

## ***AN OVERVIEW OF TOURIST CIRCUITS: A CASE STUDY OF AIZAWL AREA.***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Tourism is now not merely a travelling activity, nor a journey to visit some holy places. But it is an industry and one of the fastest growing economic activities with manifolds and dimensions. Success of tourism development depends upon numbers of issues. Destination reputation, tourist friendly environment, affordable travel and distinctive tourist circuits are some of the valuable factors for success of tourism industry. Tourist circuits and destinations are two most essential parameters that attract tourists from all round of the earth. A famous circuit with renowned destinations always signifies development of tourism. The present paper is an attempt to identify possible tourist circuit in and around Aizawl City area.

Keywords: tourist circuit, tourist destination, Aizawl tourism.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The word tourism means the travel activity or the practice of touring especially for aesthetic pleasure of human being which brings the overall satisfaction of human life. Tourism is the business activity or industry associated with providing information, accommodations and other services to the tourists. Thus, it is related with the profit making from the travellers associated with the movement of people offering an opportunity to see a new place. Tourism is directly linked with touring as the profit making business activity from traveller by pleasing them with utmost hospitability, showcasing art and culture for them, and showing them the entire beauty of the region. This is a phenomenon of modern civilization and can be summed up as the activity of visitors who visit places for recreation, pilgrimage, adventure, business, education, health etc.

Mathieson and Wall (1982) created a good working definition of tourism as "The temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs." This definition implies the business associated with the services of the host communities to their guests that travel.

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On the other hand Macintosh and Goeldner (1986) defined tourism as “The sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host government and community in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors”. It has become an important sector that has an impact on development of country economy. The main benefits of tourism are income creation and generation of jobs. In present day world, for many regions, and countries it is the most important sources of welfare. For example, Nepal, Caribbean island, Thailand, Maldives etc. are some of the countries that depend on tourism industry for their economic betterment

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Cullinan (1977) outlined the concept in “Central America Panama Circuit Tourism Study” as a pleasure trip which includes two or more countries by a resident of a third country”. According to Ministry of Tourism (2008) Tourist circuit is defined as a route on which at least three major tourist destinations are located in different areas but within such distance that tourists can and would like to cover them in a sequence. Chowdhary (2014) has quoted after Hotelmule.com (2011) that tourism circuit involves visits to three or more than one destination during a trip away from home. Perhaps this is the best simplified definition.

Circuits can be developed either within a country (intra-border) or between two or more countries (cross-border). Cross-border circuits could be based on various themes or on effective transport connectivity (Sisodia, 2011). A few types of circuit development that can take place around a theme are religious circuits, historical events circuits, tribal circuits, heritage circuits, art & craft circuits, wildlife tourism circuits etc.

## **STUDY AREA**

The present study is encompasses tourism around Aizawl City, Mizoram, India. Mizoram is a small hilly state with an area of 21087 sq. km (Pachua, 2009). The state is strategically located between two foreign countries i.e. Myanmar and Bangladesh. This is the most densely populated and also capital city of the state. The city is located in a picturesque setting on the ridge of hills at an altitude of 1132 m above the sea level and overlooking the valley and hill ranges. This is a 113 years old area that stands on the ridges of steep hills with deep gorges and

green mountains. Flanked on the north by the craggy peaks of Durtlang, the hill city overlooks the sylvan valley of the river Tlawng and ranges of blue hills beyond.

Aizawl literary means “A field of wild cardamom”, a name which originated during the days of the great Mizo Chief Lalsavunga and Thanruma who had set up village in and around the present site of Raj Bhawan in the early nineteenth century. The area, however, was deserted when the British administration established a military outpost “Fort Aijal” in the spring of 1890.

Aizawl is well connected by roadways with the rest of the country. Silchar is the most important and nearest major railhead while Lengpui is the nearby airport that connect Aizawl (Mizoram) with Guwahati, Kolkata and Delhi. Aizawl is becoming an important tourist destination day by day. The Durtlang Hill, KV Paradise, Science Center, State Museum, Bara Bazar, War Memorial, Assembly House, Raj Bhawan, Solomon Temple, Tlangnuam view point, Mizoram University, State Zoo and Sairang picnic spot, etc. are famous for Aizawl Tourism. These are attracting a lot of tourists every year.

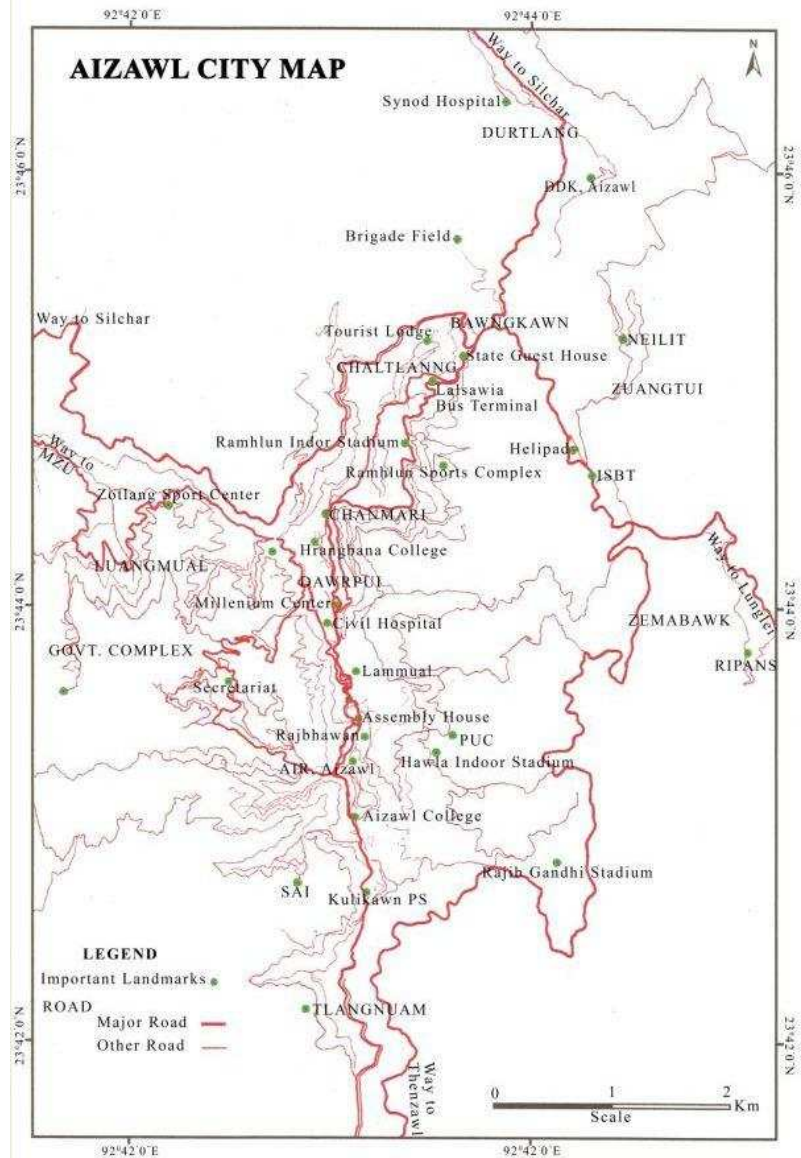


Figure 1 Aizawl City Map

Beside these destinations, there are some other nearby destinations located within the reach of Aizawl with a daylong tour. These are Ailawng-Reiek, Sairang-Lengpui, Falkawn-

Hmuifang, Seling-Baktawng, Saitual-Tamdil, and Chalfilh Tlang (peak). These destinations are recognized by the state Tourism Department and can visit by the tourist from Aizawl itself. All these destinations are not too far from the city and these may be tour from Aizawl by different means of convenient transportation. Hence, Aizawl tourism may be a niche of Mizoram tourism.

## **TOURIST CIRCUIT**

A Tourist Circuit is defined as a route on which at least three major tourist destinations are located such that none of these are in the same town, village or city. At the same time they are not separated by a long distance. It should have well defined entry and exit points. A tourist who enters at the entry point should get motivated to visit all the places identified on the circuit (Chowdhary, 2014).

Tourist circuit designing is about the strategic planning and development of tourism skill of the planner or the host agencies. A circuit may be termed as the selling skill of tourism through a planned route that followed by the traveler. Strategic planning is an inclusive process for shaping what a business or destination should become and the steps needed to achieve that goal. A circuit provides comprehensive strategic planning solutions for betterment of tourism businesses and destinations, with services that address a variety of needs. It is necessary to understand and recognize the unique and exceptional recreation desired by traveler and believe in the importance of developing tourism in a way that provides the greatest profit to the local stakeholders while conserving the natural assets for future generations.

The comprehensive set of strategic planning services includes access and assessment of destination, tourism master plan, land use planning and ecological architecture, marketing strategies, business planning, conservation and tourism planning that helps to glorify tourism in any region. Once these characteristics are fulfilled in right way, tourism development can be an effective tool for stimulating economic growth, alleviating poverty, conserving biodiversity, preserving culture and traditions, and creating employment opportunities for local communities.

## **IDENTIFICATION PROCESS OF TOURIST CIRCUIT**

The Circuit is to be taken up and will be identified by the Ministry of Tourism at the beginning of each year, in consultation with the State Government. While selecting the Circuit,

the tourism potential of the places should be considered. It should also be ensured that any circuit so identified for each State/UT should be for a Plan period. A circuit could be limited to a State or it could be a regional circuit covering more than a State/UT. The identification of the project, the implementation agency, and the mode of channelization of funds would be done in consultation with the State Government/UT Administration.

## **METHODOLOGY AND DATABASE**

The present work is based on primary data as well as secondary data. The entire work is about the tourist circuit and destinations and potentials of both in light of Mizoram tourism. The destination information, review of literature, important maps and photographs are collected from secondary sources. On the other hand, tourist demand and tourist potentiality was on the basis of primary survey conducted during the year of 2015. A total number of hundred responses were considered in the present study to reveal the preferences and destination demand of the tourists. The primary survey took places randomly at different tourist destinations, tourist lodges, hotels, in and around Aizawl city as per the convenient.

The data was calculated to find out the tourist demand in terms of percentage and ranking weightage. Afterwards destinations were classified with four supply components namely, a) popularity, b) accessibility, c) seasonality, and d) importance. Both scores are calculated, and potential destinations were found out with average score of demand plus supply. Afterwards each destination was joined depending upon possible connectivity from the tourist map and calculated their total score depending upon the three important destination's score. Every circuit has its own value with more than two destinations with one line connectivity. Finally highest scored circuits evaluated is identified as the best tourist circuit for Aizawl Tourism. A map of circuit was prepared to display the circuit along with the destinations and roads.

## **MAJOR DESTINATIONS IN AIZAWL AREA**

1.**State Museum:** Mizoram State Museum was established in the year 1977 to give the state an ethnological museum. Today, it stores more than 2500 items, each of which is a proof of the affluent past and ethnic background of Mizoram. Indeed one would find an entire gallery especially devoted to the tribes of Mizoram providing an insight into their lives, their origin, their legacies, their beliefs, their populace and lot more.

- 2.**Reiek:** Reiek tlang is a prominent range with few caves in an around. This is located in Mamit district (23°40'40.38"N and 92°36'11.89"E) just 30 kms to the west of Aizawl sprawls a prominent mountain on which Reiek village is located. This is one of the must visit destination especially for the nature lovers and trekkers.
- 3.**Falkawn:** It is a medium size village located near to the Aizawl city. This is less than 30 minutes drive by taxi from the city on way to Hmuifang. The village has high literacy rate and this village has the typical Mizo houses that can give an idea about the history of the Mizos. An example of a typical Mizo village set up along with the Zawlbuk and Chief's House is being built here by the Art and Culture Department.
- 4.**Hmuifang:** It is located at a distance of 50 kms to the south of Aizawl under the Aibawk RD block. Hmuifang Mountain (23°26'53.14"N and 92°45'30.99"E) with an elevation of 1619 meters is still covered with virgin forests reserved since the days of the Mizo chiefs.
- 5.**Tam Dil:** This is one of the most beautiful tourist spot in Mizoram located at 23°44'22.20"N and 92°57'8.24"E. Literally "Lake of Mustard", Tam Dil is situated near Saitual Village, about 110 kms from Aizawl. Having been developed as an important pisciculture centre by the Fisheries Department and a holiday resort by the Tourism Department, this is one of the most frequented lakes in the state. The lake and the surrounding thick forest are home to wide species of trees, plants and animals.
- 6.**Baktawng:** Baktawng village is located in Thingsulthliah Tehsil of Serchhip district in Mizoram, India. The village is also famous for Pu Ziona's house which is marked as World's Largest Family. From aizawl it is located at a distance of 67 km via NH54.

## POTENTIALITY ANALYSIS

For effective circuit identification potentiality of destination is needed to be analyzed. Potentiality of destination in an area is indeed the result of interaction of tourist demand and supply or local availability of tourist resources. Tourist demand of an area can be evaluated through the preference of choice of tourist towards various components of its unique attraction with reference to tourism resources. Ferrario (1982) had initiated the comparison and compilation of existing potential resources and the demand of tourists to find the potentiality of any particular area with resource inventory. He derived the formula for potentiality index as:

$$TP = \frac{(A+B)}{2}$$

In this formula, **TP** means the tourist potential, **A**= Demand component (Appeal/ interest based on the tourist); and **B** = Local component or the supply component. Thus tourist potential is an average value of demand and supply of tourists and tourist places in together.

Based on this idea, Bhattacharya (2004) worked to find out the potentiality of different tourist spots of Assam. The framework was based on the tourist attraction, importance, accessibility, seasonality, popularity and fragility. For assessment of the ‘local availability’ or ‘supply component’ of tourist resources he adopted nominal scale as good, moderate, bad, etc. Following the same method of potentiality determination, tourist spots and later on the circuits can be classified with the calculated score.

With the help of primary survey and interaction tourist demand was analyzed and summarized for better understanding of the attraction or the recreational demand of tourism for the state. For a better planning and development of tourism, an evaluation of the attraction (both manmade and natural) is an urgent need (Bhattacharya, 2004). At present Mizoram has limited scope for recreation tourist. Either the state is less explored from tourism view point or the tourist attractions are limited because of the connectivity, publicity and convenience. Therefore, tourists are more hesitant to visit remote places during their short span of visit (Deka, *et al.* 2014). The listing of criteria was not an easy task. After analyzing the available resources and facilities ten different areas of interest were short listed. The list was given to the tourists in the form of questionnaire to mark their desired. Based on the tourist choice, demand can be described accordingly with their priority. Table 1 shows the recreation demand of tourists with the short listed criteria.

**Table: 1.** Ranking of Tourist Demand

Sl No	Category	Rating	Total Score (in %)	Weightage	
				Score based on %	Rank Based
1	Rural Tourism	1 <sup>st</sup>	48	4.8	8
2	Aizawl Tourism	2 <sup>nd</sup>	33.5	3.35	7
3	Serchhip - Lunglei -Tlabung	3 <sup>rd</sup>	27.75	2.78	6
4	Historical/ Cultural (Champhai)	4 <sup>th</sup>	23.75	2.38	5
5	Scenic Beauty, Landscape, Lake, Wildlife, N.P., etc.	5 <sup>th</sup>	18.5	1.85	4
6	Trekking, Mountaining, Adventure, etc.	6 <sup>th</sup>	11	1.1	3
7	Interstate and International Trip	7 <sup>th</sup>	8	0.8	2
8	Southern Mizoram	8 <sup>th</sup>	4.5	0.45	1

Source: Primary data collected by the researcher.

The preferences were valued with percentage. Percentage of tourists preferring of each category of attraction is considered as an index to judge the significance of that category. Higher the percentage higher the weightage is marked here. Later on ranked based score was given to each category starting with 8 as top rank score. From the analysis it was found that Mizoram has a great value for its rural tourism. People are eager to see the rural life and traditional Mizo people during their visit.

After identification of demand, it was all about the evaluation of the existing tourist destination. The evaluation was completed with importance, accessibility, seasonality and popularity. The fifth component fragility was ignored for all the destinations considering the spots are non-fragile. In this evaluation process the highest score is 8 as aggregate top score, followed by 4, 2 and 1 in average with four categories depending upon the classification scheme. The classification is completely based on the personnel observation of the researcher and the field experiences and interactions with number of tourists (both domestic and foreigner). Table 2 shows the ranking scheme for tourist supply or local availability.

**Table: 2.** Ranking Scheme of Tourist Destination after Ferrario

Selected category	Rating scale	weight
Importance	Best	2
	Very good	1
	Average	0.5
	Less appeal	0.25
Accessibility	Perfect	2
	Good	1
	Average	0.5
	Poor	0.25
Seasonality	All time	2
	6-9 months	1
	3-6 months	0.5
	< 3 months	0.25
Popularity	Very popular	2
	Popular	1
	Somehow known	0.5
	Rarely visited	0.25

Afterward the destinations were classified with demand and supply. It is important note that both the categories are essential for any destinations to identify the potential score. Thus the



**TP** calculation for nearby tourist spots in Aizawl city was completed accordingly. The following table (no. 3) is showing the detailed calculation of **TP** score for selected destinations.

**Table: 3.** Tourist Destinations Nearby Aizawl (after TP index)

Destination	Demand Component								Total	Supply Component				Total	Index
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		A	B	C	D		
Hmuifang	8	7	6	-	4	3	-	-	28	2	1	2	2	7	17.5
Reiek	8	7	-	5	4	3	-	-	27	2	2	1	2	7	17
Aizawl	-	7	-	5	4	3	-	-	19	2	2	2	2	8	13.5
Falkawn	8	7	-	-	4	-	-	-	19	1	2	2	1	6	12.5
Baktawng	8	-	6	-	4	-	-	-	18	1	1	2	2	6	12
Tamdil	-	7	-	5	4	-	-	-	16	2	1	2	2	7	11.5
Ailawng	8	-	-	5	4	-	-	-	17	1	1	2	1	5	11
Lungleng	-	7	-	5	4	-	-	-	16	1	2	2	1	6	11
Sairang	-	7	-	-	4	3	-	-	14	1	2	1	1	5	9.5
Seling	-	-	6	-	4	-	-	1	11	1	2	2	1	6	8.5
State Museum	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	2	2	2	2	8	7.5
Lengpui	-	-	-	-	4	-	2	-	6	2	2	2	1	7	6.5
Saitual	-	-	-	5	4	-	-	-	9	0.5	1	1	1	3.5	6.25
Chalfilh	-	-	-	-	4	3	-	-	7	0.5	0.5	0.5	1	2.5	4.8

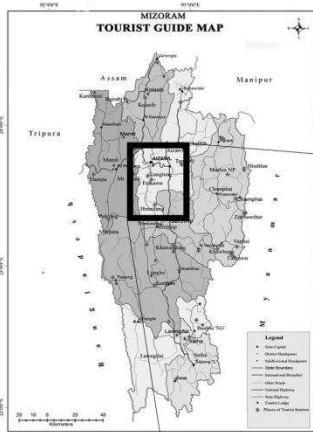
A total number of fourteen destinations were considered for the tourist potentiality index calculation. The potentiality table revealed Hmuifang as the best potential destinations followed by Reiek and Aizawl. Chalfilh scored least and placed at the bottom of the table. It is important to mention that accessibility and connectivity are the two major hurdles for many of the tourist destinations.

### MARKING OF CIRCUIT

Based on the above definition and existing road map a circuit may be put forward for a daylong tour. It is important to mention that depending upon the tourism map only circuits are proposed here. Based on the available linkage the following circuits can be proposed:

1. Aizawl-Falkawn-Hmuifang  $(13.5 + 12.5 + 17.5 = 43.5)$  = **44**
2. Aizawl- Ailawng-Reiek  $(13.5 + 17 + 11 = 41.5)$  = **42**
3. Aizawl-Seling-Baktawng  $(13.5 + 8.5 + 12 = 34)$  = **34**
4. Aizawl-Saitual-Tamdil  $(13.5 + 6.25 + 11.5 = 31.25)$  = **31**
5. Aizawl-Sairang-Lengpui  $(13.5 + 9.5 + 6.5 = 29.5)$  = **30**
6. Aizawl-Seling-Chalfilh  $(13.5 + 8.5 + 4.8 = 26.8)$  = **27**

# AIZAWL AREA: TOURIST CIRCUIT MAP



## CIRCUITS

1. Aizawl-Falkawn-Hmuifang
2. Aizawl- Ailawng-Reiek
3. Aizawl-Seling-Baktawng
4. Aizawl-Saitual-Tamdil
5. Aizawl-Sairang-Lengpui
6. Aizawl-Seling-Chalfilh

Map not in scale

After calculation of the destination score Aizawl-Falkawn-Hmuifang circuit become the highest scoring among the proposed circuits. It is followed by the Aizawl-Ailawng-Reiek circuit. Of course there are many minor destinations which are ignored in the present study. Aizawl city circuit is excluded in the study as it is considered as the niche of all these circuits. On the other hand to maintain the definition effective commercial place like Seling is considered here as a mid-way resting point in various circuits. Biasness of the destination was tried to avoid considering all major destinations only. This was in the light of govt. recommended/ identified destinations which can be connected as circuit cord.

## **CONCLUSION**

Tourism promotion can be compared to selling dreams. To sell dreams to tourists, they must be beautiful and believable. In promoting circuit tourism in Aizawl region, the challenge is to ensure that all the destinations spread across the region are equally successful in the three key destination services characteristics: quality, consistency and integrity. Given the premise above, it is the responsibility of both the public and private sectors to come forward in developing Rural Tourism Promotion for Aizawl as well as Mizoram industry. This will contribute significantly to the state economy and reduce unemployment, thereby bringing manifold welfare to the society. The study thus highlighted a clear picture about the overall tourist demand and few probable circuits for Aizawl Tourism. The identification as a result of this study, is expected to help the tour planner as well as the government agencies to identify the possibilities of successful tourism.

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