From Resource Endowment to Rural Tourism Destination: A Documentary Analysis of Jampui Hills, Tripura, India

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Abstract: Rural tourism is increasingly discussed as a place-based development strategy through which natural, cultural and livelihood resources can be connected to local enterprise and visitor experiences. Yet resource endowment alone does not constitute a functioning rural destination. This study examines how the tourism resources of Jampui Hills, Tripura, can be translated into a more integrated rural tourism system and identifies the institutional, infrastructural and market conditions that shape this process. The study uses a qualitative documentary research design and purposive thematic document analysis. The evidence base comprises official Government of India tourism strategies and destination-development documents, Government of Tripura and North Tripura district sources, and peer-reviewed literature on rural tourism, community participation, destination governance and sustainable tourism. Documents were screened against explicit inclusion criteria and analysed across four themes: resource endowment, enabling conditions, development constraints and destination opportunities. The analysis finds that Jampui Hills possesses a distinctive combination of highland landscapes, Betlingchhip, orange cultivation, local Mizo cultural resources, village experiences and community-based accommodation. However, these assets remain more strongly documented as attractions than as a coordinated tourism product. The principal development challenge is therefore one of destination integration: physical and digital accessibility, visitor infrastructure, community capability, enterprise linkages, market coordination and environmental safeguards must operate together. The study develops a destination integration framework linking resources to experiences, local enterprises, governance and markets. The contribution is conceptual and destination-specific rather than causal: no claim is made that the proposed interventions will increase arrivals or household income without primary empirical testing. The paper concludes with a phased development agenda and identifies priorities for future research using resident, visitor and enterprise data.

Keywords: Rural tourism; Jampui Hills; destination development; community participation; destination governance; Northeast India; documentary analysis; sustainable tourism

INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism has moved from a relatively peripheral tourism concept to an important field of destination and rural-development research. Contemporary scholarship commonly associates rural tourism with rural location, sustainability, community involvement and experiential consumption, while also recognizing that rural destinations face both internal resource

constraints and external market and accessibility constraints (Rosalina et al., 2021). The policy rationale is consequently broader than attracting visitors. Rural tourism can diversify livelihood opportunities, strengthen local enterprise, reinforce the value of agricultural and cultural resources, and create incentives for place-based conservation when tourism is appropriately governed. At the same time, tourism can generate environmental pressure, cultural commodification and uneven distribution of benefits. The relevant question is therefore not whether a rural area has attractions, but whether it can organise those assets into a viable, locally embedded and environmentally responsible destination system.

India provides a particularly relevant context because rural landscapes contain substantial ecological, agricultural and cultural diversity, while national tourism policy has explicitly recognised rural tourism and rural homestays as areas requiring strategic development. The Ministry of Tourism's National Strategy and Roadmap for Development of Rural Tourism in India identifies community participation, local enterprise, infrastructure, skills, responsible tourism and destination-level coordination as components of rural tourism development (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2021). The policy framework is important because it shifts the analytical focus from isolated attractions to the conditions required to turn local resources into tourism experiences and local economic opportunities.

Jampui Hills in North Tripura offers a useful case for examining this transition. Official district information identifies Jampui Hills as Tripura's highest hill range, with Betlingchhip as the state's highest peak, and records local paying-guest accommodation provided by Mizo families. The district administration places Jampui Hills approximately 198 km from Agartala and about 70 km from Dharmanagar, with road transport forming a major access route (District Administration, North Tripura, 2026a). The area's tourism identity is associated with hill landscapes, viewpoints, orange orchards, village life and Mizo cultural characteristics. Earlier Government of India documentation also identified Jampui Hills for rural tourism development and linked the destination to eco-tourism, orange cultivation and the Orange and Tourism Festival (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2011).

Recent planning attention indicates that the destination remains part of Tripura's tourism-development agenda. A 2024 discussion around Jampui Hills proposed interventions including trekking routes, an eco-park, development of Betlingchhip as a nature reserve, a skywalk and improvements around the Tlaksih paragliding site; these proposals were framed publicly

around community-based, eco-friendly and sustainable tourism (India Today NE, 2024). Such proposals should be treated as development intentions rather than evidence that the projects have already been implemented. This distinction is important in a documentary study because official plans demonstrate institutional attention but do not establish outcomes.

The research problem addressed here is therefore one of destination integration. Jampui Hills has multiple tourism resources, but the documentary record is dispersed across policy documents, administrative information and tourism literature. Existing descriptions tend to identify attractions individually. Less attention has been given to how natural, agricultural, cultural and community resources can be connected through accessibility, local enterprise, visitor infrastructure, market linkages and governance. This paper addresses that gap by asking: (1) What tourism resources are documented for Jampui Hills? (2) What constraints limit their conversion into an integrated rural tourism product? and (3) What destination-development mechanisms can connect local resources, community participation and tourism markets?

The study makes three contributions. First, it provides a systematic destination-level synthesis of documentary evidence on Jampui Hills rather than a simple attraction inventory. Second, it connects the case to contemporary rural tourism scholarship on community participation, collaborative governance and sustainability. Third, it proposes a destination integration framework that identifies the links required between resource endowment, tourism experiences, local enterprises, enabling infrastructure, governance and markets. Because the study is based entirely on secondary evidence, the framework is presented as an analytically derived proposition rather than a tested causal model.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANALYTICAL FRAMING

Rural tourism is difficult to define through a single activity because its product is often distributed across landscapes, households, farms, cultural practices, small enterprises and community institutions. Rosalina et al. (2021), in a systematic literature review, identify location, sustainable development, community-based features and experiences as recurring dimensions of rural tourism. Their review also shows that internal constraints related to resources, labour, planning and management are especially important in rural destinations. This supports a shift from attraction-centred analysis toward destination capability: the existence of a scenic site is a necessary but insufficient condition for rural tourism development.

Community participation is central to this perspective. Participation may occur through employment, accommodation, food services, guiding, craft production, entrepreneurship, product design or decision-making. These forms are not equivalent. A resident can be economically present in tourism without having meaningful influence over destination decisions, while a community can participate in planning without receiving a proportionate share of tourism value. The literature therefore treats participation as multidimensional rather than as a binary condition (Saxena, 2007; Su et al., 2019). For rural destinations, the economic significance of participation also depends on whether local products and services are connected to the visitor value chain rather than displaced by externally supplied inputs.

Recent research further strengthens the governance dimension. Reviews of rural tourism increasingly emphasize collaborative governance and horizontal coordination among public authorities, community organisations, businesses and other stakeholders. A recent review in the Journal of Destination Marketing & Management finds growing scholarly attention to collaborative governance in rural tourism and highlights the need for inclusive mechanisms rather than fragmented interventions (Brambatti et al., 2024). This is directly relevant to Jampui Hills because infrastructure, community training, marketing, conservation and enterprise development are unlikely to be solved by one actor operating independently.

Sustainability also requires a more balanced interpretation of tourism growth. Evidence from systematic reviews of tourism in traditional villages indicates that tourism can create economic and social benefits but can also generate spatial, sociocultural and ecological disruption when development is organised around visitor demand without adequate community safeguards (Li et al., 2024). Consequently, sustainable rural tourism should not be reduced to low-impact construction or visitor-volume targets. It should consider who participates, who captures value, which cultural practices are exposed to tourism, and whether ecological assets remain viable under increased visitation. On this basis, the present study uses a destination-integration lens. The analytical proposition is that rural tourism development in Jampui Hills can be understood as a chain: Resource endowment → Experience design → Local enterprise participation → Enabling infrastructure and accessibility → Destination governance and market integration → Sustainable destination outcomes. A weakness at any link can reduce the tourism value of the other links. For example, an orange orchard is a resource; an orchard visit combined with seasonal interpretation, local food and product sales is an experience; a farmer-led visit is a local enterprise opportunity; reliable access and booking information make it usable; and a

coordinated destination platform connects it with demand. The framework therefore treats tourism development as a system rather than an inventory.

METHODOLOGY

Research design: The study adopts a qualitative descriptive design using documentary analysis. This design is appropriate because the objective is to synthesise documented evidence about destination resources, constraints, policy support and development opportunities rather than to estimate demand, test causal relationships or measure resident attitudes. Documentary research is particularly useful where destination information is dispersed across policy documents, administrative sources and academic research.

Data sources and search strategy: The documentary corpus was constructed from four source groups: (1) Government of India tourism strategies and destination-development documents; (2) Government of Tripura and North Tripura district administrative and tourism sources; (3) peer-reviewed academic literature on rural tourism, community participation, destination governance and sustainability; and (4) relevant institutional studies where they contained destination-specific evidence. Priority was given to official and peer-reviewed sources. The Government of India's tourism portal confirms that rural tourism and rural homestays remain explicit national strategy areas (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2026).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria: A document was included when it provided destination-specific evidence on Jampui Hills or directly informed one of the study's analytical dimensions: resources, accessibility, infrastructure, community participation, institutional support, tourism activities, environmental management or market development. General tourism literature was retained only when it provided a conceptual or empirical basis for interpreting those dimensions. Documents containing only generic descriptions of Indian tourism without relevance to the research questions were excluded. Where official sources overlapped, the more recent or more destination-specific source was prioritised, while older documents were retained when they provided historical evidence of rural-tourism intervention.

Analytical procedure: Documents were read for relevance and coded into four themes: (1) resource endowment; (2) enabling conditions, including accessibility and infrastructure; (3) development constraints; and (4) development opportunities. Evidence was then compared across sources to identify recurring patterns, contradictions and gaps. The analysis

distinguishes three levels of evidence: documented fact, policy intention and analytical interpretation. For example, the existence of paying-guest accommodation is treated as documented evidence; a proposed skywalk is treated as a development proposal; and the suggestion that integrated packages may lengthen visitor stays is treated as an analytical proposition requiring empirical testing. This distinction reduces the risk of converting policy aspirations into measured outcomes.

Trustworthiness and limitations: Source triangulation was used to reduce dependence on a single institutional perspective. Official sources provide destination and policy information but may emphasise planned development; academic literature provides conceptual and empirical interpretation but may not capture current local conditions. The study therefore does not infer current visitor volumes for Jampui Hills from state-level tourism statistics, because the available official tourism-planning evidence itself notes that destination-specific arrival data may be unavailable for individual sites (Government of Tripura/Swadesh Darshan planning evidence, 2025). Nor does the paper claim quantified income, employment or resident-benefit effects. These would require primary field research or destination-level administrative data.

FINDINGS

Resource Endowment - Natural resources. Jampui Hills' principal natural advantage is its elevated hill landscape. North Tripura's official district profile identifies Betlingchhip at approximately 930 metres as the district's highest peak and identifies Jampui Hills as a major tourist attraction (District Administration, North Tripura, 2026b). The district tourism page further identifies panoramic viewpoints, orchids, greenery and trekking potential. These assets support nature walks, viewpoint circuits, trekking and interpretation-based experiences. Their value is experiential rather than merely visual: the landscape can become a structured product when routes, guides, safety information and interpretation are available.

Agricultural resources - Orange cultivation is a distinctive rural-economy resource in Jampui Hills. Government tourism documentation historically described orange plantation as a primary occupation and linked the area to the Orange and Tourism Festival (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2011). Agriculture creates an opportunity to connect tourism expenditure with an existing livelihood system. Orchard visits, seasonal interpretation, local produce tasting, farm-based food experiences and direct product sales could create additional tourism value without requiring agriculture to be replaced by tourism. The key condition is seasonality:

agricultural tourism should be designed around the production calendar rather than presented as a generic year-round attraction.

Cultural and community resources - The destination's Mizo cultural presence provides opportunities for local food, village interpretation, storytelling, handicrafts and community-hosted experiences. The official district source specifically records paying-guest accommodation provided by local Mizo families (District Administration, North Tripura, 2026a). This is significant because it demonstrates an existing form of resident participation. However, the documentary evidence does not establish how many households participate, their revenues, occupancy, profitability or decision-making influence. It therefore supports the existence of community involvement, not a claim about its scale or economic impact.

Accommodation and existing tourism facilities - Jampui Hills has a basic accommodation platform that can support destination development, but accommodation alone does not constitute a functioning tourism system. The visitor must be able to discover the destination, travel to it, book a stay, access attractions and activities, obtain food and information, and return safely. The finding is therefore that Jampui Hills has components of a rural destination system but requires stronger connections between those components.

Accessibility and Infrastructure Constraints - Jampui Hills is geographically distant from Tripura's principal urban centre. The North Tripura district administration currently states approximately 198 km from Agartala and around 70 km from Dharmanagar, while Panisagar is about 60 km away (District Administration, North Tripura, 2026a). The district source also states that road travel and public/private transport are available. The analytical issue is therefore not simply whether a road exists, but whether the overall journey is convenient, predictable and sufficiently connected to local attractions and services.

Accessibility has at least four components in this case: external connectivity from Agartala and nearby transport nodes; internal mobility among villages and attractions; information accessibility through maps, schedules, booking channels and digital information; and service accessibility through sanitation, signage, safety and visitor support. The literature suggests that rural tourism can be constrained by internal resource limitations as much as by external market conditions (Rosalina et al., 2021). For Jampui Hills, this means infrastructure investment should be selective and destination-wide rather than concentrated on a single flagship attraction.

Visitor infrastructure must also be environmentally proportionate. The attraction of Jampui Hills derives partly from its rural and ecological character. Overbuilding can create a paradox in which infrastructure intended to improve tourism reduces the landscape and cultural qualities that generate demand. Low-impact trails, directional signage, sanitation, waste systems, interpretation points, basic safety infrastructure and community-managed facilities may therefore be more compatible with the destination than indiscriminate construction.

Community Capability and Local Value Capture - The documentary evidence supports community involvement but reveals a significant evidence gap concerning depth and distribution. Paying-guest accommodation indicates direct household participation, while the policy literature identifies local enterprise, employment and community participation as core rural-tourism objectives. Yet no reliable secondary dataset was identified that quantifies the proportion of tourism expenditure retained locally. This is important because tourism presence and local value capture are not synonymous. A stronger local value chain could connect accommodation with local food, guiding, farm experiences, handicrafts, transport and cultural interpretation. Training should consequently move beyond generic hospitality to practical enterprise capabilities: digital booking, pricing, customer communication, food safety, accounting, photography and online promotion. Young people can potentially be integrated into guiding, interpretation and digital marketing, while farmers and households can participate in seasonal tourism activities. Such diversification would reduce dependence on accommodation alone.

The evidence also supports a participatory governance approach. Communities should not be treated merely as service providers. Decisions about cultural representation, visitor access to community spaces, appropriate photography and filming, use of local knowledge, and environmental rules require locally legitimate mechanisms. This follows the wider literature's movement toward collaborative governance and community co-creation rather than symbolic participation (Brambatti et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024).

Market Integration and Destination Positioning - Jampui Hills is better positioned as a multi-experience rural destination than as a single-attraction destination. Its strongest proposition is the combination of hills and viewpoints, agriculture, local culture and community-hosted stays. The destination should therefore be communicated through coherent experience bundles rather than isolated attraction names. Examples include a nature-and-

village stay, an orange-and-food experience during the appropriate season, and a guided hill-and-culture itinerary. These are proposed product structures, not existing products unless independently verified. Digital visibility is necessary but not sufficient. A destination website or social-media presence is useful only when it provides reliable information on access, accommodation, activities, prices, seasonal availability, local transport and contact/booking arrangements. Fragmented information raises perceived travel risk, particularly for a destination requiring a substantial journey. Partnerships with tour operators and neighbouring destinations can also reduce this problem by embedding Jampui Hills in wider Tripura itineraries rather than asking visitors to make a separate trip for one attraction.

Recent public discussion around development of Betlingchhip and related infrastructure demonstrates continuing institutional interest in strengthening Jampui Hills (India Today NE, 2024). Such attention creates an opportunity for destination planning, but project announcements should not be treated as completed infrastructure. The strategic requirement is to coordinate any new investment with local enterprise, conservation, interpretation and visitor management so that infrastructure creates a connected destination system.

DISCUSSION

The findings support the central proposition that Jampui Hills' tourism challenge is not primarily a shortage of attractions; it is the incomplete conversion of distributed resources into a coordinated destination product. This finding aligns with rural-tourism research that treats tourism as an interaction among place, community, experience and sustainability rather than a simple attraction model (Rosalina et al., 2021). The case demonstrates why resource inventories can overstate tourism potential: a resource becomes economically meaningful only when visitors can access, understand, consume and pay for an experience while value is retained sufficiently within the local economy.

The first theoretical implication concerns resource mobilisation. Jampui Hills contains natural, agricultural and cultural resources that are individually recognisable. The destination-development problem is to connect them. This is consistent with research showing that rural tourism relies on local resource mobilisation and community actors rather than only external investment (Su et al., 2019). The analytical value of the present case lies in showing how the resource categories are complementary: landscapes provide setting; agriculture supplies

seasonality and products; culture provides interpretation and identity; households provide accommodation and service capacity.

The second implication concerns community participation. Existing paying-guest accommodation indicates that residents are already part of the tourism system, but the documentary record cannot establish whether participation is broad, equitable or sufficiently remunerative. The appropriate policy response is therefore not to assume that "community tourism" already exists at scale, but to create mechanisms through which participation can deepen. This distinction is consistent with contemporary research that warns against equating tourism presence with community empowerment (Li et al., 2024).

The third implication concerns governance. Infrastructure, enterprise support, marketing and conservation are interdependent. A road improvement without local mobility or visitor information may have limited tourism effect; digital promotion without accommodation capacity can create service failures; increased visitation without waste management can damage the resource base. Collaborative destination governance is therefore not an abstract institutional ideal but a practical coordination mechanism. Recent review evidence similarly identifies collaborative governance as a major theme in rural tourism research (Brambatti et al., 2024).

The fourth implication concerns the meaning of tourism success. For Jampui Hills, visitor volume should not be the sole development indicator. A more useful destination scorecard would eventually measure local enterprise participation, share of tourism expenditure retained locally, length of stay, seasonal dispersion, resident perceptions, visitor satisfaction, waste performance, trail condition and cultural safeguards. These measures are proposed as future empirical indicators; the present study does not report values for them.

The study's contribution is therefore a destination integration framework. Resource endowment is the starting point, but five enabling links are required: experience design, local enterprise participation, accessibility and visitor infrastructure, governance coordination, and market linkage. Environmental and cultural safeguards cut across the chain. The framework is more useful than an attraction list because it identifies the mechanisms through which resources become tourism value. It can also be tested empirically in future research.

Table 1. Destination Integration Framework for Jampui Hills

Stage	Jampui Hills evidence	Required mechanism	Future indicator
1. Resource base	Hill landscape, Betlingchhip, oranges, local culture, village stays	Resource mapping and protection	Verified resource inventory
2. Experience conversion	Potential for nature, agriculture, food and cultural experiences	Guides, interpretation, product design	Number/type of bookable experiences
3. Local value capture	Existing paying-guest accommodation and local livelihoods	Enterprise support and value-chain linkages	Participating households/enterprises ; local revenue share
4. Enabling system	Long road journey; existing but dispersed facilities	Mobility, signage, sanitation, digital information	Travel time reliability; facility coverage
5. Market integration	Destination recognised in official tourism materials	Packages, digital distribution, operator partnerships	Bookings, length of stay, repeat/ referral demand
6. Governance & safeguards	Multiple public/community/private actors; sensitive landscape	Collaborative destination mechanism	Stakeholder participation; environmental/cultural compliance

Policy and Managerial Implications

A phased approach is more appropriate than a visitor-volume strategy. Phase 1 should establish destination coordination, resource mapping, community consultation, basic digital information, signage, sanitation and waste-management standards. Phase 2 should develop bookable community-based experiences, guide training, agricultural and food tourism, and links with local transport and tour operators. Phase 3 should evaluate demand, resident perceptions, environmental performance and local economic retention before scaling infrastructure. This sequencing reduces the risk of building capacity before understanding actual demand.

A destination-level coordinating mechanism should include tourism authorities, district administration, village/community representatives, accommodation providers, guides, farmers, local enterprises and relevant conservation or environmental actors. Its role should be

coordination rather than centralisation: setting minimum service standards, maintaining shared destination information, resolving visitor-management issues, coordinating festivals and seasonal activities, and aligning public investment with community enterprise development.

Community enterprise support should prioritise low-capital activities that use existing skills and assets. Local food, guided walks, orchard experiences, village interpretation, handicrafts, small transport services and homestay-linked activities can create multiple entry points. Financial support should be linked to training, service standards and transparent benefit mechanisms rather than simply subsidising construction.

Finally, environmental and cultural safeguards should be embedded before significant demand expansion. Trail capacity, waste systems, water and sanitation, visitor behaviour guidelines and community consent mechanisms should be established alongside product development. The objective is not to prevent tourism growth but to ensure that growth does not erode the assets on which future tourism depends.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has four principal limitations. First, it relies on secondary evidence and therefore cannot establish resident attitudes, visitor satisfaction, enterprise profitability or actual household income effects. Second, destination-specific tourist arrival data for Jampui Hills are not consistently available in the reviewed public sources, so state-level tourism figures are not used as proxies for the site. Third, official documents may reflect institutional priorities and development intentions; proposed projects are therefore distinguished from implemented interventions. Fourth, the qualitative framework does not test causal relationships. Future research should use mixed methods: a resident survey to measure participation and perceived impacts; an enterprise survey to estimate revenues, costs and local value capture; visitor research to measure motivation, satisfaction and willingness to pay; GPS or travel-time data to examine accessibility; and environmental indicators to assess carrying capacity and waste performance. A longitudinal design could then test whether specific interventions change length of stay, enterprise participation and visitor demand.

CONCLUSION

Jampui Hills possesses the core ingredients of a distinctive rural tourism destination: highland landscapes, Betlingchhip, orange cultivation, local Mizo cultural resources, village experiences

and community-based accommodation. The evidence, however, does not justify treating resource availability as equivalent to destination readiness. The principal development issue is integration. Natural and agricultural resources must be converted into bookable experiences; community participation must extend beyond accommodation; accessibility must include information and internal mobility; infrastructure must be proportionate to environmental conditions; and destination marketing must connect local experiences with wider tourism distribution channels.

The paper contributes a destination-integration framework that links resource endowment, experience design, local enterprise, enabling infrastructure, governance and markets, with environmental and cultural safeguards operating across the system. This framework is intentionally modest in its claims: it identifies mechanisms supported by documentary evidence and established literature, but it does not claim that particular interventions will cause higher arrivals or incomes without empirical evaluation. For policymakers and destination managers, the implication is to build a connected rural tourism system rather than a collection of isolated attractions. For researchers, the case provides a clear agenda for primary data collection on participation, demand, local value capture and sustainability. Jampui Hills' development opportunity therefore lies not simply in attracting more visitors, but in determining how tourism can reinforce local livelihoods and place identity while preserving the natural and cultural resources that make the destination distinctive.

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