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Community's Involvement and Support for Tourism Development: The Case of Asik-Asik Waterfalls in North Cotabato, Philippines

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Abstract

With the expansion of the tourism industry globally, growing interest in exploring its impacts through the viewpoints of the host community has emerged. Extant literatures in this topic primarily depict findings from developed countries, whereas there is paucity of studies focusing on locals' insights in developing nations, especially in the Philippine context. Asik-Asik Waterfalls remained hidden from the public eye until its photo went viral on the Internet. This study was conducted to evaluate the community's attitude and support levels of tourism in Asik-Asik Waterfalls, North Cotabato, Philippines. Data were collected using questionnaires from 75 respondents randomly sampled. Collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and tests of mean differences. Results revealed that tourism has created positive effects in terms of employment, business generation, and improvement in income. Residents' attitudes towards tourism impacts were affirmative, but variations exist across different socio-demographic factors. Findings substantiate the social exchange theory, in which individuals gaining benefits from tourism are more positively disposed and supportive of its development. The results reveal that residents recognize tourism as an important economic propeller, and majority strongly agreed that tourism has been indispensable in providing jobs and business prospects for the local community.

Keywords: resident attitudes, social exchange theory, tourism impacts, North Cotabato, Philippines

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Tourism has gained a reputation as a rapidly advancing industry, serving as a compelling driver of economic growth worldwide (Goodwin, 2007; Zhao & Ritchie, 2007; Zhao, 2009; Porter et al., 2015; & Charag et al., 2019). This sector has transpired as among the key activities promoting economic progress, manifested by its 10.4% contribution in global gross domestic product and generation of 313 million employment opportunities in 2017 (WTTC, 2018a; WTTC, 2018b; & Zhuang et al., 2019). It has brought forth tangible benefits such as creation of business and job opportunities, increased income levels, better quality of life, improved infrastructure and facilities, and upholding and promotion of cultural pride (Hammad et al., 2017; Latip et al., 2018; Saqib et al., 2019; & Charag et al., 2019).

While literature has established the role of tourism in economic advancement and enriching cultural heritage, it has also impacted host communities in several means. Research on resident attitudes towards tourism development has yielded diverse results (Pansiri & Mmereki, 2010; Türker & Öztürk, 2013; & Rasoolimanesh, 2015). Socio-demographic factors influenced residents' attitudes on tourism impacts as demonstrated by Liu and Var (1986). Charag et al. (2019) made a run-through of the adverse implications of tourism development which include: rise in cost of living, disturbance in natural environment, overcrowding, traffic congestion and an increase in crime rate, among others.

The existence of both beneficial and negative effects of tourism expansion has stirred interest among many researchers to explore the impacts of tourism through the viewpoints of local residents (Ko & Stewart, 2002; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011; & Vargas-Sánchez, et al., 2015). Local communities are the central elements of tourism development, and their patronage and support are of paramount importance for sustainability and further progress of tourism in an area (Gonzales et al., 2018; & Fletcher et al., 2016). If residents have positive perceptions about tourism, they are more inclined to support its development and success, and they tend to be less supportive of constraints on its expansion. Ap (1992) remarked that a tourist site will maintain a long-standing popularity if the local residents are hospitable and if they exhibit pleasant demeanour towards the visitors. Discerning residents' perceptions of tourism influence is therefore imperative, as it serves as basis to formulate level-headed planning strategies and policies for tourism advancement (Long and Kayat, 2011; Hammad et al., 2017). This also provides valuable information on how to curtail the negative impacts of tourism development on the local populace (Charag et al., 2019; Almeida-Garcia et al., 2016).

Asik-Asik Waterfalls had remained hidden from the public eye until its photo went viral on the Internet. The hidden magical waterfall was kept unheard of from the world until its unearthing by the locals in 2010. The spread of photos online and words of tourists made its catchy attention not only to local Filipino travelers but also to foreigners. Asik-Asik, which means "sprinkle-sprinkle" in the local dialect, which typifies how the water from the falls sprinkles on nearby rocks. The streams of cold water come forth from the springs deep within the rocks itself. The falls expand like a curtain and water emanating from the rocks on surrounding cliff cascades into the adjoining river. The spring water gushing through a 60-meter high rock formation carpeted with lush green ferns and moss is a remarkable sight that stirs interest among tourists. The lavish and emerald flora blanketing the surface of the 140-meter rock formation adds awe to this scenic spectacle.

The absence of a contributing river above the gigantic rock mountain remarkably sets Asik-Asik apart from other waterfalls (Lakwatsero.com). A travel blog (Lakwatsero, 2022 accessed at lakwatsero.com) provided a practical guide, indicating that tourists need to travel roughly 20 kilometers from the town proper of Alamada to get to the Waterfalls. A descending stair consisting of 376 steps have then to be traversed by travelers from the entrance to reach the falls itself. This 140 meter wide waterfall has been a

clandestine gem until it was unveiled in 2010 after a series of social media posts went viral. The splendor of the spot has been unrolled thereafter, and through various social media platforms, Asik-Asik Waterfalls has been a renowned nature's marvel.

With the advent of tourism expansion worldwide, a growing interest in studying its impacts among host communities has emerged. Ap (1992) defined "tourism impacts" as the effects or changes that transpire concurrent with tourism development. Impacts of tourism can be broadly classified into two spectrums- positive and negative, both exert tantamount influence on the local populace (Jurowski et al., 1997). Extant literature on tourism primarily focuses on delineating impacts on three key areas: economic, socio-cultural and environmental (Andereck et al., 2005; Almeida-Garcia et al., 2016; & Hammad et al., 2017).

This dimension constitutes any type of economic benefit or financial streams associated directly and indirectly with tourism activities (Gursoy et al., 2010; & Saqib et al., 2019). Economic impacts appear as among the most clear-cut beneficial influences of tourism, as demonstrated by various works (Hanafiah et al., 2013). Tourism has been an important avenue for economic growth, manifested by: better employment opportunities, increase in income levels of local residents, source of foreign exchange income for developing countries, and reduction of poverty (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Mensah, 2012; & Charag et al., 2019). A study performed by Jalani (2012) depicted that the tourism industry in Sabang, Palawan, Philippines, well-recognized for its "Underground River", has remarkably improved the economic standing of the community. It has opened job opportunities for local residents hence, tourism has gained utmost support from the host populace. A parallel finding was observed by Latip et al. (2018) who deduced that tourism significantly augmented the household income of Orang Sungai, a group of indigenous people residing in Kinabatangan, Sabah, Malaysia. The authors further remarked that tourism activities can also be a source of financial incentives for the indigenous community, as tourist accommodations and hotels serve as lucrative venues where traditional crafts can be displayed and marketed.

Despite its contribution, there are studies that underpin the adverse effects of tourism from an economic perspective. Concomitant with the rise in employment prospects, tourism activities may also escalate the cost of living, cause inflation in prices of properties, generate transitory and low-paid jobs, and instigate higher demand and competition for facilities (Ko & Stewart, 2012; Latip et al., 2018; & Gursoy et al., 2010).

Congruent with economic implications, tourism also renders both affirmative and undesirable impacts to host communities in a socio-cultural sense. The positive repercussions include: improved quality of life, enhancement of a site's appearance, development of various entertainment selections and reduced social inequalities (Charag et al., 2019; Stydilis et al., 2014; Kim 2013; & Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). Tourism also promotes preservation of historic and cultural landmarks; upholds heritage and fortifies cultural identities of the host community; serves as corridor for social interaction between tourists and residents (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010; Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; & Hammad et al., 2017). Conversely, socio-cultural impacts brought by tourism may also elicit negative effects that cannot be overruled. Among the significant matters associated to tourism development are: weakening of moral values; engagement in gambling, rise in prevalence of crime, prostitution and drug use; overcrowding and congestion of roads (Deery et al., 2012; Latip et al., 2018; & Charag et al., 2019); and gradual loss of cultural identity as residents tend to emulate tourists' behaviours (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). Tourism has also been viewed as a disruptive force among indigenous communities, particularly among younger members who may show inclination to foreign style and envision to eventually abandon the community in pursuit for modernization

Tourism is often regarded as a clean industry, however, there are studies that indicate otherwise as it is typically developed in aesthetic yet delicate environments that capitalize on natural resources (Andereck et al., 2005). In the positive light, tourism development may bring forth improvement in the physical appearance of sites, subsequently, creating awareness on environmental conservation; preservation of historic locations and resources; enhancement of public facilities and roads (Diedrich & Garcia-Buades, 2009; & Andereck et al., 2005). However, tourism may undermine itself if local policies lay more emphasis on tourists' demands without giving much concern for the environment. The possible environmental upshot documented by Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011) are pollution, increased litter and over concentration of visitors especially during peak season. Other studies substantiate the role of tourism development in causing impairment of water, soil and air quality; depletion of resources, deforestation and disruption of biodiversity (Charag et al., 2019; Ko & Stewart, 2002; & Saqib et al., 2019).

Existing studies suggest that host communities are heterogeneous in their attitudes towards tourism impacts, and these variations are influenced by socio-demographic variables. Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011) in their study at a small island in Mauritius, found that gender was the most obvious predictor of residents' attitudes. The study established that males tend to have more positive outlook about economic and environmental impacts of tourism, denoting that it promotes educational experience and greater regard for cultural heritage, and reduces social imbalances. Female participants, on the other hand, have more negative view, placing emphasis on social and cultural aspects: increased occurrence of prostitution and weakening of family ties. Individuals who were also directly reliant on the tourism industry have a more positive attitude towards its expansion. Latip et al. (2018) obtained a parallel observation, noting that indigenous residents employed in the tourism industry viewed its development more positively. As they reap economic benefits, locals foster keen interest in enhancing protected sites and support greater tourism advancement. Meanwhile, Charag et al. (2019) established that while residents' age, gender, source of income do not influence their attitudes about tourism impacts, perceptual differences across levels of education are fairly evident. They deduced that residents who had higher levels of education showed more positive disposition towards tourism. This typifies that educational attainment plays a significant role in logical assessment of the benefits and costs of tourism growth. By and large, no consistent association has been drawn between socio-demographic factors and resident perceptions, and the results mainly vary across studies. Employment in the tourism sector appears to be the only consistent variable that incites positive attitude towards tourism impacts throughout various literature (Latip et al., 2018; Hammad et al., 2017; & Saqib et al., 2019).

The analysis of locals' standpoints towards tourism impacts would patch up several knowledge gap in community's perception literature which include: (1) variations of studies focusing on residents' insights towards tourism implications in developing countries; (2) limited works on perceptual differences on tourism impacts across varying socio-demographic attributes; and (3) research actuality of relationships about resident's perception of tourism impacts in the Philippine context. Against this background, the present study explores residents' attitudes toward tourism in Asik-Asik Waterfalls, a site in North Cotabato, Philippines that recently gained popularity among tourists.

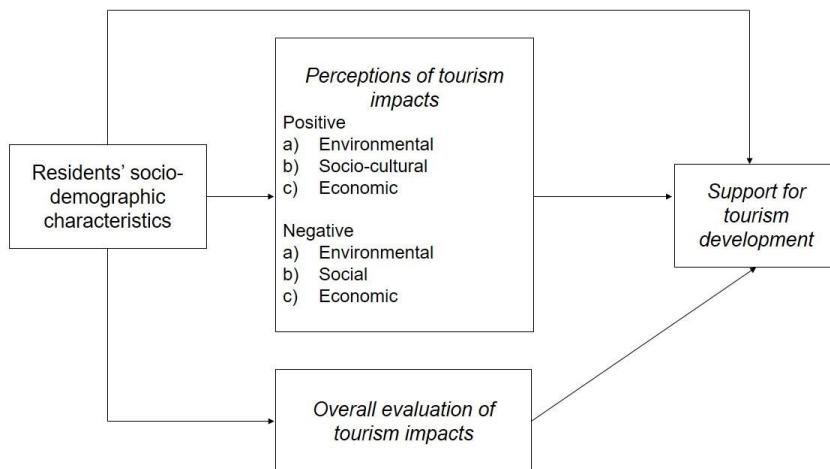
This paper seeks to address the following specific objectives: firstly, to evaluate the involvement of local community in tourism sector; secondly, to ascertain the perceptions of residents on economic implications of tourism development in their lives; and lastly, to determine the influence of socio-demographic characteristics on residents' perceptions of tourism impacts. Thus, this paper presents how a community's perception and overall attitude of economic impacts of tourism- both positive and negative- influence their involvement and support for the development of Asik-Asik Waterfalls.

Conceptual Framework

A framework is a conceptual representation on how to conceive and analyze the interaction among several variables that have been considered as important to the subject matter (Sekaran, 1992). The present study is grounded on the framework developed by Long and Kayat (2011), depicted in Figure 1, which effectually portrays how various elements dynamically interact to determine local residents' support for tourism expansion. This model constitutes five fundamental domains about implications of tourism and support for its development: residents' socio-demographic characteristics, perceived positive impacts, perceived negative impacts, overall evaluation of tourism impacts and residents' support for further tourism growth.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework on residents' perceptions and support for tourism developed by Long and Kayat (2011)



Residents' socio-demographic profile serves as the independent variable that shapes other components considered as dependent variables: residents' attitudes towards tourism impacts, and their interest and involvement for its additional development. Long and Kayat's framework is anchored on the conventions of social exchange theory, which underpins that humans are largely driven to perform actions based on their expectations of benefits- they pursue rewards and circumvent punishment. Using the social exchange theory, it can be implied that residents are more likely to be interested in and approving of tourism development if they envision and acquire benefits from it. Literature has typified that tourism inevitably generates both favorable and unfavorable outcomes in environmental, socio-cultural and economic facets, hence, positive impacts have to constantly outweigh the negative ones to ensure affirmative attitude and utmost involvement by the host community.

Figure 2

Conceptual framework on community's attitude and support levels towards tourism in Asik-Asik Waterfalls

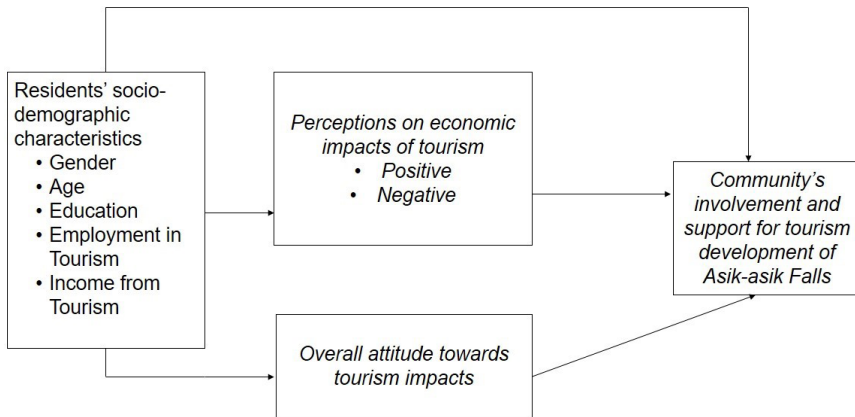


Figure 2 provides a graphical depiction of the framework developed by the researchers to reflect community's perception, involvement and support levels for tourism in Asik-Asik Waterfalls. It is largely based on the model proposed by Long and Kayat (2011), modified to address the specific objectives of the present study. The socio-demographic attributes encompass the factors that influence perceptual variations in the impacts of tourism within the local community. Previous research has established that socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, levels of education, employment and income from tourism industry are significant predictors of residents' attitudes towards tourism, hence these will be included in the present work. Emphasis would be laid on the perceived economic impacts of tourism in Asik-Asik Waterfalls, as it is considered as the prime and most definite contribution of tourism activities throughout the literature. The residents' perception of the positive and negative implications of tourism is explored using various indicators- employment and business opportunities, income levels and changes in quality of life. Social exchange theory is utilized to elucidate how a community's perception and overall attitude of economic impacts of tourism- both positive and negative- influence their involvement and support for the development. If locals consider that positive impacts of tourism prevail over the associated costs, they are more likely to get involved and be supportive of its additional growth. On the other hand, if they perceived that tourism activities bring forth more negative effects than the desirable ones, they may be skeptical and uncooperative of its expansion.

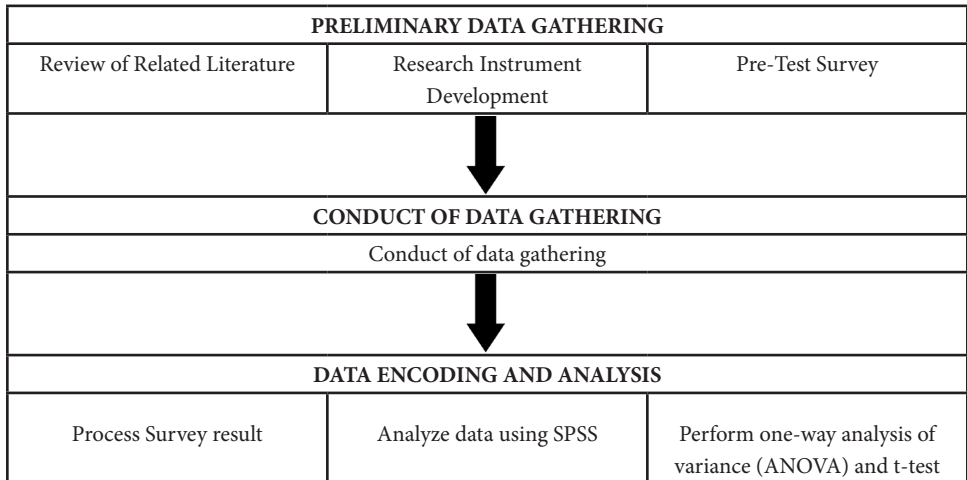
Methodology

Research Design

Figure 3 summarizes the research design used in this study.

Figure 3

Research Design



As seen in Figure 3, data were collected using self-administered questionnaires which consisted of two sections: (1) questions pertaining to socio-demographic profile of respondents; and (2) statements relating to the economic impacts of tourism development in Asik-Asik Waterfalls, following questions from the study of Bakri et al., (2014). The first part was elicited to establish whether socio-demographic variables can serve as predictors of residents' attitudes toward tourism. The second portion consisted of 17 statement items intended to capture locals' perceptions of economic impacts of tourism. Economic implications were gauged using four primary indicators- employment generated, business opportunities opened, influence on income levels and poverty reduction.

Research Subject

The study encompassed the outlook of 75 respondents who were local residents of Alamada, North Cotabato, with ages 18 and above, consisting of 46 males and 29 females. Due to constraints brought by COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the limitations in the movement of people and face-to-face interactions, there were less active respondents and the researchers were not able to have a larger sample group. Dissemination of the questionnaires was carried out from January to March 2020. The survey was conducted once a week for a period of 2 months, summing up to 8 weeks. The respondents indicated their stance on each item of the questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. A five-point Likert scale is used to measure attitudes or responses using five points, with 5 as the highest score, denoting "Strongly Agree"; 1 as the lowest which stands for "Strongly Disagree"; and 3 as the midpoint which represents neutrality or "Neither agree nor disagree" (Chyung et al., 2017). For items rated using Likert scale and are interpreted

using interval measurement, as applied in this study, the responses obtained are summarized in the form of a weighted mean, wherein the scale or score point (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) is used as a weight multiplied to the frequency divided by the total frequency as to calculate the weighted mean (Pimentel, 2019). The resulting weighted mean is then interpreted using an interval or numerical range which has an equivalent verbal description (Pimentel, 2019). The verbal interpretation of the five-point system used in this study was adopted from Pimentel (2019), indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Likert scale interpretation of scores (Pimentel, 2019)

Score point	Numerical range/ Interval	Description of the numerical range/ interval
1	1.0-1.8	Strongly Disagree
2	1.9-2.7	Disagree
3	2.8-3.6	Neither agree nor disagree
4	3.7-4.5	Agree
5	4.6-5.0	Strongly Agree

Research Process and Data analysis

Collected data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 17.0) to generate frequency tables and descriptive statistics. Calculated mean scores were utilized to evaluate residents' attitudes of the economic impacts of tourism development in Asik-Asik Waterfalls. A series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test were performed to determine the relationship between locals' perceptions and residents' socio-demographic characteristics.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 provides a depiction of the general profile of the sample population. Most of the respondents were male, comprising 61.33% of the total count whereas females constituted 38.67%. Residents belonging to the 31-40 age group were the most numerous in the sample (45.33%), followed by the age group 21-30 (26.67%). Secondary school graduates and degree holders made up 36.00% and 34.70% of the study participants, respectively. As exemplified in Table 3, the majority of the residents (81.30%) had jobs related to tourism while 18.70% of the respondents were not economically reliant on this sector. A greater proportion (52.50%) of those who are dependent on tourism had been employed for a period of 3-5 years, mostly employed as laborers (32.80%). More than 67% of the study participants earn less than 10,000.00 (\$ 190.27) in a month prior to involvement in the tourism sector. Ninety three percent (93.40%) indicated an increase in their monthly salary amounting to 10,001-20,000.00 after having been employed in the industry. Residents reliant on the tourism sector are mostly engaged in transportation services (45.90%) and food industry (34.40%), with a hefty proportion working on a part time and seasonal basis (50.80% and 45.90%, respectively), as shown in Table 4.

Table 2*Profile of the sample population*

Demographic Factor	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	46	61.33
	Female	29	38.67
Age	18-20	15	20.00
	21-30	20	26.67
	31-40	34	45.33
	41-50	4	5.33
	51 and above	2	2.67
Level of education	No formal education	9	12.00
	Primary School	12	16.00
	Secondary School	27	36.00
	Certificate/Diploma	1	1.30
	Degree	26	34.70

Table 3

Resident's Involvement in Tourism Sector

Item	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Employment dependence on tourism	Dependent	61	81.30
	Non-dependent	14	18.70
Years of Involvement in Tourism	Less than 3 years	17	27.90
	3-5 years	32	52.50
	6-10 years	11	18.00
	11-20 years	1	1.60
Type of Job Prior to Involvement in Tourism	Labor	20	32.80
	Business/Self-employed	12	19.70
	Factory/ retail	4	6.60
	Student	3	4.90
	Driver	5	8.20
	Others	17	27.90
Salary Prior to Employment in Tourism Sector	Below 10,000	41	67.20
	10,001-20,000	18	29.50
	20,001-30,000	2	3.30
Salary After Being Employed in Tourism Sector	Below 10,000	2	3.30
	10,001-20,000	57	93.40
	20,001-30,000	2	3.30

Table 4

Sectoral Involvement of Local Communities

Item	Categories	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Employment in Tourism Sector	Accommodation	8	13.10
	Transportation	28	45.90
	Tourism services	2	3.30
	Food and beverage	21	34.40
	Government agency	1	1.60
	Tourist attraction	1	1.60
Type of employment	Full time	2	3.30
	Part time	31	50.80
	Seasonal	28	45.90

Residents' Attitudes towards Tourism

The present study intends to evaluate the community's attitudes towards the influence of tourism in Asik-Asik Waterfalls. It encompasses 17 items relating to the perceived economic impacts of tourism development in the said destination, elicited in terms of employment, business generation, changes in income levels and poverty reduction that the local community experienced. An array of economic advantage was remarked by residents concomitant with tourism expansion in Asik-Asik, as indicated by the overall results of descriptive analysis (Table 5). Majority of the sampled residents were economically-reliant in the tourism industry, primarily engaged in transportation and food services, and acquired financial benefit from tourism activities.

Responses to items relating to employment generation were markedly variable ranging from 2.067 to 4.467, as indicated in Table 5. A greater proportion of the participants (36.38%) tend to strongly agree that tourism provides jobs to the host community of Alamada, while 19.62% and 29.33 % had neutral and opposing responses, respectively. This denotes that while local residents felt that the tourism surge in Asik-Asik Waterfalls has truly served as an employment avenue, the full magnitude of economic benefits derived from this industry was yet limited. The lower range of the score was obtained from entries related to skills requirement for jobs and reduction of unemployment. This may be attributed to the fact that although tourism activities in Asik-Asik have indeed opened career opportunities for the locals, most of them had temporary or part-time jobs that are mainly unstable and profoundly conditioned by tourism's seasonality. Interestingly, Asik-Asik Waterfalls has been expedient in creating employment prospects for women and single moms, as suggested by its high mean score (\bar{x} =4.093). This observation underpins the essential role of tourism in upholding gender equality and empowering women in developing economies (Liu et al., 2012).

Residents were also positive about tourism's significance in generating and boosting business ventures in Asik-Asik. In response to items pertaining to "Increased local entrepreneurs", "Creates new business opportunities", and "Opportunities to sell products", locals signified a high level of agreement (mean scores varying from 3.720 to 4.627). More than 57% of the respondents strongly agreed that the upsurge of

tourist arrivals has led to establishment and further growth of home-grown businesses, and created avenues where locally-made products can be marketed. Parallel observation was noted by Latip et al. (2018), who remarked that hotels, restaurants and shops in a tourist destination in Sabah, Malaysia served as excellent venues where handicrafts made by Orang Sungai, a group of indigenous people in, Sabah, Malaysia, can be displayed and sold. According to Liu et al. (2012), economic benefits from tourism was most greatly felt by individuals employed in or entrepreneurs who owned or managed year-around hotels, restaurants or shops, hence, they tend to have more optimistic outlooks towards its impact.

Table 5

Residents' perceptions about the impacts of tourism in Asik-Asik Waterfalls

Latent variables and measurement items	Mean*	SD
Increased local tourism entrepreneurs	4.627	0.314
Offer more job opportunities to the local community	4.467	0.702
Creates a new business opportunities	3.720	1.295
Offer jobs that require skills	2.067	0.302
Create employment opportunities for women and single mother	4.093	1.071
Easy employment in the tourism sector	3.427	1.018
More jobs and employment opportunities at peak season	4.227	0.922
Part time jobs	4.080	1.487
Reduction of unemployment	2.227	0.575
Tourism generates main income for the community	4.347	0.333
Opportunities to sell local products	4.373	0.981
Increase in household income	4.280	0.682
Earnings depend on the season	4.640	0.924
Poverty reduction	4.120	1.119
Opportunity to earn a side income	3.453	1.101
Salaries/ wages higher than other sectors	3.507	0.597
The majority of the population earned a high salary/Wages	4.333	0.996

Note: n= 75; 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree

Mean scores for statements pertaining to improvement in income fell within 3.45-4.64, suggesting that Alamada residents felt that tourism has brought forth desirable impacts in this aspect. Over forty-five percent (45.56%) of the total respondents strongly agreed that tourism activities have been useful in augmenting their household earnings. Meanwhile, poverty reduction was also seen as an upfront benefit of tourism, recording a mean score of 4.12. The host community essentially recognized the value of tourism in alleviating their living conditions, manifested by a high level of agreement among the residents (54.67%).

By and large, findings of this study reveal that the local community has a positive attitude towards the economic impacts of tourism in Asik-Asik Waterfalls. Of particular note, residents who are economically-dependent on the tourism sector were more inclined to strongly agree with statements relating to job creation, business expansion and improvement in income. This study substantiates the mainstream view of tourism as a trail for economic prosperity and community advancement, and concurs with past studies suggesting that positive perceptions of economic impacts encourages the locals to be more supportive of tourism expansion (Stylidis et al., 2014; Hammad et al., 2017; & Charag et al., 2019).

To evaluate the differences in perceptions among respondents with varying socio-demographic attributes towards the impacts of tourism, a series of t-tests and ANOVA was carried out. The usefulness of socio-demographic variables as determinant of residents' perceptions toward tourism impacts was also elucidated in this study, depicted in Tables 6 to 11. The results underpin that residents had differing attitudes on economic benefits of tourism in Asik-Asik. Among the six factors evaluated, gender, age and employment dependence were found to be discriminators of residents' attitudes toward tourism.

Mean scores from male respondents were significantly higher for statements relating to increase in tourism entrepreneurs and job opportunities for the local community. Female residents, on the other hand, more strongly agreed to items indicating tourism's role as the main income source for the community and the industry's role in generating higher salaries than other sectors. This finding is in accordance with previous research depicting that men and women had varying views about the implications of tourism in their locality (e.g., Nunkoo & Ramkisson, 2011; & Long & Kayat, 2011).

Table 6

Results of *t*-test for Influence of Gender

Statements**	Male		Female		t	Df	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD			
Increased local tourism entrepreneurs	4.761	0.480	4.414	0.628	2.545	48.359	0.014
Offer more job opportunities to the local community	4.652	0.737	4.172	0.928	2.354	49.769	0.023
Creates a new business opportunities	3.761	0.947	3.655	1.421	0.354	43.743	0.725
Offer jobs that require skills	2.065	0.533	2.069	0.593	-0.028	54.919	0.978
Create employment opportunities for women and single mother	4.217	0.964	3.897	1.145	1.255	52.153	0.215
Easy employment in the tourism sector	3.565	1.109	3.241	0.786	1.478	71.897	0.144
More jobs and employment opportunities at peak season	4.174	1.018	4.310	0.891	-0.611	65.471	0.543
Part-time jobs	4.130	1.147	4.000	1.363	0.429	52.131	0.670
Reduction of unemployment	2.152	0.631	2.345	0.936	-0.977	44.093	0.334
Tourism generates main income for the community	4.239	0.603	4.517	0.509	-2.144	66.929	0.036
Opportunities to sell local products	4.478	0.983	4.207	1.013	1.142	58.300	0.258
Increase in household income	4.217	0.867	4.379	0.775	-0.841	64.582	0.403
Earnings depend on the season	4.608	0.999	4.690	0.930	-0.357	62.890	0.723
Poverty reduction	3.957	1.134	4.379	0.903	-1.785	68.963	0.079
Opportunity to earn a side income	3.457	1.069	3.448	1.055	0.033	60.257	0.974
Salaries/ wages higher than other sectors	3.304	0.628	3.828	0.890	-2.764	45.567	0.008
The majority of the population earned a high salary/Wages	4.370	0.951	4.276	1.099	0.3785	53.313	0.707

Note: The values in bold are statistically significant at 0.05 confidence level. M=mean; SD= standard deviation.

**Bakri, N. M., Jaafar, M., & Mohamad, D. (2014).

Table 7

Results of *t*-test for Influence of Employment Dependence

Statements**	Employed in Tourism		Not Employed in Tourism		t	Df	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD			
Increased local tourism entrepreneurs	4.689	0.467	4.357	0.842	1.423	14.884	0.047
Offer more job opportunities to the local community	4.525	0.788	4.214	1.051	1.040	16.508	0.217
Creates a new business opportunities	3.689	1.162	3.857	1.099	-0.512	20.238	0.623
Offer jobs that require skills	1.984	0.288	2.429	1.089	-1.516	13.420	0.006
Create employment opportunities for women and single mother	4.098	0.995	4.071	1.269	0.074	16.856	0.931
Easy employment in the tourism sector	3.459	1.026	3.357	0.929	0.363	20.944	0.734
More jobs and employment opportunities at peak season	4.246	0.943	4.143	1.099	0.324	17.647	0.722
Part-time jobs	4.115	1.240	3.929	1.207	0.518	19.808	0.612
Reduction of unemployment	2.230	0.761	2.214	0.802	0.065	18.765	0.947
Tourism generates main income for the community	4.344	0.574	4.357	0.633	-0.070	18.224	0.941
Opportunities to sell local products	4.426	0.957	4.143	1.167	0.845	17.229	0.341
Increase in household income	4.262	0.893	4.357	0.497	-0.541	35.170	0.703
Earnings depend on the season	4.639	0.949	4.643	1.082	-0.011	17.879	0.990
Poverty reduction	4.066	1.093	4.357	0.929	-1.023	22.102	0.359
Opportunity to earn a side income	3.443	1.073	3.500	1.019	-0.188	20.171	0.856
Salaries/ wages higher than other sectors	3.525	0.808	3.429	0.646	0.477	23.363	0.680
The majority of the population earned a high salary/Wages	4.393	0.954	4.071	1.207	0.934	16.918	0.282

Note: The values in bold are statistically significant at 0.05 confidence level. M=mean; SD= standard deviation, by Bakri, N. M., Jaafar, M., & Mohamad, D. (2014).

Economic reliance on tourism also emerged as a factor affecting residents' attitudes towards tourism. Significantly higher mean scores on two attributes relating to increase in local entrepreneurs and job opportunities were noted from individuals who provide tourism products and services, compared to those who do not derive earnings from tourism. Congruent with the present findings, Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011) remarked that locals dependent on the tourism industry in Port Louis, Mauritius tend to favor tourism expansion and deem that the industry has rendered more advantages than costs. The obtained results substantiate social exchange theory (SET), with the overriding concept that if the local community feels the positive impacts of tourism, they are more likely to support and take part in its further

development (Ap, 1992; & Long & Kayat, 2011). Meanwhile, contrary to previous studies, educational attainment, years of involvement in the tourism sector and salary after being employed in the tourism industry were not found to be determinants of attitudes toward tourism.

Table 8

Results of ANOVA for Influence of Age

Statements**	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	>51	F	Sig.
Increased local tourism entrepreneurs	4.600	4.700	4.618	4.750	4.000	0.750	0.562
Offer more job opportunities to the local community	4.667	4.550	4.412	4.500	3.000	1.896	0.121
Creates a new business opportunities	3.133b	3.550ab	3.912ab	5.000a	4.000ab	2.874	0.029
Offer jobs that require skills	2.067	2.000	2.118	2.000	2.000	0.159	0.958
Create employment opportunities for women and single mother	4.067	4.050	4.147	4.000	4.000	0.043	0.996
Easy employment in the tourism sector	3.133	3.050	3.824	3.500	3.000	2.669	0.039
More jobs and employment opportunities at peak season	4.467	4.550	3.853	4.500	5.000	2.685	0.038
Part-time jobs	4.067	4.350	3.794	5.000	4.500	1.348	0.261
Reduction of unemployment	2.067	2.450	2.206	2.000	2.000	0.720	0.581
Tourism generates main income for the community	4.400	4.450	4.294	4.000	4.500	0.637	0.638
Opportunities to sell local products	4.400	4.550	4.265	4.750	3.500	0.778	0.543
Increase in household income	4.267	4.200	4.200	4.353	4.000	0.163	0.956
Earnings depend on the season	4.667	4.900	4.412	5.000	5.000	1.047	0.389
Poverty reduction	4.267	4.400	3.912	3.500	5.000	1.457	0.224
Opportunity to earn a side income	3.530	3.000	3.647	4.000	3.000	1.643	0.173
Salaries/ wages higher than other sectors	3.200	3.500	3.647	3.750	3.000	1.182	0.326
The majority of the population earned a high salary/Wages	4.400	4.600	4.176	3.750	5.000	1.142	0.344

*Note: The values in bold are statistically significant at 0.05 confidence level. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different.

**Bakri, N. M., Jaafar, M., & Mohamad, D. (2014)

A significant effect of age on residents' attitude towards the economic impact of tourism was also delineated. Young to middle-aged residents (18-50 years old) perceived the economic impacts of tourism

more positively than the older members (51 above). Locals ageing 18-50 agreed more frequently that tourism growth in Asik-Asik Waterfalls has led to opening of more employment opportunities. This could be attributed to the fact that respondents belonging to this cohort are the most economically-productive and can obtain jobs in the tourism sector more easily, especially during peak tourism season. Parallel results were noted by Almeida-Garcia et al. (2016), accentuating that young adults and middle aged residents may envision tourism advancement as an excellent economic opportunity, thus, they are more favorably disposed to it.

Table 9

Results of ANOVA for Influence of Education

Statements**	No formal education	Primary school	Secondary school	Certificate/ diploma	Degree	F	Sig
Increased local tourism entrepreneurs	4.667	4.333	4.593	4.000	4.808	1.915	0.117
Offer more job opportunities to the local community	4.444	4.083	4.481	3.000	4.692	1.937	0.114
Creates a new business opportunities	3.444	3.667	3.889	5.000	3.615	0.637	0.638
Offer jobs that require skills	2.000	1.9167	2.074	2.000	2.154	0.406	0.804
Create employment opportunities for women and single mother	4.000	4.167	4.296	5.000	3.846	0.837	0.507
Easy employment in the tourism sector	3.222	3.667	3.667	3.000	3.192	1.051	0.387
More jobs and employment opportunities at peak season	4.000	4.417	4.296	5.000	4.115	0.507	0.731
Part-time jobs	4.222	3.833	4.333	4.000	3.885	0.591	0.670
Reduction of unemployment	2.111	2.00	2.370	2.000	2.231	0.564	0.690
Tourism generates main income for the community	4.222	4.500	4.407	4.000	4.269	0.577	0.680
Opportunities to sell local products	4.667	4.333	4.333	2.000	4.423	1.706	0.158
Increase in household income	4.111	4.083	4.407	5.000	4.269	0.595	0.668
Earnings depend on the season	4.889	4.833	4.630	5.000	4.462	0.511	0.728
Poverty reduction	4.000	4.500	3.963	5.000	4.115	0.717	0.583
Opportunity to earn a side income	3.222	3.333	3.259	3.000	3.808	1.162	0.335
Salaries/ wages higher than other sectors	3.778	3.417	3.407	3.000	3.577	0.569	0.686
The majority of the population earned a high salary/Wages	4.444	4.500	4.370	5.000	4.154	0.423	0.791

*Note: The values in bold are statistically significant at 0.05 confidence level.

**Bakri, N. M., Jaafar, M., & Mohamad, D. (2014)

Table 10

Results of ANOVA for Influence of Years of Involvement in Tourism Industry

Statements**	Less than 3 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	F	Sig
Increased local tourism entrepreneurs	4.706	4.781	4.455	4.000	2.179	0.080
Offer more job opportunities to the local community	4.529	4.719	4.091	3.000	2.549	0.047
Creates a new business opportunities	3.588	3.563	4.091	5.000	0.851	0.498
Offer jobs that require skills	1.941	2.000	2.000	2.000	1.973	0.108
Create employment opportunities for women and single mother	4.471	3.875	4.091	5.000	1.105	0.361
Easy employment in the tourism sector	3.588	3.219	4.000	3.000	1.445	0.229
More jobs and employment opportunities at peak season	4.235	4.219	4.273	5.000	0.185	0.946
Part-time jobs	4.000	4.344	3.636	4.000	0.792	0.534
Reduction of unemployment	2.176	2.313	2.091	2.000	0.220	0.927
Tourism generates main income for the community	4.235	4.313	4.636	4.000	0.955	0.438
Opportunities to sell local products	4.412	4.469	4.545	2.000	1.846	0.130
Increase in household income	4.176	4.219	4.455	5.000	0.435	0.783
Earnings depend on the season	4.765	4.750	4.091	5.000	1.100	0.363
Poverty reduction	4.176	4.000	4.000	5.000	0.479	0.751
Opportunity to earn a side income	3.412	3.250	4.091	3.000	1.386	0.248
Salaries/ wages higher than other sectors	3.529	3.531	3.545	3.000	0.153	0.961
The majority of the population earned a high salary/Wages	4.29	4.438	4.364	5.000	0.429	0.787

*Note: The values in bold are statistically significant at 0.05 confidence level.

**Bakri, N. M., Jaafar, M., & Mohamad, D. (2014)

Table 11

Results of ANOVA for Influence of Years of Salary in Tourism Industry

Statements**	Below 10,000	10,001- 20,000	20,001- 30,000	F	Sig
Increased local tourism entrepreneurs	5.000	4.667	5.000	1.802	0.155
Offer more job opportunities to the local community	5.000	4.491	5.000	0.965	0.414
Creates a new business opportunities	4.000	3.702	3.000	0.365	0.778
Offer jobs that require skills	2.000	1.982	2.000	2.615	0.058
Create employment opportunities for women and single mother	4.000	4.105	4.000	0.015	0.998
Easy employment in the tourism sector	4.000	3.421	4.000	0.444	0.722
More jobs and employment opportunities at peak season	3.500	4.316	3.000	1.693	0.176
Part-time jobs	4.500	4.158	2.500	1.349	0.266
Reduction of unemployment	2.000	2.246	2.000	0.126	0.945
Tourism generates main income for the community	4.000	4.351	4.500	0.278	0.841
Opportunities to sell local products	5.000	4.404	4.500	0.531	0.663
Increase in household income	4.500	4.263	4.000	0.165	0.920
Earnings depend on the season	5.000	4.614	5.000	0.192	0.902
Poverty reduction	3.000	4.105	4.000	0.980	0.407
Opportunity to earn a side income	3.000	3.491	2.500	0.690	0.561
Salaries/ wages higher than other sectors	3.000	3.509	4.500	1.444	0.237
The majority of the population earned a high salary/Wages	5.000	4.386	4.000	0.728	0.538

**Note: The values in bold are statistically significant at 0.05 confidence level.*

***Bakri, N. M., Jaafar, M., & Mohamad, D. (2014)*

In general, this study demonstrates that residents of Alamada recognize the economic benefits of tourism development in Asik-Asik Waterfalls, and specific socio-demographic factors influence perceptual variations. Consistent with past research, gender, age and employment reliance in the tourism sector transpired as strong predictors of attitudes towards tourism's effect on the local economy. Given the significance of the host community's input and support, findings from the present work can be utilized to formulate policies in order to optimize communal benefits and sustain tourism development in the area. Fletcher et al. (2016) exemplified that local communities are the central components of tourism advancement and their support is integral to guarantee tourism's long-term success. Residents who perceive positive implications and economic benefits from tourism are more interested to take part in its future development (Hammad et al., 2017; & Charag et al., 2019).

Conclusions and Recommendations

A prominent finding of this study is the favorable perception towards tourism's role in creating employment opportunities for women and single moms. This feature alone highlights one of tourism's societal objectives: to empower women in developing nations and to create equal economic opportunity for both men and women. The local community also indicated a high level of agreement on items relating to income improvement as a result of their involvement in the tourism sector. As deduced from the sample population's socio-demographic profile, most of the residents experienced a two-fold increase in their earnings associated with tourism expansion in Asik-Asik Waterfalls.

The study also explored the relationship between socio-demographic variables and perceptions towards tourism impacts. The factors assessed include: gender, age, educational attainment, employment dependence, years of involvement in tourism and salary after employment in the tourism industry. Results exemplify that residents of Alamada have varying outlooks toward tourism expansion and these perceptual differences were significantly influenced by gender, age and employment dependence. Gender was found to be an antecedent of six statements: men strongly assented that tourism in Asik-Asik Waterfalls was valuable in boosting job and business, and offered employment opportunities that are easier to acquire. Conversely, women respondents were affirmative that tourism has aided in lowering unemployment and helped in generating higher earnings for the locals. Young and middle-aged residents belonging to 18-51 age brackets and those who have occupations related to tourism displayed positive perceptions towards tourism impacts and development. This is firmly coherent with the social exchange theory such that individuals acquiring greater benefits from tourism activities are more positively disposed to it, and are more inclined to partake in its future growth.

Drawing insights from residents' viewpoints toward tourism in Asik-Asik Waterfalls and the variables that potentially contour their perceptions is imperative for government, policy-makers, tourism promoters and planners, not only to win the local populace's approval but also to guarantee success of tourism undertakings. It is also substantial to integrate local residents in formulating decisions for tourism and conduct of tourism activities. Involving the host communities fortifies their awareness of tourism benefits, strengthens their engagement and encourages them to support it. A tourist destination will only uphold its repute if the host communities are accommodating and if they manifest desirable character towards the tourists. Therefore, understanding the attitudes of residents about tourism impacts has to be at the forefront of planning, as it can shed light on drawing appropriate strategies and policies to encourage further residential support for the expansion and sustainability of tourism. Knowledge of residents' outlooks is also expedient in minimizing the possible deleterious effects of tourism advancement on the local community. Moreover, the current work is centered on economic perspective only, however, subsequent research can include tourism impacts on other key areas such as environment, society and culture to capture an all-encompassing outlook of the local community. Future endeavors can also integrate perceptions from tourists as their satisfaction or discontent could profoundly affect the industry's operation and existence. Information of such kind would be useful for tourism planners in formulating policies that would address the multi-faceted goals of tourism: for sustenance of tourism development; and levelling off future expansion and tourists' desires with residents' well-being.

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