

Tourism and Its Socio-Economic Impacts on Local Communities: A Case Study of Kaziranga and Manas National Park of Assam, India

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is emerging as one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Impacts of tourism on an economy are multi-faceted. Tourism has a great role in expanding hotel and hospitality sector, transportation and communication, investment generation and growth of an economy. Tourism is now considered as a tool for employment generation, poverty reduction and improving standard of living of the people. It has significant contribution towards foreign exchange earnings, generation of additional income and revenues through taxes in a country. Tourism promotes international understanding and gives support to local handlooms-handicrafts and cultural activities. Local community of a tourist spot is an important component of a destination and their role in the development of a destination cannot be ignored. Host community participation is an important aspect to achieve sustainable tourism development at a destination. It is a fact that greater the degree of community participation, the better will be the development of the tourism [1]. One of the important economic features of the tourism industry is that an income earned in places of residence is spent in places visited [2].

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Impacts of tourism represent influences on the behaviours of the locals and local economy at any destination. Broadly, impacts of tourism can be classified into three heads i.e. economic, social and environmental. Economic impact indicates both direct and indirect flow of economic activities to the community[3]. Generally, it estimates the overall changes in economic activity within a particular community. Its social impacts include the effects of tourism on the social fabric of the community and well-being of the individuals and families[4]. Socio-economic impact of tourism includes changes in forms of employment, changes in land values and ownership and improved standard of living of the people in the economy. The quality of environment both natural and man-made is also essential to tourism. Its relationship is complex as many activities related to tourism have ultimately created impacts on the nature and environment at any destination of the economy. Impacts of tourism are observed as positive and negative. There is a rich body of empirical studies analysing the socio-economic impacts of tourism on the local community. Some important in this context are (Ashley, 2000)[5], (Borkakoty & Barua,1998) [6], (Chattopadhyay, 1995) [7], (Das, 13) [8], (Fleming & Toepper,1990) [9], (Gupta& Raina, 2008) [10], (Kakkar & Sapna,2012) [11], (Khan, 2013)[12], (Rastegar, 2010) [13], (Simpson, 2008)[14].

In recent years, the role of tourism in the economic development of a country has been the focus of study and research. It is the general consensus that tourism has been pivotal in social progress as well as an important vehicle of widening socio-economic and cultural contacts throughout human history. It is with this backdrop, this paper is an attempt to investigate the dynamics of the relationship between tourism and its impact on the people at the destination. The purpose of this study is to examine the socio-economic impacts of tourism on the local community of Kaziranga and Manas National Park of Assam and also to suggest necessary measures to the planners and policy makers in this direction.

3. SAMPLE DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to determine the socio-economic impacts of tourism we have selected two wildlife sanctuaries of Assam namely Kaziranga and Manas. The study is based on primary data collected randomly. Almost 100 local respondents related to tourism are interviewed purposively with the help of well structured questionnaire for the study. The analysis is based on respondents (1) who live in the sample areas of Kaziranga and Manas of Assam and (2) who are engaged in tourism activities. Samples are collected from both Owners and Employees engaged in different economic activities in our study area. In order to maximise diversification and representation of our population, we have collected samples almost proportionately from each classes of owners and employees who have been working there. We have taken 8 variables to know the positive impact and 11 variables to know the negative impact of tourism in the study area. A five point Likert scale is used to collect information about the impacts by assigning values as No Impact=1, Low=2, Moderate=3, High=4 and Very High=5. In order to test the reliability of our Likert data, Cronbach Alpha is calculated in SPSS-17. In order to have accepted internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha must lie in the range of $0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$ as per rule. We found our Cronbach Alpha as .802 for positive economic impact and it is .817 for negative economic impact. Since it is above 0.7 for both the impacts, we can derive the conclusion about the internal consistency of our surveyed data.

Considering the importance of tourism in economic development, State like Assam has made planned effort to promote it in different parts of its region. Assam has tremendous strength of tourist's attraction like scenic beauty, cultural variety, ethnic mixture and diverse flora and fauna. Kazairanga and Manas are the two national parks of Assam become the centre of attraction for tourist due to their unique natural environment. Kaziranga occupies a significant position in the international tourist map today, as one of the best wildlife resorts in the world. Another national park of our study Manas is lying on the foothills of Himalaya which is the most stunning pristine wildlife habitat in India.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

To evaluate the socio-economic impact of tourism on local community, we take 8 variables to know positive impact and 11 variables to know its negative impact. From a total of 100 respondents involved in this study, about 56% are taken from Kaziranga and about 44% from Manas. Respondents' opinion about positive and negative impacts in their region is presented in below table-I and table-II respectively.

Table-I: Respondents' opinion of the positive socio-economic impacts

Variables	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Improvement in the Standard of living	3.45	1.057	I
Help in the removal of Poverty	3.38	1.051	III
Contribution to overall Assets creation	3.11	0.962	VI
Increase in Local Resident's Income	3.32	0.963	IV
Provision of Market for Local Produce	3.31	0.950	V
Creation of Employment opportunities	3.06	0.722	VIII
Scope for Self-employment	3.41	1.025	II
Improvement of Infrastructure	3.07	0.728	VII

Source: Calculated by researcher from survey data with the help of SPSS

From the table-I, it can be noted that the positive socio-economic impacts are recognised by the community where the average mean value is found as 3.26. Our findings showed that respondents have strong opinion about improvement in the standard of living with highest mean value at 3.45 which is closely followed by scope of self-employment with mean value at 3.41, help in the removal of poverty with mean value at 3.38, increase in local resident's income with mean value at 3.32 and then provision of market for local produce at mean value 3.31. The lowest mean value is found in case of variable such as creation of employment opportunities with 3.06, followed by improvement of infrastructure at mean value 3.07 and the contribution to overall assets creation with mean value at 3.11.

Table-II: Respondents' opinion of the negative socio-economic impacts

Variables	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Increase in the Price of Essential Goods	3.08	.597	VII
Rise in the Price of Land	3.17	.779	III
Increases Local Residents' Cost of Living	3.25	.557	II
Seasonal Character of Jobs	3.10	.559	VI
Shortage of Drinking water	2.86	.778	XI
Low Level of Wage	3.27	.763	I
Excessive Dependence of Local Community on Tourism	3.15	.435	IV
Erosion of indigenous values, traditions and lifestyle	3.12	.356	V
Infringement of Human Rights by Displacement of Local People	3.06	.508	VIII
Problem of pollution	2.93	.536	X
Frequencies of crime	2.95	.687	IX

Source: Calculated by researcher from survey data with the help of SPSS

From the table-II, it can be noted that the negative socio-economic impacts are recognised by the community where the average mean value is found as 3.08. Our findings showed that respondents have strong opinion about negative impact for variables such as low level of wage with highest mean value at 3.27 which is closely followed by increases local residents' cost of living with mean value at 3.25, rise in the price of land with mean value at 3.17, excessive dependence of local community on tourism with mean value at 3.15 and then erosion of indigenous values, traditions and lifestyle at mean value 3.12. The lowest mean value is found in case of variable such as shortage of drinking water with mean value at 2.86, followed by problem of pollution with mean value at 2.93, frequencies of crime with mean value at 2.95, infringement of human rights by displacement of local people with mean value at 3.06 and then increase in the price of essential goods with mean value at 3.08.

5. T-TEST

T-test is used to measure the socio-economic impact of tourism on local community to know the respondents' agreement and disagreement with a particular statement. Since there are 8 variables as shown in table-I to evaluate positive impact having 5-point Likert scale, the maximum score is 40 and the minimum is 8. The central value is 24 where t-value obtained is 8.65 with 99 degrees of freedom. The total score is 2624 and the mean value is 26.24 with standard deviation 4.40 and standard error .440. Since the mean value is higher than the central value, one can conclude that the opinion regarding the positive impact is relatively strong among the local community.

In case of negative socio-economic impact of tourism, we have taken 11 variables as presented in the table-II, with the same 5-point Likert scale. Here, the maximum score becomes 55 and the minimum is 11. The central value is 33 where t-value obtained is 3.436 with 99 degrees of freedom. The total score is 3174 and the mean value is 31.74 with standard deviation 2.98 and standard error .298. Since the mean value is lower than the central value, one can conclude that the opinion regarding the negative impact is also relatively weak among the local community.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The perception of local community in our study has significant implications for tourism development in Assam. Because the overall attitudes toward tourism are positive. As such development of tourism programs or projects would likely find strong community support. . At this juncture, we can say that tourism has not only its business potential, but also, it has tremendous prospects in the field of income generation as well as self-employment. Some local people have expressed their concern over the potential influences of tourism on local people's asset creation and also infrastructure development in Assam. This suggests that even though most of the local residents are in favour of tourism development, they are also serious about the negative impacts of tourism that could have on the local people and the resources of Assam. Therefore, the government as well as concerned department must take necessary steps to make tourism as the most important policy weapon to drive poverty away from our society.

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