

**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABLE  
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ZIRO VALLEY OF  
ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

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**Abstract**

Sustainable tourism is based on the principle that successful tourism development must sustain the local community's socio-cultural, natural and built environment as well as contribute to the economic upliftment. For making this viable, community participation in the whole tourism development process is of utmost importance. The paper examines the participation and involvement of the Apatani tribe in the development of tourism in Ziro valley located in the Lower Subansiri District of Arunachal Pradesh. To achieve the main objective, the study examines the key aspects: involvement of community in tourism sector; income generation through tourism; participation in tourism related meetings; incorporation of community views in planning decisions of tourism development; and participation of community in decision-making process. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. Fieldwork has been done in a mixed methods approach, including interviews and questionnaires. By staying within the community, observations of the local community and their participation in tourism activities were also made. The findings of the study about the participation of local community in the tourism development in Ziro valley reveals that although the participation level of the people in tourism sector is satisfactory, however more awareness about the significance of the industry and their involvement in planning and decision-making is required for a better and efficient management for the long term sustainability of tourism.

**Key words:** Community Participation, Sustainable Tourism, Decision Making, Benefit sharing

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## **1. Introduction**

Tourism has emerged in many new forms, depending on the specific demands of the tourists and a whole lot of new value addition made to the products. There is an increase demand of nature based and culture based travel experiences, like visitation to national and natural parks, rural based tourism and the like. Tourists are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their demands, they look out for a meaningful travel experience, including such aspects as cultural authenticity, contacts with local communities, and learning about flora, fauna, special ecosystems and natural life in general, and its conservation (Kamra& Chand, 2002). The expected growth and the new trends observed put tourism in a strategic position to make positive contribution to, or to negatively affect, the sustainability of natural protected areas and the development potential of surrounding areas and their communities. Tourism can be a major tool for conservation of such areas and for raising the environmental awareness of residents and visitors. Sustainable tourism calls for presenting authentic travel experiences, emphasizing the character of the locale in terms of culture, tradition and ecology (T.S. Parmer, 2008).

The largest of the Northeastern states, Arunachal Pradesh is a part of Eastern Himalayas with high ethnic and cultural diversity. Major tribes of the region include the Monpas, the Sherdukpens, Hill Miris, Nyishis, Apatanis, Adis, Idus, Mishmis, Noctes, Singphos and Khamptis and so on. The Apatanis with highly developed age-old valley rice cultivation has been counted to be one of the advanced tribal communities in the northeastern region of India (Haimendorf, 1962). Ziro, a scenic valley in the Lower Subansiri district of the state is home to this indigenous tribe. Their lifestyle is based on deep- rooted traditions, known for its rich economy for decades, and has good knowledge of land, forest and water management. Although a number of studies have been carried out on agriculture system, natural resource utilization in Apatani valley, little research has been done on ethnic tourism development potentialities of the Apatani tribe. The present paper evaluates the participation of local communities in the development of sustainable ethnic tourism in Ziro valley.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

- i) to assess the role of local community in tourism development in the study area

- ii) to assess the extent of participation of local people in tourism related meetings and incorporation of their views in planning decisions in tourism development
- iii) to assess the extent of community participation in tourism development decision making process

### **3. Methodology**

The research employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. Fieldwork has been done in a mixed methods approach, including interviews and questionnaires. The surveyed respondents have been selected from Hong, Hari, Siiro, Tajang and Dutta villages that represented communities that were engaged in tourism industry. A total of 460 respondents were interviewed with the help of a questionnaire for local community containing relevant questions of sustainable ethnic tourism. Respondents were selected randomly throughout the communities. The selection has created representative sample of men and women with a large spread of different ages.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### **4.1 Demographic Background of the Respondents**

Demographic profile of the surveyed respondents including gender, age, marital status, educational level, occupational status and income have been presented in table 4.1. Of the total 460 respondents, there were 270 males and 190 females. Majority of them 192 (41.7%) belong to the age group of 31-50 years, followed by 191 (41.5%) belonging to the age group of 18-30 years. Around 44 of them (9.6%) belonged to the age group of below 18 years, whereas the lowest percentage (7.2 %) was above 50 years of age. About their marital status, 53 per cent were married and 45 per cent were unmarried. Out of remaining 10 respondents, 1 percent was widowed, while another 1 percent was divorced. Further, 15.4 per cent were represented as illiterate, while another 6.1 per cent were literate but below primary level of education. A total of 4.6 per cent were educated till primary school level, another 5.2 per cent were educated till middle school level. 14.8 per cent passed secondary education, 17.6 per cent were educated up to higher secondary level; while a maximum of 32.2 per cent were graduates. Rest of the 4.1 per cent respondents was technically or professionally qualified. 18.7 per cent were engaged in cultivation as their main occupation, while only 2.8 per cent also earned their income through

fishing and 10.4 per cent through forest products. A total of 10.9 per cent were engaged in livestock rearing or agro-enterprise. Only 1.7 per cent respondents were casual wage earner in agriculture, another 2.8 per cent were casual wage earner in non-agriculture. Another 9.1 per cent were salaried employee, 14.6 per cent were in government service. Remaining 16.1 per cent were engaged in private business and 26.1 per cent were either not employed or had other types of occupations. Among the surveyed respondents, 16.0 per cent were having monthly income less than Rupees 10,000 and highest 35.7 per cent were having monthly income between the ranges of Rupees 10,000 to 20,000. Another 16.3 per cent of respondents were in the slab of Rupees 20,000 to 30,000, 15.7 per cent were earning between 30,000 to 40,000 and 6.1 per cent between Rupees 40,000 to 50,000. The remaining 11.9 per cent were having monthly income of above Rupees 50,000 as indicated in table 4.1.

**Table 4.1**  
**Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Frequency	Percentage		
Gender	Male	270	58.7
	Female	190	41.3
Age	Below 18	44	9.6
	18-30	191	41.5
	31-50	192	41.7
	Above 50	33	7.2
Marital Status	Married	261	56.7
	Unmarried	189	41.1
	Widowed	05	1.1
	Divorced	05	1.1
Educational	Illiterate	71	15.4
	Literate but below primary	28	6.1
	Primary	21	4.6
	Middle	24	5.2

	Secondary	68	14.8
	Higher Secondary	81	17.6
	Graduate or Higher	148	32.2
	Other	19	4.1
Occupational Status	Cultivation	86	18.7
	Fishing	13	2.8
	Forest Product	48	10.4
	Livestock/Agri Enterprise	50	10.9
	Casual Wage Earner (Agriculture)	08	1.7
Casual Wage Earner (Non-Agriculture)	13	2.8	
Salaried Employment	42	9.1	
Government Services	67	14.6	
Private Business	74	16.1	
Other	120	26.1	
Monthly Income (Rupees)	Below 10,000	66	14.3
	10,000-20,000	164	35.7
	20,000-30,000	75	16.3
	30,000-40,000	72	15.7
	40,000-50,000	28	6.1
	Above 50,000	55	11.9

**Source: Primary Survey 2014-16**

#### 4.2 Participation of Host Communities in Tourism

It has been observed that the host communities in Ziro have participated in various tourism activities. Their positive approach towards welcoming tourists to their village or their house to take part in any cultural activities or to get acquainted with their way of living, the start-up of

many homestays for accommodating visitors by providing personalized service, overall their willingness for more visitors to their valley, are all taken as participation.

Out of 460 respondents, 23.9 per cent of them have been engaged in tourism activities, both directly and indirectly, whereas 76.1 per cent did not participate in any activities related to the industry as indicated in table 4.2. The local communities' sectoral involvement in tourism is depicted in table 4.3.

**Table 4.2**

**Participation of Local Communities in Tourism**

Participation	Number of Participants	Percentage
Yes	110	23.9
No	350	76.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Survey 2014-16

**Table 4.3**

**Sectoral Involvement in Tourism of the Participants**

(N=110)

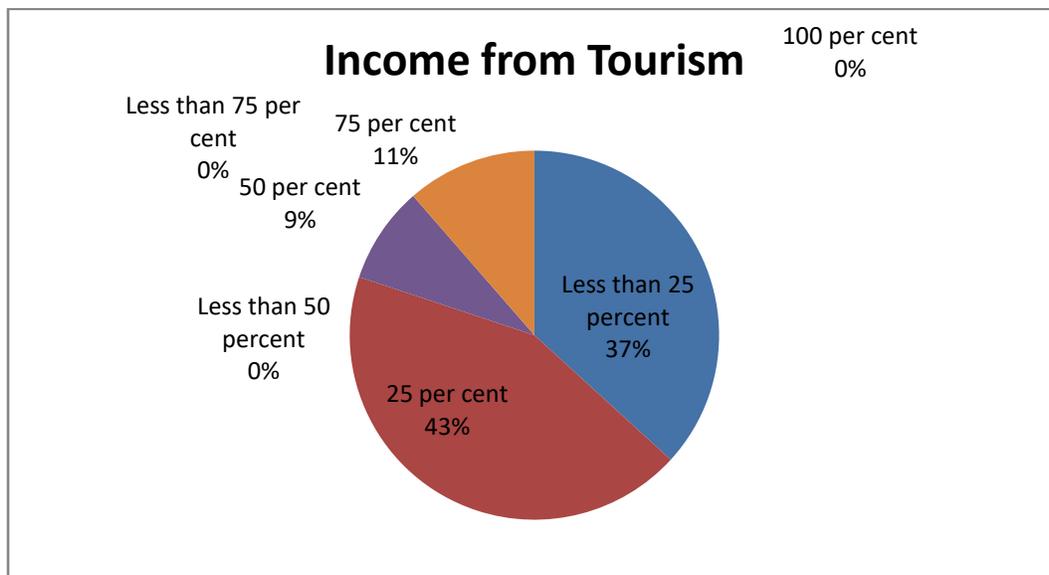
Sl. No	Participation Sectors	Number of Participants	Percentage
1.	Tourism Administration	06	5.5
2.	Accommodation	47	42.7
3.	Food and Beverage (eg. Restaurants, bars, cafes)	05	4.5
4.	Transport (eg. Bus, cars)	25	22.7
5.	Travel Operators (eg. Tour operator, travel agents, tour guides)	24	21.8
6.	Tourist Attractions (eg. Parks, reserves)	02	1.8
7.	Souvenir Shops (eg. Art and craft shops)	22	20.0
8.	Others	13	11.8

Source: Primary Survey 2014-16

When asked about the proportion of personal income attributable to tourism, 35.5 per cent indicates that tourism has only been providing less than 25 percent of their annual income while for another 41.8 per cent; it is 25 per cent of their income. Further only 8.2 per cent of the participants indicate that it is 50 per cent, for around 11 per cent it is 75 per cent of their annual income. The study indicates that tourism has so far been only taken as an alternate or supplementary source of income by the participants.

**Figure 4.1**

**Personal Income from Tourism of the Participants**



**Source: Primary Survey 2014-16**

The next questions that were asked to the respondents were related to their involvement in tourism planning and development in the Ziro valley. The first question was “*Have you participated in any type of meeting where you discussed about tourism development in your community?*” Of the total 460 respondents, only 23.3 per cent have recorded that they have participated in tourism meetings, while 62.6 per cent did not participate in any such meetings. The remaining 14.1 per cent indicated that they do not know about such meetings, which reveals that more awareness about tourism and its significance has to be communicated with the community as a whole.

**Table 4.4**  
**Participation in Tourism Meetings by the Respondents**

(N=460)

Participation	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	107	23.3
No	288	62.6
Do not Know	65	14.1
Total	460	100

**Source: Primary Survey 2014-16**

Another question that was being asked was, “*Have you been asked about your opinion on tourism by those who plan tourism development?*” Of the total 460 respondents 9.8 per cent have recorded that they were asked about their opinions many times, while 14.6 per cent indicated that they were asked only once or twice about their views. However, while almost 62 per cent have indicated that they were never been asked about their opinions on tourism development in their community, remaining 13.7 per cent did not respond to the question.

**Table 4.5**  
**Opinions of Respondents asked on Tourism**

(N=460)

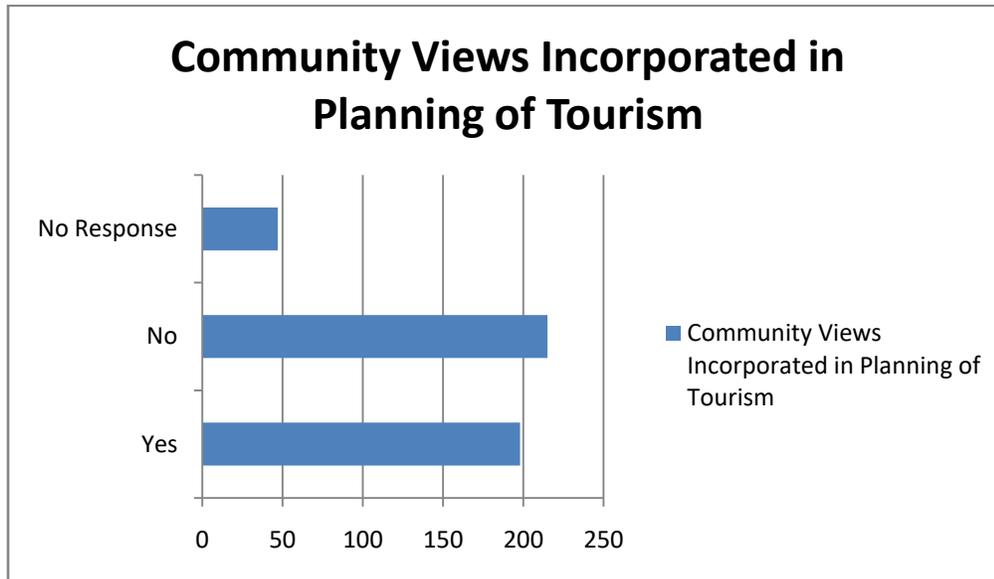
Opinions Asked on Tourism	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes, many times	45	9.8
Yes, only once/twice	67	14.6
No, never	285	61.9
No Response	63	13.7

**Source: Primary Survey 2014-16**

The next question related to the opinions of community was, “*Do you think that the views of the community are incorporated in all planning decisions of tourism development?*” Of the total respondents, 43.1 per cent have recorded that they are of the view that the opinions or views of the community is incorporated in the planning of tourism. While another 46.7 per cent

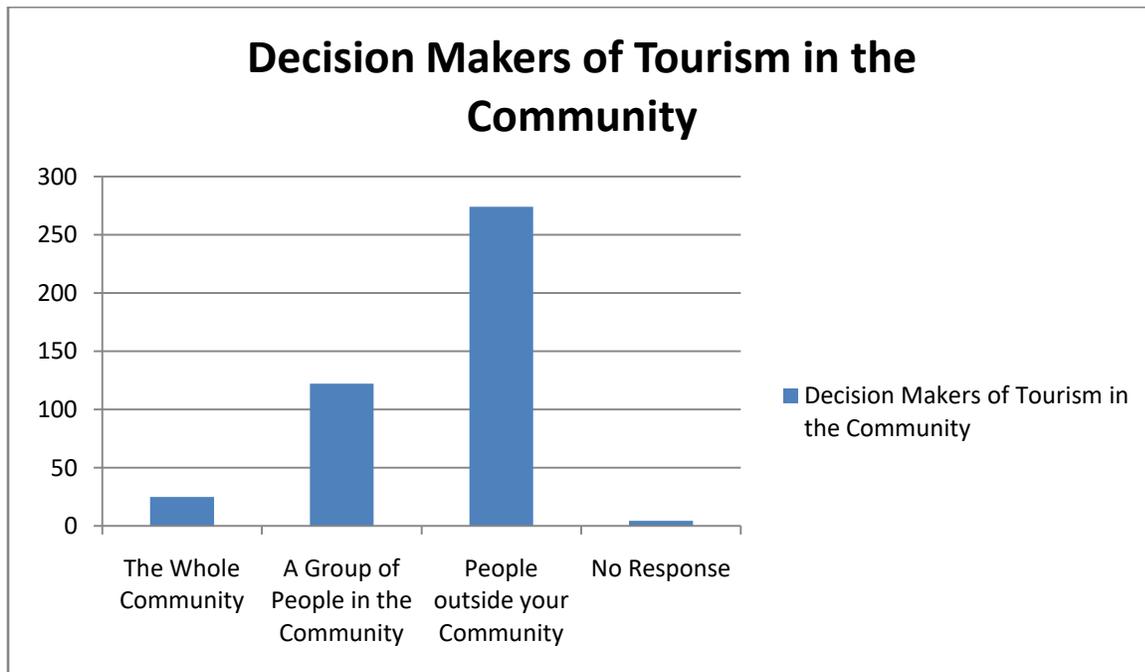
respondents recorded that the community views have not been incorporated in the planning process, remaining 10.2 per cent did not respond to the question.

**Figure 4.2**



**Source: Primary Survey 2014-16**

One of the main principles of sustainable tourism development is the involvement of the local community in the decision-making process. This role has been emphasized by empowering the local community in the policy formulation as well as entrusting them with the rights and responsibilities of managing the tourism resources. Hence the study also reveals the views of local community in the sampled villages about the major decision makers of tourism in Ziro valley. Of the total 460 respondents, almost 60 per cent are of the view that the major decisions concerning tourism in their community are made primarily by people outside community such as the government officials, tour operators, non-government agencies, financial contributors etc. Whereas 26.5 per cent of them have indicated that the decisions are taken by a group of people in their community. Only 5.4 per cent have indicated that the whole community is involved as the decision maker, while remaining 8.5 per cent did not respond to the question.

**Figure 4.3**

**Source: Primary Survey 2014-16**

The findings of the study about the participation of local community in the tourism development in Ziro valley reveals that although the participation level of the people in tourism sector is satisfactory and their involvement in the industry as a supplementary occupation is in the line of sustainable growth of the same, however more awareness about the significance of the industry and their involvement in planning and decision-making is required for a better and efficient management for the long term sustainability of tourism. Many of the respondents could not answer the relevant questions because of their ignorance about the industry and its importance. Hence more and more residents have to be involved and they should be made a part of the development process by giving them the opportunity of express their opinions and incorporating the same in the decisions taken by the local authorities.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of the study has established that there are some planning and decision making issues which need to be addressed for the involvement of the indigenous tribe which would help in sustaining the valuable traditional knowledge of the Apatani community and bring economic, social and cultural as well as environmental benefits. Amajority of people in the Apatani valley did not participate in any tourism related activities mainly because of their ignorance about the

same. There was absence of information mechanism that could invite more people in tourism related meetings where they could be given the basic concepts about the industry. Hence it is imperative that a proper planning to maximize the local participation is integrated in the tourism development process. The government should take the responsibility of facilitating information exchange between the consultants and the indigenous people so that they contribute towards the development of their villages as ethnic village and integrate it with other natural and cultural tourist products. There should be focus-group discussion where the opinions of the people could be shared and incorporated in the planning process. Important issues such as benefit sharing, income redistribution and product development and marketing strategies should be introduced and discussed in the meetings. Further it has also been found that a majority of the surveyed respondents have agreed that the decisions taken for tourism development in the valley were mainly taken by people outside their community. Hence a sense of deprivation has been felt on part of these people from taking part in one of the major aspects of planning process. Therefore it has been recommended that more participation of local people is expected in the decision making process, but at the same time it has been suggested that the local community should be able to make informed decisions. For this they should seek the assistance of the tourism expert who can make them realize the value of their cultural and natural heritages and also help them in understanding the pros and cons of tourism industry so as to avoid any untoward consequences. For tourism to be sustainable, community participation has to be ensured at various levels. They must take part in every aspect of planning till implementation of the same.

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