



Tourism Based Livelihoods and Their Influence on Living Standards of Local Communities in Rural and Border Areas of Kashmir

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Abstract- In Kashmir (Jammu and Kashmir, India), where more than 70% of the population lives in rural areas, with few other job options, seasonal farming, and geopolitical tensions along international borders, tourism as a means of subsistence is crucial. This review compiles previous research on tourism and its impact on various aspects of daily life. It focuses on community-based, rural, pro-poor, and border tourism, encompassing both direct and indirect income generation, poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, social empowerment (particularly for women and youth), and cultural preservation. Some examples of these aspects of tourism include homestays, guiding, hospitality, and handicrafts. Poonch and other border areas, as well as rising areas like Gurez and Keran, have seen positive effects, including increased economic resilience, better access to healthcare and education, and stronger community bonds. These delicate mountain ecosystems are already vulnerable, but many obstacles remain, including the effects of seasonality and over-reliance on tourism, disturbances caused by war, social and cultural erosion, environmental deterioration, and an uneven distribution of benefits. The review draws on frameworks such as social exchange theory, sustainable livelihoods, and structural equation modeling to emphasize the importance of community involvement, sustainable practices, and policy interventions (such as the Vibrant Villages Programme or homestay promotion) in achieving a balance between growth and resilience. Directions for future study are highlighted by gaps in long-term empirical data on the dynamics, particularly regarding borders and recovery after conflicts. In sum, tourism can significantly improve living conditions in rural and border areas of Kashmir, but to achieve fair, long-term results, it is necessary to address vulnerabilities caused by environmental pressures and regional instability.

Keywords - Rural Tourism, Border Tourism, Tourism-Based Livelihoods, Living Standards, Socio-Economic Impacts, Community-Based Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Jammu And Kashmir, Kashmir Valley, Pro-Poor Tourism, Homestays, Poonch District, Gurez, Seasonality, Conflict Disruptions.

1. INTRODUCTION

A key component of the global economy, tourism is both a massive and rapidly expanding sector [1-4]. Its contributions to economic growth, social development, and cultural interchange go much beyond the generation of jobs. Tourism is an exciting industry because it creates new job opportunities and supports company expansion [5-6]. On top of that, it creates many jobs [7-8]. With 10% of global GDP, 30% of global exports, and one out of every 10 jobs created globally, tourism will rank third in 2021 in terms of global export revenues [9]. Most studies have

shown a direct positive link between tourism and economic development, suggesting a considerable correlation between the two [10].

There is a general consensus that tourism has beneficial effects on local economies, cultures, and communities [4]. Conversely, those who work in sectors unrelated to tourism, such as agriculture, tend to have a higher socioeconomic status [11]. Some Indigenous communities have found success in reducing poverty through community-based tourism (CBT) [14], as it generates a range of jobs [12] and a market for locally made items [13]. Conceptually, [14] CBT has come a long way, but there is little evidence that it works, and even less research on

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how it works in practice [12]. Rural areas [15], fishing villages [16], tiny islands [17], and indigenous peoples [18] are just a few examples of traditional communities that can benefit from this kind of tourism. Rural locations are often the focal point of community-based tourism in developing nations. The impact of tourism on people's well-being has been understudied, despite its role as a key driver of economic development and a significant player in the global private sector [19]. As a vital weapon in the fight against poverty, community-based tourism can boost rural development, community growth, and sustainability [20, 21]. The local community can both manage and profit directly from the tourist company, making this unique in the tourism industry [22]. The two pillars upon which CBT has rested since its beginnings in the 1970s—community involvement and the guarantee of large financial gains for residents—are the reasons for its continued success [23]. To promote the well-being of local inhabitants, CBT strives to provide communities greater input over tourism development [24]. Because it involves local populations in tourism-related activities and shares the benefits, this idea is particularly effective in rural parts of impoverished countries [25]. By offering amenities including food and drink, village tours, accommodation, handicrafts, and cultural performances, CBT enables locals to actively participate in tourism planning and management [26]. Promoting economic growth, developing business opportunities for inhabitants, protecting cultural assets, and enhancing tourism services are the four fundamental aims that CBT must accomplish to be successful [27]. Developing nations must prioritize sustainable tourism development, which calls for an all-encompassing strategy that accounts for social, economic, and environmental factors [28] by including initiatives that improve local quality of life while boosting economic development. It aspires to do more than just protect the environment; it also aims to enhance living standards and eradicate poverty [29]. Tourism development can only be successful and welcoming if local stakeholders are included in the planning process and the welfare of the community is given first priority [30]. Comprehensive plans that address sustainability challenges and promote social and financial benefits are produced when companies, organizations, and local governments work together successfully [31].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jaisingh (2021) [32], This research looks at how tourism affects India's artisan sector, specifically how it helps revive traditional forms of art and craft. For tourists, it highlights both the importance of experiencing authentic Indian shopping and the

country's rich cultural heritage. The paper suggests resurrecting artisan businesses via responsible supply chain arrangements and artisan entrepreneurship to encourage ecologically responsible tourism.

Reddy et al. (2020) [33] Resilience and vulnerability are the focal points of this research on the tourist industry's post-conflict growth and recovery in Northern Ireland. To enhance resilience and reduce vulnerability, it finds that human elements, corporate adaptability, collaborative governance, and shared vision are crucial. It is equally critical to promote a varied attraction base and guarantee safety and security. Both the theory and practice of crisis management in the tourist industry benefit from the study. Krishna and Shekhar (2020) [34] This study examines the literature on how technology has affected rural tourism, focusing on how this industry has contributed to the socioeconomic growth of rural regions. It draws attention to patterns and development opportunities, showcasing how rural tourism has changed and how it may address social and economic issues.

Jahan (2022) [35] The results of the research that looked at geodiversity in the Himalayan mountain systems, Jammu & Kashmir, and Sikkim showed that the GI is higher in Sikkim and that subtropical forests had more species. Jasrotia et al. (2022) [36] This study aims to examine homestay practises in Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh, with a focus on sustainable tourism and environmentally conscious activities. This highlights the significance of homestay authorities being better informed and more conscious of the issue.

Jana et al. (2022) [37] note that Advances in Geographical and Environmental Sciences is a compilation of articles that explore various facets of Earth's ecosystem, including land use and urbanization, weather patterns, food safety, biodiversity, and human health. Utilizing traditional field techniques, remote sensing, and computer-aided modeling, it seeks to resolve environmental issues and provide a foundation for sustainable development. Sun et al. (2022) [38] examine 14 Asian countries based on their terrorism rates and the variables that lead to their socioeconomic stratification from 2006 to 2018. The data show that South Asia is the most vulnerable region, whereas East and North Asia see more terrorist attacks as a consequence of population increase and the distribution of education budgets.

Jangra et al. (2023)[39] The study indicates that the poor condition of National Highway-22 in Kinnaur is preventing tourism growth, as tourists prefer Kalpa. The expansion of transportation should be funded by the government. Li & Gou (2023) [40] The main purpose of the research is to find out how



people in rural China feel about solar photovoltaic panels and what influences their perspective. The findings show that traditional landscapes are more attractive, but public approval of panels is influenced by renewable energy-related considerations, including economic stakes and moral desirability.

Showkat et al. (2024) [41] examine how digital financial services have affected women's financial independence in North India. It highlights the potential of ICT to improve gender equality by showing a strong positive correlation between using these services and improved financial decision-making. Raba et al. (2021) [42] This research examines land-use changes in Jammu and Kashmir, India, and finds that undesirable ecological classes are increasing while acceptable land-use is decreasing. It emphasizes the need for sustainable management and conservation efforts.

Mir et al. (2022) [43] conducted research in 2019 and 2020 on the fisheries status at Dal Lake; the findings showed significant pollution, and that omnivorous fish were the most common. The study concluded that changes to management and governance practices, as well as restrictions on sewage intake and weed growth, are necessary. Chaudhary et al. (2023) [44] focus on the Gulmarg resort and examine the behavior of ski tourists in the Indian Himalayas. Sustainability may not be the decisive factor, but the results show that choice factors do positively impact happiness and loyalty.

III. LIVELIHOOD VULNERABILITY

The geological sciences were the first to make use of vulnerability research, which had its roots in the aftermath of catastrophic catastrophes [45]. In the years that followed, it became an essential analytical tool and a focal point in the fields of sustainable development and global environmental change studies [46]. According to Timmerman P., who first proposed the concept of vulnerability, the built-in resilience of systems may help lessen the impact of disasters, but the degree of a system's vulnerability determines the intensity of those effects [47]. The likelihood that a person or family will live below the poverty line due to unanticipated risk shocks was subsequently characterized by the World Bank in 2001 as vulnerability [48]. According to the IPCC, three main factors contribute to a person's susceptibility to climate change. These are exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capability. It explains how much a system suffers from the negative consequences of climate change and how well it can handle or adjust to those effects [49]. Foundational research on the ecological environment in northern China's agro-pastoral transition zone was conducted

by Luo Chengping et al., who were among the first to define environmental sensitivity and deterioration trends as two key features of fragile ecosystems [50]. Based on the R-H (Risk-Hazard) model, Burton expanded the definition of vulnerability to include the interplay between sensitivity, exposure of susceptible units, and hazard elements. It reflects the resilience and adaptability of social systems in the face of disasters [51]. To analyze place-based catastrophe risk, Cutter proposed the HOP (Hazards-of-Place) model, which significantly advanced the field. Her research focus is now on the coupling of natural and human systems, as she argues that regional vulnerability results from the interaction between social and natural aspects of susceptibility. The field of vulnerability research made great strides forward with this approach [52]. The notion of vulnerability expanded into socio-economic studies as research progressed, enriching the literature on vulnerability from many angles. Similarly, Lankao et al. emphasized that human activities and urban infrastructure are additional elements that affect urban vulnerability [53].

In the 1950s, scholars started to pay more attention to the livelihood problem. Among many others, Chambers's definition of livelihood—a way of life supported by one's skills, assets, and activities—has become standard fare. Assets might be physical goods or intangible rights [54]. There is currently no consensus on what constitutes "livelihood vulnerability," a term that encompasses both vulnerability and livelihood. When people or families have their access to resources cut off by external forces, it may be a devastating blow to their livelihood, according to Prowse [55]. Livelihood vulnerability is defined by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) as "the degree to which an individual's or household's ability to meet basic needs is precariously balanced on the precipice of unexpected shocks, stresses, trends, or seasonal changes, or on the basis of extreme environmental variability" [56].

IV. THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Especially in economically depressed areas, rural tourism has long been seen as a powerful engine of community growth. In economically depressed regions, Banu [57] stressed, rural tourism offers several opportunities to earn money. To boost local economies, rural areas can leverage rural tourism to highlight cultural assets, customs, and natural resources. An example of how combining agricultural techniques with tourism may benefit both farmers' earnings and local heritage preservation is the development of agritourism in China's Yunnan and Sichuan provinces [58]. It is well known



worldwide that rural tourism can promote sustainable development and economic recovery. The creation of employment and increased local spending are two ways in which rural tourism contributes to the post-pandemic economic recovery, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021). This is especially true for rural regions that are struggling economically. For their part, Hussain and Fusté-Forné [59] in New Zealand emphasized that rural tourism promotes local enterprise and environmental care, which helps to sustainable development. This model may be emulated by other nations. Furthermore, several global case studies provide additional evidence that rural tourism might enhance the long-term viability of rural regions. For example, Čurčić et al. [60] showed that rural tourism has benefited Zlakusa village, improving the community's economic stability and sustainability. The research by Čurčić et al. [60] aligns with that by Susila et al. [61], who emphasized the significance of interconnection in the development of agro-tourism and argued that rural economies may be better supported by an integrated strategy. The sustainable tourist potential of Semberija was investigated by Nedeljković et al. [62] using multi-criteria analysis, which shed light on how distinct rural settings might be considered when developing sustainable tourism.

V. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Host towns' social and cultural landscapes are shaped by tourism, which brings both benefits and challenges in multifaceted ways. Cultural interchange, the commercialization of local customs, community cohesiveness, and socioeconomic inequities are among the many aspects of the link between tourism and local cultures [63]. The idea of cultural interaction is central to tourism's social elements. By bringing people from different backgrounds together, tourists and locals may learn about and appreciate one another's cultures [64]. Both locals and visitors may benefit from the exchange of languages, traditions, and customs that often result from these encounters [65]. Kastenholz and Gronau [66] provide an example of how tourism may promote mutual understanding across cultures by giving host communities a platform to celebrate their history and traditions. When communities see the significance of their legacy in attracting tourists, it may lead to the preservation of local traditions and practices.

But not all cultures benefit from tourism's influence. The commercialization of local cultures, in which cultural manifestations are turned into marketable goods to meet tourists' expectations, is a major obstacle [67]. This

commercialization, according to Shilongo [68], might dilute genuine cultural practices, leading to a simplified portrayal of regional customs. Communities may worry about the authenticity and integrity of their cultural heritage if they feel forced to change traditional practices or performances to suit visitor tastes [69].

Additionally, communities may see changes in social structures and ways of life due to increased visitor numbers. Traditional ways of life may change or be reduced as local inhabitants adapt to the demands of the tourism sector [70]. For example, if jobs in the tourism industry suddenly exploded, it might prompt some locals to leave their more conventional positions for those in the industry. Traditional skills and traditions, which are often fundamental to a community's cultural identity, might be eroded by this change, even as it may provide economic benefits [71].

VI. LIVELIHOOD ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

It is critical to enable local populations to take advantage of economic opportunities while minimizing negative impacts as Arugambe's tourist industry continues to expand [72]. Encouragement of citizens to diversify their income sources is a key component of these programs [72]. Although the tourist industry may be very profitable, it also poses serious risks to people and families who rely on it exclusively for their livelihoods [73]. To avoid economic instability, for example, caused by changes in visitor arrivals during off-peak seasons, residents must participate in several economic activities. To stabilize family earnings during slow tourist seasons, it is recommended to encourage diversification into sectors such as small-scale fisheries, artisanal crafts, or agriculture [74]. Another crucial tactic for improving lives in Arugambe is to assist small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in starting up and expanding their operations. Entrepreneurs may greatly benefit from financial aid, grants, and low-interest loans offered by local governments, NGOs, and community groups when launching tourism-based enterprises [75].

VII. SUGGESTIONS TO PROMOTE TOURISM

1. Having a well-documented tourist policy should be the first and foremost concern in this respect. Currently, J&K lacks a policy that provides equal rights for all parties involved in tourism, including locals, the corporate sector, and NGOs. The tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir



is mostly private-sector driven; hence, the government should act as a facilitator rather than a regulator.

2. The development of tourism-related infrastructure is absent. There is a severe lack of adequate transportation options, appalling sanitation, and overcrowded hotels and resorts during high seasons. So, infrastructure in J&K has to be properly developed and maintained.
3. The Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) in Srinagar is an important institution because it trains locals, and their skills are now on par with those of foreign hotels. More schools like this should be established to teach locals who work in the tourism industry (such as tour guides, chefs, and operators) how to properly accommodate the influx of visitors.
4. The name "Paradise Unexplored" comes from the abundance of undiscovered tourist spots in Jammu and Kashmir. More and more of these undiscovered tourism hotspots need to be discovered.
5. J&K tourism must take sufficient steps to ensure visitors' safety and make them feel at ease.
6. J&K is a top destination for adventure, medical, polo, and other emerging forms of tourism yet to be discovered, but with great promise for revitalizing the industry.
7. The state should seek to revitalize its historic handicrafts industry through fresh, inventive approaches, helping it reclaim its former prominence on the global stage.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Traditional agriculture and limited economic diversification typically limit options in rural and border regions of Kashmir, where tourism-based livelihoods provide a critical path to improving living conditions. It is clear from the literature review that tourism, in particular community-based models, homestays, guiding services, handicraft linkages, and emerging border initiatives, has many positive social effects. These include the creation of direct and indirect jobs, higher household incomes, less poverty, and improved access to healthcare, education, and youth engagement. In border valleys like Gurez and Keran, as well as in districts like Shopian and Poonch, empirical research using structural equation modeling and community opinion surveys confirms strong economic multipliers and cultural preservation benefits.

Nevertheless, these advancements are not without their enduring obstacles: excruciating seasonality, an excessive dependence on tourist revenue, interruptions caused by geopolitical tensions and security incidents, changes in society and culture, such as the possibility of inequality and cultural

erosion, and environmental stresses on delicate Himalayan ecosystems as a result of resource depletion and unregulated development. The need for resilience-building measures is further highlighted by border-specific vulnerabilities, such as conflict-related closures and insufficient infrastructure, which exacerbate risks. Sustainable outcomes can be achieved through increased community involvement in planning and sharing of benefits, the implementation of eco-tourism and pro-poor practices, the strengthening of policy frameworks (such as the Vibrant Villages Programme, homestay promotion, and carrying capacity assessments), and the use of targeted infrastructure investments to diversify offerings and reduce the impact of seasonality. Tourism has the power to foster inclusive development and create jobs (supporting lakhs directly and indirectly) and gross state product (GSDP) when it is linked with peace and stability, as shown by recent recovery patterns after 2019.

Ultimately, the potential of tourism to improve living conditions in rural and border areas of Kashmir is immense. This industry can bring about economic diversification, social advancement, and cultural vitality. However, for this to succeed, it is crucial to address vulnerabilities through inclusive, sustainable, and conflict-resilient strategies. With careful planning and execution, tourism can transform from a temporary source of income into a strong foundation for inclusive growth, protecting the region's idyllic character for years to come.

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