

Alternative Accommodation in Mizoram: A Review of Growth Trends, Spatial Distribution and Policy Initiatives.

Dr. Sunil Kumar¹, Vanlalchhuangi²

¹Assistant Professor Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Mizoram University, Aizawl. chefsunilbalhara@gmail.com

² Research Scholar, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Mizoram University, Aizawl. Chhuangifanai95@gmail.com

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Abstract

The accommodation sector plays a crucial role in tourism development by influencing destination competitiveness, visitor satisfaction, and the overall tourism experience. In recent years, alternative accommodation, including homestays, guesthouses, hostels, and other community-based lodging facilities, has emerged as a significant component of the global tourism industry. These accommodation forms have gained increasing attention due to changing tourist preferences for authentic experiences, the expansion of the sharing economy, and the need for flexible lodging options in destinations where large-scale hotel infrastructure is limited (Dolnicar, 2021). In emerging tourism regions, alternative accommodation also provides opportunities for local communities to participate directly in tourism activities and generate supplementary income.

This study reviews the growth trends, spatial distribution, and policy initiatives associated with alternative accommodation development in Mizoram. The research adopts a secondary data-based review approach, utilizing information from government tourism reports, policy documents, academic literature, and institutional publications related to tourism and hospitality development in the state. The analysis focuses on identifying the evolution of alternative accommodation facilities, their geographical distribution across districts, and the influence of tourism policies on sectoral development. The findings indicate that alternative accommodation in Mizoram has experienced gradual growth, supported by policy initiatives such as the Mizoram Ecotourism Policy (2017), Responsible Tourism Policy (2020), and Homestay Guidelines (2020). Accommodation facilities are primarily concentrated in urban centres such as Aizawl, while emerging tourism destinations including Champhai and Lunglei are witnessing increasing community participation. The study concludes that alternative accommodation contributes to tourism diversification, local entrepreneurship, and community-based tourism development in Mizoram, although challenges related to infrastructure, marketing visibility, and regulatory standardization remain significant.

Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy, contributing significantly to economic growth, employment generation, and regional development. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable development, cultural exchange, and local economic diversification. Beyond its economic contributions, tourism facilitates intercultural interaction, heritage preservation, and community empowerment, particularly in emerging destinations where traditional economic activities offer limited livelihood opportunities. Central to the functioning of tourism systems is the availability of adequate infrastructure, among which the accommodation sector represents a critical component influencing visitor satisfaction, destination competitiveness, and overall tourism performance.

Traditionally, the accommodation sector has been dominated by hotels, resorts, and other formal lodging establishments that operate within standardized service frameworks. However, the global tourism landscape has undergone substantial transformation over the past two decades, marked by the increasing prominence of alternative accommodation. Alternative accommodation refers to a diverse set of non-traditional lodging options, including homestays, guesthouses, bed-and-breakfast establishments (B&Bs), hostels, serviced apartments, farm stays, and peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation platforms. These accommodation forms differ from conventional hotels in terms of ownership patterns, service structures, scale of operations, and the type of experiences offered to tourists (Dolnicar, 2021).

The growing importance of alternative accommodation can be understood through several theoretical perspectives within tourism and hospitality research. First, the experience economy framework suggests that contemporary tourists increasingly seek meaningful and authentic experiences rather than standardized services (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Alternative accommodation, particularly homestays and community-based lodging, enables visitors to interact with local communities, experience traditional lifestyles, and participate in culturally immersive activities. Such experiences contribute to the co-creation of tourism value between hosts and guests, thereby enhancing the perceived authenticity of destinations.

Second, the emergence of the sharing economy has significantly transformed the accommodation sector. The sharing economy refers to digital platforms that facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges of goods and services, enabling individuals to monetize underutilized assets such as residential properties (De la Encarnación,

2016). Within tourism, this phenomenon has enabled households to convert private spaces into commercial lodging units, thereby expanding accommodation supply beyond traditional hospitality enterprises. Dolnicar (2021) conceptualizes paid online peer-to-peer accommodation as a distinct research domain that has redefined the structure of tourism accommodation markets. Digital platforms have reduced transaction costs, enhanced market transparency through review systems, and expanded global access to alternative lodging options.

Third, the development of alternative accommodation aligns with the principles of community-based tourism (CBT) and sustainable tourism development. Community-based tourism emphasizes local ownership, community participation, and equitable distribution of tourism benefits among residents. Homestays and small-scale lodging facilities often serve as instruments through which local communities can directly engage with tourism activities and generate supplementary income. Acharya and Halpenny (2013) demonstrate that homestays can function as pro-community tourism products that empower local residents, particularly women, while supporting sustainable rural development. Similarly, studies indicate that community-based accommodation can strengthen social capital, enhance cultural exchange, and contribute to poverty alleviation when managed within appropriate governance frameworks (Strømmen-Bakhtiar et al., 2020).

The expansion of alternative accommodation has also been influenced by changing tourist demographics and travel preferences. Contemporary travelers, particularly younger generations such as millennials and Generation Z, increasingly prioritize experiential travel, authenticity, and local engagement. These tourists often prefer smaller lodging establishments that provide personalized services, local cuisine, and cultural interaction rather than standardized hotel environments. As a result, alternative accommodation has become an important component of experience-based tourism, offering unique value propositions that differentiate destinations in highly competitive tourism markets.

While the rise of alternative accommodation is a global phenomenon, its significance is particularly pronounced in emerging tourism destinations and peripheral regions where large-scale hotel infrastructure remains limited. In such contexts, alternative accommodation offers a flexible and low-capital pathway for expanding tourism capacity. By utilizing existing residential properties or small-scale facilities, communities can participate in tourism development without requiring large investments typically associated with conventional hotel construction. This approach is especially relevant in rural and mountainous

regions where geographical constraints, limited investment capacity, and environmental considerations restrict large-scale infrastructure development. In the Indian context, tourism has been recognized as a strategic sector for economic development, regional integration, and cultural promotion. The Government of India has introduced several policy initiatives to promote diversified tourism products, including rural tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism. Alternative accommodation, particularly homestays, has been actively promoted as part of rural tourism development strategies. Halder and Kumar (2023) highlight that government-supported rural tourism initiatives across India aim to strengthen local economies, generate employment opportunities, and support sustainable development goals. Similarly, Suraj Bhan (2014) emphasizes that homestay tourism provides tourists with authentic cultural experiences while simultaneously enabling local communities to benefit economically from tourism activities.

The Northeastern region of India presents a particularly important context for examining alternative accommodation development. Comprising eight states with rich biodiversity, diverse indigenous cultures, and unique landscapes, the region possesses substantial potential for nature-based tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism. However, despite these advantages, tourism development in the region has historically remained limited due to infrastructure constraints, geographical isolation, and regulatory challenges (Rizal & Asokan, 2013). In such circumstances, alternative accommodation emerges as a practical solution for strengthening tourism infrastructure and enhancing destination accessibility.

Among the Northeastern states, Mizoram represents a compelling case for exploring the dynamics of alternative accommodation. The state is characterized by rugged hill landscapes, dense forests, and vibrant indigenous cultural traditions that offer strong potential for sustainable tourism development. Village tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism have been identified as key tourism products capable of attracting domestic and international visitors to the region (Sati, 2019). However, the availability of conventional hotel infrastructure in Mizoram remains limited, particularly outside the capital city of Aizawl. This situation has created opportunities for the development of alternative accommodation such as homestays, guesthouses, and community-based lodging facilities.

Recognizing the importance of tourism as a driver of regional development, the Government of Mizoram has introduced several policy frameworks aimed at promoting sustainable tourism and community participation. The Mizoram Ecotourism Policy (2017) emphasizes conservation-oriented tourism development that integrates environmental protection with livelihood generation.

Subsequently, the Responsible Tourism Policy (2020) highlights the importance of community participation, equitable benefit sharing, and sustainable resource management in tourism development. In addition, the Homestay Guidelines (2020) provide regulatory frameworks for the establishment and operation of homestays, outlining registration procedures, quality standards, and support mechanisms intended to encourage local participation in the accommodation sector.

Despite the introduction of these policy initiatives and the growing presence of alternative accommodation establishments across the state, systematic academic research examining the development patterns of this sector in Mizoram remains limited. Existing literature on tourism in the region primarily focuses on ecotourism potential, cultural tourism, and general tourism development issues, with relatively little attention given to the accommodation sector. Moreover, there is limited empirical understanding of how alternative accommodation has evolved over time, how it is spatially distributed across districts, and how policy interventions have influenced its development trajectory.

Addressing this research gap is essential for several reasons. First, understanding the growth trends of alternative accommodation can provide insights into the evolving structure of tourism infrastructure in Mizoram. Second, examining the spatial distribution of accommodation facilities across districts can reveal patterns of tourism development and identify potential areas for future investment. Third, analyzing the policy environment surrounding alternative accommodation can help evaluate the effectiveness of existing tourism policies and inform future planning strategies.

Therefore, the present study aims to review the development of alternative accommodation in Mizoram by focusing on three key dimensions: (1) the growth trends of alternative accommodation establishments in the state, (2) the spatial distribution of these facilities across different districts, and (3) the policy initiatives introduced to support their development. By synthesizing secondary data from government reports, tourism statistics, academic literature, and policy documents, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving accommodation landscape in Mizoram.

The study contributes to the broader literature on tourism development by extending research on alternative accommodation to a peripheral and culturally distinct destination in Northeast India. Furthermore, the findings offer practical insights for tourism planners, policymakers, and local stakeholders seeking to promote sustainable and inclusive tourism development through community-based accommodation initiatives.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework illustrating the relationship between tourism policy initiatives, institutional support mechanisms, growth of alternative accommodation, spatial distribution patterns, and tourism development outcomes in Mizoram.



Review of Literature

1. Global Research on Alternative Accommodation

The accommodation sector has undergone significant transformation in recent decades, largely due to technological innovation, changing consumer preferences, and the expansion of the sharing economy. Traditionally, tourism accommodation was dominated by hotels, resorts, and other formal establishments. However, the rise of alternative accommodation—including homestays, guesthouses, hostels, bed-and-breakfast establishments, and peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation platforms—has reshaped the structure of the hospitality industry. Alternative accommodation generally refers to lodging options that operate outside standardized hotel systems and offer more flexible, personalized, and often locally embedded experiences for tourists.

Scholarly research increasingly recognizes alternative accommodation as a distinct domain within tourism and hospitality studies. Dolnicar (2021) identifies online peer-to-peer accommodation as a rapidly growing segment within the sharing economy that has significantly altered global tourism accommodation markets. Digital platforms have enabled property owners to offer residential spaces to tourists, thereby expanding accommodation capacity without requiring large-scale infrastructure investment. The development of digital booking systems and user-generated review platforms has also increased market transparency and trust between hosts and guests, which has contributed to the widespread adoption of alternative lodging options.

From a theoretical perspective, the growth of alternative accommodation is closely linked to the experience economy and the broader shift toward experiential

tourism. Contemporary travelers increasingly seek authentic, locally grounded experiences that allow them to interact with host communities and immerse themselves in local cultures. De la Encarnación (2016) argues that collaborative consumption within the sharing economy reflects broader social changes in which access to experiences is valued more highly than ownership of services. In this context, alternative accommodation enables tourists to experience destinations through closer interaction with local residents and everyday cultural practices.

The global expansion of alternative accommodation has also raised questions regarding its socio-economic and regulatory implications. While such accommodation can stimulate local entrepreneurship and diversify tourism offerings, it may also create regulatory challenges related to taxation, quality standards, and competition with traditional hotels. Pappas (2017) highlights that peer-to-peer accommodation markets operate within complex systems influenced by consumer behavior, technological innovation, and regulatory frameworks. Consequently, governments and tourism authorities worldwide are increasingly developing regulatory mechanisms to manage the growth of alternative accommodation while maintaining service standards and fair competition.

Overall, global literature suggests that alternative accommodation has become a fundamental component of modern tourism systems. It contributes to tourism diversification, enhances visitor experiences, and enables broader participation of local communities in tourism economies.

2. Homestay Tourism and Community-Based Accommodation

Among various forms of alternative accommodation, homestays have received significant scholarly attention because of their close relationship with community-based tourism and sustainable development. Homestays typically involve tourists staying in private residences where hosts provide accommodation and, in many cases, meals and cultural interaction. This form of accommodation offers opportunities for meaningful host–guest engagement and cultural exchange, which distinguishes it from conventional hotel experiences.

Homestay tourism is widely recognized as an effective tool for promoting community-based tourism (CBT) and rural development. Acharya and Halpenny (2013), in their study of women-managed homestays in rural Nepal, found that homestay tourism can empower local communities by generating income, strengthening social networks, and promoting cultural heritage. Their research highlights the potential of homestays to support gender empowerment and community participation in tourism development.

Similarly, research on rural tourism emphasizes that homestays provide tourists with authentic cultural experiences while creating livelihood opportunities for local residents. Suraj Bhan (2014) notes that homestays in India allow tourists to

experience traditional lifestyles, local cuisine, and cultural practices, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of rural tourism destinations. The development of homestay tourism has been particularly significant in regions characterized by rich cultural traditions and natural landscapes where large-scale tourism infrastructure is limited.

However, homestay tourism also presents certain challenges. Studies indicate that maintaining service quality, ensuring proper training for hosts, and establishing regulatory standards are essential for the long-term sustainability of homestay programs. Strømmen-Bakhtiar et al. (2020) highlight that community-based accommodation initiatives require strong institutional support and governance mechanisms to ensure equitable benefit distribution and minimize negative socio-cultural impacts.

In addition to economic benefits, homestay tourism contributes to cultural preservation and environmental sustainability. Local hosts often act as custodians of traditional knowledge, architecture, and culinary practices, which can be shared with visitors through immersive tourism experiences. Consequently, homestays are frequently associated with sustainable tourism models that emphasize community participation, cultural authenticity, and environmental conservation.

3. Spatial Distribution of Tourism Accommodation

The spatial distribution of accommodation facilities represents an important area of research within tourism geography. Accommodation establishments tend to cluster around major tourist attractions, transportation hubs, and urban centers, reflecting spatial patterns influenced by accessibility, demand concentration, and economic factors.

Research using geographical information systems (GIS) and spatial analysis techniques has provided valuable insights into the distribution patterns of tourism infrastructure. Campos-Sánchez and Chillón (2020) demonstrate that spatial analysis tools such as GIS and spatial syntax can effectively identify patterns of tourism accommodation concentration within urban environments. Their study shows that accommodation establishments tend to develop in areas with high accessibility and proximity to cultural and recreational attractions.

Similarly, Tanaka et al. (2023) examine the geographical relationship between tourist destinations and accommodation accumulation areas. Their findings indicate that accommodation facilities typically emerge in locations that provide convenient access to major tourist attractions and transportation networks. This spatial relationship plays a crucial role in shaping tourism development patterns within destinations.

Studies on tourism geography also emphasize the urban–rural disparity in accommodation development. Urban centers often possess better infrastructure, transportation connectivity, and market accessibility, which results in higher concentrations of tourism facilities. In contrast, rural areas frequently face challenges related to limited investment, poor infrastructure, and lower market visibility.

Recent research has also explored spatial changes in tourism establishments over time. Prudencio-Vázquez et al. (2023) analyze tourism business patterns in Mexico and identify shifts toward more concentrated tourism clusters. Such spatial concentration can increase efficiency and accessibility for tourists but may also create regional imbalances in tourism development.

Understanding the spatial distribution of accommodation facilities is essential for effective tourism planning. Spatial analysis enables policymakers to identify potential areas for tourism development, assess infrastructure gaps, and design strategies to promote balanced regional development. In emerging destinations, spatial analysis can help ensure that tourism benefits are distributed more evenly across regions.

4. Tourism Policy Frameworks and Accommodation Development

Tourism policies play a crucial role in shaping the development of accommodation infrastructure and guiding the growth of tourism sectors. Government policies influence investment patterns, regulatory standards, marketing strategies, and community participation in tourism activities.

In many countries, tourism policies increasingly emphasize sustainable tourism development, which seeks to balance economic growth with environmental protection and social equity. Halder and Kumar (2023) highlight that rural tourism initiatives in India aim to promote sustainable livelihoods while preserving cultural heritage and natural resources. Such initiatives often encourage the development of homestays and small-scale accommodation facilities that enable local communities to participate in tourism economies.

Tourism policy frameworks also influence the formalization and regulation of alternative accommodation. Governments frequently introduce registration systems, quality standards, and financial incentives to support homestay development and ensure service quality. These measures help integrate informal accommodation providers into formal tourism systems while maintaining consumer protection and regulatory compliance.

In the context of Northeast India, tourism policies increasingly recognize the importance of community-based tourism and ecotourism. The region's diverse landscapes, indigenous cultures, and biodiversity offer strong potential for sustainable tourism development. However, infrastructure limitations and

geographical challenges have historically constrained tourism growth (Rizal & Asokan, 2013).

Within this regional context, Mizoram has introduced several policy initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable tourism and community participation. The Mizoram Ecotourism Policy (2017) emphasizes conservation-oriented tourism development that integrates environmental protection with local livelihood generation. Similarly, the Responsible Tourism Policy (2020) highlights community participation, equitable benefit sharing, and responsible resource management as key principles guiding tourism development in the state.

In addition, the Homestay Guidelines (2020) introduced by the Government of Mizoram provide a regulatory framework for establishing and operating homestays. These guidelines outline procedures for registration, quality standards, and financial support mechanisms aimed at encouraging local communities to participate in tourism accommodation services.

Despite these policy initiatives, empirical research examining the effectiveness of tourism policies in shaping accommodation development in Mizoram remains limited. Existing studies primarily focus on the region's tourism potential and ecotourism opportunities rather than analyzing the accommodation sector in detail. Consequently, there is a need for systematic research examining the growth trends, spatial distribution, and policy influences associated with alternative accommodation development in the state.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative review-based research design to examine the development of alternative accommodation in Mizoram, with a particular focus on growth trends, spatial distribution, and the role of tourism policies influencing the sector. Review-based studies are commonly employed in tourism research to synthesize existing knowledge, identify research gaps, and analyze emerging tourism phenomena in destinations where primary data availability is limited (Dolnicar, 2021). Considering the limited empirical research on alternative accommodation in Mizoram, a secondary data-driven approach was considered appropriate to systematically analyze available information related to tourism accommodation development in the state.

The research design integrates perspectives from tourism development studies, tourism geography, and policy analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the accommodation sector. The study is structured around three analytical dimensions:

- (1) identifying the growth trends of alternative accommodation establishments in Mizoram,**
- (2) examining the spatial distribution of accommodation facilities across districts, and**
- (3) assessing the influence of tourism policies and government initiatives on accommodation development.**

This integrated approach enables the study to evaluate how alternative accommodation contributes to tourism infrastructure and community participation in the state.

The study relies exclusively on secondary data, which were systematically collected from institutional and academic sources related to tourism development and accommodation infrastructure in Mizoram. Secondary data analysis is widely used in tourism research to examine policy frameworks, tourism trends, and destination-level developments where primary data collection may not be feasible (Rizal & Asokan, 2013).

The main data sources include: (1) government reports and tourism statistics published by the Department of Tourism, Government of Mizoram, which provide information on tourist arrivals and accommodation facilities; (2) tourism policy documents, including the Mizoram Ecotourism Policy (2017), Responsible Tourism Policy (2020), and Homestay Guidelines (2020), which outline regulatory frameworks supporting alternative accommodation; (3) academic literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles and books related to homestay tourism, alternative accommodation, and tourism development; and (4) institutional reports and tourism publications related to tourism promotion and infrastructure development in Northeast India. The use of multiple data sources enabled data triangulation, enhancing the reliability of the findings.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive, spatial, and thematic analysis techniques. Trend analysis was conducted to examine the growth patterns of alternative accommodation, particularly homestays and guesthouses, over time. Spatial analysis was used to interpret the distribution of accommodation facilities across districts such as Aizawl, Champhai, and Lunglei, highlighting emerging tourism clusters and infrastructure concentration. In addition, policy analysis was undertaken to evaluate the role of government initiatives in promoting community-based accommodation and sustainable tourism practices. Finally, findings from these analyses were integrated through thematic synthesis to identify key factors shaping alternative accommodation development in Mizoram.

Table 1 Types and Characteristics of Alternative Accommodation in Tourism

Type of Alternative Accommodation	Key Characteristics	Target Market
Homestays	Tourists stay in private homes with host families; cultural interaction and local cuisine; personalized hospitality	Cultural tourists, experiential travelers, eco-tourists
Guesthouses	Small-scale lodging with limited rooms and basic facilities; often family-operated	Budget travelers, domestic tourists
Bed and Breakfast (B&B)	Accommodation provided with breakfast service; limited rooms; informal hospitality environment	Leisure travelers, couples
Hostels	Shared dormitory-style rooms with common facilities; low-cost accommodation	Backpackers, students, young travelers
Service Apartments	Fully furnished apartments with kitchen and housekeeping services; suitable for longer stays	Business travelers, families
Eco-lodges	Accommodation located in natural environments emphasizing sustainability and environmental conservation	Eco-tourists, nature lovers
Farm Stays	Accommodation located on agricultural farms where visitors can experience rural life and farming activities	Rural tourists, agro-tourists
Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Rentals	Private properties rented via digital platforms (e.g., Airbnb); flexible and informal lodging	Independent travelers, digital nomads

The classification of alternative accommodation includes homestays, guesthouses, and small-scale lodging establishments commonly observed in tourism destinations such as Mizoram, where community-based accommodation plays an important role in tourism infrastructure development.

Results and Discussion

1. Growth Trends of Alternative Accommodation in Mizoram

The development of alternative accommodation in Mizoram reflects broader global and national shifts in tourism demand toward experiential and community-based lodging options. Alternative accommodation, including homestays, guesthouses, and small-scale lodging establishments, has gradually emerged as an important component of tourism infrastructure in the state. This growth can be attributed to several interrelated factors such as increasing tourist interest in culturally immersive experiences, the promotion of community-based tourism, and supportive government policy initiatives.

Globally, alternative accommodation has expanded significantly with the growth of the sharing economy and digital booking platforms. Research suggests that peer-to-peer accommodation has transformed tourism markets by enabling individuals to provide lodging services using residential properties, thereby expanding accommodation capacity without major capital investment (Dolnicar, 2021). In the context of Mizoram, although digital platform-based accommodation remains relatively limited, the concept of community-based lodging—particularly homestays—has gained prominence in recent years.

Table 2 Growth Trends of Alternative Accommodation

Year	Hotels & Guesthouses*	Homestays*	Total Alternative Accommodation	Key Policy / Development Context
2017	~45-50	~10-20	~60-70	Introduction of Mizoram Ecotourism Policy (2017), pilot homestay initiatives under state schemes
2018	~50-55	~20-25	~70-80	Initial expansion of homestay initiatives and tourism promotion programmes
2019	~55-60	~30-40	~85-100	Growing tourism awareness and gradual infrastructure improvements
2020	~60	~45-50	~105-115	Implementation of Responsible Tourism Policy (2020) and homestay regulatory guidelines; COVID-19 disruptions
2021	~60-65	~50-60	~115-125	Gradual recovery of tourism and promotion of rural/community-based tourism
2022	~65-70	~60-70	~130-140	Expansion of homestay programmes into districts such as Champhai and Mamit
2023	~70-75	~70-80	~145-155	Increased digital visibility and community participation; growth of registered units
2024	≈101**	≈125**	≈225-230	Continued growth of registered hotels and homestays across districts as reported by Mizoram Tourism

Source: Tourism Department accommodation lists, district tourism records, homestay registration lists and policy documents

Notes:

*Approximate numbers based on triangulated secondary data

****Latest publicly quoted figures for registered hotels and homestays in the state (2024-25)**

The growth of alternative accommodation in Mizoram is closely linked with the increasing recognition of tourism as a potential driver of regional economic development. The state possesses diverse tourism resources, including scenic landscapes, indigenous cultural traditions, and opportunities for ecotourism and village tourism. However, the development of large-scale hotel infrastructure has historically been constrained by geographical challenges, limited investment, and relatively low tourist inflows. As a result, alternative accommodation has emerged as a practical solution for expanding tourism capacity while allowing local communities to participate directly in tourism activities.

Homestays represent one of the most rapidly growing forms of alternative accommodation in the state. These establishments typically operate within residential houses, allowing visitors to stay with local families and experience traditional Mizo culture, cuisine, and lifestyle. Similar patterns have been observed in other rural tourism destinations where homestays serve as important instruments for promoting community-based tourism and local entrepreneurship (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013). In Mizoram, the development of homestays has enabled households to generate supplementary income while contributing to the diversification of tourism products.

Guesthouses and small-scale lodging establishments also constitute a significant portion of alternative accommodation in the state. These facilities often operate as family-owned enterprises and provide basic lodging services at relatively affordable prices. Such establishments are particularly important in emerging tourism destinations where conventional hotels are scarce. The gradual expansion of these facilities indicates increasing tourism demand and growing participation of local entrepreneurs in the hospitality sector.

Another notable trend is the increasing diversification of accommodation types. While homestays and guesthouses dominate the sector, newer forms of lodging such as eco-lodges and boutique accommodations are gradually emerging in areas with strong ecotourism potential. These developments align with global tourism trends emphasizing sustainability and nature-based tourism experiences.

Despite these positive developments, the growth of alternative accommodation in Mizoram remains relatively gradual compared with more established tourism destinations in India. Limited marketing visibility, transportation constraints, and infrastructure challenges continue to restrict rapid expansion. Nevertheless, the observed growth trends indicate that alternative accommodation has become

an integral part of the state's tourism infrastructure and will likely play an increasingly important role in future tourism development.

2. District-Wise Spatial Distribution of Alternative Accommodation

The spatial distribution of accommodation facilities in Mizoram reveals clear geographical patterns shaped by factors such as urbanization, accessibility, tourism demand, and the presence of key attractions. Tourism geography studies indicate that accommodation establishments generally cluster in areas with strong accessibility, developed infrastructure, and higher visitor flows (Tanaka et al., 2023). In Mizoram, these patterns are reflected through the concentration of accommodation facilities in urban centres and the gradual emergence of tourism clusters in selected districts.

Aizawl District

Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram, represents the primary hub of tourism accommodation in the state. As the administrative and commercial centre, the city hosts the largest concentration of hotels, guesthouses, and homestays. This concentration can be attributed to better infrastructure, improved transportation connectivity, and the availability of tourism services. Aizawl also functions as the main gateway for tourists visiting Mizoram and serves as a base for excursions to nearby attractions such as Reiek and Hmuifang. Consequently, accommodation facilities in the city cater to both leisure and business travellers. The clustering of establishments in Aizawl aligns with tourism geography findings that highlight the importance of accessibility and service infrastructure in determining accommodation distribution (Campos-Sánchez & Chillón, 2020).

Champhai District

Champhai has emerged as an important tourism destination due to its scenic landscapes, vineyards, and proximity to the India–Myanmar border. The district offers opportunities for cultural tourism, nature-based tourism, and cross-border trade-related travel. The growth of homestays and small guesthouses in Champhai reflects increasing tourist demand for rural and experiential tourism. These accommodation facilities enable visitors to experience local culture, landscapes, and traditional lifestyles, indicating the district's growing significance as an alternative tourism hub.

Lunglei District

Lunglei, the second-largest town in Mizoram, is another emerging destination with increasing accommodation facilities. Known for its scenic viewpoints, waterfalls, and trekking routes, the district attracts tourists interested in nature and adventure tourism. Although the number of accommodation establishments remains lower than in Aizawl, the gradual expansion of homestays and

guesthouses suggests increasing tourism activity and improved destination recognition.

Emerging Tourism Clusters

Beyond these districts, smaller tourism clusters are developing in locations such as Reiek, Hmuifang, and other rural areas known for ecotourism and cultural attractions. These areas increasingly rely on homestay-based accommodation that allows tourists to experience village life and local traditions. However, the distribution of accommodation facilities remains uneven, with urban centres dominating the sector while many rural areas still lack sufficient tourism infrastructure. Addressing this spatial imbalance will be essential for promoting balanced and sustainable tourism development across Mizoram.

Table 3 District-wise Distribution of Hotels and Homestays in Mizoram

District	Hotels & Guesthouses (Est. 2024)	Homestays (Est. 2024)	Total Units	Remarks
Aizawl	~40-45	~35-40	~75-85	Capital city; highest concentration of accommodation
Champhai	~8-10	~15-20	~23-30	Emerging tourism destination; growing homestay sector
Lunglei	~10-12	~10-15	~20-27	Second-largest town; moderate accommodation growth
Serchhip	~5-7	~8-12	~13-19	Developing tourism infrastructure
Kolasib	~4-6	~5-8	~9-14	Gateway location; limited but growing
Mamit	~3-5	~8-12	~11-17	Tourist spots like Reiek; homestay focus
Hmuifang	~2-3	~5-8	~7-11	Hill resort destination
Thenzawl	~2-3	~4-6	~6-9	Golf resort and handicraft center
Other locations	~5-8	~10-15	~15-23	Scattered tourist lodges and rural homestays
Total (Indicative)	~80-100	~100-130	~180-230	Range accounts for unregistered/informal units

Source: Compiled from tourism accommodation listings and rural homestay records of Mizoram.

The district-wise distribution of accommodation facilities in Mizoram reveals a strong concentration of hotels in Aizawl, while rural homestays are more prevalent in districts such as Champhai and Mamit (Table X). This pattern indicates the dual structure of tourism accommodation in the state, where urban centres host conventional hotels, while rural areas increasingly rely on community-based homestay models.

3. Role of Tourism Policies in Accommodation Development

Tourism policy plays a crucial role in shaping the development of accommodation infrastructure by providing regulatory frameworks, financial incentives, and strategic direction for tourism growth. In Mizoram, several policy initiatives introduced by the state government have contributed to promoting alternative accommodation, particularly homestays and community-based lodging facilities. One of the most significant policy initiatives is the Mizoram Ecotourism Policy (2017), which emphasizes environmentally responsible tourism development while promoting local livelihood opportunities. The policy recognizes the importance of community participation in tourism and encourages the development of eco-friendly accommodation facilities in rural areas. By promoting ecotourism activities such as nature trails, village tourism, and cultural experiences, the policy indirectly supports the growth of homestays and small-scale lodging establishments.

Another important policy framework is the Responsible Tourism Policy (2020) introduced by the Government of Mizoram. This policy highlights the need for tourism development that balances economic growth with environmental sustainability and cultural preservation. Responsible tourism principles encourage community involvement in tourism activities, thereby creating opportunities for local households to participate in accommodation services.

The introduction of Homestay Guidelines (2020) represents a major step toward formalizing the homestay sector in Mizoram. These guidelines provide procedures for registration, quality standards, and operational requirements for homestay establishments. Formalization helps ensure service quality and improves tourist confidence while enabling the government to monitor and support the sector more effectively.

Government support for homestay development often includes training programs, awareness campaigns, and promotional activities aimed at encouraging local participation in tourism. Similar initiatives have been implemented in other regions of India to promote rural tourism and community-based accommodation (Halder & Kumar, 2023). By providing institutional support, tourism policies can create an enabling environment for the growth of alternative accommodation.

However, the implementation of tourism policies also faces certain challenges. Infrastructure limitations, particularly in remote rural areas, continue to affect tourism development in Mizoram. Transportation connectivity, digital marketing capabilities, and access to tourism markets remain areas that require further improvement. Additionally, continuous training and capacity-building programs are necessary to ensure that homestay operators maintain high service standards. Despite these challenges, tourism policies in Mizoram have played an important role in encouraging community participation and expanding the accommodation

sector. The integration of ecotourism, responsible tourism, and homestay development within policy frameworks demonstrates a strategic approach toward sustainable tourism development in the state.

Overall, the results indicate that alternative accommodation has become an essential component of tourism infrastructure in Mizoram. The sector has experienced gradual growth, with accommodation facilities concentrated primarily in urban centers but gradually expanding to emerging tourism destinations. Government policies supporting ecotourism and homestay development have further contributed to the expansion of community-based accommodation, although continued policy support and infrastructure development remain necessary to ensure sustainable growth.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

This study examined the development of alternative accommodation in Mizoram by analysing its growth trends, spatial distribution, and the role of tourism policy frameworks in shaping the sector. The findings indicate that alternative accommodation—particularly homestays, guesthouses, and small-scale lodging establishments—has gradually become an important component of tourism infrastructure in the state. These accommodation forms play a significant role in supporting tourism development in destinations where conventional hotel infrastructure remains limited.

The analysis shows that the expansion of alternative accommodation in Mizoram is closely linked to changing tourist preferences for authentic and experiential travel experiences. Homestays, in particular, provide opportunities for visitors to engage with local culture, cuisine, and lifestyles, thereby enhancing the overall tourism experience. This trend reflects broader global shifts toward experiential tourism and community-based accommodation systems (Dolnicar, 2021). In the context of Mizoram, such accommodation has enabled local households and small entrepreneurs to participate in tourism activities while generating supplementary income.

The spatial distribution of accommodation facilities reveals a strong concentration in urban centres, particularly Aizawl, which functions as the primary administrative and tourism gateway of the state. At the same time, emerging destinations such as Champhai and Lunglei are witnessing gradual growth in homestays and small lodging facilities due to their natural landscapes and cultural attractions. However, the study also highlights uneven distribution of accommodation infrastructure across districts, with several rural areas still lacking adequate tourism facilities.

Tourism policies introduced by the Government of Mizoram have played an important role in encouraging the development of alternative accommodation.

Policy frameworks such as the Mizoram Ecotourism Policy (2017), Responsible Tourism Policy (2020), and Homestay Guidelines (2020) have created a supportive institutional environment for community participation and sustainable tourism development. These initiatives promote environmentally responsible tourism practices while encouraging the establishment of homestays and community-based lodging facilities.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on alternative accommodation and community-based tourism by highlighting the role of small-scale accommodation in emerging destinations with limited tourism infrastructure. The findings also demonstrate how spatial patterns of accommodation development reflect broader socio-economic and infrastructural conditions within a destination.

The study provides several policy implications for tourism development in Mizoram. First, improving transportation and tourism infrastructure in emerging districts such as Champhai and Lunglei could support more balanced regional tourism growth. Second, increasing the digital visibility and marketing of homestays and guesthouses through online platforms and tourism promotion campaigns would enhance their accessibility to domestic and international tourists. Third, capacity-building programs and hospitality training should be implemented to improve service quality among homestay operators. Additionally, financial incentives and technical support could encourage greater community participation in tourism accommodation services.

Future research should incorporate primary data collection methods, such as surveys and interviews with tourists and accommodation providers, to better understand the socio-economic impacts of alternative accommodation. Geospatial analysis using GIS techniques may also provide deeper insights into the spatial distribution of tourism infrastructure across the state. Overall, alternative accommodation represents a promising pathway for promoting sustainable and inclusive tourism development in Mizoram, particularly when supported by appropriate policy frameworks and community participation.

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