

Perception of tourism on the socio-economic improvement of Purulia: A case study from the Ajyodha Hills, Purulia, West Bengal, India

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a process that brings economic development of a region and connects the local people with the rest of the world through social contact. The elevated plateau of Chotanagpur covered with many natural panoramic beauties is the centre of attraction as tourist spots. The geomorphic makeup of this terrain and its broadcasting in the internet through the recently developed various social media has attracted many visitors within West Bengal as well as the adjoining states to visit the place. The income flow from the tourists has led to well-developed communication and secured hospitality, development of habitable hotels in the region and vice-versa. As of late, tourists and visitors expect to enjoy the retro-urban facility, which is readily made available to the visitors. Last but not the least, cultural heritage of this region in the form of songs, dance and handicrafts are other important aspects of attraction offered by the residents to the tourists both as gift and with payment attracted and mesmerized the tourists.

KEYWORDS Tourism, Ajyodha Hills, Socio-economy, Purulia, West Bengal.

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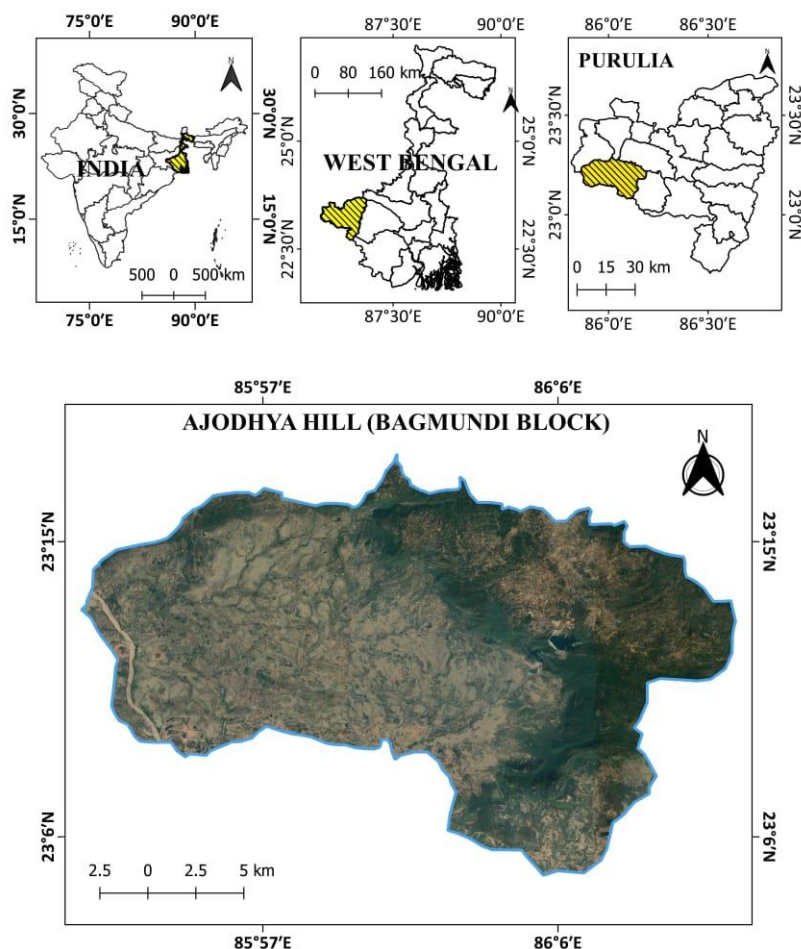
INTRODUCTION

Purulia is located at the first step of the gradual descent from the elevated plateau of Chotanagpur proper to the plains of lower Bengal and also a part of the Ranchi penplain. This area is fully covered with lush green landscapes, verdant hills and panoramic beauty. Near about 12% of the geographical area of the district is under forest cover (State Forest Report, West Bengal, 2011-12) that provides the life supporting system of the tribal people and the local residents. Forests are the natural vegetation of the study area, primarily composed of trees and shrubs and has sustained the ecological set up of the region. It represents a complex ecosystem that comprises of diverse flora and fauna. The geomorphoecological setup helps in modulating the micro climate, ecological balance,

purifying the natural environment and helping in growth and development of a particular region (Archer et al., 2005; Roy and Mukherjee, 2018; Patra et al., 2018, 2019). But slowly and steadily the idea of enjoying the natural environment to take a break from the monotony of busy life and spend some time amidst a natural habitat has been very popular in last few decades (c.f., Beaver, 2002; Reynard, 2008; Arbabi and Mirazizi 2014).

Purulia as a place of natural beauty is known since decades (Fig. 1). The area is filled with the most magical places including Joychandi Hills, Ayodhya hills, Saheb bandh, Gajaburu hills, Doldanga, Baranti Reservoir, Cheliama, Surulia and Murugama dam to mention a few are hotspots of attraction (Bhaya and Chakrabarty, 2016; Patra et al., 2018, 2019).

Fig. 1. Location map of the study area showing the relief features of Ajyodha hills of the Baghmundi block.



All these places have attracted tourists who are ardent rock climbers, who enjoy trekking, who enjoy migratory bird watching, camping, historical retreat and above all enjoying the natural beauty. In the past, tourist attraction was very limited and was restricted due to many reasons. However, recently many of these limitations are overcome, and might have marked a beginning of the industry of tourism which has transformed the region and also helped in development and progress of the socio-economic condition of the local people. The present study is carried out with an aim to understand the impact of tourism on the socio-economic progress of the local residents in the Ajyodhya Hills and its adjoining region that has developed to be a very popular tourist centre in the recent times.

1.2. Data Input:

Both primary and secondary data have been used to fulfil the objectives and analyse the impact of improvement in socio-economic condition of the people of that region with the progress of tourism industry. Primary Data is collected through the survey from local residents who are a part of the tourism project viz. shopkeeper, car-driver, hotel management staff and owner and the tourists of the specific study area along with their feedback regarding the visit. The Secondary Data has been collected from Primary Census Abstract, Census of India, 2011 and tourism related data from UDHD.

1.3. Materials and methods

In this paper the sample analysis is done through the design which includes the dual process of

quantitative and qualitative analysis. The study is done with the help of total 200 samples taken for the purpose of study. Out of the total samples, 100s are of the local residents who support the tourism sector and rest 100 samples are from the tourists who actually utilize the infrastructure of the tourism

sector. Both are taken to analyse the impact of tourism industry of Ajodhya on the local economy of that region. In this study, three tier system of data collection and processing is used: pre-field work, field work and post-field data processing and is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. A three tier system of data collection and processing followed in the present study.

1. Pre- Field work	Collection of overall Geographical information Collection of data from Census of India Selection of specific study area Determination of the objectives Designing the survey schedule or questionnaire
2. Field work	Collection of location map of GMC Conduction of resident survey Conduction of tourist feedback survey
3. Post-Field work	Tabulation of collected Data Statistical representation of data Analysis of data

2. Profile of Tourist and Tourism Infrastructure

The age, gender, purpose of visit etc. are the various factors that together build up the profile of the tourists, whereas how are they able to enjoy their vacation or leave depend on the tourism infrastructure of that region which takes place with gradual progression of the industry and also with the adaptability of the local people. The following section will deal with all the aspects of the tourists who visit those places and the various criteria that help in development of the infrastructure favourable to tourism industry.

women as women are more habituated to the homestay and homely environment (Table 2 and Fig. 2).

2.1. Distribution of Tourist by Gender (Sex)

Gender is one of the major demographic factors which influence the travel demand. Table 2 below shows the ratio of men-women travel history. The travel pattern in tourism depends mainly on the travel motivation of men and women who are travelling. From the field survey it has been revealed that, the participation of tourist in terms of their gender is high for male tourist i.e., 88% and relationally low for female travellers. According to various study it has also been concluded that, men travel more than

Table 2. Distribution of tourists by gender.

Gender	Number of Tourist	Tourist %
Male	75	88
Female	25	12

2.2. Nature of Tourist by Age Group

Age is considered to be another crucial demographic factor by tourism stake holders because leisure demand can effectively be predicted through visitors. Age is reported to have positive influence on individuals' desire for relaxation and nature exploration desires.

The study area of this paper, the Ajodhya hill region appeared to be an amazing treasure house for

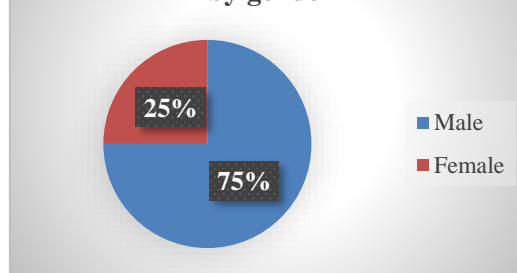
Table 3. Age group of tourists.

Age Group	Number of Tourists	Tourist %
<20	10	10
20-30	47	47
30-60	10	10
>60	3	3

2.3. Distribution of Tourists by Religion

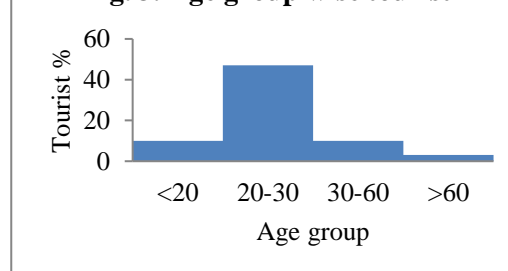
Tourism and religion are also closely related to each other. Very often it is found that various religious places although may have scenic beauty but are still mostly visited by people belonging to a specific religion only viz. Golden Temple of Amritsar is mostly visited as a holy place by Hindus. So, the impact on tourist behaviour is mainly because of religious influences the choice of destination. Even the tourists have product preferences which have

Fig. 2. Distribution of tourists by gender



the nature lover, for the educationalist and scholars as well as for adventure seekers. And that is why the majority of the tourists here belong from young to adult age group. The young group is more attracted towards the adventure games and exploring various facets of nature, whereas middle aged people prefer more of relaxation amidst the serenity of nature (Table 3 and Fig. 3). The graph below represents the age group of tourists visiting the hilly regions.

Fig. 3. Age group wise tourist



been observed in our field survey. So, the majority of the tourist belonging from Hinduism and more fascinated by the natural environment of Ajodhya hill region as compared to people of other religion. The tourists are heterogeneous in their perception of travel attributes. Travel attributes can be perceived differently by tourists of different culture community and religion. The diagram below represents the tourists by religion (Table 4 and Fig. 4).

Table 4. Tourist percentage grouped by religion

Religion group	Number of Tourist	Tourist %
Hindu	80	80
Muslim	16	16
Christian	4	4
other	0	0

2.4. Marital Status of the Tourists

Marital status is one of the major factors that affect the vacation decision. The study examined travel motivation difference among leisure tourists who were married and those who were unmarried or single. Our field survey revealed that, more than half of the tourists were unmarried i.e., 60% around. So, the singles are assumed to have more free time to engage in various activities compared to those the married couples who are also dependent on availability of break from their personal level of work. Only then they are able to make vacation plans (Table 5 and Fig. 5).

Table 5. Tourists categorized by marital status.

Status	Number of Tourist	Tourist %
Unmarried	60	60
Married	40	40

2.5. Educational Qualification of the Tourist

Educational level of the tourists is considered as an important controlling factor which influences tourism sector. Because of this factor the basis of decisions making takes place, which includes area of visit, span of stay, time of visit and nature of visit. Not only from the perspective of physiography, but also the study area depicted in this paper has a unique cultural and ethnic identity on itself. The field survey revealed that, the majority of the

Fig. 4. Tourists by religion

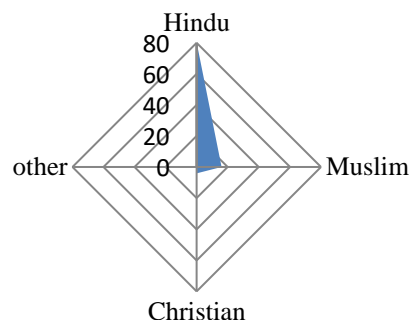


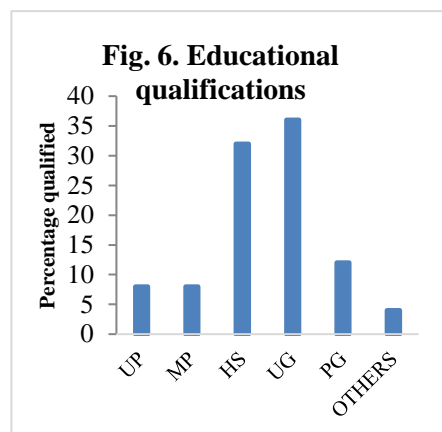
Fig. 5. Tourists by marital status



tourists are from under graduate and higher secondary educational level, whose primary objective is outing with friends or family only. A small section of people even belong to higher educational group or in services who seek pleasure and amusements in such tour. So, almost every range of people is seen to visit such places to enjoy the Nature and its beauty. The graph below shows the educational level of the tourists (Table 6 and Fig. 6).

Table 6. Education Status of the visitors.

Qualifications	Number of Tourist	Tourist %
P-Primary	0	0
UP-Upper Primary	8	8
MP-Madhyamik	8	8
HS-Higher secondary	32	32
UG-Under Graduate	36	36
PG-Post Graduate	12	12
OTHERS	4	4



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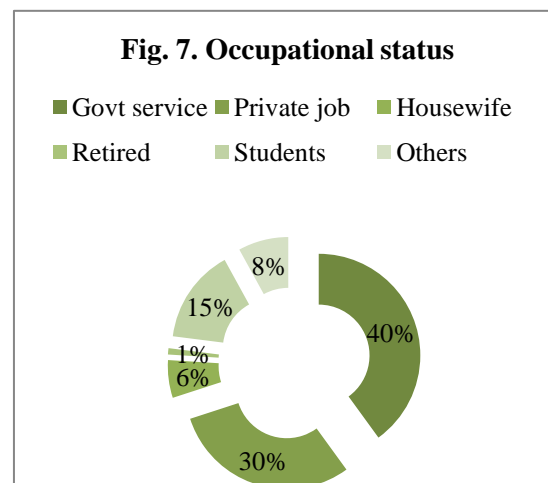
.6. Occupational Variation of the Tourist

Occupational structure of the tourist is another important parameter which influences the tourists directly. This factor actually determines whether the tourists possess the ability to purchase and afford the hospitality of the tourist place. In terms of occupational engagement of the tourists, the data revealed that, the majority of the tourists are engaged in Government services and some of them engaged even in private job, i.e., 40% in Government services and 32% in private job comparatively rest people are engaged in various

Table 7. Occupational variations of the tourists

Occupational Status	Number of Tourist	Tourist %
Govt. service	40	40
Private job	30	30
Housewife	6	6
Retired	1	1
Students	15	15
Others	8	8

other fields. They stay, enjoy and also spend their time amidst nature (Table 7 and Fig. 7).



2.7. Citizenship of the Tourists

The field survey revealed that, 98% of tourists are Indian and only 2% are from outside the country. Through the increase in foreign tourist, the employment opportunity increase which contributes in tourism industry and indirectly develops local economy. The above survey reveals

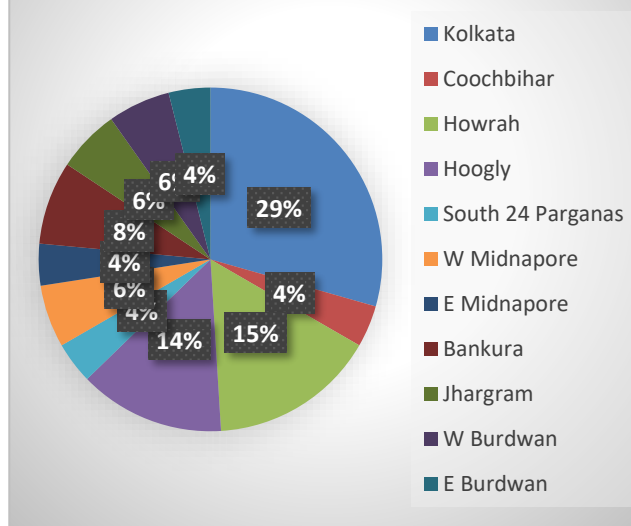
that more than half of the tourists are arrived from the different district of West Bengal and the adjacent state Jharkhand. These places are lesser known geographically, hence tourists are nearby residents only. These are regional tourist spots so it attracts people mostly from various parts of the state, who wish to spend some time amidst nature,

serenity and have an easy access to the location for short time-break (Table 8 and Fig. 8).

Table 8. Tourists from various districts of West Bengal to Ajyodha.

Districts	Number of tourists	Tourist %
Kolkata	15	29
Coochbihar	2	4
Howrah	8	15
Hoogly	7	14
South 24 Parganas	2	4
W Midnapore	3	6
E Midnapore	2	4
Bankura	4	8
Jhargram	3	6
W Burdwan	3	6
E Burdwan	2	4
	51	100

Fig. 8. Districts wise distribution of tourists from West Bengal in Ajodhya



2.8. Length of Stay of the Tourists

Length of stay is a key parameter in the measurement of tourism development. It depends upon tourism facilities and tourist's satisfaction level in terms of accommodation, lodging, food, recreational facilities, transport system, level of hygiene and sanitation, quality of road etc. As Ajodhya hill region has a demographic landscape, so it is a perfect tourist destination (Table 9 and Fig. 9).

Fig. 9. Duration of stay

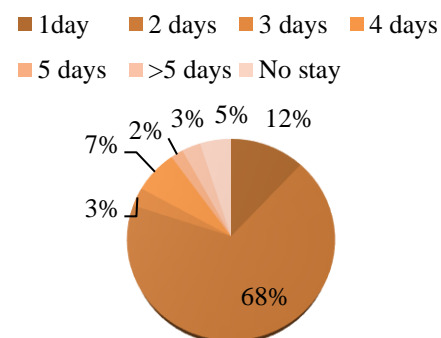


Table 9. Duration of stay of the tourists

Duration	Number of Tourist	Tourist %
1day	12	12
2 days	68	68
3 days	3	3
4 days	7	7
5 days	2	2
>5 days	3	3
No stay	5	5

2.9. Purpose of Visit

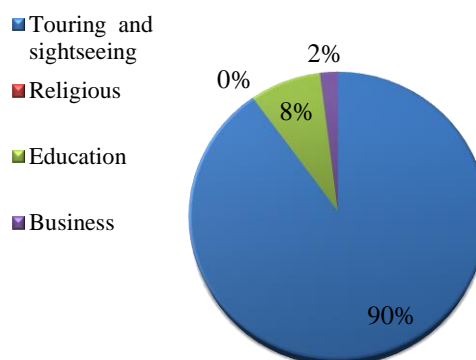
From the field survey it has been observed that, majority of the tourist visit Ajodhya for the purpose of holiday/vacation. Apart from that, it has been observed from recent trends that, a section of students and scholars are also visiting this region for educational purpose. In other words the area seems to be a treasure house for the nature lovers as well as for the students and scholars because of its geomorphological features, ethnicity and cultural uniqueness (Table 10 and Fig. 10).

Purpose of visit	Number of tourists	Tourists%
Touring and sightseeing	90	90
Religious	0	0
Education	8	8
Business	2	2

destination (Archer et al., 2005; Frînculeasa and Chițescu, 2018).

All the aforementioned factors are the important parameters that help to determine the types of tourists who come to visit this place as a holiday destination. But another important aspect that would also be required to understand the tourist psychology is the feedback that is received from them regarding their visit or stay at Ajodhya. On one perspective this serves as a way to understand

Fig. 10. Distribution of purpose of visit



2.10. Accompanying Person

Around 55% of tourists visiting this area are accompanied with their family and friends who require family accommodation and about 40% of tourists are with friend association with a day tour only. Rest 5% are students and others who are in a group but that is to explore the geomorphological features of this area. Both ways the survey depicts the overall acceptance of this region as tourist

as what makes tourists decide this particular place as suitable for vacation, whereas on the other hand the feedback helps in assuming and analysing the various progression and development of this particular region from the point of tourism industry that ultimately contributes to some socio-economic development of the local residents. The next section of this paper tries to focus on the nature of progress from tourists and native point of view.

3. Perception of Local People and the Impacts of Tourism

With the incoming of currency mostly in the form of cash-in-hand, the perception towards accepting outsiders, i.e., the tourists, has become positive. This section intends to deal with the local developments and progression that on one hand is impact of tourism sector, whereas on the other hand help tourists select such destinations for holiday and amusement (Table 11).

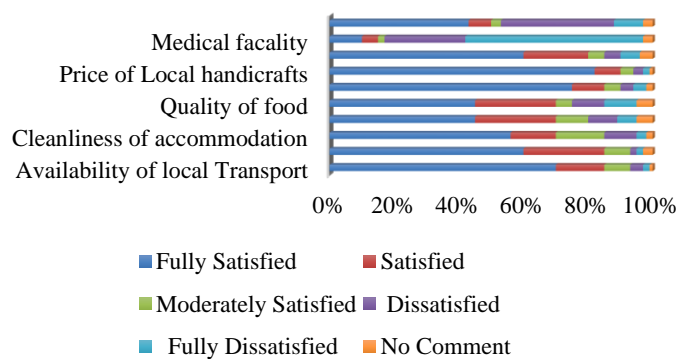
Table 11. Satisfaction level of tourists as received from the questioner feedback.

Satisfaction parameters	Fully Satisfied	Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Fully Dissatisfied	No Comments
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Availability of local Transport	70	15	8	4	2	1
Quality of road	60	25	8	2	2	3
Cleanliness of accommodation	56	14	15	10	3	2
Level of hygiene in sanitation	45	25	10	9	6	5
Quality of food	45	25	5	10	10	5
Price of food	75	10	5	4	4	2
Price of Local handicrafts	82	8	4	3	2	1
Hospitality of local people	60	20	5	5	6	4
Medical facility	10	5	2	25	55	3
Consciousness level of Covid 19	43	7	3	35	9	3

Primarily the people making their tour plan always keep in mind certain factors like geographic location and its natural atmosphere, distance of travel, hospitality to enjoy the vacation, safety and connectivity etc. which are very essential parameters from tourist point of view and also these indicate the progress of that particular region. The following sub-sections tries to deal with all these factors and the feedback received from the tourists regarding their wish to visit such places (Table 11 and Fig. 11-13).

Fig. 11. Satisfaction level of tourists



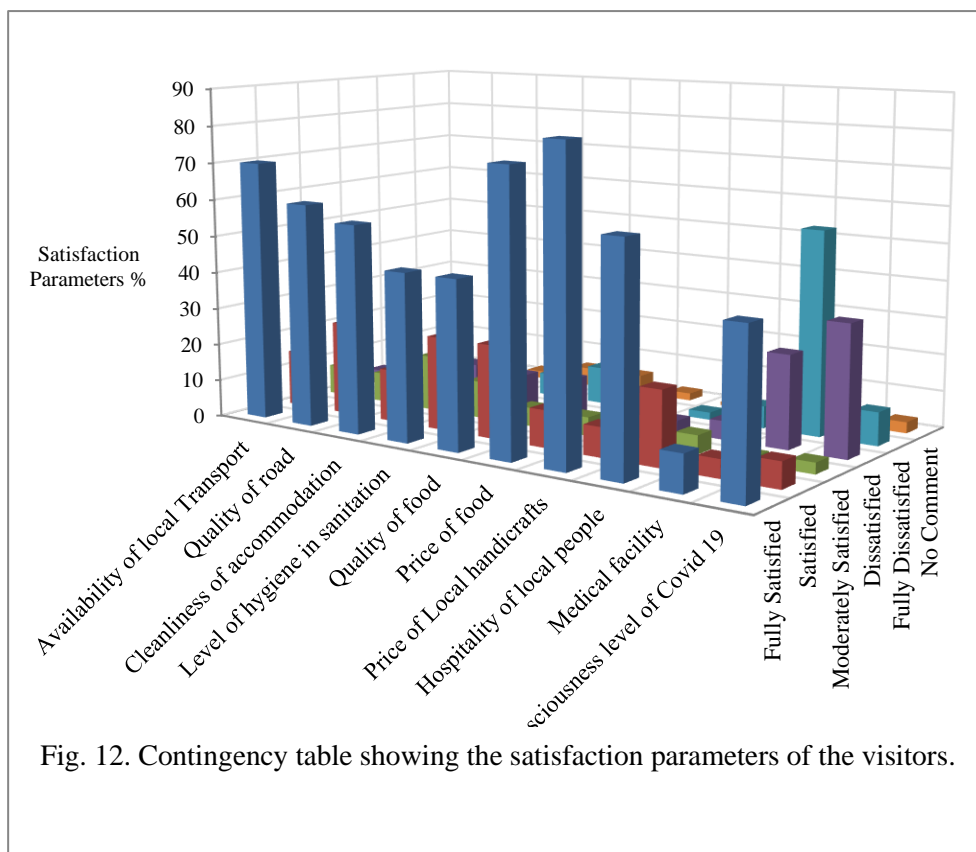


Fig. 12. Contingency table showing the satisfaction parameters of the visitors.

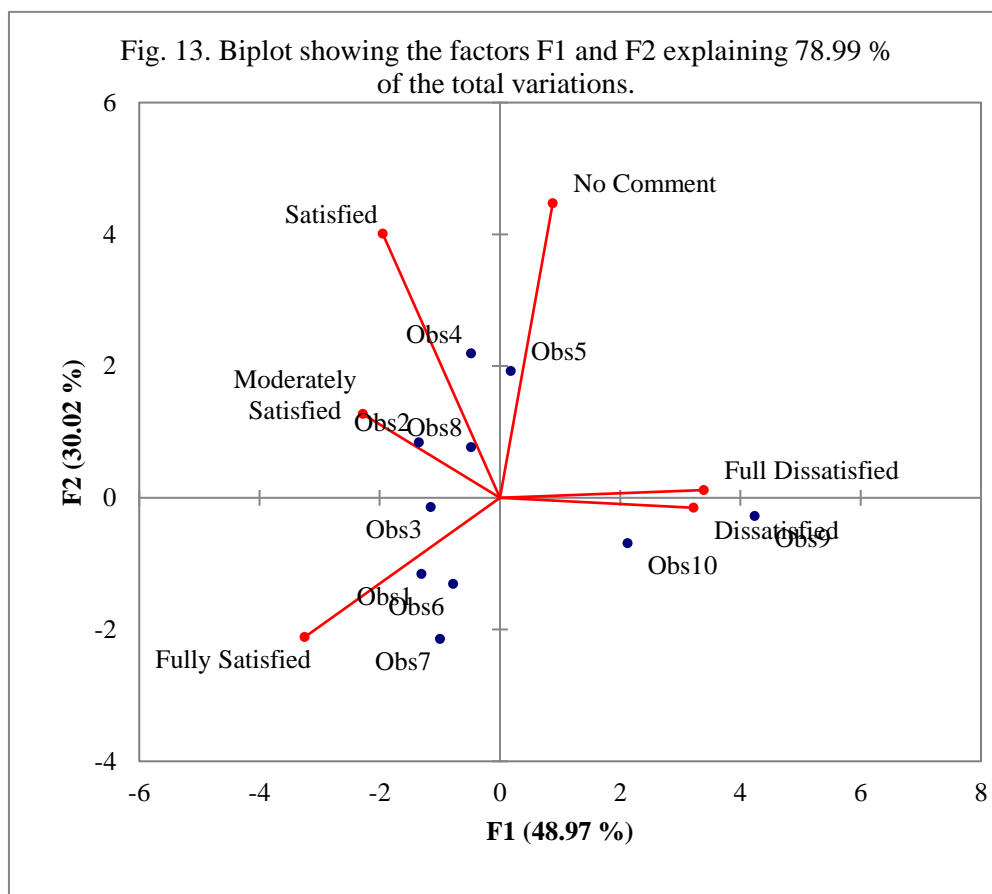


Fig. 13. Biplot showing the factors F1 and F2 explaining 78.99 % of the total variations.

Principal component and correspondence analysis was carried out on the perception level of the tourists with a thought that some of the parameters may be independent for the perception level of the tourists. However, from both the analysis it is revealed that all the factors are interdependent as the computed p-value is lower than the significance level $\alpha=0.05$ (Fig. 12).

3.1. Local Residents

Physiographical location of the study area of Purulia district falls under a sub-region of north-eastern part of chhotonagpur plateau which is mainly the habitat of the native people belonging from the tribal community. They are the indigenous people who are constitutionally called Scheduled Tribe i.e. santal, bhumiz, birhor, kheria and lodha-sabar. It has been observed from the field survey that almost 97% of the local residents comprises of these native people, who were the ancestral habitats of this region and lived their livelihood depending on the forest resources only (Blackstock, 2005). Once the forest region started decreasing, the dependency on natural resources also shifted to earning from tourism sector.

3.2. Migration

Migration is an important parameter which influences tourism development. Migration makes important social and economic contribution to the destination places, by culturally enriching their

society and enhancing the tourism product (Mishra, 2017). In our study area migration has been accounted as a least-affected parameter as the place is mostly inhabited by the native people who have their ancestral connection with this area. They uphold their cultural uniqueness which makes tourists come to visit the place.

3.3. Occupation Structure of the Local People

Occupation structure of the study area is completely dependent upon its topography. Due to adverse environmental and physical- climatic condition, the agricultural practice could not be reached to the desirable limit. In such an adverse physical condition the population opts to elect other profession for their livelihood rather than agricultural practice and dependence on natural resources processing (Das and Mandal, 2011). The data revealed from the field study that 50 % of population depends on business and 38% of people are engaged with hospitality and lodging activities in hotel and resorts.

3.4. Average Income

Among the surveyed 100 resident all of them responded about their monthly income. It is evident from table below that concentration of the monthly income of the local people is below Rs. 5000/- which is highest in the lean season (Table 12).

Table 12. Tabulation of the income of residents as their response.

Parameter	Number of Residents		Class Width	Frequency	
Monthly Income	In Peak Season	In Lean Season		In Peak Season	In Lean Season
< 5000	16	44	5000	0.0032	0.0088
5000-10000	20	28	5000	0.004	0.0056
10000-20000	21	12	10000	0.0021	0.0012
20000-30000	16	8	10000	0.0016	0.0008
30000-40000	8	4	10000	0.008	0.0004
40000-80000	12	4	40000	0.0003	0.0001
80000-120000	3	0	40000	0.00008	0

With this section the idea of livelihood of the regional people can be traced, but along with this how tourism has created an impact on the development and the progress of the region can be understood from the nature of hospitality, nature of job opportunities and also the satisfaction level of the tourists which will indicate the development and progression. The improvement in socio-economic condition and daily living of the regional people imply how far the tourism sector has helped in development of the locality. As the locality develops, the economic condition gets favourable for the regional people and also the tourists who could attain satisfaction and psychologically prepare themselves for such vacation destination in future for their friends, family and also for themselves too. The next section thus tries to analyse the data collected to understand the nature of development that has taken place in that region.

4. Impacts of Tourism on Local Economy

The following sub-sections deals with the various factors that represent the developments of the region in connection to tourism industry. With the decrease in agricultural products and utilization of natural resources, the socio-economic condition of the local people has affected their daily living. But whether this upcoming industry has anyway helped the regional people can be analysed from the following discussions.

4.1. Job Opportunity for Local People

It has been observed that the influence of geographical structure acts as a controlling factor on socio economic development in this study area. The expansion of tourism could help to recreate the basic employment opportunities among the local people. From the field study , an observation of the local people have been collected , it shows that around 62% of the inhabitants were engaged with the different mode of economic activity which has been associated with tourism. These include hospitality management, transport arrangements, supplies of daily essentials, etc., which creates job opportunities among the native people. But apart

from this, even the tourism industry opens for job opportunities for people from other areas too, as only the native people cannot provide the holistic support for growth and development of tourism alone.

4.2. Improvement of Local Economy

The tourism industry, being a part of the service sector has become an important source of income for local residents and also to others who opt for relocation in need of occupation. Tourism brings large amounts of income into a local economy in the form of payment for goods and services needed by the tourists visiting that place. The hospitality industry which benefits from tourism include transportation services (such as bus, trains and taxi), lodging services (including hotels, homestays, resorts, and renting rooms) and amusement destinations (such as parks, dams, nature camps, etc.). From the field study it has been observed that, as 60% of the inhabitants are a part of the growth of tourism sector, so expansion of tourism can improve the local economic standard as well as it promotes environmental protection also (Mahato, 2012; Atkinson, 2007).

4.3. Local Inflation

Inflation is a general rise in the price level in an economy over a period of time. Undoubtedly tourism influences the economic development of the host region but the rising prices in a tourist place introduced inflation which may be due to either an increase in tourism demand or higher costs of goods and services. On the other hand an increase in the number of tourist arrival can cause the demand for domestic goods and services to rise. This can contribute to a larger consumption of goods and services, causing a higher aggregate demand which lead to inflation. It has been observed from the field survey that 45% of the population have been agreed with the increasing prices, on the contrary 31% did not agree with the impact of inflation.

4.4. Transport and Technology

The emergence of new technologies in transport and communication also helps in growth of tourism.

When easy and smooth access of transport system prevails it attracts more of tourists to visit the place or plan for holiday destination. The growing urbanisation is the direct impact of tourism on the local economy. At every strata of living there comes an improvement which is possible by the increase in family income. It leads to educational opportunities for the new generations leading more access to varied food, health care and different other facilities for the local people.

5. Conclusion

Tourism in the Ajyodhya Hills of Purulia, has a tremendous bearing on the socio-economic development of the district. Many important parameters are responsible for the development of the tourism industry in recent times.

One of the most important developments is due to the geomorphic makeup of the terrain and its broadcasting in the internet through the recently developed various social media.

Well-developed communication and secured hospitality has attracted many visitors within West Bengal as well as the adjoining states.

Urbanization through the development of habitable hotels and their comparative cheapness with various seasonal offers are eye-catching.

As of late, tourists and visitors expect to enjoy the retro-urban facility, i.e., all modern facilities in a traditional/rural environment which is readily available.

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5. Bhaya, S and Chakrabarty, A. (2016): A GIS based eco-tourism potential site selection for promotion of tourism in Traditional cultural heritage in the form of songs, dance and handicrafts are other important aspects of attraction offered by the residents, for which tourists are attracted.

All these aspects in tourism sector leads to job opportunities which helps in improved income sources and access to better education and health for the local people. They do not need to migrate or relocate to other places in search of job. Moreover the region being made attractive for tourists, also brings communication benefits, better power supply system, easy access of internet resources for educational purposes and various other infrastructure facilities also benefit the local people and enhance their daily living. As the rural communities are linked with the natural environment, they can be also trained and informed about the various aspects of conservation of natural habitat, which helps to maintain the ecological balance. The preservation of nature and its beauty leads to promotion of tourism. Thus the overall progress in tourism also influences in the holistic development of the region and also of the residents.

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