia's oldest and second largest monastery viz., Gandan Namgyal Lhatse Gompa<sup>5</sup> (popularly known as Tawang Monastery, founded by Merak Lama Lodre Gyatso in the later part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century) is situated in the district. The district is blessed to have been the birth place of the His Holiness, the 6<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. The district is dotted with numerous other pilgrimage sites viz., Khromten Gompa, Gyangong Ani Gompa, Singzor Ani<sup>6</sup> Gompa, etc. These religious and spiritual sites can offer the perfect and tranquil atmosphere for a spiritually rejuvenating treat to the religious visitors.
- 3. Historical and archaeological sites:** Tawang is dotted with numerous sites of historical and archaeological interest that can potentially draw the attention of historians, archaeologists, researchers, students, etc. Several Buddhist religious sites dating back as early as 15<sup>th</sup> century or even before along with few sites of Sino-Indian War, 1962 dot the district. Gaden Namgyal Lhatse Gompa, Gorzam Chorten, Urgelling Gompa, Taktsang Gompa, Khromtem Gompa, Chagzam, etc. are few of the religious sites whereas, Jaswant Garh War Memorial at Sela and Subedar Joginder Singh, PVC Memorial at Bumla are the two important sites from Sino-Indian War of 1962.
- 4. Rural Tourism:** The district is a rural one in the sense that there are 218 villages and the majority of the population i.e., 77.59 percent (2011 Census) lives in the rural areas. The villages showcase the rich and incredible way of life of the inhabiting tribe in the typical traditional setting. The visitors can have a unique experience in the villages. Rural tourism can be gainfully promoted in the district.

<sup>5</sup> 'Gompa' in Monpa dialect means Monastery.

<sup>6</sup> 'Ani' in Monpa dialect means nun, and 'Ani Gompa' means nunnery.

5. **Repository of rich high altitude wildlife:** The district has a rich base of flora and fauna. Many of the flora and fauna species are endemic to the district and are not found anywhere else. The district is a home to different and exotic high altitude Himalayan species of flora and fauna<sup>7</sup>. A wide variety of high altitudinal tree and plant species, orchids, musk deer, mountain goat, bear, barking deer, snow leopard, numerous species of resident birds and migratory birds, reptiles, etc. are found. Zemithang valley in the district is one of the only two wintering sites for the endangered black-necked cranes (*Grus nigricollis*) in the state<sup>8</sup>. These incredible wildlife resources offer a strong base for the promotion of high altitude wildlife tourism in the district. The district's rich wildlife resource base has the potential to create interest among the nature lovers, students, researchers, botanists, zoologist, etc. from across the globe.
6. **Adventure Tourism:** The district can be a perfect adventure tourism destination. The tourists having the motivation to achieve the mental states of rush or flow will definitely find the ultimate solace here only. It has the perfect natural treasure which can be capitalised to promote adventure tourism. Tawang can be a whole new leaf in adventure based niche tourism enticing adventure junkies seeking for the perfect adrenaline rush or flow. The following two broad categories of adventure tourism can be promoted in the district:
  - a. **River-based adventure tourism:** The district is blessed with Tawang Chu and Nyamjang Chu rivers possessing rapids of good grade. Adventure sports activities such as white-water rafting, angling, river crossing, kayaking etc. can be gainfully undertaken.
  - b. **Terrain-based adventure tourism:** The district possesses the perfect landscapes for terrain-based adventure tourism. Activities like mountaineering, mountain-biking, mountain-cycling, paragliding, rappelling, trekking, hiking, camping, ziplining, golfing, bungee jumping, 4x4 off road car racing, etc. adventure sports activities can be undertaken.
7. **Unique and rich cultural base:** The district is inhabited by one of the major tribes of the state i.e., the Monpa tribe. The time-tested rich and unique Monpa culture which is based primarily on the Tibetan form of Mahayana Buddhism along with a pinch of Tibet's ancient Bon religion offers a strong base for the growth of cultural tourism in the district. The ethnic festivals, traditions, rituals, folk songs & dances, cuisines & beverages, games & sports, and many other cultural aspects of the tribe can be offered as never-before-experienced tourism products.
8. **Socio-cultural and religious festivals:** Since time immemorial, the Monpas of Tawang have been celebrating numerous traditional festivals. These are of immense socio-religious significance. The festivals can be offered as tourism products which can give priceless experiences to the visitors. Torgya, Dungyur, Lossar, Choekor, Drukpa Tse-zshi, Zshipa Saka Dawa, etc. are the names of few of the prominent festivals celebrated by the tribe. The age-old festivals can be monetized profitably by the communities for tourism purposes.
9. **Long tourism business season:** The district boasts of a long favorable tourism business season spanning ten (10) months viz., January, February, March, April, September, October, November and December barring the monsoon seasons during May, June, July and August. The district can have a remarkable business in tourism sector.
10. **Good snowfall:** The district experiences snowfall during the winter months of December, January, February and March which enhances the beauty of the destination. The snowfall coupled with the perfect natural landscape of the district can be leveraged upon to bring about skiing resorts. The district can become a world-class top skiing destination.

<sup>7</sup> Arunachal Pradesh has a rich biodiversity making it a 'cradle of speciation'. It harbors more than 33 percent of the total Indian flora with unique and large number of genetic resources. The state comes under the Eastern Himalayan Global Biodiversity Hotspot, one of the 35 biodiversity hotspots identified so far in the world.

<sup>8</sup> Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir (a former Indian state and which is now reorganized into two union territories - Jammu and Kashmir in the west and Ladakh in the east with the passing of Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, 2019 w.e.f. 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2019) are the only two states having the privilege of being the only two wintering retreat/site for the black necked cranes in India (Ghai, n.d.).

11. **Uncharted Himalayan mountains and peaks:** The district's topography is dotted with a range of Himalayan mountains and peaks which have never been charted before. The natural asset offers an open invitation to the extreme adventure seekers from across the globe in search of the perfect rush to undertake mountaineering, trekking, rock climbing, etc. extreme adventure activities.
12. **International borders with Bhutan and China:** The district shares its border with China (in the north) and Bhutan (in the south-west), the two of the hottest tourist destinations in the world. The district can act as the immediate gateway to the two nations there by facilitating convenient accessibility across the borders. Tourism in the district in particular and the state as well as the country in general can benefit from diverting tourist footprints in these countries by conceptualizing transnational tourist circuits which includes Tawang as one of the destinations. But this would warrant sincere and concerted efforts to be put in by the concerned governments across the borders.
13. **Large pool of educated unemployed youths:** Of late, unemployment has come up as a serious socio-economic problem in the state. The unemployment figure for the state is very high. It ranks among the top 10 states in terms of unemployment rate in the country. As per the state's Labour and Employment Department about 67,000 educated unemployed youths were registered in the various employment exchanges across the state including Tawang as on 31.03.2018 (Pao, 2019, June 16). This pool of the unemployed youths can be capitalized upon so as to create skilled labour force that can be gainfully employed in the state tourism sector offering high quality experiences to the visitors.
14. **Warm and gracious Monpa Hospitality:** The Monpas by nature are very friendly and courteous people. They are well-known for offering warm and gracious hospitality to the guests.

**WEAKNESSES:** The following are the weaknesses which act as bottlenecks in the process of tourism growth in the district:

1. **Late starter:** The state is a late starter in tourism sector. It accorded industrial status to tourism very lately. Although, the independent tourism department was established in the year 1995, but the maiden and exclusive state-specific tourism policy could be formulated only in the year 2003.
2. **Inconclusive and outmoded tourism policy:** The maiden tourism policy is inconclusive and lacks a detailed policy framework for the vast tourism sector which in the state. The policy lacks clear-cut policies and plans regarding tourism growth in the state. Moreover, it is outmoded to cater to the pressing demands of the ever changing tourism sector. It has been more than 15 years now since the implementation of the maiden state-specific tourism policy in 2003.
3. **Negligent state industrial policies:** Tourism sector as such has been given a step-motherly treatment in the sense that it has hardly any mention in the state's industrial policies rolled-out up till now. Subsequent policies have accorded not even the least importance to the sector. These mainly emphasize on Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) under manufacturing and processing sector.
4. **Low budget allocation:** In terms of the budget allocation, the state government has continually accorded the least importance to the tourism sector as is evident from the characteristic low budget allocation which the sector has been receiving in the successive state budgets when compared to that allocated for the other sectors. The sector received one of the least allocations i.e., only 1.4 percent of the total budget announced for the fiscal year 2020-21.
5. **Safety and security issues:** Insurgency problems in Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in the state in particular and the Northeastern India in general have brought the state in bad light in terms of the safety and security for life and property. The ripple effect has it that many of the tourists consider the whole of the state as a disturbed state and so, there is sense of insecurity among the tourists while travelling in the region.
6. **Non-monetization of tourism products:** Most of the district's tourism resources especially natural scenic attractions and cultural attractions are not yet monetized at all. The natural scenic assets like waterfalls, valleys, etc. and the cultural assets like the festivals, dances, etc. are yet to be monetized. This has resulted in the loss of opportunity for revenue generation especially by the local community.

7. **Lack of a world-class professional institute of travel, tourism and hospitality management:** There is a sheer lack of world-class professional institute in the state which exclusively caters to the education and training in travel, tourism and hospitality management so as to create a pool of skilled and trained manpower as required by the young and growing state tourism industry.
8. **Lack of proper wayside and on-site amenities:** The district critically lacks in both wayside and on-site amenities. There is lack of proper and decent amenities such as pure drinking water facility, proper sitting arrangement, wash-room and toilet facility, cafeteria, rest houses, etc. adding to the inconveniences of the tourists while visiting the destinations.
9. **Stray dog menace:** The large population of stray dogs in the district has been often reported as a menace not only by the visitors but also by the general populace. The menace is more acute especially in the towns wherein the dog population is highly concentrated. Incidences of dog bites; sleepless nights due to whole-night barking, etc. have been on a rise. Many of the visitors have expressed fear of attacks by the dogs while moving around on foot especially in the township area.
10. **Irregular adventure activities:** Though the district has the perfect natural landscape for a varied range of adventure activities/sports, the tremendous potential is hardly exploited. It's for only once in a year during Tawang Festival<sup>9</sup> select few range of adventure events are held. There isn't any established facility in the district to cater to the diverse needs of the adventure lovers as and when demanded.
11. **Absence of proper amusement and theme parks:** There aren't any standard amusement and theme parks in their true sense in the district. The existing parks lack in proper amenities.
12. **Perils of poor road connectivity to the district:** The road connectivity to the district is pathetic as long stretches are still under construction due to the in-progress Trans-Arunachal Highway<sup>10</sup>. The road condition worsens during monsoon seasons on account of road blocks due to landslides, road sinks, etc. The tourists' dismal observation is that it involves abnormally long hours of strenuous travel just only to reach the district. It is to be noted that as a tourist one would wish to spend much of the limited time in the destination rather than wasting it in long and tiresome journeys to reach the destinations.
13. **Poor road connectivity within the district:** Though the road connectivity within the district is mostly good but still there are few tourist destinations especially in the outskirts which are yet to be connected with all-weather roads. Khromten Gompa, Thespa Gompa, Bragyab Gompa, Thangaphe, etc. are few of the attraction centres which are yet to have proper road connectivity. Though the attraction sites like Bangachanga, Bumla Pass, Shongatser Tso, etc. are connected with roads, but these being unsurfaced roads, are observed to be not facilitating smooth, comfortable and faster all-weather travels.
14. **Poor air connectivity to the district:** The air connectivity to the district in terms of helicopter flight services is not on regular basis. The district is connected with the rest of the world through air for only twice a week.
15. **Poor telecommunications:** The district is marred with poor telecommunication services due to frequent disruptions in internet services. Tourists have expressed frustrating experiences of making unsuccessful attempts while trying to connect with their relatives, friends, and the rest of world at large while travelling while travelling in the district. They felt cut-off from the rest of the world. The situation is worse in case of most of the remote and rural areas which are yet to be connected with telecommunication connectivity. It may be noted here that Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone India are the telecom companies presently providing cellular services in the district.

<sup>9</sup> Tawang Festival is one of the annual calendar events of the Tourism Department, Government of Arunachal Pradesh. The three-day ambitious promotional event is held annually during the month of October. The event draws thousands of domestic and foreign tourists across India and the globe.

<sup>10</sup> The Trans-Arunachal Highway (NH 13) is the ambitious all-weather two-lane highway project which is considered to be a paradigm shift in the sphere of road connectivity in the state. The 2,407 km long road stretches from Tawang (Tawang District) in the north-western end of the state to Kanubari (Longding district) in the south-eastern end of the state ("**Trans-Arunachal Highway**," n.d.). As the project is still under construction especially in the higher reaches of the mountainous state, a seamless travel across the state is presently a distant dream.

- 16. Erratic electricity power supply:** Erratic power supply is a characteristic problem of the district. The problem worsens during the winter seasons when it is extreme cold, throwing all the life essential power-run systems - heating system, telecommunication system, etc. out of gear.
- 17. Restriction on visits by foreign tourists:** The foreign tourists are not allowed to visit the destinations near the Indo-China international border as well as Indo-Bhutan international border even though they possess the Protected Area Permit (PAP). They are debarred from visiting the frontier destinations viz., Bumla Pass, Gorsam Chorten, Shongatser Tso, Taktsang Gompa, etc. The foreign tourists are deprived of experiencing the exotic frontier locations in the district, much to their disappointment.
- 18. Mandatory additional permit for domestic tourists:** In order to visit the destinations along Indo-China international border as well as Indo-Bhutan international border in the district, it is mandatory for the domestic tourists to also possess an additional special permit from the district administration and the Indian Army in spite of having the Inner Line Permit. The application which is processed offline under the two establishments costs visitors at least a day of their precious limited tour duration. The domestic tourists require the special permit to visit the frontier destinations viz., Gorsam Chorten, Shongatser Tso, Taktsang Gompa, Bumla Pass, etc. The system is observed to be time consuming and unnecessary.
- 19. Inadequate exploitation of tourism resources:** Tourism as an industry in the state is a recent consideration and hence it is in its initial stage of promotion and development. The district's treasure of tourism resources are yet to be exploited to the fullest. There is a tremendous scope for fuller and optimal utilization of the resources. Almost all of the tourism categories in which otherwise the district is quite potential of are yet to be developed and promoted to the fullest, and offered to the tourism market across the globe.
- 20. Inadequate and weak marketing efforts:** A sheer lackadaisical attitude on the part of the stakeholders - government and non-government alike, is observed when it comes to marketing Tawang as a tourism brand. An active marketing effort across various media platforms is not observed. There isn't any well-conceived Tawang-specific official promo done by the government as yet. Though of course, the state tourism department has brought about few official promos but these promote the whole of state as a one single tourist destination. The comprehensive promos covering various destinations across the state as a whole are observed to be ineffective in promoting/publicizing Tawang as a tourism brand. These miss out in garnering targeted attention for the district as a potential tourism destination in the market.
- 21. Absence of control measures to counter mass tourism.** There isn't any clear cut road map in place to counter the menace of excess inflow of tourists and the ill-impacts under mass tourism situation. The district in particular and the state in general is not yet prepared to counter the problem.

**OPPORTUNITIES:** The following are the opportunities coming on way that can be capitalized up on so as to bring about a robust tourism industry in the district:

- 1. Act East Policy and the associated goodies:** Considered as the gateway to the Southeast Asia, the North-eastern India is being accorded unprecedented support and attention from the Union Government of India under its ambitious Act East Policy.<sup>11</sup> It is envisaged to usher development in all the spheres of the regional economy. Arunachal Pradesh including Tawang in particular and the other states from the region in general would be definitely receiving the required developmental thrust in all the spheres of the economy including tourism.
- 2. Trans-Arunachal Highway and enhanced accessibility:** The in-progress portions of Trans-Arunachal Highway (NH 13) project connecting Tawang with the plains of Bhalukpong (Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border) and the rest of the world if once completed, then it would increase the district's accessibility quotient

<sup>11</sup> India's Act East Policy is a diplomatic initiative launched in 2014 to promote economic, strategic and cultural ties with the countries in Asia-Pacific region i.e., Southeast Asian nations and the countries in the eastern parts of India. It is a paradigm shift in India's foreign and economic policy in the Asia-Pacific region. The policy warrants a more proactive role for India in the region (**De, n.d**).

which would definitely contribute to the growth of tourism. Given an all-weather comfortable and faster connectivity, tourist traffic in the district would increase.

3. **Railway connectivity and enhanced accessibility:** The central government has cleared the Bhalukpong-Tenga-Tawang (378km) project under its ambitious plan to expand railway networks deep into the state and up to frontier border districts under the Northeast Frontier Railways. As of now, the project survey is being carried out. On the successful completion of the project, it would provide a yet another seamless, economic and comfortable mode of transportation to the travelers visiting Tawang. It would increase the accessibility of the district (**Sharma, 2019, November 14**).
4. **Lumla-Tashigang-Darrang International Road Project:** The in-progress ambitious Lumla (Tawang district, Arunachal Pradesh, India) - Tashigang (via Samdrupdzongkar, Bhutan) - Darrang district (Assam, India) international road project is soon expected to see the light of the day. Upon completion the road would drastically reduce the travelling distance between Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh, India) and Guwahati (Assam, India) by 200 kilometres, thereby, saving the travelling time by 6 hours.<sup>12</sup> The road would offer a better, faster, convenient and cost-effective all-weather connectivity alternative to the district when compared to the existing one. It would tremendously boost the tourism sector in Tawang district in particular and the state in general. An attractive transnational tourist circuit connecting Tawang with the destinations in Bhutan would definitely increase the attraction value of the district as a hot tourist destination ("**Governor takes up Lumla-Tashigang road with Bhutan consul general,**" 2019, October 12).
5. **Ambitious tourism schemes for augmented infrastructural development:** The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has off late begun to give unprecedented and tremendous attention to the growth of tourism sector in the country. Many schemes such as Swadesh Darshan, Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD), etc. are being rolled out. The tourism infrastructural base in the state including Tawang too could be hoped to be augmented under the schemes in near future.
6. **Boost in air connectivity:** Under the UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Nagrik) scheme, the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India has the ambitious plan to link the entire state with aviation services in the next 10 years connecting small and big towns with helicopter and other small passenger aircraft services. The foundation stone for the state's lone Greenfield airport at Holongi near Itanagar, the capital city of the state has been laid by Shri Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India on 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2019. The Prime Minister also inaugurated the civilian airport constructed by the Airport Authority of India (AAI) at Tezu (Lohit district) on the same day. Post operationalisation of the airports, Tawang would surely enjoy the share of the boom in the tourist inflow to the state ("**PM lays foundation of Greenfield airport, inaugurates another airport in Arunachal Pradesh,**" 2019, February, 9).
7. **Coming up of state-of-the-art outdoor stadium:** A state-of-the-art high altitude outdoor stadium in name of Gyalwa Tsangyang Gyatso High Altitude Stadium is being constructed in the district. In near future, sports tourism in the district will definitely see the light of the day. The district may prove to be an offbeat venue wherein national and international games and sports activities such as cricket, football, volleyball, etc. can be conducted.
8. **Initial stage of growth of state tourism:** The fact that the process of planned growth of tourism in the state has just begun<sup>13</sup>, can be taken as a golden opportunity by the tourism players to promote and develop the sector in the district on sustainable lines taking cue from those destinations which are presently bearing the brunt of unplanned approach to the sector. The associated socio-cultural and environmental implications due to tourism must be given utmost importance.

<sup>12</sup> The travel time involved in the present Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh) - Tezpur (Assam) route is over 15 hours. A considerable amount of time of a tourist is lost just only to reach Tawang. The time involvement is even more during the monsoons.

<sup>13</sup> Tourism sector in Arunachal Pradesh has just begun and is in its initial stage of growth. This is in the sense that the industrial status to the sector in true sense was accorded only in the year 2003, i.e., just about 17 Years ago when the state rolled out its maiden tourism policy viz., Arunachal Pradesh State Tourism Policy, 2003.

**THREATS:** The following factors are posing as the threats in the process of tourism growth in the district:

1. **Tough competition in tourism market:** Tourism market is highly competitive. This poses a threat for the district as a tourist hotspot destination. There is a tough competition from other tourist destinations at various levels - state level, regional level, national level and international level. For instance at the state level itself, Tawang as a tourist destination faces competition from its counterparts viz., Ziro, Bomdila, Dirang, Mechukha, Tezu, Namsai, Anini, etc.
2. **Uncertainty in tourism market:** Tourism market is volatile and dynamic in the sense that the tastes and preferences of the potential tourists may fluctuate or change at any moment. Tourists' favourable perception of a tourist destination may become unfavourable and they may not like to visit the destination any longer.
3. **Loss of originality of the Monpa culture:** The authenticity of the Monpa culture may get lost permanently forever on account of acculturation. The host culture may undergo change due to the frequent and long contacts between the host culture and foreign cultures. This may drastically affect the indigenous cultural nuances of the host.
4. **Moral and societal degeneration:** There is a high propensity of the visitors indulging in sexual and other immoral activities such as prostitution, drug menace, human trafficking, etc. in the destination for drawing pleasure. The effect of such immoral activities could have cascading negative effects on both the health and the morality of the society in the long-run. The host community may contract sexually transmitted diseases like the dreaded acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), etc.
5. **Environmental pollution and degradation:** In the absence of proper waste management system, there is a high chance of pollution and environmental degradation at the destinations in the district due to mass tourism and uncontrolled tourist traffic in the days ahead. The destinations may turn into litter-dumping sites. Pollution at tourist destinations has cropped up as a serious menace across the globe.
6. **Sense of insecurity due to insurgency:** There is a general apprehension of insecurity of life and property among the tourists in the state including Tawang district due to the ripple effect of the state's overall negative image created on account of intermittent incidences of insurgency reported from Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts of the state. Active presence of various factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) is reported in these districts.<sup>14</sup>
7. **Over tourism and its ill-effects:** In the absence of appropriate control measures to check tourist traffic, the district may experience the menace of over tourism and its detrimental socio-cultural and environmental impacts. The situation may put strain on local infrastructure and turn out to be a nuisance for the local community.
8. **Contingencies:** Tourism in the district in particular and the state in general may suffer a huge set back if certain emergency situations arise such as natural disasters, pandemics, wars, etc. There would be no business in the sector in the absence of any visitation. The on-going Covid-19 pandemic has drastically crippled the tourism industry world-wide.

## XI. SUGGESTIONS

The study suggests the following measures for the growth of tourism in Tawang district:

1. Both on-site and wayside basic infrastructures/amenities such as cafeteria, pure drinking water facility, washroom and toilet facilities, rest houses, etc. must be constructed. The effort would result in to value addition of the district as a tourist destination.
2. Existing tourism infrastructures such as hotels, lodges, guest houses, homestays, etc. in the district and the

<sup>14</sup> The National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) is the insurgent group operating in Northeast India (including the states of Manipur, Nagaland, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh) as well as in northwest Myanmar. It aims at establishing a sovereign Naga state consisting of all the areas inhabited by the Naga people in Northeast India and Northwest Myanmar. Currently, the group is engaged in its long struggle against India for the independence of Nagaland. There are in all five factions of the insurgent group viz., NSCN-IM, NSCN-K, NSCN-KK, NSCN-U, and NSCN-R ("The National Socialist Council of Nagaland," n.d.).

amenities therein like the cafeteria, restaurants, bars, washroom, toilet facilities, etc. should be periodically maintained and cleaned so that these remain in hygienic and ready-to-use condition.

3. Amusement parks and theme parks with the requisite facilities/amenities must be constructed at various locations in the district.
4. Bottom-up approach must be resorted to formulate a newer, unambiguous, comprehensive, and state-specific customized tourism policy at the earliest by the state government through involving all other tourism stakeholders. The policy must meet the test of the time and should be implemented in letter and spirit.
5. Tourists who have been to the district and persons from outside the state who have earlier stayed or are presently staying in the district in connection with their services, businesses, education, etc. may volunteer to act as tourism brand ambassadors and speak favorably about the district to their friends, relatives and other countrymen.
6. Both the district tourism department (government) and the private stakeholders must put sincere and co-ordinated efforts to create an attractive brand image for the district. They must aggressively market the district tourism through both digital and print media platforms by bringing out attractive promos about the tourist destinations and the tourism products. Digital media strategies in the form of social media, websites, television, email, etc., and the print media strategies in the form of tourism calendars, coffee-table books, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, brochures, flyers, postcards, greeting cards, etc. may be used.
7. Launching virtual tours of the district's attraction sites on tourism department's/ministry's official website and social media platforms will be a good initiative to lure potential tourists to make a visit.
8. The number of foreign tourist footprints in the district needs to be increased. These being high-end consumers will definitely contribute in terms of higher revenue generation both by the government and the community. Favorable policies and incentives must be formulated in this regard.
9. The district must participate in both national and global tourism road shows so as to publicize its tourism potentials.
10. Film makers from across the globe especially Hollywood, Bollywood, etc. should be encouraged to shoot films in the district through favorable and lucrative incentives. Films being effective media to showcase tourism potentials of a destination carry open invitations to the potential tourists worldwide to visit the destination.
11. A world-class professional institute exclusively dedicated in the creation of high quality employable skills (out of the large pool of unemployed educated youths in the state) needed in tourism sector must be established in the state so that the demand for the requisite manpower is met.
12. Proper signages/boards notifying the names of the tourist attraction sites and their distances from the district headquarters must be put up at the central locations such as at the Bomdila-Tawang inter-district border at Sela, Changprong helipad, Bus and Taxi stand at Old Market, Tawang.
13. Adventure activities must be conducted at regular intervals.
14. District's immense prospects in cultural tourism, religious & spiritual tourism, adventure tourism, natural beauty tourism, wildlife tourism, history tourism, heritage tourism, sports tourism, etc. need to be explored, developed and promoted through proper marketing strategies. Niche tourism products under each broad tourism categories must be conceived and promoted.
15. The tourism policies should also emphasize on conservation and protection of the natural environment. Effective measures to minimize environmental issues due to tourism in the district must be taken.
16. Clear-cut instructions prohibiting littering in the destinations must be given through notice boards/signage. Proper waste disposal system must be set up at the destinations. Cleanliness drives at the tourist destinations must be regularly conducted by the stakeholders.
17. The stretch of Trans-Arunachal Highway connecting Tawang must be completed at the earliest so as to provide an all-weather smooth and faster road connectivity thereby reducing the travel time to reach Tawang.
18. The destinations which aren't yet connected with roads must be connected with all-weather roads at the earliest. Also, the stretches of unsurfaced roads connecting the destinations must be surfaced and made all-

weather roads.

19. Air connectivity to the district must be improved by increasing the frequency of weekly helicopter services to the district.
20. The ambitious Lumla (Tawang district, Arunachal Pradesh, India) - Tashigang (via Samdrupdzongkar, Bhutan) - Darrang district (Assam, India) international road project must be completed at the earliest.
21. Tawang must be brought under railway network of the country. The Bhalukpong-Tenga-Tawang railway line project needs to be completed at the earliest.
22. Air connectivity to the state urgently needs to be enhanced. The Greenfield airport project at Holongi near Itanagar (state capital) must be completed at the earliest. Besides, the Tezu airport needs to be operationalised urgently.
23. The existing telecommunication connectivity must be improved facilitating an uninterrupted internet services in the district.
24. The entry restrictions on the foreign nationals to visit the frontier locations in the district must be lifted at the earliest so that they are not deprived of experiencing the exotic locales. This would definitely add to their satisfaction level.
25. The mandatory additional permit for the domestic tourists to visit destinations in the district along the international borders with China and Bhutan must be done away with.
26. Effective measures to protect and conserve the Monpa culture in its originality must be put in place by all concerned. Ill-impacts of acculturation should be avoided.
27. Strict measures must be set to conduct the behavior of the tourists and the local community so as to prevent immoral activities such as prostitution, drug trafficking, etc. which may earn bad reputation for the district.
28. The tourism resources must be identified properly and adequately valorised so that opportunity to raise revenue is not lost.
29. Uninterrupted electricity power supply must be maintained in the district especially during the winters so as to keep life essential power-run systems - heating system, telecommunication system, etc. functioning.
30. Theme parks and amusement parks in true sense with good amenities should be constructed in the district.
31. The district's characteristic stray dog menace should be urgently redressed by containing the dog population through appropriate measures.
32. The share of tourism in the annual state budget allocation needs to be hiked. The policy makers need to give due importance to state's tourism sector.
33. Adequate measures/guidelines must be set in advance to check near future imminent mass tourism in the district in particular and the state in general.
34. Certain projects under the central government's Swadesh Darshan, Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD), etc. schemes must be undertaken in the district.
35. Adequate measures must be taken to instill a sense of security among the tourists visiting the state. Fake and unfounded negative image projection of the state as an insurgency-infested region as a whole through media should be strictly avoided.
36. The Tsangyang Gyatso High Altitude Stadium project must be completed by the executing agency as per the original plan in to so as to meet the standards.

## **XII. CONCLUSION**

Given the district's enormous strength as a tourist destination, coupled with the opportunities coming its way, in near future Tawang is surely going to be listed as a must-visit destination in the tour itinerary of each and every tourist visiting Arunachal Pradesh. The district surely has a bright prospect in coming up as a hot tourist destination for a varied tourism categories viz., Religious & Spiritual tourism (based on Tibetan Buddhism), Cultural Tourism (based on the indigenous Monpa culture), Natural Beauty Tourism (based on the natural landscape beauty), Himalayan Wildlife Tourism, History Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Sports Tourism, etc. in near future. It could be an incredibly complete package of rich and unique experiences that can be offered in the global tourism market. Though of

course, the district has its own weaknesses and threats, but then through meticulous planning, these can be worked out to its advantage. But this earnestly warrants a responsible and a well co-ordinated effort on the part of all the stakeholders, led by the government both at the district and state levels, by striking the optimal Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in the sector. In fact, tourism could be the main revenue generating economic activity in the district. It could induce economic growth by offering a viable and a dynamic entrepreneurial base in the district.

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