

Palani Jharna (Waterfall): Host-Guest Perspectives of an Off-beat Rural Tourist Destination in Jharkhand, India

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ABSTRACT

The article attempts to examine the non-perennial Palani Waterfall (Jharna), which is located in the Patratu Block (Palani Village), in the Ramgarh District, in the Indian state of Jharkhand. The study aims to investigate the main socio-cultural challenges that must be overcome through better tourist planning in order to promote rural and eco-tourism in the selected site and protect the eco-cultural destination. In recent years, a crucial tool for guaranteeing the sustainability of tourist sites has emerged: an assessment and monitoring of tourism impacts combined with community perspective. The current study intends to examine the viewpoints of the local population at Palani, a developing tourist destination in Ranchi, Jharkhand, India, on the effects of tourism and their involvement in the process of tourism development. To achieve the study's goals, a non-probability convenience sampling method was employed. Our data shows that tourism is typically regarded as a sector that fosters development. Its advantages are more commonly accepted than its disadvantages since it increases household income, boosts local reputation, generates employment possibilities, and promotes the standard of living for indigenous people. Despite the fact that a sizable portion of tourists to the area think that tourism services are still in their infancy, the location has the potential to become more well-known. The study anticipates that the results will be helpful to the tourism industry, planning

organisations, business community, ethnic minority organisations, and academic institutions in order to plan, manage, and develop rural and ecotourism.

KEY WORDS: Rural-Tourism, Host-Guest perception, Tourism experience, Palani Waterfall, Jharkhand.

INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism has frequently been found to under-deliver in terms of expected economic benefits and job creation, and may exacerbate social and economic inequalities, and rural communities often lack the skills and experience required to successfully attract and satisfy tourists [1]. Miller et al. [2] argue that rural tourism is not “a magic panacea” for overcoming the complex and deep-rooted problems facing rural regions around the world, however it may provide one avenue, amongst others, for rural growth and (re)development. Rural Tourism exhorts tourists to spend quality time in a nuanced fashion by engaging them in different ethnic, indigenous, and aesthetic practices in rural areas. As against conventional tourism, rural tourism has certain typical characteristics: It is experience-oriented; the locations are less populated, it is predominantly in natural environments and it is based on the

preservation of culture, heritage, and traditions.

Many rural tourism initiatives are being conceived within the framework of Community Based Tourism, which combines aspects of community development, poverty alleviation, cultural heritage, and conservation. Tourism Policy of 2002 of Government of India considered the dynamics of rural and community-based tourism and introduced the concept of rural tourism to show case the rural life of Indian country side to visitors. The intention was to benefit the local community economically and socially as well as to enable interaction between tourists and local population for a mutually enriching experience. Even the concept is a relatively new concept; it can definitely be useful if it will be sensibly nurtured in a country like India, where almost 68.84% population reside in 6, 38,000 villages where most of the villagers are mainly dependent in agricultural activities and are eagerly looking for alternative job scope on an urgent basis for survival, as many a time due to drought, flood like natural calamities they suffer a lot and even incident like suicide is not rare one in rural farmer-communities.

In the above context, an exploratory study was conducted in the Palani Village of Patratu Block, Jharkhand, to observe the hosts' perceptions of developing an offbeat attraction as a tourist destination. Ethno-ecotourism is a specialised, niche market that has emerged as the tourism industry has diversified into "alternative" or "special interest" types of tourism such as nature and adventure tourism. Jharkhand offers numerous opportunities for Rural Tourism, Ethno-Tourism, Eco-Tourism, and Mass-Tourism. As a result, Palani Jharna has been designated as an Offbeat Tourism destination, with opportunities in marketing, cultural values and beliefs, and the tourism industry. The primary goal of this research is to determine the potential impact of rural tourism in the study area as a result of host-guest interaction if it is developed as a tourist destination. Furthermore, the paper

attempts to document villagers' and visitors' perceptions in order to examine the potential challenges and opportunities in developing Palani Jharna (Waterfall) as a tourist destination.

SOME EARLIER STUDIES ON RURAL TOURISM

The purpose of reviewing earlier literature is to understand the background of the study and thereby conduct further extensive study. Rural tourism emphasizes on actively contributing to the rural lifestyle. The present review of literature is an attempt to highlight a cross section of the studies which deals with the field of Rural tourism. It can be a variant of ecotourism or ethno-tourism. Even though a vast array of scholars and industry experts from the world over have researched on tourism and specifically rural tourism, it is not possible to study and include all, but some of the major ones are notably mentioned.

Waite and Cook (2007) ^[3] stated that tourism should be assimilated into the environment and the local culture of an area. According to Nagaraju and Chandrashekar ^[4], "Environmental improvements such as village paving and traffic regulation schemes, sewage and litter disposal can be assisted by tourism revenues and political pressures from tourism authorities. These helps develop pride of place, important in retaining existing population and businesses, and in attracting new enterprises and families." According to Pavel ^[5], 'Fundamental for a sustainable tourism industry is accepting the key principles underlying the concept of rural tourism'. Promotion and responsible marketing approaches help the host community and local entrepreneurs to recognize the intrinsic value of rural tourism. Ethical responsibility motivates both the host and the tourists to behave sensibly towards the environment. Such behaviour prevents the exploitation of tourism resources and as a result, all get long-term benefit as the principal and primary product of rural tourism is always rural culture and heritages along with nature

and its rich bio-diversity. Van der Ploeg [6] suggested an integrated rural tourism model. Rural tourism and local economy both are interdependent and it is considered as a key strategy player for the regional development [7-9]. Komppula [10] opined that developing rural tourism is actually the development of the region and wellbeing of the local community. Bramwell [11] has said that development increases the number of travellers and the frequency of travel. Rural Tourism facilitates the declining areas to be developed with basic infrastructure facilities and provides the host community alternative ways of employment and side by side it reduces out-migration. It fosters a closer relationship between city dwellers and rural communities. While tourists enjoy the natural environment and learn about nature, rural culture, tradition and heritages, farm work, art of living etc., the host receives income from tourism. It empowers local people and they take participation in different decision-making occasions.

METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The research was conducted in accordance with the study's theme, which is qualitative in nature. The primary goal of the research is to determine the scope of rural tourism in the study area. In 2022, a basic survey was conducted using pre-tested schedules based on Neil Leiper's Whole Tourism System Model [12]. It was created to find out what respondents thought about the Scope of Rural Tourism and Eco-Tourism in the study area. Interviewees were asked open-ended questions while still in the field (face to face), and the researcher attempted to administer the field work survey using the Focus Group Discussion, Personal Interview, Case Study, and Photography methods. A convenient sampling method was used to select survey participants. The research has been carried out in different phases. Initial period of research proved to be difficult because of uneven terrain and suspicious attitude of the respondents that gives the impression of a culture whose members constitute what

Adler and Adler [13] (2002) described as reluctant respondents who are not only hard to find but even harder to secure for permission to study. Moreover, prior to the 'real' field work, few informal meetings and interviews were carried out with some key people and potential key informants in block and village to explore more on baseline information regarding the study. The data on local perception were collected through open ended interview and guided observation by the field guide. Almost every member of the village incorporating male, female, adult and young were interviewed independently to find the shared and distributed knowledge concerning destination development and management. The study was principally guided by qualitative methodology and data validation was based on focused group discussion and peer group meeting.

PALANI JHARNA (WATERFALL)'S TOURIST IMPORTANCE: AN OVERVIEW

Palani Jharna is located in the Palani village that comes under the Ramgarh's Patraru block, Jharkhand. Palani is located 29 kilometres from the district headquarters Ramgarh, 50 kilometres from the state capital Ranchi, and lies between Kanke Block to the north and Patraru Block to the west. The settlement is roughly 4 km off the major highway, and SH2, which connects Ranchi with Patraru, Pithauriya, and Kanke, begins at its intersection with NH 20 near Ramgarh Cantonment. *Talatanr* Panchayat oversees this village in terms of village panchayat administration.

According to the villagers, the place (*tola*) where this waterfall flows is known as *Phulwa Kocha*. The authors came across an intriguing story concerning the finding and identification of this Palani Waterfall during a conversation with residents of Palani village. This Palani village is situated within forest area and the waterfall is also within forest. This whole area comes under the Ramgarh forest division. This forest area is watched upon and protected by Santosh

Toppo, a *vanpal* (forest guard). He used to frequently go there to take care of the forest area. One day he requested the locals to draw attention to this location. As soon as the people were prepared, he began to blog, record movies, and take pictures of this waterfall. To make this fall popular, he called media people, posted videos and photos on Facebook, What's App, and YouTube. Most of the locals weren't too enthusiastic about this project at first, but once tourists started coming, they got involved and later added to the effort to make this waterfall renowned in numerous ways. The people urged Santosh Toppo, the forest guard, to name the waterfall after himself. But he vehemently objected to this. He firmly argued that since the waterfall is a village asset and a tourist destination, it should be called the "Palani Waterfall" in honor of the community. As a result, Palani Waterfall gained popularity. After the persistent efforts of the forest guard and the locals, this waterfall was first brought to the public's attention in 2019 (before to the epidemic and COVID-19). The villagers regard this forest guard as a family guardian and are his loyal followers.

The Palani waterfall is bordered by three side hills covered in lush green forests, which is an intriguing phenomenon. It can be observed in its early stages and looks fantastic during the wet season. According to tourists and locals, the current of this waterfall induces inner tranquilly and a sense of permanence. In fact, people have often expressed a desire to spend a few days or a week living here. This autumn is too gorgeous and alluring because of the high-altitude hill and the various kinds of vegetation and woodlands. This is Ramgarh district's newly discovered (explored) non-perennial waterfall. Tourists are seen in large numbers here from December to January. However, on average, 30-50 tourists visit this location per day.

It was found during conversations with certain villagers that individuals intended to construct a "Lord Shiva Temple" and a "Maa Devi" temple next to the Palani Jharna. The decision is still being thought about, but construction on the temple is soon to begin. In addition, since 2022, the locals have begun to congregate close to this Jharna on the occasions of "Makar Sankranti and Mahashivratri." On the other hand, the villagers and their committees are also debating whether to organise the large fair on the day of "Mahashivratri."

Another villager shared a brief tale, he said that the water current that runs through this Waterfall descends to the earth, and this subsurface water is referred to as *Putriya Nala* (Son's drain). Since the inhabitants believe that their forefathers called this small river, its name has been used since ancient times. Some locals also refer to this minor river as Chotaki Nadi. Agriculture uses the ground-flowing water from the waterfall. The people claim that the winter season is when most tourists come to this area. They mostly come here for picnics and leisurely visits. But on January 1st, 2022, about 5000 individuals showed up. Between 5000 and 7000 people came here overall in January. The Palani Waterfall committee of villagers is depicted in the Van Adhikar Adhinyam (Forest Rights legislation, 2006) of the central government forest legislation, according to residents Ravi Munda (35) and Manoj Mahto (40). These villagers consider themselves to be subject to the Van Adhikar Adhinyam Act, and their committee abides by its regulations. Villagers make decisions and create laws, regulations, and prohibitions under the direction of this committee while seated together. The head of this waterfall committee is Bhuneshwar Oraon, a resident of Palani Village in Mahali Tola.



Palani Waterfall



Main Entrance of Waterfall & Park



Tourists at Palani Waterfall



The Researcher at Palani waterfall

Images of Palani Waterfall Area (Source: Field Work 2022)

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF PALANI JHARNA: HOST AND GUEST PERCEPTION

Recently, academics around the world have attempted to research the perceptions of local communities and tourists towards tourism, as well as their impact on the tourism industry. Despite an increase in the number of studies focusing on local residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism in general and its impacts [14], the results remain inconclusive. Local residents' support for tourism development is required to ensure the industry's commercial, socioeconomic, cultural, physiological, and

political sustainability. The socio-economic status of the community's residents may influence the structural changes within the tourism industry occurring as a result of the ongoing development of rural tourism such as changes in the local economics [15,16], social changes [17,16], cultural changes [18,19], and environmental changes [20, 18]. The perceptions for socio-cultural impacts on one specific site were inspected by Brunt and Courtney [21] and Gu and Wong [22] and they found that the residents had a positive perception for the tourist movement. On the other hand, few researches found the negative perception of local residents

towards tourism^[23]. High tourist movement in the area produces displeasure among residents and it has relationship with transportation problem, corruption, and price rise^[24]. Heavy tourist inflow to the region has the relationship of perception with traditional culture loss^[25].

The purpose of this study is to add to the body of knowledge on local perceptions and tourist appeal. It establishes a framework for examining how context affects the relevance of visitor and local traits and how they affect appeal. This study will serve as a model for planners, hoteliers, and other stakeholders interested in improving the tourism environment by strengthening infrastructure and closing critical gaps.

This study used a sample of fifty (50) local residents and ten (10) tourists from the study area to map the residents' and tourists' perceptions of the positive and negative impact of this off-beat rural destination in Jharkhand. For convenience and to protect the respondents' anonymity, we have labelled the local respondents as L followed by a numeral, i.e., L1, L2... Similarly, tourists are labelled as T1, T2, etc. The study's findings are indicative and suggest various perspectives on rural tourism development. Locals agree that tourism can bring both positive and negative aspects to a community. It's worth noting that the majority of respondents expressed reservations about the government's role in the area's planning and development strategies. Because of the primary benefits, tourism was viewed as a development opportunity for the host community (e.g., recreational areas, job opportunities, living standard of the residents). These findings support previous research that tourism development leads to environmental (natural and cultural) protection and an increase in job opportunities. These are critical aspects for the development of sustainable tourism in rural areas. The development of tourism activity in rural areas generates additional revenue for the local budget, which can be invested in future tourism development plans and the conservation of tourism

attractions, ensuring the area's sustainability. The results of thematic analysis of the interviews that captured local perceptions are shown below.

Positive and Negative Aspects of Tourism

In general, research participants appreciated the positive impacts that can be brought to an area from tourism. Each interviewee summarised the impact of tourism in their area using expressions like 'diverse income opportunities' (L9), 'gave motivation to young people to stay in the village' (L2), and 'better infrastructure' (L5). The following excerpt demonstrates that the villagers are willing to accept development intervention to make popular their rural and ecological heritage., definitely. We are always moving forward to make this waterfall developed and is directly linked to its social and environmental characteristics. For example, we follow our traditional rituals and behaviours in the same way as our ancestors used to do.

Tourism is perceived as a positive enterprise in rural areas, and has a multiplier effect^[26]. Locals appreciate the fact that their village is attractive to outsiders because of its various elements that make it unique. L11 mentioned that:

Tourism development can bring to repair, reconstruct and maintaining dilapidated roads, restore temples, and improve drinking water supply. Some gardens and parks may be built to attract outsiders for green tourism experiences. Transport communication can also be improved.

Tourism, according to L21, is one of the reasons that many villagers may stay in the village even during the off-agricultural season due to the income opportunities that tourism can provide for young people. Respondents were eloquent in mentioning that there are also negative consequences because development is not always aligned with village life. Furthermore, some respondents expressed concern that if all villagers will be dependent on tourism services as a means of earning a living, we will be at risk losing our traditional way of

life, which is inextricably linked to our agricultural operations. In addition, the seasonal cycle of tourist footfall is an important consideration when developing an occupational diversification strategy. Locals feel that they must diversify their occupational activities by combining traditional practises and finding new revenue streams. This is especially true after the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented any tourism of the various prominent tourist spots located near the Palani Jharna region. A respondent (L32) stated that

I believe that major efforts with proper planning is required to promote our village as a green-ecotourism and rural tourism destination. It's a peril when locals rely entirely on tourism.

This is an issue for many destinations with seasonal tourist cycles^[27]. As a result, the authorities should prioritise plans and policies that enable the diversification of tourism activities and generate year-round demand. The government's role appears to be weaker as a result of its inability to impose development strategies and incentives that can offset negative effects with positive ones.

During the field trip, researchers interacted with a few visitors, most of whom were from the same district and a few from other districts throughout the state. Visitors from outside may struggle to find the location because it is not yet well-known and lacks any kind of signage. Various perspectives from visitors emerged during the interaction, which may shed some light on both positive and negative aspects of that destination. Excerpts from one of the visitors (T2) from outside the districts,

Because of its amazing location and consistent flow of water, this location has the potential to become most popular waterfall destinations in the Ramgarh district. If a dam is built over this waterfall, then flow of water will continue throughout a year. However, significant improvements in basic tourist amenities are required.

Another visitor (T8) mentioned that the lack of proper signage from main road towards waterfall makes it difficult for the majority of visitors to find the location and raises concerns about security because it is not yet on the Jharkhand tourism department's tourist map. However, the sine board is made available on main road with proper text directed the way.

I am confused about going to that location. Before entering from SH2, no any signage found but found after 1km. But now it is much better than before. Villagers and some visitors are well-known to inquire about the location. If something goes wrong with me.....I am sure to find assistance but still fear as the way is remote area with half kutcha and pucca.

Although both the host and the guest agree that the area has a high tourism potential, they did not ignore the negative aspects of destination development. This explains why, despite the potential for self-sustained development, residents in most villages with tourism potential lack a clear tourist culture, leading them to see tourism as a development sector. In general, while visitors recognize the territory's potential, their focus in each destination is more personal.

Threats and Opportunities

The main threats stem from the negative impact of unplanned or unauthorized development in the areas. Respondents primarily mentioned "waste pollution" or "a lack of coordinated development actions." Furthermore, there have been reports of tourists harassing locals while visiting and organizing picnics in the village area. The following quote provides an example of a threat to tourism:

Local teenagers usually come here with their girlfriend and found engaged in some heinous (unsocial) behaviors. They also consume alcohol and discard the glass bottle in the nearby bushes and make disturbance in the spots and village (L6).

The excerpts from a visitor (T7) is also representative,

You can visit this place with your family. The waterfall is lovely flowing within the forest, and there is clear path to the viewpoint. But you cannot take bath due lack of bathing point here. There are also the threats of wild animals but attractive. On the other hand, taking bath is a risk due to scattered live rocks and slippery rocks here and there.

The preceding narratives raise concerns about the habits of tourists who visit rural areas. What is required is that visitors to rural areas respect the surrounding pristine environments as well as the residents' peaceful lives. In the case of opportunities arising from tourism, hosts eloquently argued that there are many financial and social benefits. L3 states:

I truly believe that tourism can bring family members together, especially when it comes to a family business. Villagers (hosts) can work in small businesses such as restaurants, grocery stores, selling fruits and handicrafts, and so on.

Another excerpt from visitor (T2) is worth mentioning,

I'd never been to such a pristine and serene natural setting. It requires safeguards against overexploitation, commercialization, anti-social being, and waste management. With proper planning, villagers can be used as tourist guides for trekking through the forest to reach the viewpoint and tourist's friend for better hosting (hospitality).

However, there has been dissatisfaction with the government authorities' focus on developing specific villages. Locals believe that there is discrimination and step manners in tourism development and that areas' full potential has not been realised. Tourism has been identified as a good development strategy for rural areas in Jharkhand, but development has been slow for the off-the-beaten-path destination. Perhaps this is because the development of the neighbouring popular destination did not allow for the growth of the off-beat destination. The authorities may not have enough resources as well. However, the Jharkhand government's pursuit of

sustainable tourism should result in holistic development, which can improve the area by realising all of its potential and ensuring social and economic viability.

Change in Attitude, Lifestyle and Eating Behavior

Undoubtedly, tourism activity can introduce new habits to an area^[27]. Interview results are indicative, and provide an insight into local perceptions in relation to new habits, lifestyles, and attitudes. L15 said that,

Tourism activities in my locality has changed my mindset, but not my lifestyle. I catch myself being more open to the outsiders, and appreciate and respect the differences of every person without losing my culture and tradition.

Interacting with other cultures influences people's acceptance and appreciation and contributes to mutual understanding. The main argument concerning eating habits is that locals discovered and have explored the gastronomy and cuisine by serving traditional dishes to outsiders in a *dehati* (local) way. One of the respondents (L3) mentioned that,

We use all home-made ingredients to prepare the dishes and served in a *Sal* plate. Sometimes, visitors also ask for locally brewed liquor (*handia* and *mahua*). We feel happy for serving such hospitality. We also assist visitors who feel immediate acidity by herbal treatment using some selected plant leaves.

Response of T1 is also worth mentioning, The best way to enjoy *Palani Jharna's (waterfall)* serenity is with fried snacks (non-veg) and *handia* (rice juice). I used to come here with a friend just for that. I really enjoy the delicious taste here.

Exploring food traditions through the presentation of dishes made with local ingredients gives the location identity, and residents can become more connected to their cultural roots and traditions. Visitors seek out traditional gastronomy and cuisine to learn more about the area. Another important aspect is that food culture and local spirits culture can be combined,

especially with proper planning, to replace the anarchy caused by consuming foreign liquor by the visitors.

Cultural Revival

Cultural elements in tourism have a variety of benefits for destinations [28]. Cultural characteristics are being regenerated, as evidenced by traditional cuisine, food, festivals, and handicrafts. According to an articulate respondent (L42):

We intend to hold an annual *Banjari Mata worship* (deity of forest) event over the waterfall area (live rock covered with green forests) in the month of asadh (July) to promote the area to outsiders. We wish for better rain, cultivation, well-being, and welfare of the village during our worship. Such gatherings also allow the villagers to showcase their cultural performances in front of strangers. Then after we start our business here such as levying charges, opening shops and etc. If we will not follow this, there is a fear of something bad happening.

Another respondent replied (L12) that, Through traditional food, songs, and folk tales we can demonstrate our culture, our hospitality, our own identity.

The below excerpt is also indicative (L11): Many people, including tourists and outsiders are interested in learning about our religion, traditions, cuisine, and daily lives. As a result, they come to our area to expand their knowledge and have a one-of-a-kind experience with our cultural heritage. At the same time, we are learning from this experience and attempting to learn even more and find useful information to share with them, going above and beyond to demonstrate the warm hospitality that is part of our cultural heritage. We really are fortunate to be the native of this village and Palani Jharna.

Thus, cultural revival and pride are concerned with 'image,' 'identity,' and the exchange of knowledge through cultural demonstration. Cultural pride is synonymous with the pride of locals who

share a sense of belonging. A visitor (T10) suggests,

Villagers can exhibit their traditional artifacts by building a community museum. This will attract visitors while also educating them about the local culture. They should build temples of their gods/goddess who they believe for making this place more popular as well as spiritual tourists spot (Ethno-tourism).

The above narration suggests that involvement in tourism benefits the locals because they are consequently motivated to present and promote their cultural heritage. Sustainability is indeed a way of displaying the unique characteristics of a place.

Government Support

Respondents argued that rural areas are part of tourism development in the case of the government's role. During discussions with the villagers, it appears that the villagers have some demands to develop this hidden tourist destination through beautification while preserving the natural and cultural landscape. They want the area to be beautified, with a park, ropeways leading down to the waterfall, a tourist amenity center, and other basic amenities. However, the main demand is that the government include this location on the Ramgarh district's official tourist map. They also suggested that the *Palani Jharna* be promoted as part of a local tourist circuit that also included Patratu valley and Patratu Dam. A respondent (L4) highlighted that:

If properly developed, a tourist could visit Patratu valley, Patratu Dam, and Palani Jharna all at once. All three are close to one another.

Another respondent (L6) said that, The PRI and assembly representatives have been very proactive in bringing this location to the forefront. Jharkhand's administration is also doing a good job of promoting rural tourism. To develop this location, we will need to work together.

We met one person (T6) who lives permanently in Bihar and visited that

location with local relatives and suggested that,

The view is truly breath-taking, and the YouTube Vlogger should document the location in a proper way so that government agencies are aware of it.

Local governments in rural areas can play an important role in encouraging tourism development as apparent from the statement below by L22.

I used to believe that this village had nothing to offer and that the investment opportunities were minor. But now I realise how wrong I was. The village's tourism potential emerged during the Covid-19 lockdown, when Santosh Toppo a forest guard, began exploring the area in their spare time. Our Mukhiya (Panchayat Head) has a vision for the village's growth while also preserving its unique character and identity.

Additionally, indicative quotes include statements like the government needs to invest in road infrastructure and maintenance to make our village accessible (L19).

Also, L14 said,

Need to construct the entrance mentioning the place name and appointment of *Paryatak mitra* and supporting staffs to facilitate tourist needs. Presently only 2 paryatak mitra is deputed but it should be like 10-15 as per the situation.

Another, L 45 said,

Showing me the cut page of headlines of Local newspaper 'Ek Jhalak,' this waterfall would be developed by Central Government and State Government funds. Actually, this information is clear from media and newspapers Prabhat Khabar. An amount of one billion sixty lakh rupees (100,6000000) has been allocated by the central and state government to develop this, Palani Waterfall. Present M.P Jayant Sinha from Hazaribagh Constituency also made his contribution to make develop this waterfall. But till now that amount has not reached the ground level.

Locals are preparing to approach administration in order for them to listen to

their concerns and establish a network of rural localities as popular tourist destinations with year-round activities. The unique natural and social environment, as well as the rich historical and religious heritage, should be promoted. Education is essential for encouraging locals to enter the industry and learn about the benefits. The development of stronger collaboration networks will enable rural residence to pursue sustainable goals. Any government plan will fail unless locals participate (Segota et al. 2017).

PALANI JHARNA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION: HOST'S INITIATIVES

Rural tourism development is more than just a homestay programme; it is also a rural development strategy. However, implementation necessitates a high level of commitment and understanding among stakeholders. A concerted effort, without relying on outsiders' assistance, is required to design a successful rural destination, particularly in village tourist destination programmes. The development of Palani as a tourist village may provide enormous opportunities to rural communities. This could provide additional support for rural socioeconomic development, social capital development, conservation and enhancement of rural areas, and security issues in general. In order to develop the tourism sector in a rural destination, the local community must be involved in the tourism development programme. It is believed that the programme will not achieve its goals unless the community in the rural destination develops. Nature-based tourism and cultural tourism are two types of rural tourism products. Village tourist destination is the result of the combination of two products.

As one of the villages in Ramgarh District, Palani Village has the potential to become one of the tourist villages in the Patratu block. Despite the fact that the village only recently gained prominence as a tourist destination, tourist traffic remains very low. There is no mechanism in place to count

tourist footfall in order to develop an organised plan for developing this location as a tourist destination. However, locals reported only a few figures about the average number of daily visitors per day and

their purpose of visit in various months. In winter, on the account of Makar Sankranti, 1st January and 14th February, the waterfall area attracts a large number of visitors, including local and state dignitaries.

Table 1: Average monthly visitor's at Toti Jharna

Sl. No.	Month	Average Tourist Per Day (No.)	Purpose/s
1	March to June	30 to 50	Leisure
2	July to October	150-200	Picnic, Leisure, and visit
3	November to February	300-500	Picnic, Recreation, Leisure

Table 1 shows the average number of tourists who visit each month and their main reason for visiting. Tourists visit that location for leisure during the summer season because of its location in the midst of the dense green forest. People visit during the monsoon and winter seasons for both leisure, entertainment, and recreational reasons. During the winter months, the most people visit for picnic, leisure, recreation, and natural scenic observances. There were a few temporary shops set up by villagers selling groceries, snacks, water, local fruits, and ice-creams. In this context, the visitor's composition is also important. During the winter, a family or a group of male, female, and children can be found, whereas in the summer, a boy's group can be found primarily in the afternoon. Based on this rudimentary information, locals have classified the village's potential as a tourist destination into two categories and prepared an operational guideline to protect the community and promote rural tourism in their area. The two potentials are Natural potential (Waterfall, forest trail and hilly landscape), and Institutional Potential (Local community, Local wisdom, and Local performances). During a focused group discussion with the villagers, it was discovered that they had already agreed on certain points to manage and develop their village as a tourist destination through *Gram Sabha* (Village committee) meetings. The following are the proposed steps that all of the villagers agreed to carry out:

i) Temple Construction: Because this location has mythological significance for locals, people from the village and neighboring villages travel there to perform

their annual rituals and wish for better rain, cultivation, well-being, and welfare of the village, but there is only open location to hold those performances. Littering is a common occurrence following performances. Villagers decided to build a temple to Lord Shiva and *Maa Devi* there in order to better serve visitors and manage the area. The villagers also believe that the location has the spiritual significance and confidence. Villagers believe that *Palani Jharna* is the source of their income and rural tourist heritage. Temple construction also makes it easier to organize various fairs and festivals, which attract visitors in all seasons. Other activities such as Marriage ceremony, head tonsuring and sacrificing animals may be held in the temples but the decisions are under consideration as the village committee stated.

ii) Follow-up meetings: During the weekly *gram sabha*, villagers decided to create a separate agenda for discussing tourism activities in the village. The discussion will center on innovative ideas for 362 tourism activities, the development of tourist facilities, visitor demand, locals, inviting VIP guests to attract media attention, and so on. They also intend to organize a group of male and female volunteers to greet the special guests in a traditional manner during their visit to the Palani Jharna. A nominal subscription fee will be collected from the villagers, and donations from visitors may be requested for the development of tourist amenities in the area. Everything will be decided at the weekly follow-up meetings accordingly.

iii) Surveillance Activities: Because the location is in a remote area, outsiders are

often hesitant to visit. To ensure the safety of the tourists, a village surveillance committee is formed. Furthermore, the behaviors of young couples involved in vulgar activities will be closely monitored. During the peak season, every interested villager will be given an equal chance to open a temporary shop. If any of the tourists is found to be engaging in illegal activities, he or she will be turned over to the local police station.

iv) Increased Accessibility: Everything will change if the destination becomes accessible to all types of tourists all year. The gram sabha decided to put a big entrance door near the SH 2 that mentioned the 'Palani Jharna' and its distance from the entrance. If possible, the entrance gate should be folded with beautiful photographs of the spot of attraction that will attract tourists who are unfamiliar with the location. Stairways leading to the waterfall is under construction from the parking area and near by the waterfall. For those seeking adventure, an alternate path to the waterfall via a forest trail will be prepared. A few professional YouTube vloggers will be contacted for videography of the area, which may help reach a rural tourism audience.

The potential for tourism development in Palani village is vast. The high tourism potential of Palani Village has piqued the interest of the city dwellers. The growing desire of the people of Palani Village to develop its tourism potential has undoubtedly become a major capital for the implementation of community-based tourism and added energy to village tourism efforts. Existing products must be strengthened in terms of innovation and technology. Community products must be innovative, especially then that Palani Village will be designated as a tourist village. The general public must be educated not only on how to make, but also on how to present products that meet tourism service standards. This is significant because, as we discovered during our village stay, the potential for community

involvement in tourism management is very high. Community participation will not only produce products (food, drinks, and accessories), but will also teach people how to present tourism-standard products. According to the above description, the Palani tourism village planning approach necessitates the involvement of various decision makers in the tourism planning process so that the community can identify the various impacts of tourism and then formulate strategies and programmes to optimise the positive impacts and minimise the negative impacts caused by the development of tourism destinations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Palani villagers see tourism as a significant development opportunity for the rural community, and they employ a variety of tactics to promote it, despite the fact that their efforts are still in their infancy and small in comparison to the potential of the area. This study looked into how tourists and locals in a Jharkhand hamlet perceived the industry. To conceptualise and comprehend local sentiments towards tourism, the study used semi-structured interviews with residents. However, they expressed concerns about the official government authorities, who they believe should implement more effective policies and plans. Locals view tourism as a positive trend in their communities. In terms of development, there are differences among rural areas. This is because there isn't a comprehensive development strategy that can incorporate and inspire all communities. Locals contend that tourism has all the elements necessary for rural communities to grow and can help residents economically and financially. The study's findings demonstrate that residents of the rural destination have a favourable opinion of tourism, which they anticipate would benefit both the region's tourist providers and the region as a whole. As a result, if tourism providers from rural areas continue to develop their offers based on the aforementioned expectations of the target

population, it has the potential to become an essential source of sustainable development. The locals are aware of the potential effects that tourism may have on their neighbourhood, and they particularly value the good ones, such as the enhancement of recreational activities and the growth of the neighbourhood by raising the standard of living and quality of life. To be sustainable and draw both local and foreign tourists, the growth of tourism in rural areas needs strategic plans that take into account the history, the cultural traits, and the competitive advantages of the region. In addition to developing special training programmes to qualify the workforce in tourism services and ensure high standard quality services, special training programmes should be developed to qualify the working force in rural tourism services in order to improve perception about the quality of those services. The research highlights important aspects related to the perception of the residents and visitors. The interactions between visitors and locals have a big impact on how sustainably tourism develops in a place. Residents' impressions of the growth of tourism and their acceptance and tolerance of tourists are influenced by the quality of interactions between residents and visitors. In order to determine the support and attitude of the local community towards tourism development, on the one hand, and to evaluate the satisfaction level of the tourists, on the other, future research should be expanded to similar rural regions with tourism potential. It's crucial to examine the demand for rural tourism in order to create effective and sustainable plans. When creating appropriate tourism services and products, this can offer crucial information about the sociodemographic traits of the visitors, their preferences, and trip budget. Finally, only a comprehensive approach to development and the participation of locals, visitors, and the government through a powerful collaborative network will enable sustainability goals to be achieved.

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