

## BRIDGING THE GAP: UNDERSTANDING LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON TOURISM IN WORLD HERITAGE SITE KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK

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### Abstract

Wildlife and nature-based tourism at Kaziranga National Park is growing at a fast rate and this has a differential impact on the destinations. The increasing tourism activities in the region have both positive and negative consequences on the destination. Perceptions of locals on these activities are the most crucial elements of the tourism development of a tourism destination. As the tourism industry progresses further, it is important, from time to time, to assess the views of locals toward the changes. In the research article, the aim is to analyze the views of locals toward perceived economic impacts, socio-cultural impacts, and impacts of tourism development on the environment using the methods of principal component analysis for data reduction and maximum representation. The findings of this study reveal that local residents benefited economically, socioculturally, and ecologically from the growth of the tourism industry in their area. However, there are certain instances where locals believe they are not receiving full advantages from tourism activity. The study's findings will assist tourism policymakers and decision-makers in taking necessary actions to ensure that the advantages exceed the negative repercussions and that local inhabitants continue to benefit to the greatest extent possible.

**Keywords:** Wildlife Tourism; Local community; Perceptions; Kaziranga National Park.

## FECHANDO A DISTÂNCIA: COMPREENDENDO AS PERSPECTIVAS LOCAIS SOBRE O TURISMO NO PARQUE NACIONAL DE KAZIRANGA, PATRIMÔNIO MUNDIAL

### Resumo

O turismo de vida selvagem é baseado na natureza no Parque Nacional de Kaziranga está crescendo a um ritmo acelerado e isso tem um impacto diferencial nos destinos. As crescentes atividades turísticas na região têm tanto consequências positivas quanto negativas para o destino. As percepções dos locais sobre essas atividades são os elementos mais cruciais para o desenvolvimento do turismo em um destino turístico. À medida que a indústria do turismo avança, é importante, de tempos em tempos, avaliar as opiniões dos locais em relação às mudanças. No artigo de pesquisa, o objetivo é analisar as opiniões dos moradores sobre os impactos econômicos percebidos, os impactos socioculturais e os impactos do desenvolvimento do turismo no meio ambiente, utilizando os métodos de análise de componentes principais para redução de dados e máxima representação. Os resultados deste estudo revelam que os residentes locais se beneficiaram economicamente, socioculturalmente e ecologicamente com o crescimento da indústria do turismo em sua área. No entanto, há certos casos em que os moradores acreditam que não estão recebendo todas as vantagens da atividade turística. Os resultados do estudo ajudarão os formuladores de políticas de turismo e os tomadores de decisão a tomar as medidas necessárias para garantir que as vantagens superem as repercussões negativas e que os habitantes locais continuem a beneficiar ao máximo possível.

**Palavras-chave:** Turismo de Vida Selvagem; Comunidade Local; Percepções; Parque Nacional de Kaziranga.

## CERRANDO LA BRECHA: COMPRENDIENDO LAS PERSPECTIVAS LOCALES SOBRE EL TURISMO EN EL SITIO PATRIMONIO MUNDIAL PARQUE NACIONAL KAZIRANGA

### Resumen

El turismo de vida silvestre y basado en la naturaleza en el Parque Nacional Kaziranga está creciendo a un ritmo rápido y esto tiene un impacto diferencial en los destinos. Las crecientes actividades turísticas en la región tienen tanto consecuencias positivas como negativas para el destino. Las percepciones de los locales sobre estas actividades son los elementos más cruciales para el desarrollo turístico de un destino turístico. A medida que la industria del turismo avanza, es importante, de vez en cuando, evaluar las opiniones de los locales sobre los cambios. En el artículo de investigación, el objetivo es analizar las opiniones de los locales sobre los impactos económicos percibidos, los impactos socioculturales y los impactos del desarrollo turístico en el medio ambiente utilizando los métodos de análisis de componentes principales para la reducción de datos y la máxima representación. Los hallazgos de este estudio revelan que los residentes locales se beneficiaron económica, sociocultural y ecológicamente del crecimiento de la industria turística en su área. Sin embargo, hay ciertos casos en los que los lugareños creen que no están recibiendo todas las ventajas de la actividad turística. Los hallazgos del estudio ayudarán a los responsables de políticas turísticas y a los tomadores de decisiones a tomar las medidas necesarias para asegurar que las ventajas superen las repercusiones negativas y que los habitantes locales continúen beneficiándose en la mayor medida posible.

**Palabras clave:** Turismo de vida silvestre; Comunidad local; Percepciones; Parque Nacional Kaziranga.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is a rapidly growing sector globally, connected to many other parts of the economy. It is the largest industry worldwide, accounting for 10.4% of the total global GDP and providing 334 million jobs across the globe (WTTC, 2019). Beyond its economic impact, tourism also significantly affects tourists and improves their quality of life.

A good holiday has many potential to change the life of a tourist. Tourism helps broaden the views of tourists and also allows them to find themselves during vacation periods. Escape from mental stress, rest and relaxation, and enhanced well-being are some of the other positive benefits of tourism. Employment generation is one of the most significant contributions from the tourism industry to the overall economic development of the tourist destination.

The engagement of various sectors in the tourism industry leads to more employment generation. From Government agencies to small street vendors, tourism generates a wide range of employment opportunities for the local people. Tourism supports more than 7% of the world's workers in direct and indirect ways (Choudhary, 2013).

The terms **perceptions, attitudes, and reactions** are frequently used in the literature on tourism without distinction to refer to the "opinions" that host populations hold. (Cordero, 2008). Accordingly, the present study aims to explore the use of the term 'perception' to describe the opinion of the respondents. The proposed objective of this study is to highlight the importance of local residents' perceptions toward the development and further development of the tourism industry in their locality.

The state of Assam is another crucial state of the Republic of India which is located in the Northeastern part of India and is located geographically important area. The state shares borders with two foreign nations i.e., Bhutan in the north with 263.5 km and Bangladesh in the south with 533.3 km. Along with these two foreign nations, the state shares boundaries with eight Indian states: Arunachal Pradesh to the north, Nagaland and Manipur to the east, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura to the south, and West Bengal to the west, with a 22 km Siliguri corridor. Tourism in Assam is based on wildlife, natural beauty, turbulent rivers, river islands, cultural diversity, flora and fauna, lush tea gardens, and festivals.

The use of these natural resources for tourism development offers its own advantages. Since local residents usually prefer to explore nearby destinations, they will be the first to be impacted by local tourist activities. Therefore, the opinions of local people become very important in determining the growth of the tourist destination.

Therefore, it is important to understand the perceptions of locals towards their tourist destination. Hence, the focus of this study is on how local people perceive tourism in the selected destination, namely Kaziranga National Park.

The present article is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the review of literature. The next section, i.e., section 3, covers the research methodology, including the design of the questionnaire, data collection procedure, and study techniques. This is followed by the empirical results and discussion, and finally, the conclusion.

## 2 THEORETICAL REVIEW

Globally, conducted studies on the perceptions and attitudes of the local residents toward the tourism industry development in tourist areas have been a lasting research issue in tourism industry-related studies among researchers. (Long and Wall, 1996; Ko and Stewart, 2002; Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Mohsin, 2005; Kibicho, 2008; Lepp, 2008; Gursoy and Dyer, 2009, Juan Gabriel Brida, Eugenia Riaño and Sandra Zapata Aguirre, 2011).

Many studies on local communities' perceptions of tourism development and its impact on them have been conducted worldwide over recent years. Generally, these studies find that individuals who benefit directly from tourism-related activities and those who observe greater economic opportunities—such as more jobs and higher income prospects—tend to have strong opinions about tourism development when viewed from an economic perspective (King et al., 1993; Lankford and Howard, 1994; Haralamopoulos and Pizam, 1996).

Similarly, individuals who believe they are knowledgeable about the tourism industry or who are somewhat involved in the decision-making process of tourism development tend to hold a more favourable view of the industry's progress than other residents (Andereck et al., 2005). Researchers in various parts of the world have examined local residents' opinions and perspectives on the development of the tourism industry.

The cost-benefit analysis is always taken from the perspective of local residents. The local residents of a tourist destination may have both favourable and unfavourable perceptions and attitudes toward developing the tourism industry-related activity. (Ap, J. 1992; Brunt & Courtney, 1999). Earlier studies related to the attitude and perception towards the development of tourism were descriptive in nature. (Andriotis 2005 and Dimitriadis et. al 2013) Later studies on the variables show promising results toward tourism to varying degrees of success.

Andereck and Zhao (2012) has reviewed the perception and attitude of locals toward tourism development studies. They have found mixed and different results regarding various variables.

Mir, M. (2021) study results confirm that the tourism industry has more positive impacts on the local community, both economically and socio-culturally. Economically, local residents benefit from employment opportunities, improved local businesses and economy, increased personal income, and the development and maintenance of infrastructural facilities.

Aside from this, the socio-cultural impacts of the industry on locals are viewed positively regarding tourism development. The local residents argued that the growth of the tourism industry has helped protect local culture and improve security in the region.

Other negative socio-cultural impacts such as prostitution, crime, drug abuse, and other illegal activities have not been observed due to the development of tourism in the area. Sahin, G., and Akova, O. (2019), there are regional differences in how local residents perceive the growth of the tourism industry, as well as variations in

demographic factors including age, gender, educational attainment, and employment status.

Residents' views and attitudes are shaped by the benefits or disadvantages of these activities; if they experience benefits, their opinions tend to be positive. Additionally, it has been noted that individuals who have lived there for more than 21 years have increased environmental awareness, and city residents even more so.

Tyrrell and Spaulding (1984), Lankford and Howard (1994), Andriotis and Vaughan (2003), Allen et al. (1988), and Ritchie (1988) have argued that citizens' perceptions of expected conditions and changes in host communities should be given priority. Stakeholders who benefit from tourism generally hold favourable attitudes because it produces more activities for businesses and creates additional jobs.

From a supply-side perspective, it is essential to balance local residents' perceptions of the pros and cons of the tourism industry, as this greatly affects the demand driver, that is, tourist satisfaction, and is therefore critical to the success and future development of tourism.

Allen et al. (1988) find that residents' opinions and views on the development of the tourism industry in their locality must be regularly reviewed, as well as the interaction of tourism with the local community life, to ensure that prompt actions and appropriate measures are taken so that residents can become willing partners in the development process.

Wall's (1996) found that people living nearby the destination tend to have a positive attitude toward tourism development in its early stages. The author pointed out that involving locals in the decision-making process can help garner their support. Sun (2012) found that individuals directly employed in or connected to the tourism industry generally hold a more positive view of tourism development compared to those not involved in tourism activities.

Bagri and Kala (2016) show that the tourism sector has both beneficial and negative effects on residents. Since it promotes valued local experiences through encounters with tourists—such as increased destination image, improved public infrastructure, and higher standards of living—on the other hand, it harms customs and accelerates social issues.

Jovana et al. (2019) noted that the local community in the study area views tourism as a potential development engine, and they have a positive attitude toward this industry. There are no xenophobic views among the local residents and tourists, as evidenced by the positive attitude that the community has toward visitors.

Bertan, S. (2019) has pointed out that developing the tourism industry in an area requires involving local residents in the development and decision-making processes. It is essential to ensure that locals receive the maximum benefits and suffer fewer losses to foster favourable attitudes and perceptions toward further tourism development. Including local residents is clearly key to achieving sustainable development.

The income generated from the industry should stay within the local economy by supporting and promoting local products, diversifying local offerings, safeguarding local culture, and reducing negative impacts.

Andriotis and Vaughan (2003) propose that gaining a deeper understanding of local residents' perceptions of future

tourism development in their area can help policymakers and stakeholders make informed decisions. This understanding can also support in addressing concerns and implementing suitable measures to maximise benefits and reduce negative outcomes.

Mohsin (2005) studied the marketing strategies used by tourism service providers and tourism product buyers. The author gathered 675 samples from Western Malaysian people to examine their attitudes towards visiting Darwin in North Australia. Tourists' attitudes and perceptions of destinations and their preferences greatly influence tourist arrivals. Andereck and Zhao (2012) found varied and mixed results concerning different variables.

The authors found no link between gender and locals' attitudes or perceptions toward tourism development, such as economic, environmental, and social factors. However, one study revealed that age, length of stays, education levels, and employment in the industry significantly influence the development of casino tourism in the area. They recommended that, to gain support from local residents, it is important to include more locals, ensure that benefits outweigh costs related to the industry, and distribute most of these benefits to locals (Kamat, K. et. al., 2016).

Funa et al. (2014) argue in favour of the local community's self-efficacy or competence to carry out the behaviours needed to achieve certain performance goals in tourism. Stakeholders must care for the welfare of the locals and respect their values from all angles. Sünnetçioğlu, S. et al. (2021) used Doxey Irridex to measure the perceptions and attitudes of local residents toward tourism development. Using this method, they found that the stages vary by location.

The study shows that the rise of the tourism industry on the islands has led to increases in inflation, pollution, crime rates, and excessive water use. Perceptions and attitudes toward tourism differ among groups. Students, as well as those unemployed or employed in the tourism industry, tend to have positive perceptions. In contrast, individuals not employed in tourism, public sector workers, and retirees generally have less positive views. Furthermore, residents of the islands welcome tourists because they bring money, new connections, jobs, and enhance the area's status.

Generally, it has been observed that those who are involved in the tourism industry or related activities tend to have a positive perception of further development in their locality. In contrast, residents who are not directly or indirectly involved often hold a negative view of tourism industry expansion. It is important to regularly assess the local community's opinions on the growth of tourism in their area. The present study aims to explore local respondents' perceptions of tourism development, focusing on economic, socio-cultural, and environmental factors.

## 2.1 Study Area

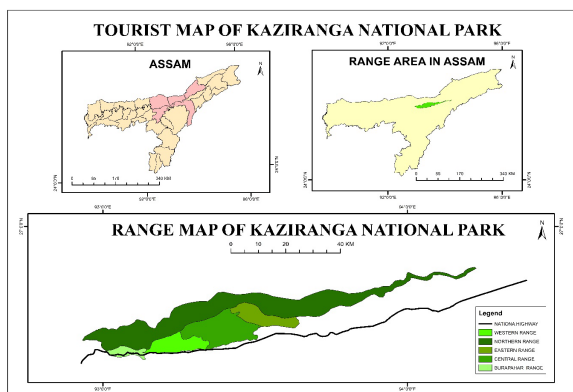
Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is located in two districts of Assam. These are Golaghat and Nagaon districts. The distance between the state capital and the park is 217 km, and from Jorhat, it is 96 km. The nearest railway station to the park is Furkating Junction,

which is 80 km away. The total area of the national park spans over 430 square kilometres.

The park is famous for the one-horned Indian rhinoceros. It is also home to various other wildlife species such as elephants, tigers, bison, different types of deer, wild water buffalo, various bird species, orchids, and other flora and fauna. Kaziranga National Park was designated a 'World Heritage Site' in 1985.

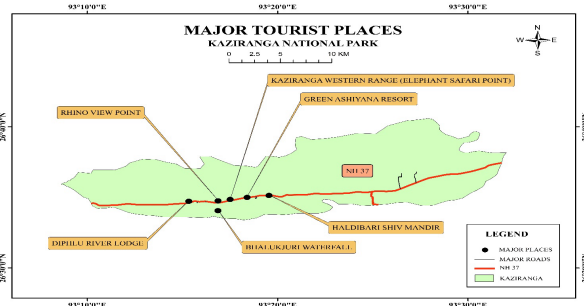
The park area was designated a Tiger Reserve in 2006 by government authorities. According to the 2011 census report, the total population of Golaghat district was 1,066,888, Nagaon 2,823,768, and the adjacent district of Karbi Anglong 956,313. The park is divided into five ranges: Kohora or central range, Bagori or western range, Burapahar Range, Agaratoli or eastern range, and northern range.

**Figure 1:** Ranges of Kaziranga National Park.



Source: own elaboration.

**Figure 2:** Major tourist places of Kaziranga National Park.



Source: own elaboration.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Questionnaire and Data Collection

The study primarily focused on using primary data collected from 106 individuals living in and around Kaziranga National Park. Secondary data sources included government reports, research papers, government websites, and other relevant materials as needed. Primary data for the study was gathered from individuals who had resided in the area of Kaziranga National Park for at least four years. The sample comprised both people directly involved in tourism and those who were not engaged in tourism. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed to assess the perceptions of residents living near Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO

World Heritage site. The questionnaire contained 53 items and was divided into four sections. Section A included 11 questions related to demographics, education, and occupation. Sections B, C, and D comprised 45 questions.

Section B contained questions related to perceptions of economic impacts, section C addressed socio-cultural impacts, and section D focused on environmental impacts. To gather data for these sections, the research assessed the extent of conformity or divergence within the local community. A five-point Likert scale was utilised to measure respondents' perceptions.

In this study, descriptive statistical analysis was utilized. To evaluate local residents' perceptions of tourism development based on the factor structure of the variables, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. Specifically, Principal Component Analysis within the exploratory factor analysis was applied.

Forty-five variables were analysed using this technique, and the varimax rotation method was applied to establish the constructs. To assess the sample size adequacy and the suitability of the data, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of Sphericity were examined, respectively. To evaluate the internal consistency of data for each factor, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated using SPSS 16.

Regarding reliability, the Cronbach-Alpha Coefficient was used in the measurement process. The questionnaire consisted of 45 items related to views on the sociocultural, environmental, and economic impacts of tourism growth, as well as 11 items covering the demographic and general profile of respondents. Cronbach Alpha in SPSS was employed to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. The Likert scale included 45 items. The scale reliability coefficient is 0.9242.

### 4 RESULTS ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Profile of the respondents

In the present study, most respondents were males. The gender distribution is dominated by males, comprising 83.96% of the total respondents, while females account for 16.04%. Most respondents were under 35 years of age. The age distribution is mainly within the 18-35 years range (61.32%), with the remaining 38.68% being above 35 years up to 55 years.

Concerning educational qualifications, Table 1 shows that nearly 61.32% of respondents had completed high school, while 15.09% had completed secondary education, and another 15.09% held graduate degrees. It can be inferred that the majority of respondents were literate.

**Table 1.** Education qualifications of the respondents.

Education qualifications of the respondents		
Level of education	No. of respondents	Percentage
Primary	8	7.55
HSLC	65	61.32
Secondary (x-xii)	16	15.09
Graduate	16	15.09
Professional Degree	1	0.94
Total	106	100.00

Source: own elaboration.

**Table 2.** Occupation pattern of the respondents.

Occupations	No. of respondents	Percentage
Govt. Job	13	12.26
Daily Labour	38	35.85
Self-employed	15	14.15
Farmer	4	3.77
Tourism service/accommodation	15	14.15
Tourists guide	7	6.60
Others	14	13.21
Total	106	100.00

Source: own elaboration.

Regarding the occupation patterns of the respondents, Table 2 shows that 20.75% (22 respondents) were directly involved in tourism-related activities. Among the other respondents, 35.85% were daily labourers who occasionally engaged in tourism activities indirectly, while 14.15% were self-employed and 12.26% held Government jobs.

Table 3 indicates that the majority of our respondents have been staying in the study area for more than 10 years (96.26%), whereas only 3.78% of the respondents have been staying for less than or greater than 5 years.

**Table 3.** Distribution of respondents based on residency

Years of stay	No. of respondents	Percentage
Less than 5	2	1.89
5-10	2	1.89
More than 10	102	96.23
Total	106	100.00

Source: own elaboration.

**Table 5.** Total Variance explained.

Com	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sum of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	13.419	33.832	33.832	13.419	33.832	33.832	7.061	17.802	17.802
2	6.554	16.525	50.357	6.554	16.525	50.357	4.919	12.401	30.203
3	2.877	7.253	57.61	2.877	7.253	57.61	4.729	11.922	42.126
4	2.029	5.117	62.727	2.029	5.117	62.727	3.875	9.769	51.894
5	1.964	4.953	67.679	1.964	4.953	67.679	3.804	9.591	61.486
6	1.545	3.896	71.575	1.545	3.896	71.575	2.728	6.878	68.364
7	1.239	3.125	74.7	1.239	3.125	74.7	2.178	5.492	73.856
8	1.15	2.899	77.6	1.15	2.899	77.6	1.485	3.743	77.6
9	1.039	2.619	80.219						
10	0.916	2.31	82.529						
11	0.799	2.014	84.543						
12	0.697	1.757	86.3						
13	0.602	1.519	87.818						
14	0.464	1.17	88.989						
15	0.448	1.13	90.119						
16	0.421	1.063	91.182						
17	0.382	0.963	92.144						
18	0.32	0.806	92.951						
19	0.311	0.783	93.734						
20	0.291	0.734	94.467						
21	0.262	0.661	95.128						
22	0.236	0.595	95.723						
23	0.214	0.539	96.262						
24	0.206	0.519	96.781						
25	0.182	0.459	97.241						
26	0.154	0.388	97.629						
27	0.14	0.353	97.982						
28	0.122	0.307	98.289						
29	0.118	0.298	98.586						

**Table 4.** Involvement in Tourism-Related Activities (Directly)

Involved/Not Involved	Frequencies	Percentage
Yes	22	20.75
No	84	79.24
Total	106	100.00

Source: own elaboration.

Table 4 indicates that 20.75% of the respondents were directly involved in tourism-related activities, making it their primary source of income. Meanwhile, 79.24% of the respondents were not directly engaged in tourism jobs. Although tourism-related activities were not the main source of income for most respondents, approximately 57.14% of the 77 respondents were indirectly involved in the tourism industry. Only respondents from the Silimkhuwa village in East Karbi Anglong district were not engaged in any tourism-related activities at all.

## 4.2 Empirical Results

The data was extracted using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to identify the 45 components employed to evaluate the local population's perception of tourism development. Each characteristic was measured with a five-point Likert scale, where 5 indicates strongly agree, 4 indicates agree, 3 indicates neutral, 2 indicates disagree, and 1 indicates strongly disagree.

30	0.103	0.26	98.847						
31	0.102	0.256	99.103						
32	0.083	0.21	99.314						
33	0.075	0.19	99.504						
34	0.069	0.173	99.677						
35	0.06	0.15	99.827						
36	0.036	0.092	99.919						
37	0.032	0.081	100						

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis (PCA).

Source: own elaboration.

The sample is appropriate for PCA, as evidenced by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.813. The PCA of the twenty-seven variables, with Varimax rotation, resulted in a seven-component solution that explains 74.701% of the total variance. Only factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained.

Extracted factor components are given below:

**Table 6.** Factor 1 - Income Generation

Code	Variable description	Eigenvalues
PEI1	Tourism has created jobs in the area.	1.22
PEI2	Tourism industry development has increased the basic infrastructural facilities like roads and connectivity, medical facilities etc. in the destination.	1.032
PEI5	The tourism growth has motivated the local youth to be involved in the tourism businesses related activities.	0.932
PEI3	Tourists wants to buy locally produced and handmade products.	0.597
PEI4	Tourist like the local handicrafts and are ready to pay an appropriate amount for their local handicraft products.	0.644
PEI8	Local residents earn money by renting their out land and other assets for tourism business related activity purposes in the destination.	0.605
PSI7	There is greater scope for private investors to invest in the tourist destination.	0.679
PEI13	The local residents are not fully benefitted from the tourism industry as they are working as insemi-skilled i.e., guides/cooks/sweepers/ security guards etc.	0.678
PEI14	The tourist prefers non-local merchandised goods over local products due to which economic leakage occurs to the rural economy.	0.51

Source: own elaboration.

The first component had nine perception factors that explained 33.832% of the variation in the total and related to various tourist operations and innovation trends in the tourism industry. Therefore, the first factor was named Income Generation. Tourism has created jobs of all kinds in the areas surrounding Kaziranga National Park.

This is particularly evident in the Kohora, Bagori, and Kuthari areas of Golaghat and Nagaon districts. In contrast, not many jobs were created in the village Silimkhuwa of the nearby East Karbi Anglong area. Focus on tourism has led to the development of roads in the area, which in turn has increased the local people's access to basic facilities, especially health services.

These positive developments have inspired local youth to participate in the tourism industry. The demand for local products, especially food, art, and crafts, by tourists is seen as a sign of appreciation for local skills and craftsmanship. However, tourists often prefer non-local goods for certain daily use items. Another way locals generate income is by leasing their land and property for tourism activities.

Kaziranga also provides opportunities for private operators to develop tourism activities such as adventure tourism, amusement parks, and tea tourism. This is expected to boost the income of local residents.

**Table 7.** Factor 2 - Cultural Promotion and Preservation

Code	Variable description	Eigenvalues
PSI3	The tourism industry in the destination gives the local culture a new identity and they feel proud of it.	0.685
PSI2	When tourists express interest in their culture, local residents feel more proud of it, which boosts their respect and sense of self.	0.573
PSI5	Tourism has led to a greater understanding of the need to protect culture, including wildlife and natural areas.	0.518
PSI9	The tourism development in the tourist destination shows local community cooperation and a sense of common history.	0.587
PEI7	The great scope in tourism has encouraged the private player's participation (investment) in the areas.	0.593
PSI6	Due to the tourism development in the tourism place, the heritage of the area is getting more protection.	0.674

Source: own elaboration.

The second factor is labeled as "cultural promotion and preservation", which includes six variables and accounts for 16.525% of the total variance. The study shows that women's participation in tourism-related activities was positive. The development of the tourism industry at the destination provides the local culture with a new identity, and when tourists show interest in the local culture, local residents feel more proud of it. This, in turn, boosts their respect and sense of self.

At the same time, it has increased awareness of protecting culture, including wildlife and natural areas, fostered greater local community support and cooperation for tourism, and created a sense of shared history. Due to tourism development in the area, the heritage of the region is gaining more protection and significance.

**Table 8.** Factor 3 - Community Empowerment

Code	Variable description	Eigenvalues
PSI 6	As the tourism industry grows, heritage of the destination is being getting more protection.	0.545
PIE 2	There is an appropriate disposal system in the destination for waste and sewage	0.843

**Source:** own elaboration.

The third factor, interpreted as Community empowerment, includes two variables and accounts for 7.253% of the total variance. The results show that as the tourism industry expands, the destination's heritage and history are being protected and given greater importance. Additionally, the destination has an appropriate waste and sewage disposal system in place for managing the industry's waste, both of which have a positive impact on the environment.

**Table 9.** Factor 4 - Unintended Consequences or Tourism Impacts

Code	Variable description	Eigenvalues
PIE7	As the number of tourists arrive in the study area increases resulting in increased traffic congestion and pollution.	0.881
PIE8	The tourism development in the area increased garbage and littering.	0.929
PIE6	Tourism development has resulted in overcrowding in the destination area	0.771
PSI14	Tourism activities have resulted in the exploitation of the local community	0.7

**Source:** own elaboration.

The fourth factor identified as "Unintended Consequences" included four variables and accounted for a total variance of 5.117%. The tourism industry can have both positive and negative effects on an economy or destination areas. The present study finds that as the number of tourists visiting the study area increases, it leads to more traffic congestion and pollution, such as noise, solid waste, garbage, and littering.

**Table 10.** Factor 5 - Socioeconomic Exploitation

Code	Variable description	Eigenvalues
PEI13	The local residents do not fully benefit from the tourism industry as they are working as semi-skilled i.e., guides/cooks/sweepers/ security guards, etc.	0.614
PSI16	Many locals are involved in selling liquor and are ready to provide any type of service to the tourists for the sake of money.	1.194
PSI14	Tourism activities has resulted in the exploitation of the local community.	0.759
PSI18	Sometimes tourists visiting locations do not respect the local culture and behave in an undesirable way, considering themselves superior beings.	0.629

**Source:** own elaboration.

The fifth factor, interpreted as "Socio-economic exploitation," had four variables and explained 4.953% of the total variance. The study results indicate that local residents are not fully benefiting from the tourism industry, as they are employed in semi-skilled roles, such as guides, cooks, sweepers, and security guards. The results also indicated that activities like crime, drug activity, alcoholism, gambling, promiscuity, and prostitution were not observed with the growth of the tourism industry in the study area.

These issues cause overcrowding in certain areas, mainly in the Kohora range, and sometimes result in the exploitation of the local community. Overcrowding often occurs during peak seasons at Orchid Park and KohoraChariali. In KohoraChariali, crossing roads from one side to the other becomes quite difficult. Sometimes locals suffer the loss of domestic animals along with wild animals due to vehicles spreading on NH 715, which passes through the park area.

**Table 11.** Factor 6 - Collaboration

Code	Variable description	Eigenvalues
PIE5	Local SHGs and NGOs are working together with the local community to preserve and protect the environment of the destination.	0.522

**Source:** own elaboration.

The sixth factor was interpreted as "Collaboration". It included one variable, namely, local SHGs and NGOs working together with the local community to preserve and protect the destination's environment, accounting for 3.896% of the total variance.

**Table 12.** Factor 7 - Exclusion

Code	Variable description	Eigenvalues
PEI12	Locals rarely get the opportunity to work in high managerial positions.	1.18

**Source:** own elaboration.

The seventh factor, named "Exclusion", accounts for 3.125% of the total variance. The study results indicate that local residents lack adequate opportunities to hold top managerial positions in the tourism activities within the study area.

## 5 CONCLUSION AND CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this research was to examine how residents near Kaziranga National Park perceive tourism development. The locals were interviewed to understand their perceptions or level of acceptance of the tourism industry based on the various impacts of tourism activities. According to the research paper, different findings can be summarized depending on the overall opinion of the sample population.

This research concludes that local residents feel the benefits of tourism activities in their area can outweigh the negative impacts on the community and the local economy. Regarding the economic aspects of tourism and income generation, many people see the number of jobs created by tourism in the area as a positive.



Consequently, by acquiring this knowledge, tourism developers and planners can not only be better prepared but also craft journalism strategies for effective communication and persuasion of different community segments, while also bridging gaps among all stakeholders, particularly with local residents. This will enable them to effectively garner residents' support for the growth of the tourism industry.

Subsequent recommendations may also assume the need for policymakers to consider local residents' expectations, particularly regarding employment opportunities and an improved quality of life. Therefore, it provides local people with an opportunity to participate in analyses and decision-making related to tourism planning and promotion.

To realise the benefits of a destination's tourism industry, it is crucial to ensure the sector's efficient operation, balanced development planning, careful monitoring, and resource conservation so that both current and future generations can benefit from it (Wani, G. A. and Nagaraj, V. 2022).

Considering that Kaziranga National Park is a heritage site under the protection of UNESCO, both wildlife tourism and eco-tourism should be developed in terms of their resources and the sustainability of their activities. Finally, more study is required to accurately track any changes in the way the community perceives further tourism development in their locality.

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Term	Definition	Author 1	Author 2
Conceptualization	Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims	x	x
Methodology	Development or design of methodology; creation of models	x	x
Software	Programming, software development; designing computer programs; implementation of the computer code and supporting algorithms; testing of existing code components	x	
Validation	Verification, whether as a part of the activity or separate, of the overall replication/ reproducibility of results/experiments and other research outputs	x	x
Formal analysis	Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal techniques to analyze or synthesize study data	x	x
Investigation	Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection	x	x
Resources	Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools	x	x
Data Curation	Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later reuse	x	x
Writing - Original Draft	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation)	x	x
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Visualization	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically visualization/ data presentation	x	x
Supervision	Oversight and leadership responsibility for the research activity planning and execution, including mentorship external to the core team		x
Project administration	Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution		x
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