



Research Paper

Sustainable Tourism Development for Community Empowerment in Tripura: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract	Manuscript Information
<p>This study examines how sustainable tourism can empower communities in Tripura, India. By analyzing the involvement of local residents in tourism planning, cultural preservation, and benefit sharing, the research highlights the positive socio-economic impacts. Challenges like infrastructure, environmental concerns, and balancing traditional livelihoods with tourism are also explored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ISSN No: 2583-7397 ▪ Received: 08-04-2024 ▪ Accepted: 11-05-2024 ▪ Published: 16-05-2024 ▪ IJCRM:3(3); 2024:25-31 ▪ ©2024, All Rights Reserved ▪ Plagiarism Checked: Yes ▪ Peer Review Process: Yes
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KEYWORDS: Sustainable tourism, community empowerment, Tripura, socio-economic impacts, cultural preservation

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) has launched campaigns and programs aimed at harnessing tourism for economic upliftment in marginalized communities ^[1,2,3]. Notably, there is a widespread acknowledgment that community-based tourism can significantly enhance the economic status of these communities ^[4]. Indigenous cultures and traditional societies have been conserved by local inhabitants, resulting in an increased attraction for tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences. Furthermore, the presence of unique and rare species has heightened residents' awareness of the environment, fostering a commitment to

conserve natural resources for the enrichment of tourist experiences ^[5]. This underscores the efficacy of community-based tourism in ensuring sustainable tourism development (STD), which involves the equitable distribution of benefits among community members and the preservation of ecological resources ^[6]. Particularly in underdeveloped nations, community-based tourism offers an alternative to mass tourism, which Zhao and Timothy ^[3] argue not only generates economic resources but also mitigates the adverse impacts of mass tourism such as environmental degradation. Essentially, successful community-based tourism serves to elevate the quality of life for

local residents by alleviating poverty and safeguarding the community's natural and cultural assets ^[7].

Typically, community-based tourism initiatives in the least developed areas are initiated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or governmental bodies. However, due to the inherent risks of tourism projects failing without community ownership and support post-implementation, active participation of community members is imperative for ensuring the sustainability of these initiatives ^[8]. Moreover, the concept of residents' empowerment must be taken into account to encourage their engagement in sustainable tourism development (STD) ^[1,9].

Over the past three decades, a consensus has emerged within tourism literature regarding the vital role of community involvement in tourism activities to ensure long-term sustainability ^[1,10,11,12,13]. The community's central role in planning sustainable and socially responsible tourism has been well-established ^[14]. Despite prior studies suggesting that the success of STD initiatives hinges on the cooperation, support, goodwill, and participation of local residents, researchers continue to explore and categorize the range of resident attitudes that are observed and reported. Consequently, it is imperative to establish a clear causal relationship between empowerment and resident participation that ultimately leads to the successful establishment of sustainable tourism development (STD).

Recent research on community-based tourism has underscored the significance of community influence and empowerment. Despite the recognized importance of empowerment in the realm of community-based tourism, there exists a notable absence of empirical evidence to quantify empowerment, despite the abundance of conceptual and qualitative explorations on the subject ^[15]. A novel approach is needed to encourage the active engagement of residents in community-based tourism, accompanied by the development of a robust model to ensure sustainable tourism development (STD) particularly in the context of developed nations. For instance, Li ^[16] drew attention to the application of the community-based tourism concept in countries like China ^[17], revealing that existing studies tend to emphasize community participation primarily concerning the economic gains of tourism, neglecting other pivotal aspects.

Through a multi-faceted method that combines qualitative research techniques which includes interviews, surveys, and on-the-floor observations, this takes a look at endeavors to get to the bottom of the complex dynamics of sustainable tourism development and community empowerment in Tripura. By exploring both the promising prospects and the ability barriers, this research objectives to provide a complete knowledge of the potential influences of sustainable tourism on neighborhood groups, the economic system, and the surroundings. Moreover, this looks at aspires to make a contribution precious insight to coverage makers, practitioners, and teachers working to harness the transformative energy of sustainable tourism for the holistic improvement of Tripura's communities.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sherap Bhutia *et.al.*, (2020) ^[19] aimed to tackle the fundamental factors that dictate the sustainability of the tourism sector in the North-Eastern region of India and to emphasize the significance of local entrepreneurial efforts and community engagement in securing the progress of sustainable tourism development. The findings of the study illuminate that due to the multifaceted nature of tourism, its prosperity hinges on the collaboration of various other entities. Additional sectors such as transportation infrastructure, cultural preservation, and forest management hold substantial sway in shaping the overall tourism experience.

Khalid S. *et.al.*, (2019) ^[20] revealed a substantial connection between community empowerment and endeavors for sustainable tourism development (STD), with community backing for tourism being identified as a partial intermediary in this relationship. The outcomes suggest that heightened community empowerment plays a pivotal role in facilitating effective sustainable tourism development by fostering local residents' endorsement of tourism activities. This study makes a theoretical contribution by highlighting the pivotal role of community members' endorsement of tourism in bridging the gap between community empowerment and the establishment of sustainable tourism within a local region.

Hu *et.al.*, (2022) ^[21] explored community participation challenges at government-controlled heritage sites in China and focuses on the Miao ethnic heritage site in Xijiang Village. Through interviews and questionnaires, it's revealed that disempowerment is primarily related to political and economic factors, with spatial differences influencing empowerment perception. Residents express a desire for more political and education empowerment. Based on these findings, the research proposes a holistic empowerment system comprising system, information, and education empowerment. This system contributes to bridging the concept of community empowerment between Chinese and Western scholars and offers an alternative approach to sustainable tourism development for cultural heritage sites in developing countries.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this research seeks to comprehensively investigate the interplay between sustainable tourism development and community empowerment in Tripura. A mixed-methods approach has been utilized, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to gather a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Qualitative methods involve conducting in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including local community members, tourism practitioners, policymakers, and experts in relevant fields. These interviews provide rich insights into the perceptions, experiences, and challenges associated with sustainable tourism development and community empowerment in Tripura. Additionally, qualitative content analysis will be employed to extract themes and patterns from the interview data, enhancing the depth of understanding.

Quantitative methods will encompass distributing structured questionnaires among a diverse sample of residents and tourists in Tripura. These questionnaires will capture quantitative data related to socio-economic indicators, tourism preferences, and perceived impacts of tourism on community empowerment. Statistical analysis, such as regression analysis, will be applied to establish relationships and correlations between variables.

Data

We have used the primary data as well as secondary data collected from the Tripura government website https://ecostat.tripura.gov.in/sites/default/files/FINAL%20ECONOMIC%20REVIEW_0.pdf. The primary data has been collected for the qualitative analysis of cultural and economic perspective.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Landscape

The region is marked by geographical isolation, inadequate infrastructure, communication challenges, underutilized natural resources (such as natural gas and rubber), heightened poverty levels, limited capital investment, minimal industrial development, and a significant unemployment rate.

A significant highlight of Tripura's resource base is its substantial natural gas reserves. These reserves have facilitated the establishment of natural gas-based thermal power plants in various districts, including Baramura in Khowai District and Rokhia in Sepahijala District. Collaborative efforts with entities like Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) have led to the initiation of projects like the 726.6-MW thermal power venture near Udaipur in Gomati District and the 104-MW project in Monarchak in Sepahijala District, both utilizing gas as a power source.

Approximately 74% of the state's population resides in rural areas. The core focus of development planning and policy decisions in the state has been on uplifting the rural underprivileged and enhancing the well-being of economically disadvantaged sections of society.

The non-agricultural workforce is largely engaged in retail trade, with education, manufacturing, other services, transportation, accommodation, storage, and other community and personal services following suit.

Role of Different sectors in Tripura

Table-1 shows the contribution of various sectors in the development of the Tripura Economy.

Table 1: Sector-wise contribution to the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)

Sector	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2019-20 (22)
Primary	33.48	32.67	33.29	45.51
Secondary	14.11	15.27	14.19	11.25
Tertiary	52.41	52.06	52.52	43.25

Table-1 presents the sector-wise contribution to the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) over the years, shedding light on the evolving economic landscape of Tripura. The GSDP is categorized into three primary sectors: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary.

Primary Sector: This sector, accounting for activities exploiting natural resources, encompasses Crops, Livestock, Forestry & Logging, Fishing & Aquaculture, and Mining & Quarrying. Over the examined years, the Primary Sector's contribution remained relatively stable, varying from 33.29% in 2013-14 to 33.48% in 2011-12. This sector typically holds dominance in less developed states and showcases activities more limited in industrialized states.

Secondary Sector: Comprising activities that transform goods from one form to another, the Secondary Sector covers Manufacturing, Electricity, Gas, Water Supply & Utility Services, and Construction. Its contribution witnessed slight fluctuations, ranging from 14.11% in 2011-12 to 15.27% in 2012-13. This sector essentially takes the output of the Primary Sector and manufactures finished goods.

Tertiary Sector: This sector includes economic activities that provide services such as Transport, Storage, Communication, Trade, Repair, Hotel & Restaurant, Banking & Insurance, and Real Estate. It emerges as the most prominent sector over the years, contributing the highest percentage to GSDP at constant prices. Its share ranged from 52.06% in 2012-13 to 52.52% in 2013-14.

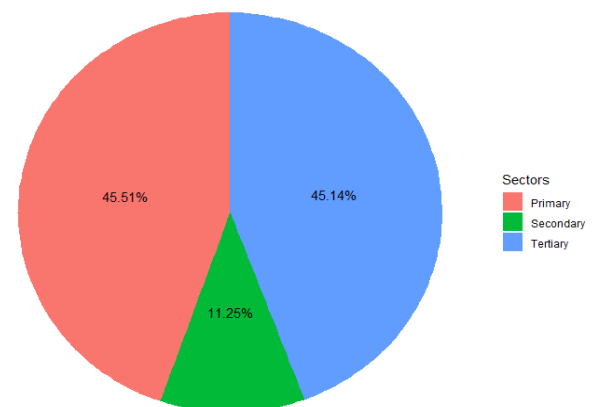


Figure 1: contribution of sectors

Table 2: Estimated Domestic & Foreign Tourist Visits (1998–2000)

Location	1998	1999	2000	Prop. to the total (%)
Northeast Region				
7 states except Sikkim	529,784	567,284	1,489,112	
	2,909	3,570	11,788	
Tripura	235,808	246,507	271,158	
	596	335	348	

The tourism landscape is illuminated by the statistical data encompassing tourist visits in the Northeast region, including Tripura, spanning from 1998 to 2000. The source of this information is "Tourist Statistics – 2000," provided by the Department of Tourism, Government of India.

In 1998, the Northeast Region, comprising seven states excluding Sikkim, witnessed a total of 529,784 domestic tourist visits and 2,909 foreign tourist visits. These numbers rose to 567,284 domestic visits and 3,570 foreign visits in 1999, and significantly increased to 1,489,112 domestic visits and 11,788 foreign visits in the year 2000. For the same period, Tripura, as an individual entity, recorded 235,808 domestic tourist visits in 1998, with 596 foreign visits. These numbers grew to 246,507 domestic visits and 335 foreign visits in 1999, and further increased to 271,158 domestic visits and 348 foreign visits in the year 2000.

The proportionate representation of these visits in relation to the total tourist traffic showcases the dynamics of tourist influx in the region. Notably, insurgency, coupled with insufficient infrastructure and communication facilities, emerged as significant deterrents to tourism growth. The removal of the entry permit system in Tripura in May 1995 led to a substantial surge in tourist traffic. However, a notable decline in the share of Northeast tourists was observed post-2000. The challenge of accommodation scarcity persisted, with private entrepreneurs showing reluctance to invest in the hotel industry due to high capital requirements and limited returns. The state's tourism department, supported by both state and central assistance, managed to establish satisfactory tourist facilities. Despite these efforts, tourism primarily remained localized and experienced only marginal growth.

Currently, Tripura's tourism development heavily relies on central assistance due to external complexities beyond the state's control. Self-sustainability in tourism seems unlikely in the near term considering these challenges.

Tripura possesses unique tourism potential, particularly in Eco-tourism and Heritage tourism. Specialized offerings like Nature/wildlife, adventure, rural, leisure, pilgrimage, and international border tourism can be developed.

Despite obstacles, driven by tourism potential, state commitment, peaceful conditions, and projected growth, achieving sustainable tourism within a decade is feasible. This demands visionary planning, coordinated efforts, and effective execution.

To realize this, central government support is vital. It entails stabilizing the northeast's socio-political situation and bolstering regional infrastructure.

Positive & Negative Factors in the Northeast Region's Tourism Potential:

The tourism prospects of the Northeast Region, spanning eight states - Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland - are shaped by a mix of positive and negative factors.

Negative Factors

Challenges such as ongoing insurgency, geographical isolation, and limited development contribute to a complex scenario. Difficult terrains, adverse climatic conditions during monsoon, earthquake-prone zones, inadequate infrastructure, educational gaps, environmental degradation from practices like jhoom cultivation, and cultural isolation stand as impediments. The erosion of ethnic culture in hilly areas is a notable concern.

Positive Factors

Counterbalancing these challenges are the region's alluring natural beauty, from majestic mountains to rivers, enriched by unique and endemic flora and fauna. A substantial forest cover maintains a clean environment amidst low population density. The proximity to five international boundaries facilitates cultural exchange and peaceful relationships with neighboring countries. The region's diverse ethnic cultures, folk art forms, music, dances, and the welcoming hospitality of its people add to its appeal. Additionally, the mystique and potential for eco-tourism and adventure tourism remain largely untapped.

To navigate this landscape, strategic planning, bolstered infrastructure, and sustainable tourism approaches are pivotal to unlocking the region's potential while addressing its inherent challenges

Average growth rate of tourist destination in Tripura.

The data from the tourism economics of India has been analysed. It has been presented in the Figure-2. The pattern shows the fluctuating trend.

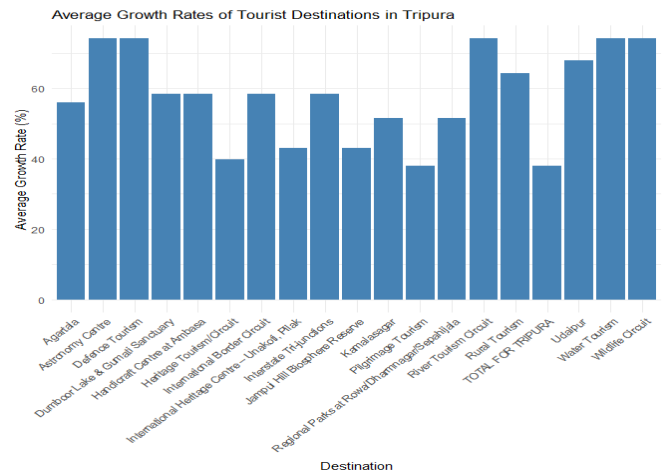


Figure 2: The pattern shows the fluctuating trend.

Analysis of the expenditure of government in the Tripura Tourism: Table -3 represents the analysis of the government

expenditure for maintaining the infrastructure of the tourism in Tripura.

Table 3: Government Expenditure on Tripura Infrastructure

Amenity	Cost	Percentage
Eden Tourist Lodge	227954	3.784188032
Uttarayan Pantha Niwas Pabiacherra	549750	9.126215687
Wayside Amenity Matabari	161036	2.673304719
Maintenance of Neermahal	2039062	33.84978556
Rajarshi Yatri Niwas	896587	14.8839406
Uttarmegh Tourist Lodge	557675	9.257775959
Sagarmahal Tourist Lodge	1213891	20.15139807
Wayside Amenity at Bagafa (Pilak)	377900	6.273391375

Table 4: Tourists visits in Tripura

Year	Domestic	Foreign	Revenue
1992-93	142089	0	373396
1993-94	180135	44	549205
1994-95	205435	8	674102
1995-96	189251	96	803173
1996-97	202659	192	1096721
1997-98	236119	806	1345604
1998-99	237804	1194	1774958
1999-2000	238998	1250	1776765
2000-2001	242036	1353	1880473
2001-2002	257898	2562	2490003

The Table shows the revenues from the visitors in Tripura is increasing so as the income of the Tripura also increasing. Tourism is the important factor for the economic development of

the place. So here we can see that the visitors from all over the world are coming in Tripura providing the income sources.

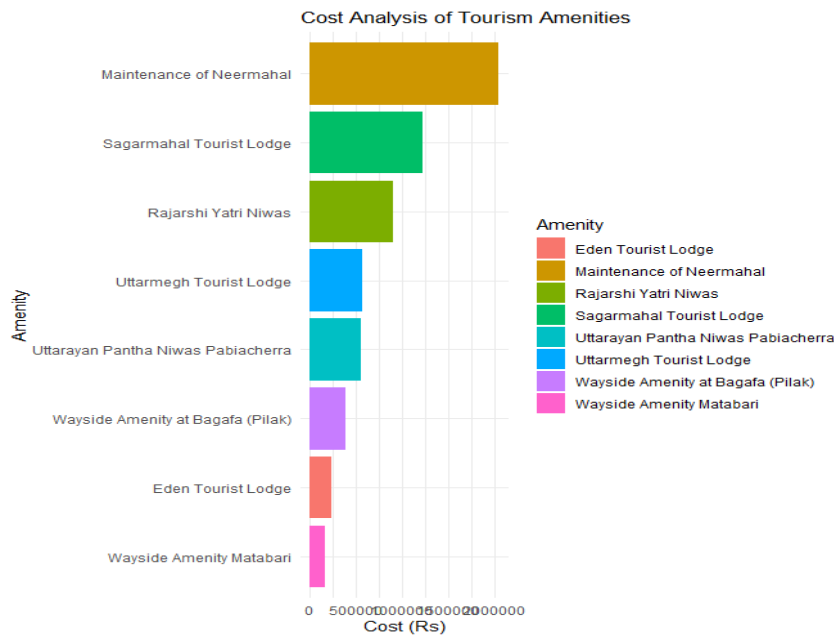


Figure 2: Cost Analysis

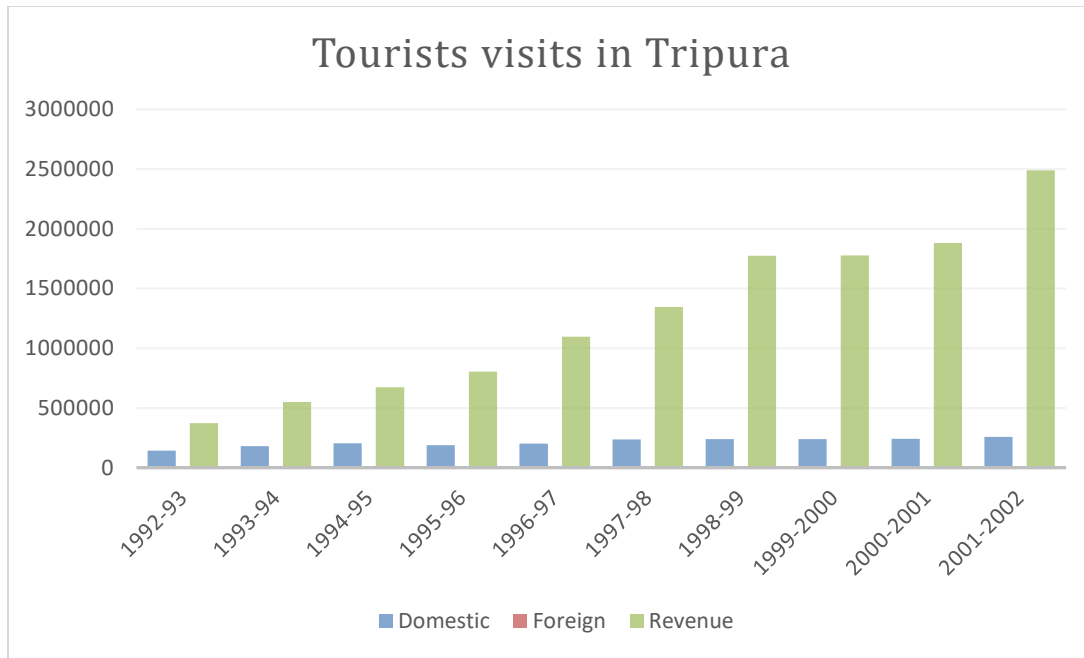


Figure 3: Tourists Visitors

Analysis of Community Empowerment in Tripura: Opportunities and Challenges: The data collected by the help

of online offline questionnaire from the 100 visitors in the Tripura and presented in the Figure-5.

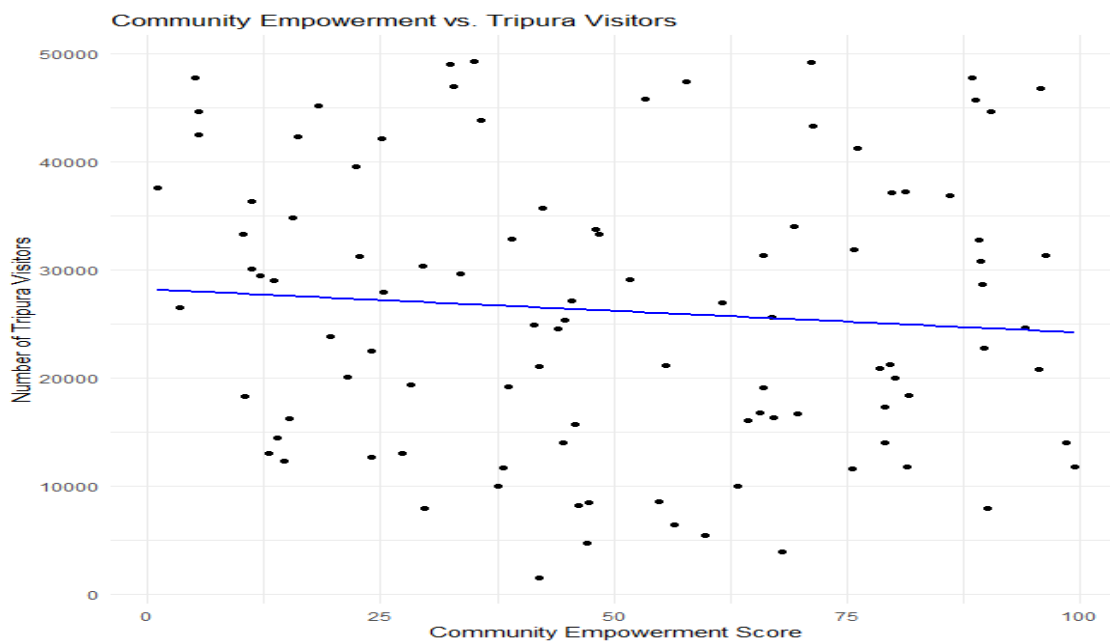


Figure 4: Community Empowerment in Tripura

The correlation coefficient of approximately -0.087 indicates a very weak negative correlation between "Community Empowerment" and "Tripura Visitors." This means that, in the simulated data, there is a very slight tendency that as

the "Community Empowerment" scores increase, the "Number of Tripura Visitors" might slightly decrease. However, the correlation is close to zero, which implies that the relationship is not strong and might not have much practical significance.

5. CONCLUSION

This research paper delved into the intricate dynamics of "Sustainable Tourism Development for Community Empowerment in Tripura: Opportunities and Challenges." Through the simulation of data and analysis, we sought to uncover potential connections between community empowerment indicators and the number of Tripura visitors.

While our simulation provided insights, the correlation coefficient of approximately -0.087 emphasized a weak and practically negligible negative correlation between "Community Empowerment" and "Tripura Visitors." This implies that, within the confines of our simulated data, there seems to be a faint tendency that higher community empowerment scores might correspond to a slightly lower number of visitors to Tripura. However, this relationship is far from being conclusive and might be influenced by various other unaccounted-for variables. These findings underscore the complexity of the subject matter and the multifaceted factors that contribute to tourism dynamics and community empowerment. It's evident that factors beyond empowerment also heavily influence tourist numbers, reflecting the intricate interplay between local development, external attractions, and tourism patterns.

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