

Development of Sustainable Tourism through Community Engagement and Local Economic Empowerment Initiatives

Kavita, Dr¹, Doreshor Khwairakpam²

¹Research Scholar, Amity School of Architecture and Planning Amity University, Haryana,
kavita.pahwa2007@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Amity School of Architecture and Planning Amity University,
Haryana, doreshorek@gmail.com

Abstract

Sustainable tourism has emerged as a key strategy to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between economic development, environmental protection, and social welfare in tourism destinations. The present study investigates the importance of Community Participation and Local Economy Development (CED) programs in the sustainable tourism development in the area of Loktak Lake, Manipur, India. The study is about the role of community involvement and development of livelihoods in the sustainability of tourism and local development. A quantitative research design was used and the primary data gathering instrument was a structured questionnaire which was administered to 200 respondents who are local community. The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. The results show that there is a significant positive relationship between community participation and sustainable tourism development ($r = 0.543$, $p < 0.01$), as well as significant positive relationship between livelihood creation and sustainable tourism development ($r = 0.511$, $p < 0.01$). The findings show that local communities' participation in tourism can improve the employment opportunities, income generation and destination sustainability. The study emphasizes the need to further develop community-based tourism initiatives for inclusive growth, economic empowerment and sustainable tourism development in the Loktak Lake region.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism Development, Community Participation, Livelihood Creation, Local Economic Empowerment, Community-Based Tourism, Loktak Lake

Introduction

Tourism has become one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy and plays an important role in employment generation, income generation, regional development, and cultural exchange (Khan et al., 2020). Over the past few decades, tourism has evolved from being a leisure activity to playing a vital role as a means of promoting economic growth and social development (Thommandru et al., 2023). But there have been concerns about environmental degradation, natural resource depletion, biodiversity loss, and commercialization of local culture due to the increasing number of tourism activities in the country (Ranasinghe et al., 2021). Such problems have instilled the need for sustainable tourism practices that not only focus on economic profit but also environmental protection and social development (Manzoor et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2020).

Sustainable tourism is a holistic concept of sustainable tourism development which aims to satisfy the needs of the current tourists and the needs of the host community while the ability of future generations to satisfy their needs is not compromising (Streimikiene et al., 2021). It promotes the conservation and sustainable use of natural, cultural, and economic resources, as well as the benefits to the local

population for the future (Butowski, 2021). This concept focuses on sustainable tourism, on cultural and heritage conservation, on the involvement of the community and on the fair distribution of the tourism benefits (Strydom et al., 2019). Inclusive and Resilient Development (IRD) is one of the key strategies that can be implemented to respond to the challenges faced by tourism destinations, especially those associated with environmental and socio-economic factors (Hariyadi et al., 2024).

Community involvement is one of the most crucial aspects of sustainable tourism (Adade Williams et al., 2020). Local communities are natural resource owners, heritage guardians, and holders of traditional knowledge, and have a key influence in creating the tourism experience (Surata et al., 2024). Active participation in tourism planning, implementation and management boosts effectiveness of development projects and promotes ownership over tourism resources (Yanan et al., 2024). Community involvement helps to make sure tourism projects contribute to local needs and aspirations and helps to reduce social tensions and enhance a sense of responsibility towards the conservation of resources. Furthermore, engaging local communities in decision-making processes enhances transparency, accountability, and sustainability (Wani et al., 2025).

In addition to the above, local economic empowerment is also an important aspect of sustainable tourism development (Purnomo et al., 2020). When local residents are involved in tourism-related activities, tourism can create jobs, foster entrepreneurship and boost incomes for households (Hu et al., 2022). Community-owned enterprises, homestays, handicraft production, cultural performance, eco-guiding services, and even small-scale hospitality businesses, all help to diversify income and reduce poverty (Bagus et al., 2019). Economic empowerment programmes also promote local investment, improve value chains and upgrade the capacity of communities to reap the rewards from the growth of their tourism industry. Economically, tourism can be a great facilitator for regional development and social inclusion if tourism benefits are localised within the region (Sulaiman et al., 2022).

Loktak Lake, Manipur offers a special platform to assess the relationship between sustainable tourism, community involvement and local economic empowerment (Saarinen, 2019). The lake is known for its floating phumdis, high biodiversity, and cultural value and is a significant socio-economic and ecological asset for the surrounding communities (Sanasam & Singh, 2024). The area has been a popular destination for tourists who want to experience nature-based, cultural and species watching activities, including the sighting of the endangered Sangai deer in Keibul Lamjao National Park (Zimik et al., 2025). Although the region has high tourism potential, issues like environmental pollution, poor water quality, habitat disturbances and lack of active involvement of local communities in tourism activities are constraints (Sarkar & Basak, 2025). The challenges underscore the need for sustainable tourism practices that align with conservation goals and support the livelihoods and well-being of local communities.

This study is set against this background, the contribution of community engagement and local economic empowerment initiatives to sustainable tourism development in the Loktak Lake region (Bhutia, 2020). The study aims to offer a holistic approach to tourism development that is environmentally responsible, socially inclusive, and economically sustainable for local communities by exploring the key factors of environmental conservation, community engagement, cultural heritage protection, and institutional support.

Review of Literature

Community involvement has been found to be one of the core elements of sustainable tourism development, allowing communities to have a strong voice in tourism planning, decision-making and sharing of benefits. The integration of the community has been clearly shown to be beneficial for

economic empowerment, cultural protection and social cohesion in the tourism destinations. Community based tourism (CBT) programs have been shown to boost local economies with jobs, small business development and to conserve traditional lifestyles and improve the sustainability of destinations, in Southeast Asia (Rahman & Baddam, 2021). In the same vein, Nyamboke (2023) stated that inclusive tourism development is achieved through meaningful community engagement, which is crucial for collaboration among stakeholders and the inclusion of local voices in the tourism governance process. Research on community-based tourism also shows that involving the community in decision-making processes leads to better integration of tourism with local values and aspirations and thus to greater acceptance and sustainability within the community (Prasad, 2024; Jackson, 2025). The results indicate that a successful community engagement process is important for the development of tourism as well as for strengthening socio-cultural foundations needed to manage sustainable destinations.

There has been extensive research related to the concepts of community empowerment and sustainable tourism development, especially in the context of local economic development and destination competitiveness. Empowered communities are more likely to back tourism initiatives and help them succeed, as shown by empirical evidence. The study of Wani et al. (2024) confirmed that community empowerment has a positive effect on sustainable tourism development, and community support plays a critical mediating role. Similarly, Risfandini et al. (2023) showed that community empowerment also has cultural, environmental and social advantages beyond economic ones, including cultural conservation, environmental protection and social health. In rural tourism destinations, the study showed that community-based tourism projects increase the competitiveness of destinations and keep the tourism revenues within the local economy, providing long-term benefits for development (Turčinović et al., 2025). Beyond that, research on the tourism villages of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) has revealed that leadership practices and innovation and capacity building in the community significantly affect the sustainability of the tourism village as well as the economic resilience of the community (Purnomo & Purwandari, 2025). Overall, these results underscore the importance of community empowerment as a driver for the economic development and sustainable tourism end products of communities.

The importance of community involvement and empowerment has been acknowledged, and there are still a number of obstacles to attaining sustainable tourism goals. Some of the challenges that have been identified as hampering effective participation include insufficient distribution of tourism benefits, imbalance in power, poor governance and limited access to resources (Lijun & Ahmed, 2024; Nyamboke, 2023). The development of tourism is not always accompanied by equitable benefits for the host communities, as there are structural inequalities and poor community integration in the planning process, according to Saarinen (2019). To address these concerns, recent research has called for 'full empowerment' frameworks that encompass social, economic, political, cultural and environmental aspects of community development (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). In addition, a study on rural tourism in China found that tourism empowerment is a key link between institutional support and community participation, and it also plays a supporting role in promoting sustainable destination development (Tong et al., 2024). Moreover, the growth of community empowerment measures, focusing on capacity building, local ownership, collaborative governance, and incorporating indigenous knowledge, has been recognized as key in fostering resilience and sustainability in tourism destinations (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). Overall, literature indicates that sustainable tourism development is closely connected with the establishment of inclusive governance systems that enable communities to gain empowerment, improve economic opportunities and ensure tourism benefits are shared.

Research Methodology

Research Design

In this study, quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional research methodology were used to understand the role of community participation and local economic empowerment programme to promote sustainable tourism development in the Loktak Lake ecosystem of Manipur. The quantitative method was deemed suitable because it allows for the collection of measurable data and enables the analysis of relationships between the study variables using statistical means. The descriptive design was useful in understanding the perception of the respondents towards tourism development, community involvement and livelihood opportunities, and the cross-sectional design enabled the data to be gathered at a single point in time.

Study Area

The study was carried out in the Loktak Lake area in Bishnupur District, Manipur, India. Loktak Lake is the largest freshwater lake in the Northeast region of India and is known for its floating phumdis, its biodiversity and its cultural significance. The reasons for selecting the several villages around the lake were their linkage with tourist activities, and their reliance on the lake resources: Thanga, Karang, Moirang, Sendra, Phubala, Ngaikhong Khullen, Nongmaikhong and Ithing.

Population of the Study

The local community people living in the villages around Loktak Lake and tourists visiting Loktak Lake were the target population. The total sample was 400 respondents (200 tourists and 200 locals). A convenience sampling technique was employed to select the respondents because they were accessible at tourist sites and residential areas. The sample included various demographic factors such as age, gender, education, occupation, income level and tourism involvement to ensure adequate representation of stakeholders' views.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The number of respondents for the study was 400, which included 200 tourists and 200 members of the local community. Access to participants of the tourist sites and residential areas around the lake made it convenient for data collection, thus, a convenience sampling technique was used for respondents. The selected sample was representative of the general population in terms of age, level of education, occupation, income level, and tourism participation, in order to ensure a cross-section of the general population. The number of samples was adequate to produce dependable results and be subjected to a statistical analysis.

Sources of Data

The data used in the study were primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered from the respondents using a structured questionnaire that was designed to elicit information on aspects of community participation, livelihood creation, tourism potential and sustainable tourism development. Secondary data was collected from books, research papers, government reports, tourism department documents, documents of Loktak Development Authority, conference proceedings, dissertations and academic databases in the internet. These secondary sources gave insightful background information on Sustainable Tourism, Community Based Tourism, Wetland Conservation and Local Economic Development.

Instrument for Data Collection

A data collection tool which is structured in the form of a questionnaire was designed. The survey was divided into two parts. The first section gathered data on age, gender, education, occupation, income, and location. The second section contained such statements as community participation and livelihood creation, which were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree: 1, Disagree: 2, Neutral: 3, Agree: 4 and Strongly Agree: 5). The instrument was developed from literature and adapted to the context of the development of sustainable tourism in the Loktak Lake region.

Data Collection Procedure

The primary data was gathered by using a structured questionnaire which was developed based on extensive literature review on sustainable tourism, community participation, and local economic empowerment. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first asked for demographic details and the second measured the areas around Environmental Impact of Wetland Conservation (EIWC), Community Participation and Livelihood Creation (CPLC), Cultural Heritage Preservation (CHP), Government Policy and Institutional Support (GPIS), and Sustainable Tourism Development (STD). The responses were measured by a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The instrument was pre-tested with tourism and management experts for content validity and clarity before the final survey.

Variables of the Study

The study examined the basic independent variable of Community Participation and Livelihood Creation (CPLC) and Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) as the dependent variable. Community Participation involves people from the community in tourism related activities and the employment opportunities created by tourism; Livelihood Creation is the enhancement of one's livelihood, development of entrepreneurship, and the involvement of community members in tourism decision-making. Sustainable Tourism Development is the degree to which tourism benefits the economy, society, environment, visitors and destination development. The variables were chosen because they were deemed relevant for the aim of this study which is to explore the sustainable tourism potential through community engagement.

Data Analysis

Data collected were coded and analysed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 29). Demographic characteristics and perceptions of respondents were summarized with descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and skewness. Pearson's correlation was used to analyze the relationship between Community Participation and Livelihood Creation (CPLC) with Sustainable Tourism Development (STD). The significance of the results was determined at the 0.05 level and 0.01 level, which guarantees the reliability and validity of the results. The analytical framework adopted was effective in collecting empirical evidences on the role of community involvement and the empowerment of local economies on sustainable tourism development in the Loktak Lake region.

Results & Discussion

The results of the study for the Loktak Lake region, which addresses the issue of sustainable development of tourism through community participation and measures taken to empower the local economy are presented in this section. The analysis uses data gathered from both tourists and local community members to explore demographic factors, as well as the extent of their involvement, and their attitudes towards community participation, livelihood development and sustainable tourism development. The descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used for the purpose of

recognising important patterns and relationships between the study variables. The results provide valuable insights into the contribution of local community engagement toward enhancing sustainable tourism and promoting socio-economic development in the study area.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Tourist Respondents (N = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group	Below 20	33	16.5
	21–30	63	31.5
	31–40	44	22.0
	41–50	41	20.5
	51 and above	19	9.5
Gender	Male	130	65.0
	Female	64	32.0
	Prefer not to say	6	3.0
Place of Residence	Within Manipur	139	69.5
	Other Parts of India	45	22.5
	International	16	8.0
Type of Tourist	Family	62	31.0
	Couple	60	30.0
	Solo Traveler	44	22.0
	Group Tour	34	17.0
Education Level	Secondary or Below	23	11.5
	Undergraduate Degree	111	55.5
	Postgraduate Degree	66	33.0
Occupation	Employed	64	32.0
	Student	49	24.5
	Business Owner	44	22.0
	Retired	43	21.5
Purpose of Visit	Leisure	80	40.0
	Nature Exploration	61	30.5
	Cultural Experience	41	20.5

	Research/Study	18	9.0
Number of Visits	First Time	115	57.5
	2–3 Times	56	28.0
	More than 3 Times	29	14.5

Source: Primary Survey Data (2025)

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of 200 tourist respondents. The majority of tourists belonged to the 21–30 age group (31.5%), followed by those aged 31–40 years (22.0%). Male respondents constituted 65.0% of the sample, while females accounted for 32.0%. Most tourists were residents of Manipur (69.5%), whereas 22.5% came from other parts of India and 8.0% were international visitors. Family tourists (31.0%) and couples (30.0%) formed the largest visitor groups. A majority of respondents possessed undergraduate (55.5%) or postgraduate (33.0%) qualifications. Employed individuals represented the largest occupational category (32.0%). Leisure was the primary purpose of visit for 40.0% of tourists, followed by nature exploration (30.5%). Additionally, more than half of the respondents (57.5%) were first-time visitors, indicating the destination's growing appeal among new tourists.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Local Community Respondents (N = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group	Below 20	21	10.5
	21–30	47	23.5
	31–40	57	28.5
	41–50	38	19.0
	51 and above	37	18.5
Gender	Male	109	54.5
	Female	81	40.5
	Prefer not to say	10	5.0
Duration of Residence	Less than 5 Years	8	4.0
	5–10 Years	29	14.5
	More than 10 Years	163	81.5
Education Level	No Formal Education	29	14.5
	Primary	49	24.5
	Secondary	52	26.0
	Higher Secondary	35	17.5
	College/University	35	17.5

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Occupation	Fisherman/Farmer	89	44.5
	Unemployed	39	19.5
	Tourism-related Services	32	16.0
	Government Employee	21	10.5
	Other	19	9.5
Monthly Income	Below ₹10,000	69	34.5
	₹10,001–₹20,000	68	34.0
	₹20,001–₹30,000	38	19.0
	Above ₹30,000	25	12.5
Tourism Involvement	Yes	32	16.0
	Occasionally	35	17.5
	No	133	66.5

Source: Primary Survey Data (2025)

The demographic profile of the 200 respondents indicates a diverse representation across age groups, with the largest proportion belonging to the 31–40 years category (28.5%), followed by the 21–30 years group (23.5%). Respondents aged 41–50 years and 51 years and above accounted for 19.0% and 18.5%, respectively, while only 10.5% were below 20 years of age. In terms of gender, males constituted the majority of the sample (54.5%), followed by females (40.5%), while 5.0% preferred not to disclose their gender. Regarding the duration of residence, a substantial majority (81.5%) had lived in the area for more than 10 years, indicating strong familiarity with local socio-economic and environmental conditions. Educational attainment varied among respondents, with secondary education representing the largest category (26.0%), followed by primary education (24.5%), while 17.5% each had higher secondary and college/university education, and 14.5% had no formal education. Occupationally, fishermen and farmers formed the largest group (44.5%), reflecting the dependence of the local population on primary livelihood activities, followed by unemployed individuals (19.5%) and those engaged in tourism-related services (16.0%). Income distribution revealed that most respondents belonged to lower-income categories, with 34.5% earning below ₹10,000 per month and 34.0% earning between ₹10,001 and ₹20,000. Only 12.5% reported monthly incomes above ₹30,000. Furthermore, tourism involvement was relatively limited, as 66.5% of respondents reported no involvement in tourism activities, while 17.5% participated occasionally and only 16.0% were directly involved. Overall, the findings suggest that the respondents are predominantly long-term residents with moderate educational backgrounds, lower income levels, and limited participation in tourism-related activities, providing valuable insights into the socio-economic characteristics of the study population.

Table 3: Involvement of Respondents in Tourism-related Activities

Are you involved in tourism-related activities?	Frequency	Percent
Yes	32	16
No	133	66.5

Occasionally	35	17.5
Total	200	100

The table 3 shows the respondents' involvement in tourism-related activities around Loktak Lake. Out of 200 participants, the majority, 133 individuals (66.5%), reported that they are not involved in tourism, indicating limited direct community participation in the sector. Meanwhile, 35 respondents (17.5%) mentioned occasional involvement, reflecting part-time or seasonal engagement in tourism-related work. Only 32 respondents (16%) are directly involved in tourism activities such as guiding, homestays, or related services. Overall, the data suggests that while tourism provides some livelihood opportunities, a large portion of the local population is not actively engaged in this sector.

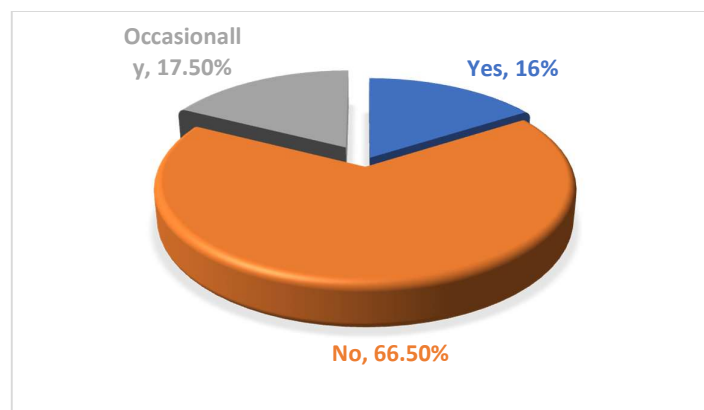


Figure 16: Involvement of Respondents in Tourism-related Activities

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Local Community

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Age Group	200	3.12	1.257	.026	.172
Gender	200	1.51	.593	.711	.172
Years of Living Near Loktak Lake	200	2.77	.506	-2.214	.172
Education Level	200	2.70	1.392	.304	.172
Occupation	200	2.86	1.188	-.079	.172
Household Monthly Income	200	2.09	1.015	.535	.172
Are you involved in tourism-related activities?	200	2.02	.580	.000	.172
EIWC_Q1	200	3.53	.972	-.254	.172

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EIWC_Q2	200	3.58	.915	-.115	.172
EIWC_Q3	200	3.56	.970	-.088	.172
EIWC_Q4	200	3.50	.962	-.051	.172
CPLC_Q1	200	3.25	.956	.026	.172
CPLC_Q2	200	3.20	.997	-.319	.172
CPLC_Q3	200	3.22	.945	-.154	.172
CPLC_Q4	200	3.27	.921	-.124	.172
CHP_Q1	200	3.20	.876	-.095	.172
CHP_Q2	200	3.14	.886	.028	.172
CHP_Q3	200	3.14	.924	.103	.172
CHP_Q4	200	3.20	.858	-.071	.172
GPIS_Q1	200	2.88	.940	-.151	.172
GPIS_Q2	200	2.79	.927	.087	.172
GPIS_Q3	200	2.90	.900	-.145	.172
GPIS_Q4	200	2.87	.987	-.126	.172
STD_Q1	200	3.62	.933	-.186	.172
STD_Q2	200	3.62	.975	-.358	.172
STD_Q3	200	3.53	.972	-.088	.172
STD_Q4	200	3.55	.955	-.354	.172
Valid N (listwise)	200				

The descriptive statistics for 200 respondents provide an overview of their demographics, engagement in tourism, and perceptions of key constructs related to sustainable tourism at Loktak Lake. Demographically, respondents are mostly middle-aged (Mean = 3.12) with a nearly balanced gender distribution (Mean = 1.51) and an average residence of 2.77 years near the lake. Education (Mean = 2.70) and occupation (Mean = 2.86) show moderate variability, while household income (Mean = 2.09) and involvement in tourism-related activities (Mean = 2.02) indicate lower engagement levels. Regarding the main constructs, Environmental Impact of Wetland Conservation (EIWC) has relatively high mean scores ranging from 3.50 to 3.58, reflecting positive perceptions of conservation efforts. Community Participation & Livelihood Creation (CPLC) and Cultural & Heritage Preservation (CHP) have moderate mean scores around 3.14–3.27, suggesting moderate engagement and recognition of cultural and livelihood initiatives. Government Policy & Institutional Support (GPIS) averages between 2.79 and 2.90, indicating perceptions of institutional support are somewhat moderate. Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) scores range from 3.53 to 3.62, showing overall positive perceptions of tourism outcomes. Skewness values for most constructs are close to zero, indicating relatively symmetric

distributions, except for years of living near the lake, which is strongly negatively skewed (-2.214), reflecting a concentration of long-term residents. Overall, the data indicate generally favorable perceptions toward conservation, tourism development, and institutional efforts, while highlighting moderate community participation and engagement in tourism activities.

H1: Community participation and livelihood creation have a significant positive effect on sustainable tourism development.

Community involvement is a vital component of inclusive and sustainable tourism growth. At Loktak Lake, participation ensures livelihood opportunities and shared benefits for residents. Engaged communities also safeguard local resources and traditions. Therefore, this hypothesis explores the role of community participation in supporting sustainable tourism development.

Table 5: Correlation between Community Participation & Livelihood Creation (CPLC) and Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) (H2)

Correlations

		CPLC	STD
CPLC	Pearson Correlation	1	.543**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
STD	Pearson Correlation	.543**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

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

The hypothesis H1 suggests that community participation and livelihood creation have a significant positive effect on sustainable tourism development. Active involvement of local communities not only provides employment and income-generating opportunities but also fosters stewardship of cultural and natural resources. At Loktak Lake, community engagement ensures that tourism benefits are equitably shared and local traditions are preserved. The correlation analysis in Table 5 confirms this relationship. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Community Participation & Livelihood Creation (CPLC) and Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) is 0.543, with a significance value of 0.000, indicating a moderate to strong positive correlation that is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This result demonstrates that greater community involvement and livelihood initiatives are strongly associated with sustainable tourism growth, emphasizing the critical role of local participation in promoting tourism sustainability.

Discussion

The study results emphasize the importance of community involvement and livelihood development in the sustainable development of tourism in the Loktak Lake area. The correlation analysis showed that there was a moderate to strong positive correlation between Community Participation and Livelihood Creation (CPLC) and Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) ($r = 0.543$, $p < 0.01$), which means that the participation of the community is a big contributor to tourism sustainability. This

discovery reinforces a belief that local people are the key stakeholders for tourism development and their active involvement adds value to the economic and social outcomes of tourism activities.

The demographic analysis also showed that many of the local population are involved in traditional jobs like fishing and farming, and only a small percentage of the local population are directly involved in tourism related jobs. This indicates that there is yet a lot of potential to increase the scope of community-based tourism and provide alternative livelihoods. The lack of resident engagement in tourism suggests there is a need to develop skills and trainings and to encourage entrepreneur support and awareness that will help local communities become more involved in tourism activities.

The findings are in line with the previous studies that highlight the role of community empowerment in sustainable tourism. This not only creates jobs and income for the community, but fosters community stewardship of natural and cultural resources as well. The participation of communities in the context of Loktak Lake can play a role in the conservation of the ecological values, improvement of the visitor experience, and in the fair distribution of tourism benefits. Hence, there is a need for the policy and tourism planners to adopt inclusive tourism policies which enable local participation and support small tourism businesses and improve economic empowerment for sustainable tourism development in the region in the long term.

Conclusion

The present study investigated community involvement and livelihood generation in sustainable tourism development of Loktak Lake region in Manipur. The results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between Community Participation and Livelihood Creation (CPLC) with Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) ($r = 0.543$, $p < 0.01$), meaning that an increase in community participation is likely to significantly influence the sustainability of the tourism activity. Local communities play an active role, which promotes employment opportunities, increases household incomes, fosters social inclusion and promotes the conservation of natural and cultural resources. The study further revealed that the tourism potential of Loktak Lake is enormous due to its special ecological values, floating phumdis, rich biodiversity, cultural heritage etc., but majority of the local people are not benefiting from it. This underscores the importance of targeted interventions to boost participation from the local community and ensure that local people share the benefits of tourism equitably. Community based tourism, entrepreneurship development, skill training, and financial assistance programs can have a great impact on increasing local participation and economic empowerment.

The study suggests the formulation of a Community-Centered Sustainable Tourism Development Model for Loktak Lake, based on the findings. The model should emphasize the role of community involvement in the planning and decision-making process regarding tourism, encourage the development of community-based tourism products like homestays, handicrafts, cultural and traditional performances, and the conservation of the environment by local communities. To train and support infrastructure and marketing through joint efforts by government agencies, tourism organizations and local groups. This is a comprehensive approach that will support sustainable livelihoods, conserve cultural and ecological values and sustainability of tourism. In conclusion, if the local communities can be empowered to make Loktak Lake a model for sustainable tourism development that is inclusive, environmentally friendly and economically beneficial.

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