

## Inflow of Tourist in Namchi: A Geographic Analysis

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### Abstract:

Namchi often termed as ‘cultural Capital of Sikkim’ offers one of the tourist destinations in Sikkim, Namchi as a Tourist destination requires only one day to explore. The geography of Namchi is worth visiting for its combination of spiritual sites, scenic beauty and cultural exchanges. Dotted with sacred temples and monasteries, the region has emerged as one of the religious centres in Sikkim. After it declared as MNC in 2010, and the Siddheswara Dham or Char Dham which is a one of the famous tourist spots in Sikkim was established and opened to the public in 2011 as a pilgrimage and cultural centre, Namchi gained more popularity and is must visited destination for travellers seeking peace and adventure alike. However, the arrival of both domestic and international tourist is ample, but the business of lodging is not beneficial due to the close proximity of the tourist attraction spots which is covered within a day and mostly tourist prefer to go either Pelling or Gangtok for stay. The present study deals with the pattern of the hotel development, inflow of tourist during off and peak season and also focuses on different issues and challenges.

**Keywords:** Namchi, Tourist, Off Season, on Season, Hotel.

### Introduction

According to Tourism Society of Britain 1976, tourism is the temporary short-term movement of people to destination outside the places where they normally live and work and their activities during their stay at this destination. India a country with the diversity in the culture, climate and the topography attracts tourist from all over the world.

Tourism is one of the major sources of Indian economy along with tourist they bring foreign currency with them. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and tourism is growing rapidly in India with the potential of providing employment, jobs and income to the people of India. Tourism not only helps in generating employment rather it also improves the infrastructure of the country. Attraction, accessibility, amenities, adventure activities and accommodation are the main elements of tourism.

Sikkim is one of the famous tourist destinations in India. Sikkim is a small hilly land-locked state which is rich in its beauty, natural vegetation, biodiversity etc. It shares its boundary with Tibet (China) in the North, Bhutan in the East, the Kingdom of Nepal in the west and Darjeeling hills in the south. Sikkim is situated in eastern Himalayas lies between 27° 04'46" N and 28° 07'48" and 88° 00'58" E and 88° 55'25" E covering an area of 7096 sq km. In terms of area Sikkim is the 2<sup>nd</sup> smallest state in India but Sikkim is very famous for its scenic valleys forest, water springs, lakes, mountains and its unique terrine feature.

Tourism is one of the major sources of economy of Sikkim. According to tourism department records, in 2019 around 16 lakhs tourist has visited the Himalayan state. During the peak season all the hotels, home stay are fully occupied which massively generates huge revenue.

Namchi district is one of the developed districts in Sikkim. It elevation ranges from 400 m to 2000m (land Revenue and Disaster Management Department: District at a glance, 2024). Namchi district is also well known for its tourism. There are several places for tourist to come and visit but some of the renowned places in Namchi district are Siddheshwar Dham (Chardham), Samdruptse Monastery, Shri Shirdi Sai Baba Temple, Tarey Bhir<sup>1</sup>etc other places includes Rose Garden, Helipad, Bhaichung Stadium etc.

**Table no.1. Review of related literature**

Title of the Paper	Authors/s	Findings	Relevance to the present study.
1. Tourism Industry of Namchi, South Sikkim: An overview.	Mitra, Roy and De. (2015).	This study deals with the scope, infrastructure and the possibility of the growing Namchi as a tourist focus of south Sikkim.	It is very much relevant for the present study as it mentions about Pilgrimage tourist destinations and growing Namchi as one of the Tourist destinations of Sikkim.
2. Tourism Marketing in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria; Advertising and public relations in perspectives.	Ketabchi & Mohammad . (2004).	The study significantly talks about Tourism as a very complex industry because of multifaceted activities and it also makes us understand the ways to fascinate tourist.	This paper is relevant to present paper as this paper tries to cover the connectivity to promote Tourist attraction.
3. Problems and prospects of Tourism Financing in Sikkim.	Sharma. T. 2023	The study considered the significant impact of tourism financing on the development of local communities, and there is a significance relationship between	It is related to present study to understand the financial constraints as problems and prospects

<sup>1</sup>The word 'Bhir' means cliff in the local Nepali language, basically it is view point, accessed from [www.sikkimstdc.com](http://www.sikkimstdc.com)

		the involvement of financial institution and the development of tourism.	
4. Toursim and its impact on local economy: A study on part of Gangtok Municipal Corporation Area, East Sikkim,India.	Palit, Kumar and Halder. (2020).	It has pointed out that Tourism industry boost employment for local community and it also focuses on satisfaction of the visitors who visit the place for various reasons.	Relation between the number of visits and spending levels, seasonal variation of the tourist has been mentioned.

## 2. Objectives

1. To know the status of hotel business in Namchi Municipal Council.
2. To study the relation of tourist, visit and hotels of Namchi Municipal Council.

## 3. Database and Methodology

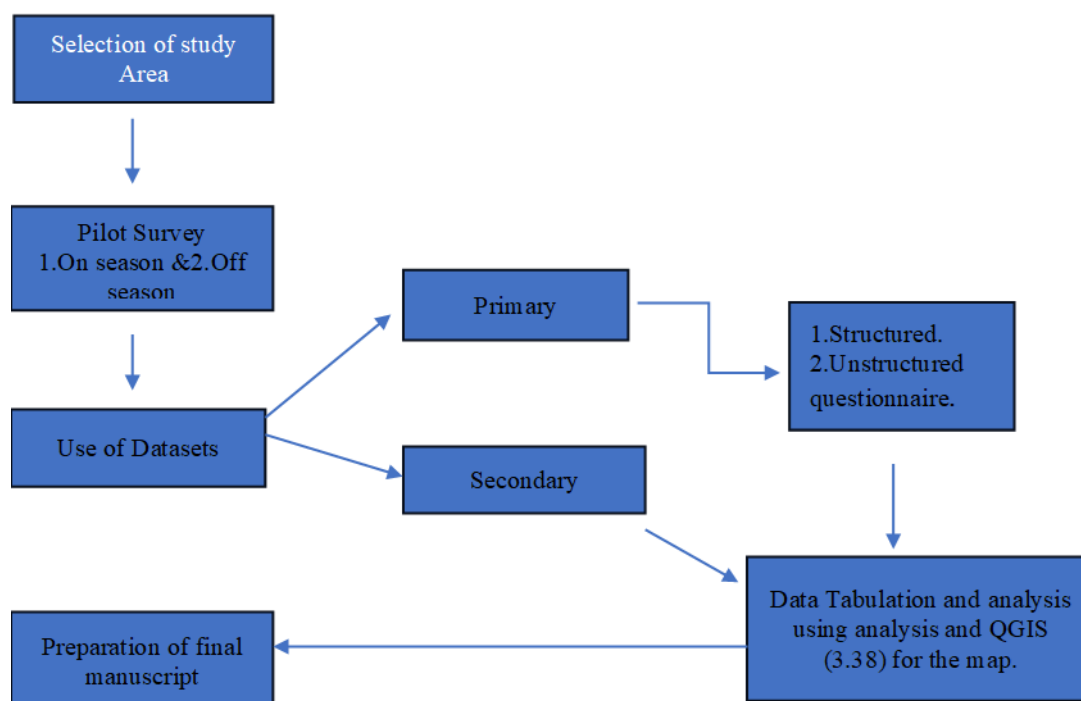


Fig.1. Presenting Methodology of the study.

The study has employed mixed method where both primary and secondary data was used. For Primary data, the data has been collected in two phases. In Phase I, peak month of tourist

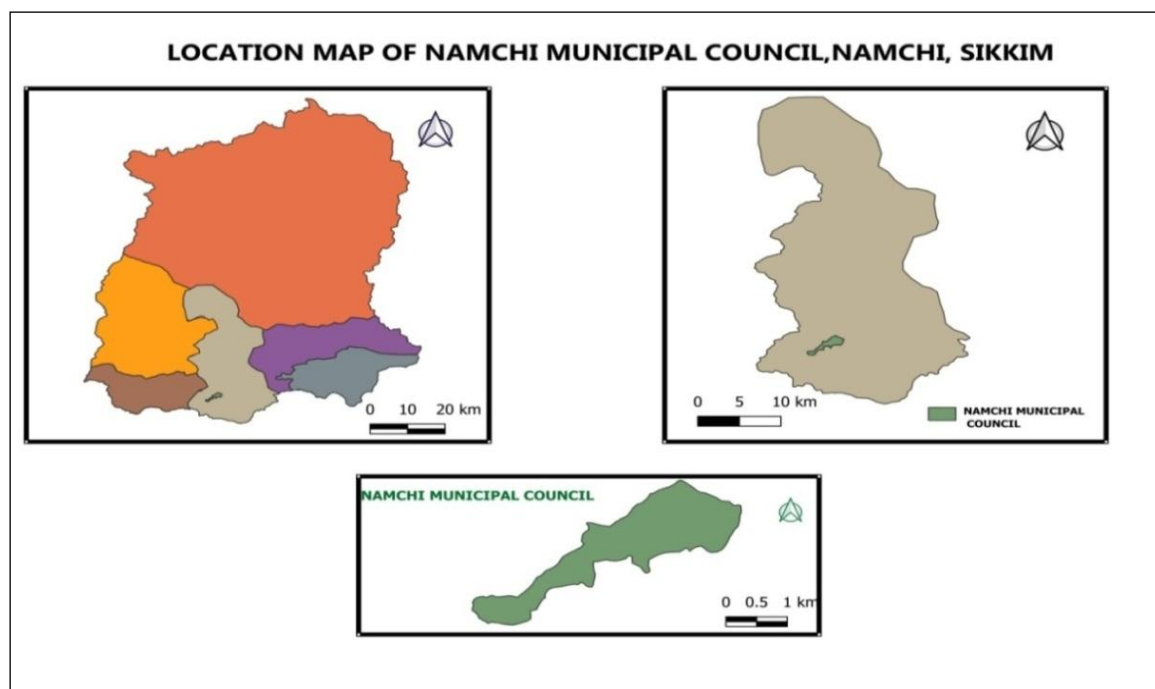
season was taken into consideration and in Phase II data was collected during off season, interview method with structured questionnaire was done and samples were collected from all the wards of Namchi Municipal Council. Secondary Data has been collected through Tourism Department, google scholar, books, Newspaper. To be more precise Google Earth Pro, G.P.S and QGIS 3.30 version was used to prepare location map of the study area.

### Sample of the study (N=45)

The Namchi Municipal corporation has over 150 hotels (fooding and lodging<sup>2</sup>), for the present study the target sample Hotels is 45 ( $45/150 \times 100 = 30$ ). 45 hotels (30%) have been purposively selected on the basis of Probability sampling.

### 4.Study Area

Namchi, located 78 kilometres away from its capital Gangtok, is a well-liked by tourist resort in the region. Namchi means "sky high" in Bhutia, and this municipality is steadily becoming more and more well-known as a fantastic travel destination. The 135-foot statue of Guru Padmasambhava in the Samdruptse monastery is the main draw of the location. From here, visitors can also enjoy the breathtaking vista of Mount Khangchendzonga. The Siddhesvara Dham in Namchi is a popular tourist destination and a site of pilgrimage that has received praise for its beauty. Namchi provides the best vantage point of the surrounding valleys of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Namchi is the town which is designated as Municipal Council in 2010 which after boost development of hotels in the region. Due to its physiographic structure and distinct rural retreat consisting of farmland and terraced hills, broken up by spring-patched woodlands makes Namchi more attractive for one to have vacation.



Map prepared with the help of QGIS 3.30.

<sup>2</sup> 'Fooding' is the standard term where author has used to mean the hotels which only provide Foods.

**Table no.2. Demographic profile of respondents<sup>3</sup> (N=45).**

Number of Respondents	Average Age of the Owner	Gender of Respondents (in percentage)		Ownership (in percentage)	
		Male	Female	leased	Owened
45	41	64	36	78	22

The above table no 2 presents the demographic profile of hotelier's respondents, where it has only included the Hotel owners of Namchi Municipal Council. The number of respondents is N=45, where the average age of the Hotel owner is 41years. 64% of the hotel owners are male and 36 % are Female which is fairly good in comparison to National average. CNBC TV18 report (Aayog, 2021) says; In India, women Entrepreneurs represents approximately 14% of the total entrepreneurial landscape and India ranks 57<sup>th</sup> out of 65 countries in the Mastercard Index of women Entrepreneurs (MIWE, 2021). The study found out that 78% hotels are leased rather than directly owned, the owner acts primarily as a landlord, receiving a fixed rent and the operator takes on operational and financial risks of running the business and is responsible for all aspects of the hotels management and operations. Respondents say "Sometimes the perfect location is on land that you can't own".

### **Pattern of Hotel development.**

The pattern of development of hotels in Namchi has been rising rapidly, from 1980 there is gradual increase in the number of hotels till 2010 but after 2010 there is sudden rise in the number of hotels in Namchi Municipal Council because in 2010 Namchi was declared as a Municipal Council and the Siddheswara Dham or Char Dham which is a one of the famous tourist spot in Sikkim is nearby Namchi was established and opened to the public in 2011 as a pilgrimage and cultural centre by the state government which attracted huge tourist influx ultimately led to increase in numbers of hotels. In 2015, As per the record from the office of the NMC (Namchi Municipal Council) from 2019-2022, 19 hotels were inaugurated within 4 years of time span, it was mainly due to the arrival of huge domestic and international tourist who visited Namchi Pilgrimage Centre. However, the arrival of both domestic and international tourist is ample, but the business of lodging is not beneficial due to the close proximity of the tourist attraction spots which is covered within a day. Development of hotel, as well as tourism in general in Namchi has always increases as the modern digital network, Facebooks, videos of content creator, the fast internet and the availability of information from everywhere have influenced numerous changes in pattern of hotel business in recent years, the progress of technology has directly impacted hotel business in a positive way.

**Table no.3. The total no.of Rooms (N=45)**

Total	No of	No of Hotels	Percentage
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<sup>3</sup>Respondents here means Hotel owner.

Rooms		
0-10	22	48.8
10-20	16	35.5
20-30	3	6.6
30-40	2	4.4
40-50	1	2.2
50-above	1	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey

The above table shows a fragmented hotel industry which is mostly dominated by small establishments, with very limited presence of medium or large hotels. Nearly 84.3% (22+16 hotels) have less than 20 rooms, which shows the majority of hotels are small scale establishments. The medium sized hotels (20-40 rooms) are limited, only 5 hotels i.e.11% fall in this category. Large hotels (40+ rooms) are very few, just 2 hotels 4.4% have more than 40 rooms. The data suggests the hospitality industry here is highly concentrated in small hotels, with only a handful of larger properties, it also indicates a lack of infrastructure for large scale or luxury. In future, the development of medium and large hotels could fill the market gap and enhance the regions capacity to attract diverse categories of tourists.

**Table no.4. Showing hotel's room booked during on season and off season (N=45)**

Season	Total Room (571)	Percentage	Avg. Room Book	Standard Deviation
<b>On Season</b>	475	83	10.5	8.7
<b>Off Season</b>	229	40	5	6.0

The above table displays total no. of rooms booked in the hotels during on-season and off-season. During on-season out of total 571 rooms of all hotels combined, 475 rooms are booked which contributes 83% and during off-season only 229 rooms are booked which contributes 40%. This gives a reference that during on season majority of rooms are booked, whereas in off-season booking fall to less than half. Average booking per hotel in tourist season is 10.5 rooms and only 5 rooms during off-season. While the standard deviation in peak season is 8.7 and 6.0 in off season, which implies that in peak season, some hotels are fully occupied while others partly, whereas in off -season the difference is less but still remains.

The data clearly shows that there is seasonality in tourism, with 83% of rooms booked during peak season and at least 40% rooms booked during off season. Tourist prefer larger hotels with better amenities, but mid-sized hotels are booked in decent number during off-season. Smaller hotels suffer during off-season showing unequal distribution of demand.

### **Conclusion & Findings**

The tourism industry as a fastest growing industry has successfully influenced even the remotest corner across the globe. The tourism sector is one of the major revenues earning sector in Sikkim because of its natural beauty, mountain view and cultural heritage that attract visitors from different corners of the world. The State's tourism department has developed various tourism plans and packages to influence travellers and contribute significantly to the economic development of the state. Namchi also provides many facilities to attract the tourist arrival, despite having numerous attraction and destination spots, Namchi town area is visibly growing at slower rate than it should have. The associated factors for partial success in tourism sector lies in the fact that Namchi face major shortcomings like water scarcity, lack of entertainment amenities and community participation. The following are the findings of the present study.

The lowest demand, lowest occupancy, and lowest profitability occur during the off-season. Off-season is the time of year when the weather is at its worst, Regretfully, hoteliers usually lose money during the off-season. Low to very-low occupancy rates, occasionally less than 50%, or even lower which directly affects the income of the hoteliers. The 78% of hotels are rented/leased, they struggle to stay afloat during economic downturns with high rent, rising costs, such as staffing expenses, supplies and other expenses leads to financial difficulties which sometimes leads to shutting down of hotels. The Study revealed that there is poor economic earning of the tourism sector especially hotels business because the tourism destinations are closely located around the NMC which can be visited in a single day. The area has no unique attraction to keep the tourist intact for longer day because of the absence of local attraction like; traditional markets, museums, artefacts etc.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

- To enhance the tourism sector in Namchi, it could be beneficial to focus on promoting the towns' unique cultural heritage and natural beauty through effective marketing strategies. Online advertisement and promotions through various social media platforms may attract more guests and increase the inflow. NMC should provide guests with unique experience such as local cultural activities, cuisines and recreational activities to make their stay more memorable.
- The guest feedback should be focused and prompt improvement should be made accordingly to satisfy the guests' stay in a particular hotel.
- Collaboration with the travel agencies can help in developing specialized tour packages that highlight the local traditions, spiritual sites and adventure activities could attract a diverse range of tourist. Additionally, investing in infrastructure improvements such as better transportation, facilities, accommodation and recreational facilities can enhance the overall tourist experience.



- With increasing demand for entertainments, Namchi should also start practicing the lineage of other towns in terms of discotheque and night recreations. Even events like local fairs, youth fairs, cultural exchange programs etc. should be organized from time to time. Promotion through popular figures can help booming the region's tourism.
- Collaborating with local communities to offer authentic cultural experiences and ensuring sustainable tourism practises can also contribute to the long-term growth and success of the tourism sector in Namchi.
- The water scarcity is undeniably a major problem due to the absence of natural springs and streams. So, to address this problem water conservation through rain water harvesting and creating ponds can improve the issue of water shortage. The source located far away from the NMC area are frequently disrupted during monsoon, so, the concerned authority is supposed to add more pipelines with resistance networking and fixation of leaky pipes should be quick so that the continuous water supply is not disrupted.

By implementing these suggestions, the tourism sector can enhance their offerings to attract more guests and to improve the overall guest satisfaction.

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