

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF TOURISM GROWTH AND NURTURING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FOR RESIDENTS IN POOKODE

Jitha C*
Dr. Nameirakpam Taibangnganbi**

ABSTRACT

Tourism has emerged as a significant economic driver in contemporary society, fostering a tourism-friendly environment in today's globalized world marked by technological advancements and economic disparities. India's rich geographical, historical, and cultural heritage contributes to its status as a prominent global tourist destination. Pookode, located in Kerala, boasts a wealth of natural beauty and cultural significance, drawing visitors to its serene landscapes. This paper delves into the repercussions of tourism on the local community in Pookode, examining how residents derive their means of livelihood from various tourism sectors. With a notable surge in tourist arrivals over time, our research adopts a mixed-method approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analyses. We administered semi-structured questionnaires to 100 households and conducted in-depth interviews with 13 key informants. Data analysis, involving correlation, regression, and ANOVA tests, aims to unveil the relationship between tourism and the income levels of Pookode's local community. The study reveals that tourism serves as a primary source of income for Pookode's residents, yet the industry's seasonal and unpredictable nature underscores the imperative of developing alternative income-generating strategies. Our investigation underscores the importance of formulating plans, policies, and strategies aimed at enhancing the sustainability of the tourism industry in Pookode and involving local community members in decision-making and tourism management processes.

Keywords: *Tourism Impact, Sustainable Livelihoods, Local Community, Economic Development.*

Introduction

Tourism is a powerful driver of economic growth and development in many regions, and its impact on local communities is a subject of increasing significance. This study delves into the intricate relationship between tourism development and the sustainable livelihoods of residents in Pookode, a captivating village nestled in the Wayanad district of Kerala, India. Pookode's scenic beauty, rich cultural heritage, and diverse natural resources have made it an attractive tourist destination, attracting visitors from near and far. As tourism in the region continues to grow, it brings with it promises of economic prosperity, job opportunities, and infrastructural development. However, it also presents challenges such as seasonality, encroachment, and cultural preservation. The overarching objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of tourism growth on the local community's livelihoods and to identify sustainable strategies that can nurture these livelihoods while ensuring the responsible and sustainable development of this unique region. By assessing the perceptions of the community, analyzing tourism's economic implications, and gauging the sustainability of livelihoods, this research aims to provide valuable insights that can guide policymakers, stakeholders, and residents in making informed decisions for the future of Pookode. In doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism and its role in fostering economic well-being while safeguarding the environment and culture of host communities.

* Research Scholar, Department of Economics, VISAT Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

** Research Supervisor and Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, VISAT Chennai, India.

Review of Literature

Agarwala et al. (2014) - "Assessing the relationship between human well-being and ecosystem services: A review of frameworks": Agarwala and colleagues offer a comprehensive examination of the intricate connection between human well-being and ecosystem services. Their paper reviews various frameworks and methodologies for assessing how ecosystems contribute to human welfare. This is of particular importance in understanding the impact of tourism on local communities as tourism often relies heavily on ecosystem services. By utilizing these frameworks, researchers can effectively evaluate how tourism development affects the well-being of both residents and the environment in destinations like Pookode.

Allison and Ellis (2001) - "The livelihood approach and management of small-scale industries": Allison and Ellis introduce the livelihood approach, which is primarily aimed at managing small-scale industries. While not directly related to tourism, this approach can be applied to the tourism industry to understand how it impacts the livelihoods of local communities. This paper highlights the importance of considering local economic dynamics when planning and managing tourism activities, particularly in the context of small-scale enterprises that are often prevalent in tourist destinations.

Anup and Resham (2014) - "Tourism and its impact on livelihood in Manaslu conservation area, Nepal": Anup and Resham's research specifically investigates the effects of tourism on the livelihoods of communities in a conservation area. By examining the case of Manaslu in Nepal, the study provides valuable insights into the socio-economic consequences of tourism in a natural setting. Researchers studying tourism in ecologically sensitive areas can draw lessons from this paper regarding the potential trade-offs and benefits of tourism development.

Baaijens et al. (1998) - "Monfort meta-analysis for the comparison and transfer of regional tourist income explanatory multipliers": Baaijens and colleagues introduce the Monfort meta-analysis approach, which is designed to assess regional tourist income multipliers. This method is essential for understanding the economic impact of tourism on local communities. By applying this approach, researchers can calculate and compare the economic contributions of tourism in different regions, aiding in the formulation of targeted policies for sustainable tourism development.

Bennet and Dearden (2014) - "Why local people do not support conservation: Community perceptions of marine protected area livelihood impacts, governance, and management in Thailand": This paper delves into the perceptions of local communities regarding marine protected areas (MPAs) in Thailand. While the focus is on conservation, the findings have relevance for tourism development. It highlights the complex relationship between local residents and tourism-related conservation efforts, shedding light on potential challenges and opportunities in garnering community support for sustainable tourism initiatives.

Bhatia (1982a) - "Principles of tourism development and practices" and Bhatia (1982b) - "Tourism development principles and practices": A.K. Bhatia's books serve as foundational resources for understanding the principles and practices of tourism development. They cover various aspects of tourism planning and management, making them essential references for researchers and practitioners alike. These works provide insights into how tourism can be strategically developed and managed to benefit local communities.

Binns and Ne (2002) - "Supporting local economic development in post-apartheid South Africa": Binns and Ne's paper explores strategies for supporting local economic development in post-apartheid South Africa. While specific to South Africa, the findings offer insights into how post-conflict or post-transition regions can revitalize their economies. This can be applied to regions impacted by tourism, emphasizing the need for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Bujdosó et al. (2015) - "Utilization of geoheritage in tourism development": Bujdosó and colleagues investigate the potential of geoheritage in tourism development. Their research underscores the importance of recognizing and leveraging geologically significant sites for tourism. This has practical implications for destinations like Pookode, which may have unique geological features that can be integrated into sustainable tourism strategies.

Statement of the Problem

In the context of Pookode, this research confronts a significant knowledge gap by probing into the intricate relationship between tourism and the local economy. This study endeavors to address three pivotal questions: (1) the nuanced impact of tourism on the livelihoods of local individuals engaged in the

tourism sector, (2) the identification of essential resources and strategies required to cultivate sustainable livelihoods for the diverse array of residents, and (3) the practical implications and feasibility of adopting a sustainable livelihood approach within Pookode's tourism landscape. By elucidating these aspects, this research aims to furnish invaluable insights that can guide policymakers, community stakeholders, and tourism practitioners in optimizing the positive outcomes of tourism while mitigating its potential adverse effects, thereby fostering a more resilient and sustainable local economy.

Objectives of the Study

- To comprehensively evaluate how tourism activities in Pookode affect the livelihoods of local residents involved in the tourism sector.
- To identify the essential resources, both natural and human, and strategies necessary to foster sustainable livelihoods for the diverse population of Pookode.
- To assess the practical implications and feasibility of implementing a sustainable livelihood approach within Pookode's tourism context.

Materials and Methods

Area of the Study

In the present study, Pookode, a prominent tourist destination nestled within the rural expanse of Wayanad district in Kerala, takes center stage. Within this picturesque locale, we delve into the dynamics of tourism practices, community involvement, and the myriad opportunities and challenges it presents. The focus on ecotourism activities becomes particularly relevant, offering local residents an avenue for participation, given the inherent seasonality and volatility of the tourism industry. Pookode, situated in the captivating landscape of Wayanad, is renowned for its natural beauty and serene surroundings, making it a sought-after destination for tourists. According to the Census of India, 2011, Pookode village boasts a population of approximately 9,366 residents, with 4,242 males and 5,124 females (Census of India, 2011). The region enjoys a tropical climate characterized by relatively uniform temperatures throughout the year.

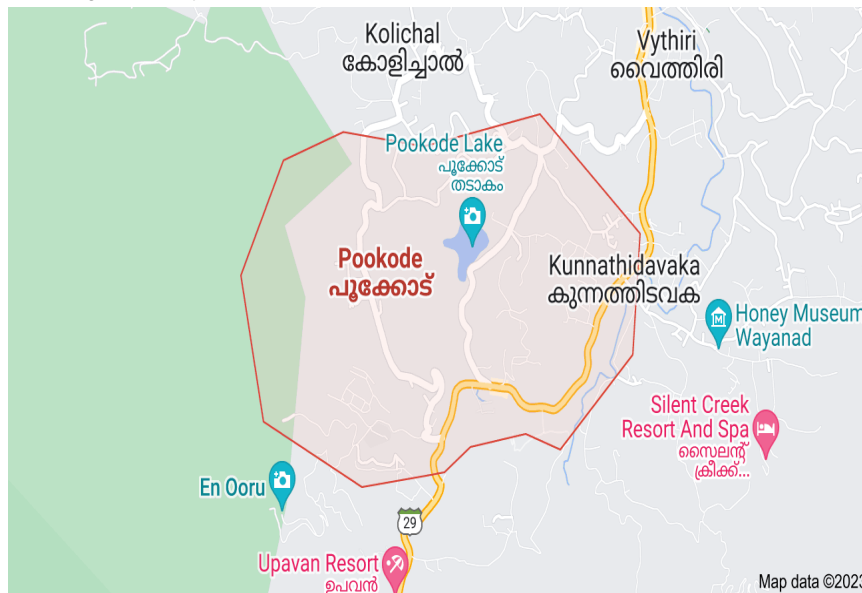


Fig. 1: Location of the Study Area

Methods

In alignment with the research titled "Evaluating the Impact of Tourism Growth and Nurturing Sustainable Livelihoods for Residents in Pookode," the study employs a mixed methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to achieve holistic perspectives and an in-depth understanding of the local community's perception and experiences regarding tourism. Drawing from Choy (2014) and utilizing primary survey methods, the study collected primary data through structured questionnaires and field observations.

The primary survey involved 100 local respondents actively engaged in the tourism sector, selected through a Stratified Random Sampling (SRS) method. Half of the respondents resided within a 2-kilometer buffer region of the Pookode lack, while the other half lived within the village area. Additional information about the village was gathered from the ward member and well-informed village citizens. The questionnaire, designed to capture key demographic variables such as gender and socio-economic status, probed respondents about both positive and negative impacts of tourism, economic development, livelihood security through tourism, types of employment, seasonal variations in investments, and temporal expansion of tourism-related services.

In conjunction with the household survey, the study conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with 13 key informants, selected based on their expertise in tourism, experience in the tourism industry, and historical knowledge of tourism in Pookode. Stakeholder consultations and personal field observations enriched the qualitative data. Tour guides interviewed during the research provided detailed insights into local livelihood strategies and the impact of tourism on the community.

The research also incorporates data from various secondary sources, including Census Handbook of India for demographic and socioeconomic profiles, Geological Survey of India for geology and geomorphology data, Department of Tourism and Kerala for tourist arrival statistics. Additional information was derived from reports, feasibility studies, publications, journals, and books relevant to the research objectives.

To analyze the quantitative data, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed. Demographic information was analyzed in terms of age structure percentages. Following the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF), the study assessed the impact of tourism on livelihood using a 5-point Likert scale (Kothari, 2004). Statistical techniques such as the Karl Pearson Correlation Technique, linear regression, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were applied to determine the statistical significance of the relationship between tourism and the income levels of local community members. The ANOVA test, in particular, examined the influence of various factors by comparing sample means, enabling informed future planning and forecasting.

Ultimately, guided by the SLF, the study formulated recommendations to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism by proposing alternative livelihood strategies for the local community, aligning with the overarching goal of nurturing sustainable livelihoods for residents in Pookode.

Analysis and Discussion

In Pookode, the local community has a substantial history of participation in the tourism sector. Notably, 23% of the respondents have been actively engaged in tourism-related activities for over 15 years, while an additional 25% of respondents have contributed to the industry for a decade to 15 years. The survey findings also indicate that approximately 33% of respondents initiated their involvement in the tourism business within the last 0 to 5 years, and another 29% have been part of the industry for the past 5 to 10 years. This pattern underscores the meaningful engagement of local residents in various tourism-related enterprises such as restaurants, hotels, and bed and breakfast facilities. Importantly, a growing number of individuals have entered the tourism sector over the past 10 years, surpassing those with over a decade of experience, highlighting the burgeoning nature of tourism in the Pookode region.

In Pookode, the community's perception of the impact of tourism on local livelihoods was assessed using a five-point Likert scale. A majority of community members in Pookode either agreed or strongly agreed that tourism has had several positive effects, including increasing employment opportunities for local residents (mean = 4.70), boosting foreign exchange earnings (mean = 4.65), stimulating both private and public sector investments in infrastructure (mean = 4.50), fostering the development of recreational facilities (mean = 3.65), and promoting entrepreneurial growth (mean = 4.04).

However, respondents also expressed some concerns. Many agreed that tourism opportunities in Pookode are seasonal in nature (mean = 3.89) and that tourism has led to encroachment by outsiders into the community (mean = 3.54). Additionally, there was agreement that tourism has disrupted the local lifestyle and culture (mean = 4.03) and has increased the cost of infrastructure (mean = 4.03). Nonetheless, the majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the notion that local residents have suffered as a result of the tourism industry (mean = 2.61). Respondents also slightly agreed that tourism has resulted in increased prices (mean = 3.19), a decrease in the amount of agricultural land (mean = 3.14), an increase in revenues for the local government (mean = 3.14), and an upsurge in enclave tourism (mean = 3.14).

In the context of Pookode, it is evident that an upsurge in tourism is strongly correlated with several positive factors, as highlighted. Notably, there is a notably positive correlation with an increase in the local income level (0.65), a substantial expansion of hotels (0.72), a growing presence of Ayurveda/Naturopathy (0.67) facilities, and an improved transportation infrastructure (0.41). These correlations indicate that as tourism flourishes in Pookode, it brings about tangible benefits, including enhanced income opportunities, greater accommodation options, a flourishing wellness and healthcare sector, and improved transport accessibility, all of which contribute to the overall economic well-being of the community.

Among these, the highest sustainability index scores were observed for natural capital (0.47), highlighting the value of the region's rich natural resources, which are often harnessed for tourism-related activities. Similarly, human capital scored significantly with an index of 0.43, indicating the importance of the local community's skills, knowledge, and labor force in contributing to livelihood sustainability. Additionally, financial capital, with a score of 0.42, demonstrates the role of financial resources and access to capital in supporting livelihoods.

Discussion

The analysis of sustainable livelihoods in Pookode, as conducted within the scope of our study titled "Evaluating the Impact of Tourism Growth and Nurturing Sustainable Livelihoods for Residents in Pookode," has yielded valuable insights into the current dynamics of the region. Assessing the sustainability of five crucial capital assets - natural, human, financial, physical, and social - has provided a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities facing the local community. Notably, Pookode exhibits moderate sustainability across these assets, with particularly strong scores in natural, human, and financial capital. These strengths underscore the significance of the region's natural resources, the skills and knowledge of its residents, and access to financial resources in supporting livelihoods. However, the scores fall short of the benchmark for highly sustainable livelihoods, signaling areas in need of improvement. Challenges such as the seasonality of tourism and cultural preservation must be addressed through strategic interventions. Overall, this analysis sets the stage for our research's broader objective: to leverage tourism growth for the benefit of Pookode's residents while ensuring the responsible and sustainable development of this unique region.

In accordance with our research objectives titled "Evaluating the Impact of Tourism Growth and Nurturing Sustainable Livelihoods for Residents in Pookode," the primary survey outcomes reveal a prevailing sentiment among 65% of respondents, affirming that tourism serves as a substantial catalyst for local economic development and livelihood security. This collective perspective is rooted in the acknowledgment of tourism's manifold positive economic impacts on the region.

Respondents overwhelmingly recognize that tourism engenders a host of economic benefits, including heightened local employment opportunities, increased income levels, expanded production capacities, economic diversification, and the amelioration of infrastructure. These beneficial effects materialize primarily through the expenditures made by tourists during their visits, encompassing various activities such as accommodation, dining, transportation, and cultural experiences. The infusion of tourist spending into the local economy has a ripple effect, circulating through both formal and informal sectors and exerting a multiplier effect as it is continuously reinvested (Baaijens, Nijkamp, & Monfort, 1998).

Tourism's economic contributions extend to fostering the growth of auxiliary businesses, including restaurants, shops, travel agencies, and tour guide services. The educational aspect is also noteworthy, with young residents engaging in part-time positions as tourist guides, enhancing their expertise in tourism and language skills (Sagala, Rosyidie, Sasongko, & Syahbid, 2018).

Furthermore, foreign tourist arrivals have witnessed a significant upswing in the past five years, surging from 47,659 in 2012 to an impressive 133,658 in 2017 within our study area (Kerala Tourism Statistics, 2017). This surge in tourism activity has concomitantly resulted in an augmentation of foreign exchange earnings, as tourists' expenditures on various tourism-related products infuse income into the local economy. The consequent influx of funds has also spurred investments in essential infrastructure development, encompassing improved water supply and waste management systems, electricity grids, and public transportation networks.

Moreover, these developments have spurred public-private partnerships aimed at enhancing tourism facilities, including water sports, ropeways, boating services, and the construction of cultural complexes. The study area has seen notable improvements in sewage treatment and biogas plants, addressing waste management concerns while fostering sustainable tourism practices.

The economic landscape has further evolved through direct and secondary revenues generated by taxes and levies on tourism-related activities and goods. These revenues encompass levies on income from tourism occupations, property tax, import duties, sales tax, income tax, hotel tax, transport tax, entertainment tax, and more. This multifaceted fiscal approach has not only benefited business owners but has also led to an upswing in government revenues.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our comprehensive study in Pookode has illuminated the multifaceted impact of tourism growth on the local community's livelihoods and the broader economic landscape. The findings underscore that tourism serves as a significant engine for economic development, offering employment opportunities, income generation, infrastructural enhancements, and increased government revenues. However, it also highlights the importance of balancing this growth with sustainable practices to mitigate challenges such as seasonality and cultural preservation. While Pookode exhibits moderate sustainability across key capital assets, there is a collective endeavor to attain highly sustainable livelihoods. Our research has not only assessed the current state but has also set a course for responsible tourism development, emphasizing the need to nurture sustainable livelihoods for the residents in Pookode. This endeavor aligns with the broader goals of fostering economic prosperity while safeguarding the region's unique natural and cultural heritage, paving the way for a more sustainable and prosperous future.

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