

Attitude of Locals Towards Increasing Massive Tourists' Footfall in Varanasi

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Abstract

The current research investigated how the locals are feeling about the rising tourist traffic in Varanasi, particularly in terms of perceived economic, lifestyle-related and cultural effects of tourism development. The descriptive and analytical research design was chosen and primary data were obtained through a structured questionnaire among 200 local residents according to the five-point Likert scale. The proposed hypotheses were tested by a correlation analysis by Pearson. The results showed that the interest of the local residents was mostly positive towards the growth of tourism because they understood that it led to economic growth, creation of jobs, development of infrastructure and promotion of culture. Nevertheless, issues connected with increased cost of living, congestion, disruption of life style and cultural commercialization were also noticeable. The test of hypotheses proved that the perceived economic, lifestyle-related and cultural effects of tourism were statistically significantly associated with the attitudes of residents, with the strongest effect of the economic one. The paper came to a conclusion that the growth of tourism in Varanasi was mostly supported by the populations but on the basis of equal sharing of the benefits, proper management of the negative effects, and maintenance of the cultural authenticity. The results highlight the significance of the sustainable and community-based tourism planning in the heritage and pilgrimage sites.

Keywords: Tourism growth, Local residents' attitudes, Tourist footfall, Economic and cultural impacts, Lifestyle impacts, Varanasi

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has come out as a powerful source of economic, cultural and urban change in heritage cities worldwide (Kumar & Bandaru, 2019). Varanasi is one of the largest religious, cultural, and historical sites in India, which has experienced a significant rise in the tourist traffic over the last few years. Although tourism development leads to creation of job, better infrastructure, advancement of cultural heritage, and cultural tourism development has its own problems which include overcrowding, increase in the cost of living, disruption of lifestyle, and commercialization of culture (Tobar & Ramshaw, 2022). Since the local residents are the direct beneficiaries of these changes, their perception towards advancing tourism is very important in deciding the sustainability of tourism development (Edensor et al., 2021). Perceptions of the locals are therefore crucial in a balanced tourism planning. In this regard, the present study will examine how the local population perceives the trend of the rising tourist arrival at Varanasi regarding the perceived economic, lifestyle-based and cultural impacts of the tourism development (Máté & Kajos, 2023).

1.1. Background of the study

Varanasi is one of the oldest constantly inhabited cities in the world, which has a significant religious, cultural, and historical value, where millions of national and international tourists visit annually (Oliveira et al., 2021). In recent decades, there has been a booming growth in tourism in the city as a result of increased connectivity, government sponsored tourism promotion programs, as well as development of infrastructure. This influx of tourists has resulted in significant shifts in the economic system, the urban landscape, social life and culture in the city (Rookwood, 2024). As much as tourism has provided people with livelihood opportunities and increased awareness of the heritage of Varanasi to the rest of the world, it has also increased the strain on the local resources, open spaces and traditional lifestyles. The changing conditions present the necessity to learn how the local people perceive and react to the rise in tourism since their attitude is the key to the sustainability prospects of tourism development, as well as its societal acceptability in Varanasi (Obradović et al., 2022).

1.2. Significance of the Study

The significance of the study at hand is that it targets the behavior of the locals towards the increased number of tourists visiting Varanasi which is a fast-changing city as a result of tourism (Weber et al., 2022). The research provides useful data to the policy makers, urban planners and tourism managers to come up with policies that would balance the needs of the tourism development and the community to have a sustainable tourist industry that would not jeopardize the interests of the residents (Mabon, 2023). Its findings can be used to optimize the benefits areas and reduce the adverse effects of tourism which will enable tourism to develop sustainably and inclusively. Further, the research also contributes into the prevailing body of literature on tourism by offering empirical data on one of the top heritage and religious tourism destinations in India, which explores the importance of the local perceptions in enhancing the sustainability of the tourism in the long term (Milićević et al., 2020).

1.3. Research Objectives

- To assess the overall attitude of local residents of Varanasi towards the increasing tourist footfall.
- To investigate how locals view the financial effects (revenue and expenses) of increased tourism.
- To analyze perceived lifestyle-related conveniences and inconveniences caused by tourism growth.
- To investigate how locals view the influence of tourism on cultural practices at the local level.
- To examine the connection between residents' perceptions of the economic, lifestyle, and cultural effects of tourism and their views on its expansion.

1.4. Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

- **H₀**: There is no significant relationship between perceived economic impacts of tourism and locals' attitude towards increasing tourist footfall.
- **H₀₁**: Perceived economic benefits of tourism and residents' attitudes toward attracting more tourists are significantly correlated.

Hypothesis 2

- **H₁₀**: Locals' attitudes toward more tourists are not significantly correlated with perceived lifestyle-related impacts.
- **H₁₁**: Perceived lifestyle-related impacts and communities' attitudes toward attracting more tourists are significantly correlated.

Hypothesis 3

- **H₂₀**: There is no discernible correlation between residents' attitudes about attracting more tourists and how they perceive the cultural effects of tourism.
- **H₂₁**: Locals' attitudes about attracting more tourists and their perceptions of the cultural effects of tourism are significantly correlated.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gautam (2023) investigated the determinants of the positive perception of sustainable tourism development by the local residents and discovered that the attitude of the residents was greatly conditioned by the perceived economic gains, social welfare, and sustainability in the long term. In the study, it was highlighted that the greater residents were able to perceive tourism as positively influencing local development and quality of life, the more they used to support the growth of tourism. The results emphasized the need to integrate the local views in the planning of tourism to make sure that the communities embraced it and that it developed in a sustainable manner, which gives a good theoretical basis on research on attitudes based on tourism (Gautam, 2023).

Ramkisson (2023) presented an idea of a conceptual framework of connection between

perceived social effects of tourism and the quality of life among residents and their general attitudes to tourism development. The paper displayed that economic prospects, social engagements, and change of the lifestyle together affected the perceptions of the residents and support of their perception towards tourism. This finding highlighted that economic aspects did not entirely define the attitude of residents but instead it was a composite of the social and overall lifestyle aspect which supported the idea of multidimensional evaluation of tourism effects (Ramkissoon, 2023).

Kumar Prasad and Datta (2025) investigated the relationship between perceived tourism effects, quality of life, community attachment and tourism development support in a community perspective. They discovered that these optimistic attitudes on the economic and social benefits of tourism enhanced the quality of life of the people and in the process, this enhanced their encouragement of further development of tourism. The research proved the mediating role played by quality of life and community attachment where the attitude of the residents towards tourism was dictated by the material benefits and emotional attachment to the community (Kumar Prasad & Datta, 2025).

Das and Sharma (2009) evaluated the effects of tourism development in Varanasi in the eyes of local tourism businesses and concluded that tourism had played a significant role in the city in terms of income generation and creation of employment. Nevertheless, the paper also noted other issues due to the pressure on infrastructure, congestion, and disproportionate benefits distribution. Even though the case under study was centered on the tourism stakeholders, instead of residents, the findings thereof created a very context-specific evaluation of the economical and operational impacts of tourism development in Varanasi that can still be used to explain the local perception (Das & Sharma, 2009).

Velinov, Dhiraj, Kumar, and Rani (2024) surveyed the attitudes of residents to the development of tourism in the Buddhist circuit of India and discovered that the positive aspects of tourism development included economic prospects, cultural exposure and infrastructural development. Meanwhile, the issues of overcrowding and commercialisation of culture were noted among the members of the local communities. The paper found that the favorable attitude of residents towards tourism development was based on the balance between the perceived benefits and costs, and provided empirical findings in an Indian setting, which was very close to the goals of the current study (Velinov et al., 2024).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current research was carried out in order to explore the perception of the local residents with regard to the growing tourist traffic in Varanasi, with special reference to the perceived economic, lifestyle, and cultural effects of the tourism development. The systematic and empirical research methodology was taken to guarantee reliability and validity of the results.

3.1. Research Design

The purpose of this study was to look into how the locals feel about the growing number of tourists in Varanasi and how they feel about the effects of this trend on their economy, way of life, and culture. It used a methodical and empirical approach to research to guarantee that the results were reliable and valid.

3.2. Sources of Data Collection

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of information.

- Primary data: Individuals residing in Varanasi were surveyed using a standardized questionnaire in order to get primary data.
- The secondary data was gathered in the form of published research articles, books, government publications, publications by the tourism department and similar online databases to assist in the conceptual framework of the research.

3.3. Primary Data Collection Instrument

The structured questionnaire was based on the five-point Likert scale with Strongly Disagree

(S.D) (1) and Strongly Agree (S.A) (5) as the opposite ends.

The survey was divided into four parts that were used to measure:

- Attitude towards increasing tourist footfall
- Perceived economic impacts
- Perceived lifestyle-related impacts
- Perceived cultural impacts

The instrument was maintained short to ensure that the respondents were not overworked and it was still able to cover the important dimensions of perceptions.

3.4. Population of the Study

The research sample was composed of the local people of the city of Varanasi; the local people who were residing in the locality and were directly or indirectly involved in the tourism activities.

3.5. Sampling Area

The sampling region encompassed localities of Varanasi of choice especially in places of intense tourist presence and contact between the residents and the tourists.

3.6. Sampling Unit

The study sampling unit was individual residents of Varanasi.

3.7. Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling method was used because of the availability of respondents and lack of time. The respondents were also chosen according to their availability and readiness to take part in the research.

3.8. Sample Size

The study involved 200 respondents as the size of the sample. The sample size used was found to be sufficient to perform statistical analysis and test the hypotheses put forward.

3.9. Variables Used Under the Study

- **Dependent Variable:**
 - Attitude of local residents towards increasing tourist footfall
- **Independent Variables:**
 - Perceived economic impacts of tourism
 - Perceived lifestyle-related impacts of tourism
 - Perceived cultural impacts of tourism

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The section will provide the analysis and interpretation of information gathered among the locals of Varanasi to assess their views on the growing tourist influx. Due to the research objectives and hypotheses, the data were systematically coded, tabulated, and analyzed with the help of appropriate statistical techniques. The discussion is aimed at the perceptions of the residents about the economic, lifestyle-related, and cultural effects of tourism and the connection of these perceptions with the general attitudes towards tourism growth. The findings are interpreted to obtain meaningful results and to assist in making empirical conclusions of the study.

4.1. Demographic Analysis

The socio-demographic features of the respondents should be understood to put into perspective their attitudes and perceptions towards tourism expansion. The section familiarizes the demographic profile of the sampled locals of Varanasi, which provides the background of the different parameters in terms of gender, age, education, occupation and time of residence.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	118	59.0%
	Female	82	41.0%
Age Group (Years)	Below 25	38	19.0%

	25-40	76	38.0%
	41-55	54	27.0%
	Above 55	32	16.0%
Educational Qualification	Up to Higher Secondary	44	22.0%
	Graduate	96	48.0%
	Postgraduate & above	60	30.0%
Occupation	Business / Self-employed	62	31.0%
	Service / Salaried	54	27.0%
	Tourism-related occupation	48	24.0%
	Others	36	18.0%
Length of Residence	Less than 5 years	28	14.0%
	5-10 years	52	26.0%
	More than 10 years	120	60.0%

The demographics is well balanced, with the respondents being evenly spread in terms of gender and age, with most of them being members of the economically active citizens. A large percentage of the respondents were the graduates or postgraduates indicating that they had sufficient awareness and could assess the impacts on tourism. Occupational distribution displays significant presence of tourism related industries and the business sectors showing direct exposure to tourism activities. Additionally, most of the respondents had lived in Varanasi over a period of ten years, which means that the information was not based on newly acquired perceptions and attitudes with regard to the changes in tourist footfall. This age group served as a sound foundation on which to assess the attitude of local residents in terms of growing tourism in Varanasi.

4.2. Survey Analysis

Section A: Attitude Towards Increasing Tourist Footfall

This part was intended to evaluate the general opinion of the local residents on the growth in tourist numbers in Varanasi and how they felt tourism growth was beneficial.

Table 2: I support the increasing number of tourists visiting Varanasi

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S. D	14	7.0%
D	26	13.0%
N	38	19.0%
A	74	37.0%
S. A	48	24.0%
Total	200	100.0%

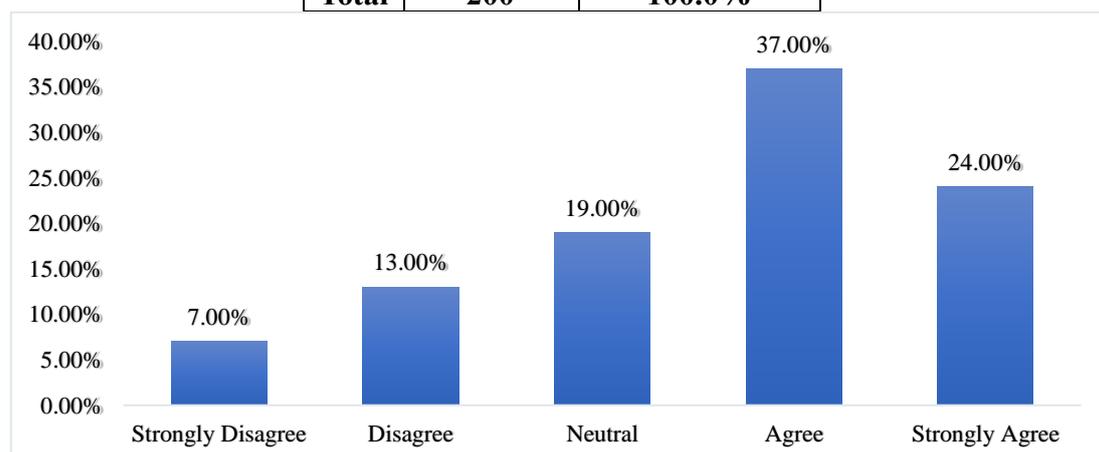


Figure 1: Visual Representation of I support the increasing number of tourists visiting Varanasi

Table 2 clearly shows that most locals were in favor of increasing the number of tourists visiting Varanasi. Overall, 61% of people who took the survey felt positively about the increasing number of tourists strolling about the neighborhood. On the other hand, 19% of respondents were neutral and 5% were not agreeing, indicating that a sizeable portion of the population is ambivalent or reservational. In general, the results indicate that despite the predominance of the local support of further tourism development, some concerns of the minority of residents also exist and should not be neglected.

Table 3: Tourism growth is beneficial for the overall development of Varanasi

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S. D	10	5.0%
D	22	11.0%
N	34	17.0%
A	82	41.0%
S. A	52	26.0%
Total	200	100.0%

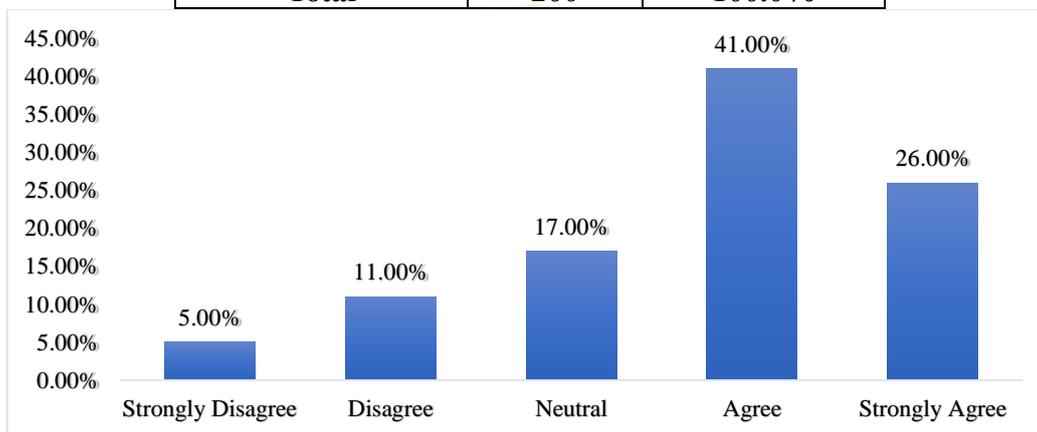


Figure 2: Visual Representation of Tourism growth is beneficial for the overall development of Varanasi

Table 3 indicates that the tourism development is of extreme importance to the local residents as far as the development of Varanasi in general is concerned. Nearly two-thirds (67 percent) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement and this indicates that they firmly believed the developmental role of tourism. Conversely, 16 percent of respondents differed and 17 percent adopted neutral views indicating that there were mixed perceptions amongst some residents. According to the results, tourism is generally considered to be a spur to development but the benefits are not realized by all members of the local population with a positive perception.

Section B: Perceived Economic Impacts of Tourism

This part was to analyze the perceptions of the local residents to the economic effects of tourism especially to the generation of income, increase or decrease of employment opportunities and how the living cost changed.

Table 4: Tourism has increased income and employment opportunities for local residents

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S. D	12	6.0%
D	24	12.0%
N	30	15.0%
A	86	43.0%
S. A	48	24.0%
Total	200	100.0%

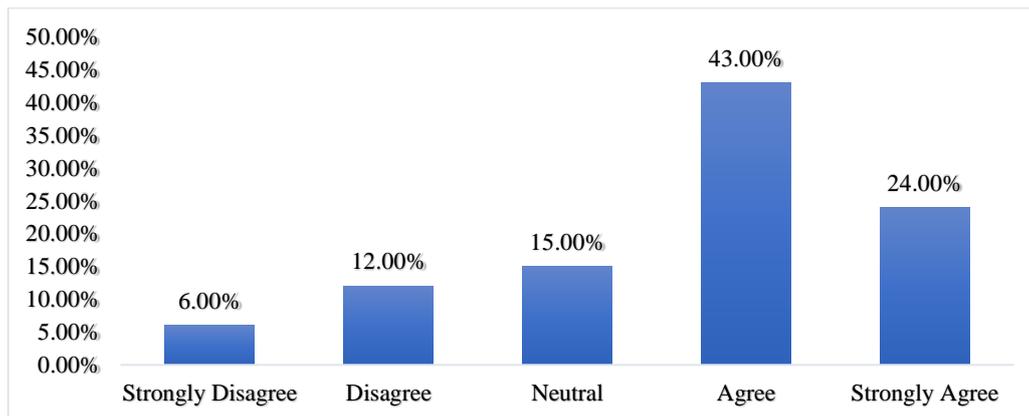


Figure 3: Visual Representation of Tourism has increased income and employment opportunities for local residents

Table 4 shows that significant number of local residents viewed tourism as good income generator and employment earner in Varanasi. Most of the respondents (67 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that tourism had brought more income and job opportunities, which showed a relatively positive economic outlook. The percentage of those who disagreed was only 18 percent, and 15 percent of the respondents were neutral, which indicates that even though the majority of the residents realized those economic advantages, a smaller proportion of them did not actually feel the advantages or were not sure of the effects. Generally, the results indicate that tourism is perceived as a significant economic activity by the locals.

Table 5: The economic benefits of tourism outweigh the increase in living expenses for locals

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S. D	22	11.0%
D	38	19.0%
N	44	22.0%
A	62	31.0%
S. A	34	17.0%
Total	200	100.0%

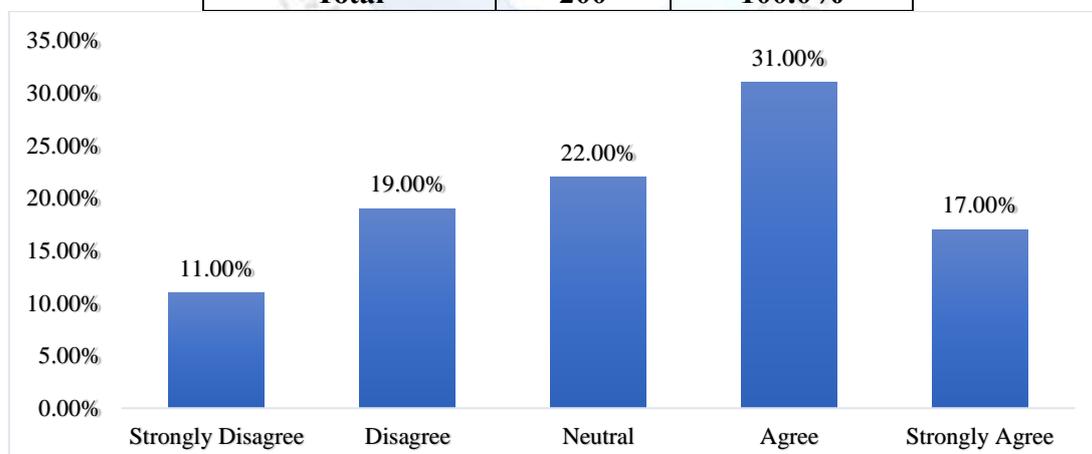


Figure 4: Visual Representation of the economic benefits of tourism outweigh the increase in living expenses for locals

Table 5 indicates a more ambivalent attitude towards the question whether the financial merits of tourism are more than the related rise in the cost of living. Although a large percentage (48) of those interviewed said that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, a significant percentage (30) disagreed and 22 percent said that they were neutral. Such distribution implies that despite the fact that many of the residents recognized net economic benefits of tourism, a

significant part of the population continued to be anxious about increasing costs of living. The fact that there are significant neutral and dissenting reactions shows that the economic gains might not be distributed uniformly among the local residents and affect the perceptions of the overall economic effects of tourism.

Section C: Perceived Lifestyle-Related Impacts

The section was dedicated to the perception of the residents about the lifestyle-related changes caused by the influx of tourists, both beneficial and adverse ones, such as infrastructure improvement and negative impacts on the daily life.

Table 6: Tourism has improved infrastructure and public facilities in Varanasi

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S. D	8	4.0%
D	18	9.0%
N	32	16.0%
A	88	44.0%
S. A	54	27.0%
Total	200	100.0%

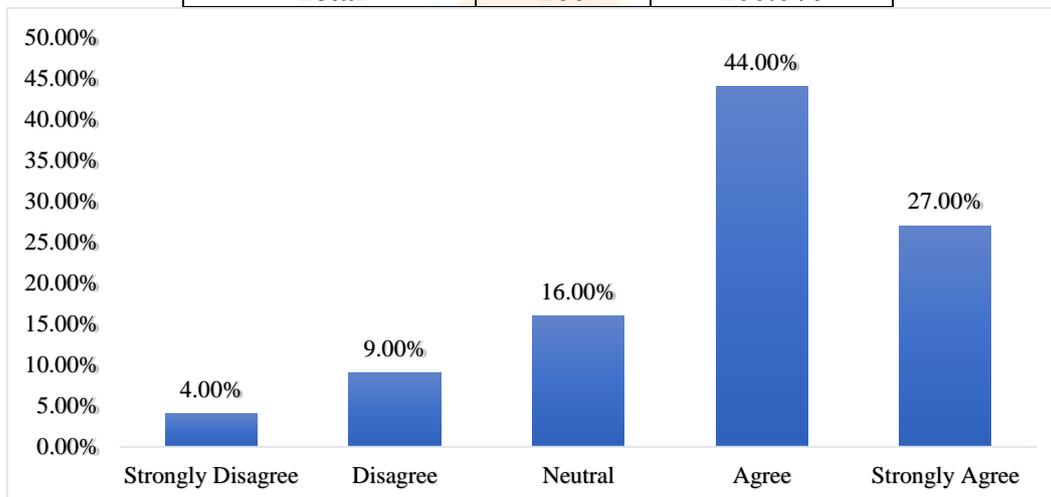


Figure 5: Visual Representation of Tourism has improved infrastructure and public facilities in Varanasi

Table 6 indicates that the impact of tourism development on Varanasi on the local residents is rather positive in terms of the attitude to the development of infrastructure and social facilities. A strong proportion of the respondents reported having concurred with it, which implies that an increased number of persons (tourists) have contributed towards the betterment of roads, social amenities and services offered in the urban areas. The fact that the degree of disagreement is fairly low suggests that it is not that difficult to oppose the development of infrastructure associated with the tourism industry. Comprehensively, conclusions indicate that tourism is to a large extent considered a factor that leads to infrastructural improvement in the city.

Table 7: Increased tourist footfall disrupts the daily life of local residents due to crowding and congestion

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S. D	20	10.0%
D	34	17.0%
N	36	18.0%
A	70	35.0%
S. A	40	20.0%
Total	200	100.0%

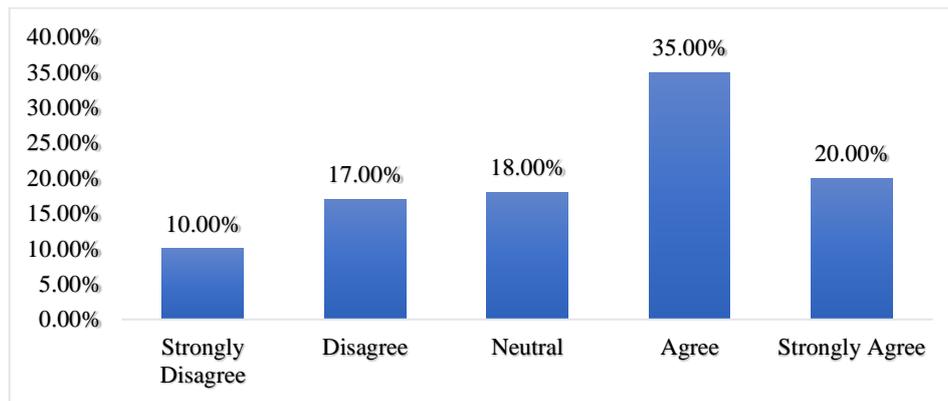


Figure 6: Visual Representation of Increased tourist footfall disrupts the daily life of local residents due to crowding and congestion

Table 7 indicates that a significant number of the respondents felt the augmented tourist traffic to be annoying to life because of crowding and congestion. Although some part of the population felt no major disruption, the levels of agreement were much higher, which shows that the problem of traffic, overcrowded social places, and overburdened local infrastructure are quite significant. The neutral responses indicate that there are mixed experiences among residents which implies that lifestyle dislocations do exist alongside the gratifications of tourism expansion.

Section D: Perceived Cultural Impacts

This part aimed at understanding how the local people felt about tourism and the impact it has on the cultural heritage, the way of life of the locals and the possibility of commercializing the local culture.

Table 8: Tourism helps in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Varanasi

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S. D	12	6.0%
D	20	10.0%
N	30	15.0%
A	84	42.0%
S. A	54	27.0%
Total	200	100.0%

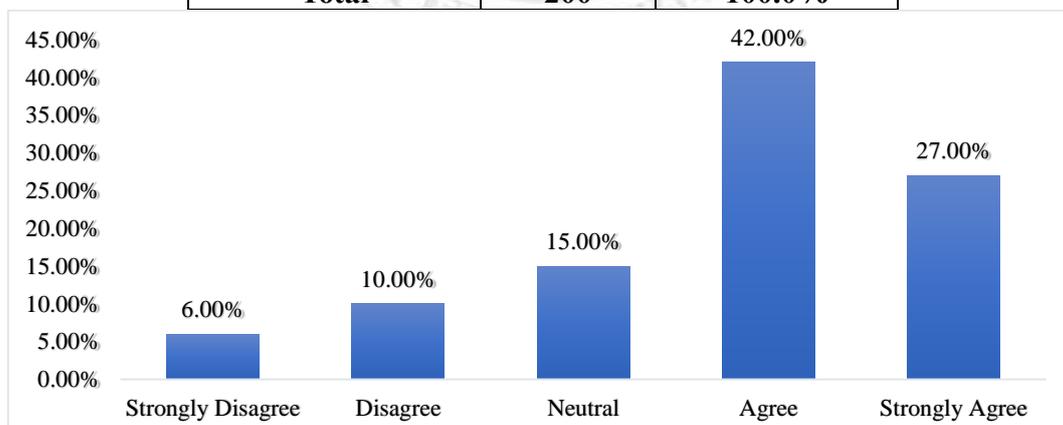


Figure 7: Visual Representation of Tourism helps in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Varanasi

Table 8 also shows that a significant share of the respondents considered that tourism is positively contributing to the conservation and exposure of the cultural history of Varanasi. The respondents, in their turn, responded to the statement that 69 per cent agreed or strongly agreed

that tourism growth is associated with its higher visibility, protection, and appreciation of cultural and heritage assets. Nevertheless, 15 per cent of the participants were neutral, and a lesser proportion (16 per cent) disagreed, showing that the cultural impact of tourism does not have a positive effect on all inhabitants. On the whole, the results are a fairly positive view of the role of tourism in cultural preservation.

Table 9: Increased tourism leads to commercialization and dilution of local culture

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
S. D	18	9.0%
D	28	14.0%
N	42	21.0%
A	68	34.0%
S. A	44	22.0%
Total	200	100.0%

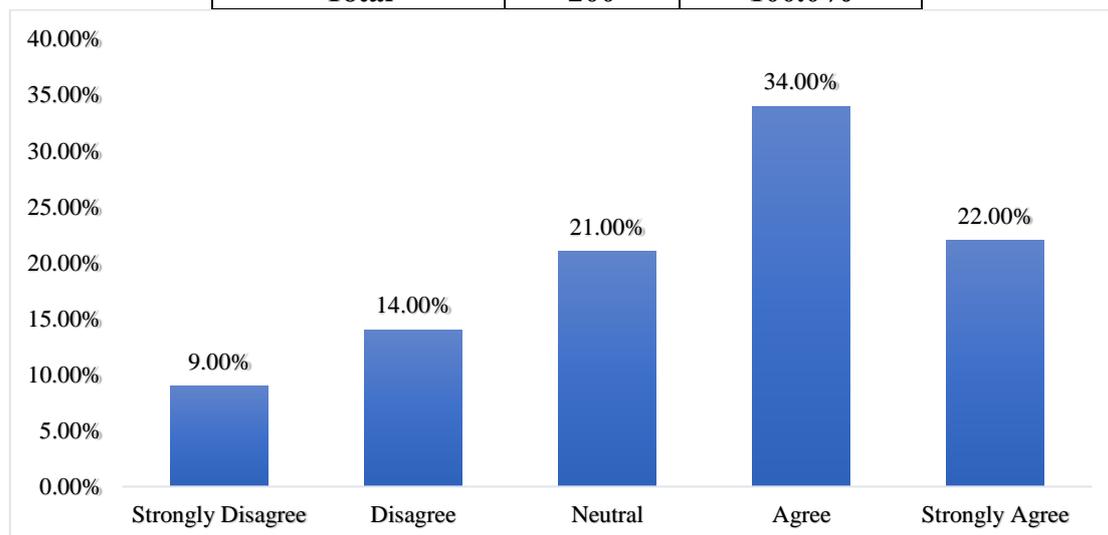


Figure 8: Visual Representation of Tourism helps in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Varanasi

Table 9 shows a more fragmented opinion among the local residents on the negative cultural implications of tourism. Though, 56 per cent of the respondents either agreed or confirmed that more tourism contributes to the commercialization and dilution of local culture, 23 per cent of the respondent's expressed disagreement with the same, and 21 per cent expressed no. Such distribution implies that despite the well-known and commonly recognized cultural advantages of tourism, a good percentage of inhabitants has been worrying about the possible loss and commodification of customary cultural practices. The findings reveal a deeper cultural conflict that exists to go with the development of tourism in Varanasi.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

In order to determine the connection between the perceived effects of tourism and the attitude of Varanasi residents towards the growing number of visitors, this section will include statistical tests of the postulated hypotheses. To determine the strength and significance of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, Pearson used correlation analysis. A significance level of 5% was used for the hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis 1: Relationship between Perceived Economic Impacts of Tourism and Locals' Attitude

- **H₀**: There is no significant relationship between perceived economic impacts of tourism and locals' attitude towards increasing tourist footfall.
- **H₀₁**: Perceived economic benefits of tourism and residents' attitudes toward attracting more tourists are significantly correlated.

Table 10: Correlation between Economic Impacts and Attitude towards Tourism Growth

Variables	Attitude towards Increasing Tourist Footfall	Perceived Economic Impacts
Attitude towards Increasing Tourist Footfall	1	.462**
Perceived Economic Impacts	.462**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000
N	200	200

Findings demonstrate a fairly favorable correlation between residents' perceptions of the economic effects of tourism and their attitudes towards increasing visitor numbers ($r = 0.462$). The correlation was shown to be statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$). As a result, we accepted the alternative hypothesis ($H_0 1$) and rejected the null hypothesis (H_0). This suggests that optimistic views of the economy significantly influence attitudes toward tourism expansion.

Hypothesis 2: Relationship between Perceived Lifestyle-Related Impacts and Locals' Attitude

- **H1₀**: Locals' attitudes toward more tourists are not significantly correlated with perceived lifestyle-related impacts.
- **H1₁**: Perceived lifestyle-related impacts and communities' attitudes toward attracting more tourists are significantly correlated.

Table 11: Correlation between Lifestyle-Related Impacts and Attitude towards Tourism Growth

Variables	Attitude towards Increasing Tourist Footfall	Perceived Lifestyle Impacts
Attitude towards Increasing Tourist Footfall	1	.318**
Perceived Lifestyle Impacts	.318**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000
N	200	200

According to Table 11, the perceived effects of lifestyle and the attitude of locals towards drawing more tourists have a favorable but relatively weak link ($r = 0.318$). A significance level of 0.01 was used to determine the association. That being the case, we accept H_1 and reject H_0 as the null hypothesis. Improvements to the infrastructure and everyday difficulties are two lifestyle-related elements that contribute to the creation of the attitude of the people towards tourist growth.

Hypothesis 3: Relationship between Perceived Cultural Impacts of Tourism and Locals' Attitude

- **H2₀**: There is no discernible correlation between residents' attitudes about attracting more tourists and how they perceive the cultural effects of tourism.
- **H2₁**: Locals' attitudes about attracting more tourists and their perceptions of the cultural effects of tourism are significantly correlated.

Table 12: Correlation between Cultural Impacts and Attitude towards Tourism Growth

Variables	Attitude towards Increasing Tourist Footfall	Perceived Cultural Impacts
Attitude towards Increasing Tourist Footfall	1	.274**
Perceived Cultural Impacts	.274**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000
N	200	200

The results show that residents' attitudes regarding the increase of tourist traffic are positively correlated with their perceptions of the cultural impacts of tourism ($r = 0.274$). With a significance level below 0.01, we can reject the null hypothesis (H2) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H2.1). Based on these findings, it may be inferred that cultural considerations, such as preservation and commercialization concerns, greatly influence how locals feel about the expansion of tourism.

5. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This part contains the key results of the research based on the analysis and interpretation of primary data, in direct proportion with the identified research objectives and hypotheses. It also concludes the general findings of the research and makes conclusions about the local resident's attitude towards the possibility to enhance tourist traffic in Varanasi according to the main empirical results.

5.1. Findings

The study results are made based on the analysis and interpretation of the primary data gathered among the people of Varanasi as the primary inhabitants. The findings are categorized in relation to the research objectives and indicate the attitude and the perception of the resident's vis-a-vis the rising number of tourists in the city.

1. The analysis indicated that the local people in the city of Varanasi are mostly positive towards the growth of tourists. Most of the individual who responded supported the growth of tourism and thought that it was positive in terms of general development of the city.
2. On the issue of economic effects, the majority of the respondents understood tourism as a major income earner and source of employment. Nevertheless, the attitudes to the issue of whether economic gains prevail over increasing living costs were ambivalent, which implies the concerns of unequal distribution of economic returns of tourism.
3. Regarding the effects of tourism in lifestyle, the tourism was generally seen to have led to better infrastructure and facilities that were accessible to the citizens. Simultaneously, a significant percentage of the population mentioned disturbances in the everyday routine because of crowding and congestion, which indicates the simultaneous occurrence of the positive and negative effects on the lifestyle.
4. The results regarding cultural influences were connected with two-sided views of residents. Although, most of the respondents thought of tourism as a boon in the preservation and promotion of culture, a good number of them also raised the issue of commercialization and dilution of local culture due to over-tourism.
5. The results of hypothesis testing were confirmed to show that economic, lifestyle-related, and cultural effects of tourism were significantly correlated with the attitudes of locals towards the upsurge in the number of tourists. Among them, economic impacts had the best correlation with attitudes of the residents, then there were lifestyle and cultural impacts.

5.2. Conclusion

The current research has explored the perception of residents in Varanasi on the issue of growing footfall of tourists by assessing economic, lifestyle related, and cultural effects of tourist growth. The results show that although tourism has been received generally well by the people in the vicinity because of its developmental and economic positive impacts, it also has raised an issue of escalating living expenses, changes in lifestyle and commercialization of the culture.

On the whole, the attitude of residents towards the growth of tourism was established to be mostly positive but conditional and depended on the balance of perceived advantages and costs. The results of the strong connection observed among the perceived tourism impacts and attitude of the residents towards the perceived tourism impacts highlight the role of inclusive and sustainable tourism planning. The policy-makers and the tourism department should thus aim at providing equitable economic gains, controlling the crowding and strain of infrastructure as

well as protecting cultural authenticity to maintain local proposal to tourism growth in Varanasi.

The paper adds to the knowledge of the host community perceptions in heritage and pilgrimage sites and offers valuable implications in terms of managing the growth of tourism in a culturally aware and socially sustainable manner.

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