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Tourism-Led Regional Development in Rajasthan: An Econometric Analysis of Income Employment, and Infrastructure Growth

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study is to analyse the impact of tourism on the economic Development of Southern Rajasthan, particularly on the region's economic development and employment generation. The study is based on primary data collected through purposive and convenience sampling from the districts of Southern Rajasthan. The author conducted descriptive and comparative studies to examine the consequences of the tourism industry on the districts' economies. The study shows that higher levels of income and employment opportunities resulting from tourism Development and improvements in transport, hospitality, and civic infrastructure are consequences of tourism development. The study shows that tourism Development in Southern Rajasthan should be complemented by proper planning, the development of tourism infrastructure, diversification of tourism products, and sustained long-term tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Arising from the multifarious implications of tourism is its ability to contribute to economic development in heterogeneous areas of India, including the culturally and historically affluent state of Rajasthan. As a service sector of preeminence on the worldwide stage, tourism provides a massive impetus towards the economy in a social way, both directly and indirectly by interfacing with the supplementary primary and tertiary sectors of the nation, such as transport, handicraft, and hospitality (Nayak & Hanagodimath, 2024; Tiwari & Bisen, 2023). In the Indian context, the tourism-led growth (TLG) hypothesis holds that international and domestic travel create structural changes in the national macroeconomy (through mechanisms of foreign-exchange earnings and domestic capital formation).

Rajasthan is one of the major tourism destinations of India, the sixth-largest destination for foreign tourists and the tenth-largest for domestic tourism. Its diverse terrains, from the Thar Desert to forests, from grasslands to wetlands, support rich biodiversity and sustainable tourism development (Shekhar & Kothari, 2025). Rajasthan, known as the premier "desert state" of India, is reflected in its experience architecture with attractions like the "Palace on Wheels" and celebrations of unique festival heritage. These traditions are strengthening their status as part of the broader growth of the Indian tourism sector (Manglaw *et al.*, 2022). The state introduced its first tourism policy in 1989 and later gained the "industry status" for tourism, leading to a significant shift in government focus toward infrastructure development and supportive policies (Rajasthan Tourism Policy, 2020). This policy reform has been key in achieving an incredible

500 percent increase in visa issuances nationwide (Rajasthan Tourism Policy, 2020). Additionally, the first comprehensive India tourism policy, released in 1989, set a foundational pathway that resulted in issuing 52 million visas by 2018.

The regional economic impacts of tourism are, by nature, multifaceted. Empirical evidence highlights the sector's central role in creating jobs across developing contexts, and tourism accounts for almost 10% of the total employed population in some areas (International Labour Organisation, 2024; Tiwari & Bisen, 2023). Nonetheless, tourism jobs are often seasonal, and underdeveloped infrastructures and places often offset the benefits associated with these. While the tourism multiplier effect in Rajasthan has resulted in increased incomes and improved living standards for local artisans along the Desert Circuit, the positive effects in other areas are relatively modest (Manglaw *et al.*, 2022; Sharma, 2021).

A major issue is over-dependence on tourism, as witnessed during the pandemic, which has left regional economies reliant on such commercial activities and made them especially vulnerable to external shocks in the event of a decline in visitor numbers (Rajasthan Tourism Policy, 2020).

Given Rajasthan's significant potential, a robust econometric analysis is indispensable for accurately measuring the extent of correlation among tourism growth, infrastructure development, and employment distribution across different sub-sectors. Consequently, this research takes an econometric approach to empirically assess the contributions of tourism, active employment, and regional infrastructure improvements, with a view to assisting prospective policy efforts.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic enquiry into tourism is not limited to its contribution to gross domestic product; it also examines its role in altering Rajasthan's regional identity. In districts like Udaipur, the results of a qualitative investigation suggest that the local population sees tourism development as a driving force in the socio-economic modernisation of society. It was documented that significant advancements have been made in infrastructure and transportation accessibility. This observation aligns with region's self-proclaimed "Tourism-Led Growth" narrative which attributes growth and stabilisation directly to a rise in tourist visits (Balaguer & Cantavella, 2002; Roy & Medhekar, 2025). Within the Indian tourism ecosystem, this phenomenon is often called a disguised export, highlighting the economic benefits it generates for the country without producing any tangible goods (Sharma, 2018).

Tourism in Rajasthan provides employment opportunities, both in quantity and quality. In addition, as a necessary safeguard for disenfranchised communities, such as traditional artisans, whose economic resources are under greater pressure in a changing market (Tanwar, 2022). Primary research done on the Dhundhar circuit further shows that tourism-derived employment does not just revolve around job creation, it has an added multiplier effect, which brings about an initiation of a structural shift in the economy or helps in preserving local crafts and maintaining the entrepreneurial spirit especially with the younger generation doing the hospitality and guiding work (Mishra & Goswami, 2024; Skirec, 2024). However, stories show some serious shortcomings. Interviews and perception surveys have identified a dual-faced dimension of seasonality, labelled the "double-edged sword", where winter triggers a peak and economic boom for local communities, while the off-season triggers an economic slump and labour migration (Godara & Dhaker, 2025; Sharma, 2018).

For any rural infrastructure projects, tourism should be considered not only for its economic benefits but also for its political advantages; otherwise, there would be no justification for such projects. Studies conducted on the rural road network and public utilities across Rajasthan suggest that these projects are primarily demand-driven and that people will utilise the services provided, whether they visit the area or reside there.

Improvements have been described in many instances, but, in general, the literature is united in the belief that survival requires overcoming an intractable geographical or spatial bottleneck. As the cities of the so-called Golden Triangle are rapidly modernising, the country's outer belt, the so-called Shekhawati and Hadoti, faces a paradox of modernity: it is bypassed and lacks a structural basis (Parveen, 2018; Tanwar, 2022). Newer research aimed at addressing these inequalities suggests that Agri-Ecotourism and Village Tourism should be a central focus. Simply put, the developmental patterns of Rajasthan need to shift, at most, to an urban perspective,

with a focus on the agrarian tradition and the experiential aspects that could be offered to international travellers (Singh *et al.*, 2025; Tanwar, 2022).

However, the mainstream account remains tainted by serious methodological flaws. The empirical studies conducted through qualitative interviews and perception surveys continue to reaffirm what has been labelled the twin-edged sword of seasonality. Here, a noticeable seasonal peak in the economy is followed by a boom in economic activity and apparent prosperity in local markets, which is later followed by a lean season, triggering financial strain and wage outflows (Godara & Dhaker, 2025).

Research Gap

The current literature on tourism in Rajasthan is mostly based on qualitative research. While the present inquiry examines perception, identity, and sociocultural implications, the econometric treatment is superficial, though the analysis does not conflict with the Tourism-Led Growth postulate. Of particular concern here is that district-level examinations of the role of tourism and its consequent impact on income, employment, and infrastructure are virtually non-existent. There is also a dearth of empirical work relating to spatial discrepancies between the established core circuits and new and peripheral zones. Moreover, there is a lack of clarity regarding the statistical determination of the magnitude and elasticity of the tourist multiplier effects. Consequently, there is a dire need for a detailed econometric study of the contribution of tourism to the economic development of Rajasthan

Research Question

- What is the impact of growing tourism on the income and livelihood diversification of households in various districts of Rajasthan?
- How profound is the impact of employment generated through tourism on the local communities, in terms of economic security, capacity building, and venture creation?
- Is there an economic and market access impact on the rural and fringe communities of Rajasthan as a result of the economic and infrastructure development (roads, transport utilities, etc.) brought by tourism?

Hypotheses

H01: Growing tourism has no significant impact on household income and livelihood diversification in Rajasthan.

H02: Employment created by tourism fails to generate a statistically significant impact on economic stability, skill development, and entrepreneurial opportunities in local communities in Rajasthan.

H03: Infrastructure development guided by tourism fails to show a statistically significant effect on the economic health and infrastructure access of rural and

peripheral communities in Rajasthan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study examines tourism development and its implications for local communities in southern Rajasthan using a cross-sectional, quantitative research design. Data were collected from 150 respondents living in districts affected by tourism using a 5-point Likert scale. According to Halim *et al.* (2022), such a multivariate analytical approach is best suited to social science inquiries of this nature. To achieve representativeness, a multi-stage sampling procedure was used, combining purposive and convenience sampling criteria. Economic stakeholders involved in the tourism sector, such as hospitality, craftsmanship, transportation and guiding services, were intentionally chosen. The influence of tourism in the region was operationalised using the measures of household employment, job security, skill

acquisition, and infrastructural development with the aid of the specified instrument. Projections of the effects of tourism on communities, along with the null hypotheses, were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression models (Balaguer and Cantavella-Jorda, 2002).

H01 Growing Tourism Has No Significant Impact on Household Income and Livelihood Diversification in Rajasthan

Construction of Income Impact Index

To understand the impacts of tourism on household income and the diversification of household income sources, a composite Income Impact Index was created. This index combines three specific indicators of income:

- S19_2: Tourism increased income.
- S19_3: Property values, making housing less affordable.

Table 1: Perceived Economic Impacts of Tourism (Descriptive Statistics)

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourism increased income	2.77	1.011
Property values (housing less affordable)	2.53	1.041
Tourism provided substantial opportunities	2.77	1.006
Composite Income Index	2.69	—

• S19_4: Tourism has provided substantial opportunities. The observed score of 2.69 indicates a moderate perception of tourism’s impact. Since this value is below

the neutral point of 3.00, it suggests that residents recognise some changes affecting the economy but do not currently see tourism as a primary or significant

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Tourism Economic Impact Variables

Correlations		Tourism increased income	Property values, making housing less affordable	Tourism has provided substantial opportunities	Tourist Interaction
Tourism increased income	Pearson Correlation	1	.376**	.489**	.170*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.037
	N	150	150	150	150
Property values, making housing less affordable	Pearson Correlation	.376**	1	.323**	.168*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.039
	N	150	150	150	150
Tourism has provided substantial opportunities	Pearson Correlation	.489**	.323**	1	.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.970
	N	150	150	150	150
Tourist Interaction	Pearson Correlation	.170*	.168*	.003	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.037	.039	.970	
	N	150	150	150	150

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

contributor to livelihood diversification.

Correlation Analysis

It was designed to examine the relationships between different aspects of tourism’s economic impact and direct tourist

interactions using Pearson correlation analysis (see Table 2).

The analysis shows several essential findings:

Internal Consistency

There is a strong positive correlation between the construct of “Tourism increased income” and a response of “Substantial opportunities” by the respondents ($r=.489$, $p < 0.001$), meaning that the higher the respondents’ income from tourism, the more they see opportunities.

Economic Pressure

There is a statistically significant relationship between income growth and property value growth ($r=.376$, $p < .001$). This suggests that the rising economy, driven by tourism revenue, is causing higher living costs, as evidenced by rising real estate prices.

Interaction Dynamics

“Tourist Interaction” shows a weak but statistically significant positive relationship with both increased income ($r = .170$, $p = .037$) and property values ($r = .168$, $p = .039$). On the other hand, its relationship with the provision of “Substantial opportunities” is virtually negligible and statistically non-significant ($r = .003$, $p = .970$).

The statistical evidence is empowering - as with most things. While the correlation matrix shows that tourism

variables are significantly associated with increases in income and property value ($p < .05$), the overall composite mean of 2.69 and the lack of correlation between interaction and long-term “substantial opportunities” ($p = .970$) suggest that the impact has yet to become transformative. Consequently, the null hypothesis is partly rejected; tourism does have an impact on income, but it is limited, confined to the diversified livelihoods in the area under study.

H02 Employment Created by Tourism Fails to Create a Statistically Significant Impact on Economic Stability, Skill Development, And Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Local Communities in Rajasthan Construction of Employment Index

To assess the role of tourism in job creation and improvements in living standards, a composite index, the Employment Impact Index, was developed. The index combines three different measurements related to employment:

- S19_1 Employment opportunities for locals
- S19_8 Tourism promoted skill-based education and training

Table 3: Perceived Employment Impacts of Tourism (Descriptive Statistics)

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employment opportunities for locals	2.51	1.079
Tourism promoted skill-based education and training	2.71	0.973
Employment opportunities in tourism	2.77	0.999
Composite Employment Impact Index	2.66	—

- S19_8 Employment opportunities in tourism
- Correlation Analysis**

The Pearson correlation matrix shows a strong understanding of tourist interactions, with tangible

Table 4: Correlation Matrix of Tourism and Employment Impact Variables

Correlations		Tourist Interaction	Employment opportunities for locals	Tourism promoted skill-based education and training	Employment opportunities in tourism
Tourist Interaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.137	.114	.181*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.095	.166	.026
	N	150	150	150	150
Employment opportunities for locals	Pearson Correlation	.137	1	.264**	.322**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.095		.001	.000
	N	150	150	150	150
Tourism promoted skill-based education and training	Pearson Correlation	.114	.264**	1	.433**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.166	.001		.000
	N	150	150	150	150
Employment opportunities in tourism	Pearson Correlation	.181*	.322**	.433**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	.000	.000	
	N	150	150	150	150

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

outcomes and employment benefits.

Key Statistical Findings

Interaction and General Employment

The results of the analysis show a weak but statistically significant positive relationship between direct interaction by tourists and opportunities for employment in the tourism industry ($r=0.181$, $p=0.026$).

The Skill Development Gap

Notably, tourist interaction is not statistically significantly linked with employment opportunities for local people ($r = .095$) or the promotion of skill-based education and training ($p = .166$).

Internal Synergy

A strong, highly significant relationship is observed between skill-based education and tourism employment opportunities ($r = .433$, $p < .001$), indicating that while the interaction is not enough by itself to develop skills, education is a key factor in securing jobs in the sector. The study does not reject the null hypothesis. Although interaction with tourism is significantly correlated with overall employment availability ($p < .05$), the lack of statistically significant relationships with local employment access ($p = .095$) and skill development

($p = .166$) indicates that the influence is not yet transformative for the local labor market. The relatively low composite mean of 2.66 further supports the idea that tourism primarily serves as a stimulus for professional diversification, making it a secondary rather than a primary source of livelihood.

H03: Infrastructure Development Guided by Tourism Fails to Show a Statistically Significant Effect on the Economic Health and Infrastructure Access of Rural and Peripheral Communities in Rajasthan Construction of the Infrastructure Development Index

To study the impacts of tourism on infrastructure development and environmental management in the local communities, a composite Infrastructure Development Index was developed. This index incorporates four indicators relating to infrastructure:

- S19_5 Tourism revenue supports the development of basic infrastructure
- S19_11 The government has effectively used revenue to improve beautification and community services
- S19_13 Destination development improved waste management
- S19_15 Balance between development and

Table 5: Perceived Infrastructure Development Impacts of Tourism (Descriptive Statistics)

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourism revenue supports the development of basic infrastructure	150	2.87	1.051
The government has effectively used revenue to improve beautification and community services	150	2.85	1.006
Destination development improved waste management	150	2.67	1.026
Balance between development and conservation efforts	150	2.85	1.047
Composite Infrastructure Development Index	150	2.81	—

conservation efforts

The composite Infrastructure Development Index score of 2.81 indicates a moderate perception of tourism’s contribution to infrastructure and environmental management. While the score is close to the neutral mark of 3.00, slight underperformance suggests that residents recognize certain improvements in

infrastructure, beautification, waste management, and conservation efforts. However, tourism has not yet been widely recognized as a strong force in promoting comprehensive infrastructure development or in ensuring the balance of environmental resources within Rajasthan’s local cultures.

Table 6: Correlation Matrix of Tourism Interaction and Infrastructure Development Variables

Correlations		Tourist Interaction	Tourism revenue supports the development of basic infrastructure	The government has effectively used revenue to improve beautification and community services	Destination development improved waste management	Balance between development and conservation efforts
Tourist Interaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.108	.000	.033	-.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.187	1.000	.689	.972
	N	150	150	150	150	150

Tourism revenue supports the development of basic infrastructure	Pearson Correlation	.108	1	.465**	.540**	.421**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.187		.000	.000	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150
The government has effectively used revenue to improve beautification and community services	Pearson Correlation	.000	.465**	1	.480**	.539**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150
Destination development improved waste management	Pearson Correlation	.033	.540**	.480**	1	.459**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.689	.000	.000		.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150
Balance between development and conservation efforts	Pearson Correlation	-.003	.421**	.539**	.459**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.972	.000	.000	.000	
	N	150	150	150	150	150

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

Correlation Analysis

Key Statistical Findings

Insignificant Correlation with Basic Infrastructure

Statistical analysis showed that tourist interaction and development of basic infrastructure were not significantly correlated ($r = .108$, $p = .187$), implying that the rise in tourism is not connected with improved access to infrastructure.

Zero Correlation with Community Services

There was an absolute zero correlation ($r = .000$, $p = 1.000$) between Tourist Interaction and the effective use of revenue for beautification and community services.

Environmental Management Gap

No statistically significant relationship was found for tourism activity and gains in waste management ($p=.689$), nor the conservation/development balance ($p=.972$).

Internal Consistency of Infrastructure

Although tourism interaction does not seem to drive these changes, by a high level of intercorrelation ($p < .001$), variables of development seem to be supported by central planning mechanisms rather than “guided” by tourism volume.

Based on the empirical evidence from the correlation matrix, the null hypothesis is not rejected. The data results show that there is no statistically significant relationship between tourist activity and perceived improvements in local infrastructure or community services.

Discussion

The conclusion of an empirical study reveals a clear disconnect between macro-level tourism growth and micro-level community prosperity in Rajasthan. This results in a supplementary livelihoods approach to tourism today, rather than viewing it as a primary engine of economic transformation. The average score of 2.69 on the Income Impact Index aligns with the framework proposed by Tao and Wall (2009). Although tourism provides a secondary source of income, it is insufficient

to transform traditional household structures, especially because its impact is often diminished by economic pressures such as rising property values ($r = 3.76$, $p < .001$), as discussed by Andereick and Jurowski (2006). Additionally, the non-significant rejection of hypothesis H02 highlights a missed opportunity, showing no statistically significant link between tourist interactions and skill development ($p = .166$). This indicates that residents are mostly confined to low-level jobs, while external stakeholders hold high-value positions, a structural barrier identified by Bhardwaj *et al.* (2022). This stagnation in professional growth is reinforced by H03’s findings, which reveal no correlation ($r = 0.000$) between tourist interaction and the equitable distribution of tourism revenue for community services. As a result, improvements in infrastructure assets are mainly determined by strategic planning rather than the scale of tourist inflows. Empirical data further suggest that mere exposure to tourism does not necessarily lead to superior skill development, increased occupational security, or greater access to infrastructure. Community participation plays a vital role in promoting socio-economic sustainability in tourism development (Escamir & Hinlayagan, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The net economic consequences of tourism growth in Rajasthan can be seen at the macroeconomic level; however, at the household level, the impacts are significantly reduced, if even visible. Regarding income streams and livelihood diversification, tourism appears to be a supplementary source of income, with no discernible restructuring towards a diversified, resilient livelihood portfolio. The employment opportunities inspired by the tourism industry provide employment to the local population and foster the development of local skills; however, its contribution to economic security, vertical economic growth, entrepreneurial development, and complex education is limited.

Such impacts more often rely on formal training mechanisms rather than on exposure to tourism activities

alone. Additionally, despite infrastructural upgrades, including roads, transport systems, and public services, which have increased access to markets and economic linkages in rural and frontier districts, this has not led to greater economic integration or empowerment of local populations. Therefore, the evidence suggests that tourism alone is insufficient to trigger significant economic development in Rajasthan. The current tourism development approach in the state lacks the necessary institutional support, skills development, and targeted initiatives needed for equitable economic growth. However, Rajasthan has the potential to advance along the path of economic development across all communities involved in tourism.

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