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ANALYSIS OF TOURIST INFLOW & TOURISM GROWTH IN MUNGER DISTRICT, BIHAR, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the pattern of tourist inflow and tourism growth in Munger District of Bihar over the period 2015–2024. Based on secondary data collected from official sources, the study analyses year-wise domestic and foreign tourist arrivals and corresponding growth rates using descriptive and trend-based techniques. The results reveal that tourism in Munger district experienced a phase of moderate and stable growth during 2015–2018, followed by a sharp increase in 2019, indicating growing recognition of the district as a religious and cultural destination. The tourism sector suffered a severe setback during 2020–2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in unprecedented negative growth. However, the post-pandemic period witnessed a strong recovery, with a remarkable surge in tourist inflow and high growth rates during 2022–2024. The analysis clearly establishes a direct and positive relationship between tourist inflow and tourism growth. The study highlights the emerging tourism potential of Munger district and emphasises the need for planned and sustainable tourism development.

KEY WORDS: *Tourist Inflow, Tourism Growth Rate, COVID- 19 Pandemic, Tourism Potential, Sustainable Development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors, contributing significantly to economic growth, employment generation, and regional development worldwide. In developing countries like India, tourism plays a significant role not only in earning foreign exchange but also in promoting socio-cultural integration and balanced regional development. At the regional and district levels, tourism has the potential to transform local economies by utilising existing natural, cultural, historical, and religious resources. In recent years, there has been growing academic interest in analysing tourist inflow patterns as a key indicator of tourism growth and development. Tourist inflow reflects the popularity of a destination, the effectiveness of tourism policies, and the availability of infrastructure and services. A systematic analysis of tourist inflow helps in understanding temporal trends, growth phases, seasonal variations, and the overall development trajectory of tourism in a region. Such analyses are particularly important for emerging and lesser-studied destinations, where planned interventions can significantly enhance tourism potential. Munger District occupies an important place in the tourism landscape of Bihar due to its rich historical, religious, and cultural heritage. Located along the banks of the river Ganga, Munger is known for its association with ancient civilisations, religious traditions, yoga and spiritual practices, and historic monuments. Sites such as Bihar Yoga School, Kastaharni Ghat, Munger Fort, Chandisthan, and Sita Kund attract a considerable number of pilgrims, spiritual seekers, and domestic tourists. In this context, an analysis of tourist inflow becomes crucial to assess the pattern and pace of tourism growth in Munger district. Understanding trends in tourist arrivals over time can provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the district's tourism sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is widely recognised as a vital sector contributing to regional economic development through employment generation, stimulation of domestic consumption, foreign exchange earnings, and its contribution to gross domestic product (GDP). Numerous studies have highlighted the multifaceted economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism development at national, regional, and local levels. **Mishra and Pal (2009)** analysed tourist satisfaction in the historically and religiously significant Sultanganj region of Bhagalpur district, Bihar. Their study, based on twenty satisfaction attributes, found that tourists were satisfied with eight attributes, neutral toward three, and dissatisfied with nine, indicating a moderately high overall satisfaction level with scope for improvement in tourism services and infrastructure at religious destinations. **Ray et al. (2011)** examined the motives behind tourist visits and highlighted the importance of cultural, religious, and recreational factors in influencing tourist behaviour. **Mishra (2012)** emphasised the potential of eco-tourism as a means of generating rural employment and promoting sustainable livelihoods, particularly in environmentally sensitive regions. **Rizal and Asokan (2013)** examined tourism development in the North-Eastern states of India and found that tourist inflow was highest in Assam and lowest in Nagaland. The study revealed that tourism's contribution to Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) was relatively high in Assam, while Arunachal Pradesh recorded the highest growth rate of tourist arrivals (55%) among the states.

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Ahamed (2018) viewed rural tourism as a socially transformative force capable of enhancing community participation and improving the socio-economic conditions of rural populations. **Narasappa (2019)** identified tourism as an alternative and sustainable revenue stream for India, particularly in regions with rich cultural and natural resources. **Upadhyay, Kumar, and Vij (2020)** stressed the crucial role of government policy and institutional support in promoting Buddhist tourism in Bihar, highlighting the need for improved infrastructure, promotion, and coordinated planning. **Trivedi (2020)** highlighted the economic importance of tourism in developing countries by generating income and employment across transport, hospitality, and allied sectors, while stressing the need to balance tourism growth with environmental sustainability. Focusing on the Darbhanga district of Bihar, the study emphasised the potential and sustainable development of rural tourism in the region. **Singh et al. (2021)** critically examined tourism management in Bihar and called for improved planning strategies, better governance, and infrastructure development to enhance the state's tourism potential. **Roy (2022)** analysed tourist arrival trends in Bihar during 2010–2019 and identified uneven growth patterns, stressing the importance of destination diversification and effective promotional strategies. **Pandey et al. (2023)** explored the role of digital tourism services in Bihar and highlighted the growing importance of technology-driven tourism promotion and management. **Kumari (2024)** highlighted the role of tourism development in generating employment and stimulating local economies in Bihar through increased tourist footfall, transport services, hospitality, and demand for local goods. **Kumari & Kumar (2025)** analysed seasonal tourist inflow during the Sharavani Mela (2010–2024) and found a statistically significant increase in arrivals during the festival period, underscoring the influence of religious events on tourism and the need for adequate infrastructure and planning to manage seasonal fluctuations.

3. STUDY AREA

Munger District is located in the southeastern part of Bihar along the southern bank of the river Ganga. The district lies between 25°10′ and 25°30′ North latitude and 86°20′ and 86°50′ East longitude. It is bounded by Lakhisarai district to the west, Jamui district to the south, Khagaria district to the north, and Begusarai district to the northwest. The district is characterised by a mixed alluvial–rocky landscape, with fertile alluvial plains along the river Ganga and rocky outcrops and low hills in its southern parts. This physical diversity has influenced land use patterns as well as the location of settlements and religious sites. Munger enjoys good connectivity through rail and road networks, linking it with major urban centres of Bihar and neighbouring states, which enhances its accessibility for tourists and pilgrims. Its strategic riverine location and historical importance make it a significant centre of cultural and religious tourism in Bihar. The district is well known for several important tourist attractions, including Munger Fort, an ancient fort of historical and architectural importance; Kastaharni Ghat, a major pilgrimage site on the banks of the Ganga; Bihar Yoga School, an internationally Recognised centre for yoga and spiritual learning; Chandisthan, a prominent Shakti worship centre; and Sita Kund, known for its mythological and religious significance.

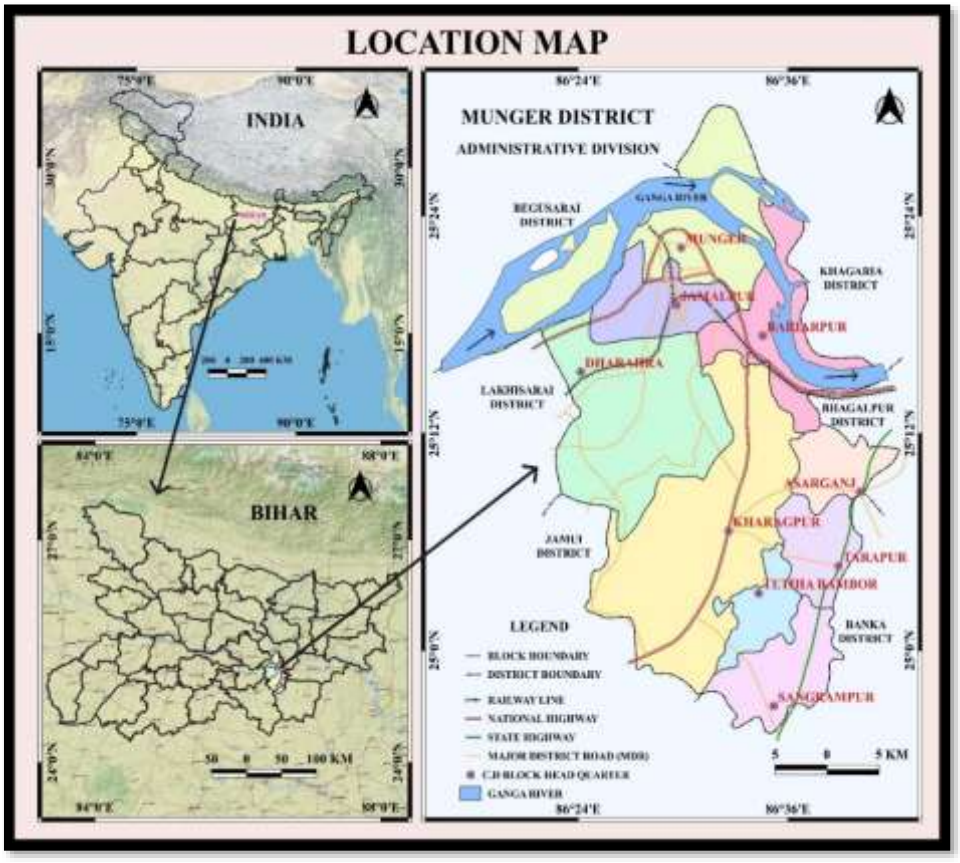


Figure 1: Location Map of Study Area

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4. OBJECTIVES

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives:

- To examine the significance of major tourist sites in shaping tourist inflow and tourism growth in Munger District.
- To analyse the trend of tourist inflow in Munger District (2015-2024).
- To examine the growth of tourism in the district over the selected period of study.
- To assess the relationship between tourist inflow and tourism growth in the district.

5. DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The present study is based entirely on secondary data related to tourist inflow in Munger District. The data were collected from reliable government publications and the Bihar Tourism Department. The study covers a selected period for which consistent tourist arrival data were available. A descriptive and analytical research approach was adopted. Year-wise tourist inflow data were tabulated and analysed using simple statistical techniques such as percentage change, growth rate, and trend analysis. For data visual representation, tools such as QGIS, MS Excel, and Paint were used to create maps and diagrams. The relationship between tourist inflow and tourism growth was examined through a comparative analysis of arrival trends over time, enabling meaningful conclusions regarding tourism growth in the district.

6. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. ROLE OF MAJOR TOURIST SITES IN INFLUENCING TOURIST INFLOW

The growth of tourism in Munger District is closely associated with its major religious, historical, and cultural tourist sites, which are shown in Table 1, and has influenced tourist inflow and tourism growth in Munger District. The analysis indicates that tourism development in the district is primarily site-driven, with tourist movement largely concentrated around places of religious and cultural significance. Munger possesses a rich heritage of pilgrimage centres, historical monuments, and spiritual institutions, which collectively form the backbone of its tourism sector. Religious sites such as Kastaharni Ghat, Chandisthan, and Sita Kund attract a continuous flow of pilgrims and devotees throughout the year. These sites play a crucial role in sustaining regular domestic tourist inflow, particularly during religious festivals and auspicious periods. Historical landmarks like Munger Fort add heritage value to the district, while institutions such as the Bihar Yoga School enhance its spiritual and wellness tourism appeal. The coexistence of these diverse tourist places strengthens the overall attractiveness of the district as a multifaceted tourism destination. A close examination of tourist inflow trends reveals that periods of rising tourist arrivals correspond with increased recognition and utilisation of these key tourist sites. The sharp rise in tourist inflow observed in the post-pandemic period (2022–2024) can be largely attributed to the revival of religious tourism, improved accessibility, and heightened awareness of Munger's cultural and spiritual heritage. The dominance of domestic tourists further reinforces the significance of religious and cultural sites, as pilgrimage and faith-based travel remain the primary motivations for visits to the district. Despite limited foreign tourist participation, the continued growth of tourism in Munger District underscores the strong influence of its tourist places. The concentration of multiple religious, historical, and cultural attractions within a compact geographical area facilitates short-duration visits and repeat tourism. However, the uneven development and limited infrastructural support at some sites restrict their full tourism potential. Overall, the analysis clearly establishes that major tourist sites act as key drivers of tourist inflow and tourism growth in Munger District. The sustained and accelerated growth of tourism is closely linked to the presence, accessibility, and cultural significance of these attractions. Strengthening site-specific infrastructure, promotion, and conservation measures would further enhance their role in supporting long-term and sustainable tourism development in the district.

Table 1: Major Tourist Sites in Munger District

Sl. No.	Tourist Site	Type of Site	Tourism Significance	Dominant Tourist Type
1.	**Kastaharni Ghat**	Religious	Major pilgrimage centre on the Ganga; ritual bathing and festivals	Domestic
2.	**Chandisthan**	Religious	Shakti worship centre, an important regional pilgrimage	Domestic
3.	**Sita Kund**	Religious	Mythological importance linked with Goddess Sita; natural hot spring	Domestic
4.	**Munger Fort**	Historical	Heritage tourism, military architecture, and historical significance	Domestic
5.	**Bihar Yoga School**	Cultural / Spiritual	International centre for yoga, wellness, and spiritual learning	Domestic & Foreign
6.	**Bhimbandh Wildlife Sanctuary**	Natural	Wildlife tourism, hot springs, forest ecosystem, and eco-tourism	Domestic
7.	**Kharagpur Lake**	Natural	Scenic lake, boating potential, leisure and nature-based tourism	Domestic
8.	**Rishi Kund**	Religious	Sacred hot spring associated with sages; ritual bathing	Domestic
9.	**Khanqah Rahmani**	Religious	Sufi spiritual centre; symbol of communal harmony	Domestic
10.	**Kali Pahadi**	Historical / Religious	Hilltop shrine with historical and religious importance	Domestic

Source: Compiled by Author (Bihar Tourism Department)

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2. TREND OF TOURIST INFLOW IN MUNGER DISTRICT (2015-2024)

The tourist inflow data of Munger District from 2015 to 2024, shown in Table 2, reveals significant variations in both domestic and foreign tourist arrivals, reflecting different phases of tourism development in the district. During the period 2015–2018, domestic tourist inflow showed a steady and gradual increase, rising from 105,506 in 2015 to 126,587 in 2018. This phase indicates a period of moderate tourism growth, likely driven by religious tourism and local pilgrim movement. Foreign tourist arrivals during the same period remained very low and fluctuating, ranging between 59 and 249, suggesting limited international exposure and infrastructure. A sharp increase in domestic tourists was observed in 2019, when arrivals rose to 261,998, indicating improved tourism activity and growing recognition of the district as a religious and spiritual destination. Foreign tourist inflow also reached its pre-pandemic peak at 322 in the same year. The years 2020 and 2021 witnessed a drastic decline in tourist inflow due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Domestic tourists dropped sharply to 40,053 in 2020 and further to only 1,604 in 2021, while foreign tourist arrivals almost ceased. This period represents a phase of severe disruption and stagnation in tourism activities.

From 2022 onwards, tourism in the Munger district has shown a strong recovery trend. Domestic tourist arrivals increased significantly to 179,651 in 2022, followed by an unprecedented surge in 2023 (1,089,258) and 2024 (2,463,071). This rapid growth indicates a post-pandemic revival of religious and domestic tourism, improved connectivity, and increased promotional activities. Foreign tourist arrivals also increased considerably in 2023 (2,744), though a slight decline was observed in 2024 (2,165), suggesting that international tourism is still stabilising. Overall, the data clearly indicate that domestic tourists highly dominate tourist inflow in Munger district. The long-term trend shows a transition from slow growth (2015–2018) to rapid expansion in the post-pandemic period, despite a temporary decline during 2020–2021. This trend confirms the growing importance of Munger district in Bihar's tourism landscape and highlights its strong potential for sustained tourism growth in the future.

Table 2: Tourist Inflow of Munger District in 2015- 2024

Sl. No.	Years	Domestic Tourists	Foreign Tourists	Total Tourists
1.	**2015**	105506	59	**105565**
2.	**2016**	113470	249	**113719**
3.	**2017**	120508	233	**120741**
4.	**2018**	126587	249	**126836**
5.	**2019**	261998	322	**262320**
6.	**2020**	40053	54	**40107**
7.	**2021**	1604	0	**1604**
8.	**2022**	179651	342	**179993**
9.	**2023**	1089258	2744	**1092002**
10.	**2024**	2463071	2165	**2465236**

Source: Bihar Tourism Official Website (bihartourism.gov.in/data.html

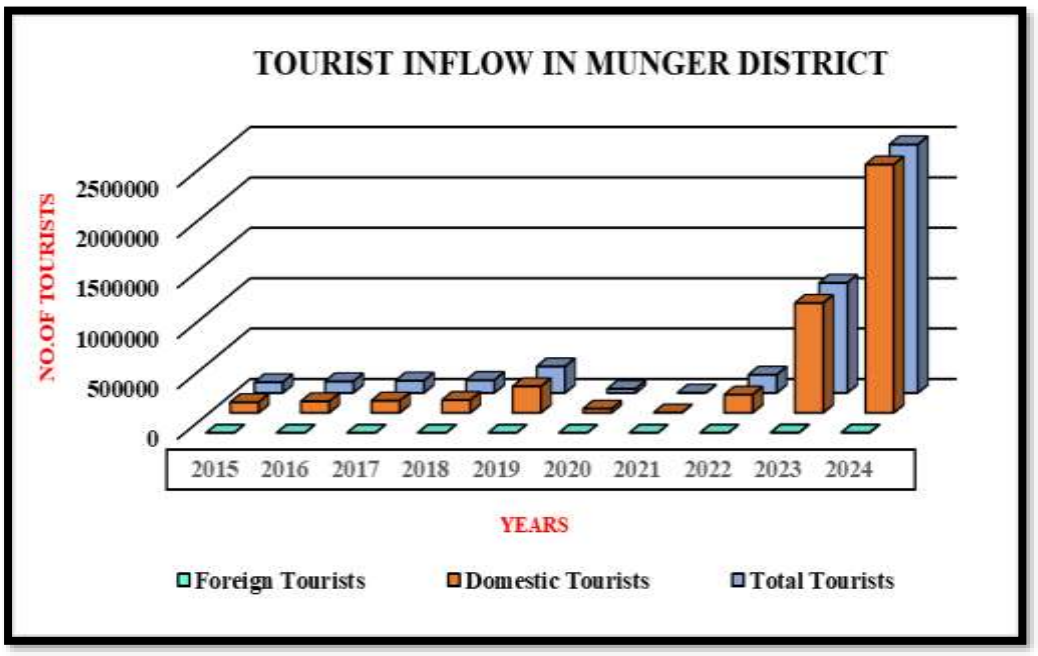


Figure 2: Tourist Inflow in Munger District (2015- 2024)

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3. GROWTH OF TOURISM IN THE MUNGER DISTRICT 2015-2024.

The growth rate of total tourist inflow, as shown in Table 3, clearly explains the pattern of tourism growth in Munger District over the study period. During 2015–2018, tourism growth remained steady but moderate, with growth rates gradually declining from 7.72% to 5.05%, indicating a stable but slow expansion of tourism activities in the district. A sharp surge in 2019, with a growth rate of 106.82%, marks a significant expansion phase, reflecting increased tourist movement and the growing prominence of the district as a tourism destination. The year 2020 witnessed a severe negative growth (–84.71%), followed by an even sharper decline in 2021 (–96.00%), clearly highlighting the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism activities. Travel restrictions and the suspension of religious and cultural events led to an unprecedented contraction of tourism during this period. However, a strong post-pandemic recovery is evident from 2022 onwards. The exceptionally high growth rate in 2022(11121.51) is attributed to recovery from an extremely low base year (2021) and should be interpreted cautiously, while the sustained high growth in 2023 (506.69%) and 2024 (125.75%) indicates rapid tourism expansion and renewed tourist confidence. Overall, the growth rate pattern reveals that tourism growth in Munger district has been uneven but strongly positive in recent years, emphasising the district's emerging importance in Bihar's tourism landscape and the need for planned and sustainable tourism development.

Table 3: Growth Rates of Tourists in Munger District (2015-2024)

Sl. No.	Years	Total Tourists	Growth Rate (%)
1.	**2015**	105,506	—
2.	**2016**	113,470	**7.72**
3.	**2017**	120,508	**6.17**
4.	**2018**	126,587	**5.05**
5.	**2019**	261,998	**106.82**
6.	**2020**	40,053	**–84.71**
7.	**2021**	1,604	**–96.00**
8.	**2022**	179,651	**11121.51**
9.	**2023**	1,089,258	**506.69**
10.	**2024**	2,463,071	**125.75**

Source: Compiled by Author

4. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOURIST INFLOW AND TOURISM GROWTH

The relationship between tourist inflow and tourism growth in the district has been analysed using year-wise data on domestic tourists, foreign tourists, total tourist arrivals, and corresponding growth rates for the period 2015–2024, **as shown in Tables 1 & 2**. The data clearly indicate that tourism growth in the district closely follows the pattern of tourist inflow. During the initial phase from 2015 to 2018, the district recorded a gradual increase in total tourist arrivals, rising from 105,565 in 2015 to 126,836 in 2018. This steady increase was accompanied by positive but moderate growth rates ranging between 5.05 per cent and 7.72 per cent, reflecting a phase of slow and stable tourism growth. A major change is observed in 2019, when total tourist inflow more than doubled to 262,320, resulting in an exceptionally high growth rate of 106.78 per cent. This sharp rise indicates a strong expansion of tourism activities in the district, clearly demonstrating that increased tourist inflow directly contributes to tourism growth. However, the trend reverses sharply during 2020 and 2021, when total tourist arrivals declined drastically to 40,107 and further to only 1,604. Correspondingly, tourism growth turned highly negative at –84.71 per cent in 2020 and –96.00 per cent in 2021, highlighting the severe contraction of tourism caused by external disruptions, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. The post-pandemic period shows a strong recovery in both tourist inflow and tourism growth. In 2022, total tourist arrivals increased sharply to 179,993, resulting in an extraordinarily high growth rate of 11,119.9 per cent due to recovery from a very low base. This upward trend continued in 2023 and 2024, with tourist inflows rising to 1,092,002 and 2,465,236, respectively, accompanied by high growth rates of 506.7% and 125.7%. The consistent rise in growth rates during periods of increasing tourist inflow clearly establishes a direct and positive relationship between tourist arrivals and tourism growth in the district. Overall, the analysis reveals that years of growing tourist inflow are invariably associated with positive and accelerated tourism growth, while periods of declining tourist arrivals correspond with stagnation or negative growth. Thus, the data strongly suggest that tourist inflow is a key driving force behind tourism growth in the district.

7. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of tourist inflow and tourism growth in Munger District during 2015–2024, several suggestions and recommendations are proposed to ensure sustained and balanced tourism development. The sharp increase in tourist arrivals during the post-pandemic period highlights the urgent need to strengthen tourism infrastructure, including better road connectivity, adequate accommodation facilities, sanitation, drinking water supply, parking spaces, and tourist information centres near major religious and heritage sites. As domestic tourists constitute the dominant share of total tourist inflow, focused promotion of religious, spiritual, and cultural tourism should be prioritised through organised festivals, heritage events, and tourism circuits. At the same time, efforts should be made to revive and enhance foreign tourist inflow by improving international visibility through digital promotion, multilingual signage, and inclusion of Munger in national and international tourism itineraries. The extreme fluctuations in tourism growth during the pandemic period reveal the vulnerability of the tourism sector, indicating the need for diversified and

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sustainable tourism planning, including eco-tourism, wellness tourism, and river-based tourism. Greater involvement of local communities through skill development, homestays, handicrafts, and guide services should be encouraged to promote inclusive tourism and generate local employment. Furthermore, regular monitoring of tourist inflow data and the use of digital platforms for tourism management are essential for informed decision-making and long-term tourism planning in the district.

8. CONCLUSION

The present study analysed tourist inflow and tourism growth in Munger District, Bihar, for the period 2015–2024, with the objective of understanding trends, growth patterns, and the relationship between tourist arrivals and tourism growth. The analysis reveals that tourism development in the district has undergone distinct phases, including a period of moderate growth (2015–2018), rapid expansion (2019), severe decline during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021), and a strong post-pandemic recovery (2022–2024). The study clearly demonstrates that tourism growth in Munger District is closely linked to tourist inflow. Years marked by increasing tourist arrivals consistently recorded positive and accelerated growth rates, while periods of declining inflow resulted in negative or stagnant growth. The unprecedented surge in tourist arrivals during the post-pandemic period highlights the district's growing importance as a religious and cultural tourism destination in Bihar. Despite temporary setbacks, the long-term trend indicates strong tourism potential in Munger District, driven primarily by domestic tourism. However, uneven growth patterns and low foreign tourist participation underline the need for planned, sustainable, and diversified tourism development. Strengthening infrastructure, improving promotion, ensuring community participation, and adopting sustainable tourism practices are essential for maintaining long-term tourism growth.

In conclusion, the study confirms that tourist inflow acts as a key driving force behind tourism growth in Munger District. With appropriate planning and policy support, the district can emerge as a major tourism hub in Bihar, contributing significantly to local economic development, employment generation, and regional growth.

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