



Nexus of Tourism Infrastructure, Governance, and Sustainability at Pathivara Temple, Nepal

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Abstract

Religious tourism is becoming a major component of tourism economy in Nepal. This study aimed to explore the relationship between tourism infrastructure and governance with economic growth and cultural and environmental sustainability in the context of Pathivara Temple. This study used a mixed-methods approach. The required numerical data were collected from 212 respondents by using structured questionnaires. Likewise, narrative information were generated from 15 articulating participants representing different groups of local residents, tourism entrepreneurs, service providers, and government stakeholders, and semi-structured interviews for key informants. The descriptive and correlational analysis were done by using SPSS software. The results indicate that both tourism infrastructure development and tourism governance and management are strongly and significantly related to the outcome variables, accounting for between 74 and 83 percent of the variance in the outcome variables. These statistical trends are supported by qualitative evidence and highlight ongoing limitations such as cross-agency coordination, inadequate infrastructure, seasonal overcrowding and increasing environmental pressures. The study concludes that a conscious balanced approach to tourism development, one that balances the investment in infrastructure with the participatory governance is vital if Pathivara is to create a sustainable economic benefit without compromising the spiritual and ecological value that makes it so special.

Keywords: Pathivara temple, religious tourism, tourism infrastructure, tourism governance, sustainable tourism

Manuscript Received
20 May, 2026

Accepted
21 June, 2026

Final Revision
15 August, 2026

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Introduction

Religious tourism is one of the fastest-growing parts of the tourism market and it has a double value as compared to the regular tourism. It is, on one hand, a sustaining practice of pilgrimage, devotion, and communal rituals, and, on the other, an economic catalyst for the communities that surround sacred places and produce demand for transport, accommodation, food, ritual items and guiding services (Rinschede, 2021; Timothy & Olsen, 2020). Nepal's position as a crossroads of Hindu and Buddhist civilisation makes it an obvious destination for this type of tourism. Pilgrims and tourists make annual pilgrimages to places like Pashupatinath and Lumbini, and more recently, to lesser known locations in the remote hill and mountain regions of the country.

One such place is the Pathivara Temple in the eastern Himalayas of the country in Taplejung district of Nepal. It is a temple dedicated to the goddess Pathivara and attracts thousands of devotees each year, despite its isolation and lack of facilities. People of all castes, classes and religions are attracted to such religious sites of worship, highlighting the extensive cultural influence of such religious sites (Shinde, 2020). Besides devotional purpose, the temple complex has become an important hub of community life as well as socio-economic exchanges; and, in recent years, scholarly studies have shown that sacred landscapes like Pathivara can foster sustainable local development without compromising cultural identity and heritage protection (Pandey & Khadka, 2022; Sharma, 2021).

In parallel, an increased number of visitors at Pathivara is starting to reveal the weaknesses of the current infrastructure and management system. All of the above are becoming more apparent, and are known to occur at religious and environmentally critical sites elsewhere (Gössling et al., 2020; Nepal, 2022). This study is an attempt to address that developing tension. It incorporates cultural, religious and socio-economic aspects of Pathivara pilgrimage economy to evaluate the effects of tourism infrastructure and governance on the local economic development and culture and environmental sustainability. In so doing, it aims to suggest a development trajectory for Pathivara that preserves its sacredness, while also enhancing the benefits that the surrounding communities can derive from its increasing popularity.

In many places around the world, the growth of tourism has exceeded the planning capacity of the institutions tasked to manage it in ecologically and culturally sensitive places. The unintended side effects when it comes to growth are well-known: diminishing natural resources, loss of fragile environments, and progressive decay of native traditions and social systems (Gössling et al., 2020; Nepal, 2022). All these pressures have stimulated research and policy development to seek solutions to the sustainable tourism issues that seek to balance economic benefits with environmental protection and cultural continuity. Good governance, true public involvement and adequate regulation are consistently cited as the prerequisites for tourism development

that is not detrimental to the ecosystems and cultural values that are essential for its future.

Religious tourism is part of this landscape, and has its unique flavor. It is driven mainly for the purpose of pilgrimage, prayer and seeking spiritual fulfilment, and yet has many of same economic impacts as regular tourism; there is a demand for accommodation, transport and for ritual items that can be sold – these provide direct income into local economies (Rinschede, 2021). Nepal's rich history of religious and cultural diversity has ensured it remains the enduring destination for many pilgrims, both Hindu and Buddhist. Pathivara Temple has significant spiritual importance and a considerable, mostly untapped, tourism potential too, as one of the sacred places of eastern Nepal. The shrine is a popular tourist destination, attracting thousands of visitors annually who not only come to see the shrine but also to participate in its customs and rituals, thereby boosting the local economy and strengthening social bonds.

But the fact that Pathivara is a successful pilgrimage site has created its own problems. Increasing numbers of visitors have strained transportation systems, created ecological challenges to the landscape surrounding the site, and revealed an ongoing lack of an effective management plan that can integrate the many decisions made by visitors, government, and community groups and private operators which impact the site. However, recent studies suggest that religious tourism can effectively boost rural economies and contribute to rural development if development is planned and sustainably managed, otherwise it can have negative social and environmental impacts (Adhikari et al., 2023; Sharma & Tiwari, 2021). In this context, the current study investigates the current situation of tourist development in Pathivara and suggests a more sustainable development for the tourism sector in this region.

Taplejung region in the eastern Himalayan region of Nepal is considered to be one of the most scenic areas in Nepal with rich cultural heritages and the region is increasingly gaining popularity as a religious pilgrim destination. Pathivara Temple is the main temple of the district attracting thousands of pilgrims from around Nepal and neighbouring countries annually. Even though there is clearly an opportunity for this to become an organised religious tourism destination, it is yet to be fully realised. The quality of service, physical facilities and the coordination of tourism in the temple complex are still inadequate.

The speed of area development is hampered by several interwoven constraints. The capacity of transportation facilities has not yet kept up with the number of pilgrims visiting the site; the tourism planning has not been coordinated but done ad hoc; the number of hotels and basic amenities is still insufficient; and marketing and promotional activities are still limited. An increasing number of visitors, in turn, has led to an increase in environmental problems and pressures on customary practices around the site, creating a significant impact on the natural and cultural environment of the

surrounding communities. Combined, these constraints suggest a growing mismatch between the tourism potential and reality of the study area.

Theoretical Perspectives

The religious tourism industry in Nepal is deeply embedded in the country's rich civilisational heritage and a strong tradition of pilgrimage practice among both Buddhist and Hindu temples. The practice dates back to ancient times and was influenced by many during Emperor Ashoka's reign who encouraged the practice of Buddhism including him who created sacred sites like Lumbini. In respect of religion and culture, Nepal has always been a place of exchange with pilgrims coming from across the globe and the continuous development of inbound tourism (Sharma, 2021; Timothy & Olsen, 2020). This industry is sustained by iconic places like Swayambhunath and Pashupatinath temple and also continues to support the preservation of associated cultural practices (Adhikari & Bhattarai, 2022; Rinschede, 2021) and is also supported by religious festivals and traditions, which give a chance for cross-cultural interaction between pilgrims and visitors on a regular basis.

Despite these strengths, there are ongoing challenges for religious tourism in Nepal, the most pertinent being the commercialisation of sacred places and the degradation of the natural environment around these places (Adhikari & Bhattarai, 2022; Nyaupane et al., 2020). Concurrently, the sector provides significant socio-economic benefits, especially to rural areas, as seen in its contribution to jobs and wider economic development (Nyaupane et al., 2020; Sharma, 2021). The Pathivara Temple, however, occupies a unique space between two extremes: It is not as commercialised as Pashupatinath nor as institutionalised as Lumbini, but it experiences the same tension as increased demand for pilgrimage and insufficient sustainable infrastructure and governance systems.

To analyze the characteristics of tourism activity at a specific location and to explain how and why this activity increases or decreases over time, it is necessary to examine the economic, social-cultural, environmental and institutional forces that interact to shape the activity. The process of tourism development is a dynamic process which can be explained in a multi-causal manner, meaning that a systematic theoretical lens is required to explain the evolution of tourism destinations and how sustainability can be incorporated in their management. Three modern international theories are of special interest at a place like Pathivara where spiritual faith, livelihood of the people and environment come together.

In recent years, a great deal of interest has been shown in tourism resilience theory, especially in the face of global disasters such as the Covid-19 pandemic. B. Gössling, Scott and Hall (2020) suggest that tourist destinations need to develop the ability to withstand unexpected disruption, adjust to new conditions and recover well, and highlight flexibility, crisis management and long-term sustainability. The point of view

is highly relevant to the context of Pathivara as it is largely isolated, sensitive to ecological factors and reliant on a short annual pilgrim calendar. Enhance the resilience of the site with key measures such as strengthening basic infrastructure, disaster preparedness and more adaptive management practices to safeguard the destination and the communities that rely on it.

Another lens is that of smart tourism destination theory. Real-time data systems, intelligent infrastructure, and digital technologies can be used to augment the visitor experience and boost the operational efficiency of a destination, as described by Gretzel and Sigala (2021). For Pathivara, this means digital promotion, online pilgrimage information systems and smart facilities may enhance the connectivity and visitor management while minimising the environmental impact of tourism activities by better directing resource consumption and easing the pressure of physical infrastructure during high tourist seasons.

The third framework relevant to this study is sustainable tourism governance theory, which is related to institutional arrangements for growth management. Effective governance systems are important in the development of inclusive, environmentally responsible and community beneficial tourism (Goodwin, 2021). In Pathivara, this means a need for coordinated management that can control the pace and place of infrastructure development, ensure environmental protection measures are being implemented and ensure a true partnership between local government, community organisations and the tourism industry. Combined, these three theories echo a general consensus that investing in infrastructure is not distinct from institutional governance, and that both are crucial to unlocking the potential for long-term local benefits from tourism growth at Pathivara, or for cumulative environmental and cultural degradation.

This study is based on multiple propositions, which is the potential for the development of tourism infrastructure, coupled with tourism governance and management, to enhance the local economic development and cultural and environmental sustainability. The local economic development and cultural and environmental sustainability are hypothesized as dependent variables influenced by two independent variables: tourism infrastructure development and tourism governance and management. There are two indicators for infrastructure development: transportation availability and accommodation adequacy; indicators for basic services are hygiene and sanitation and site accessibility; indicators for governance and management are policy effectiveness, stakeholder coordination, environmental management practice, regulation of tourism activity and community participation in decision-making. There are indicators of income increase, employment generation, business growth, improvement of the living standard that can be used as indicators of local economic development, and indicators of cultural preservation, environmental protection, and promotion of local tradition and sustainable use of resources are used as indicators of cultural and environmental sustainability.

Objectives and Methodology

The objectives of the study were to explore the relationship between tourism infrastructure and governance from economic growth as well as cultural and environmental sustainability perspectives. In doing so, the study used mixed-methods study design for explaining religious tourism development activities at the Pathivara Temple. The quantitative component was based on descriptive correlational design, which aimed to determine the direction of association of the independent variables (infrastructure development and governance and management) to the dependent variables (local economic development and cultural and environmental sustainability). The qualitative portion was used for capturing the lived experience, perspectives and concerns of community members which included local residents and hospitality businesses. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents based on their first-hand experience on religious tourism or their participation in it at the place. A total of 212 persons responded to the quantitative survey, and 15 key informants were also selected for in-depth qualitative interviews.

Numerical data were gathered using structured questionnaire having 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Before field work, tools was piloted with 20 respondents for ensuring internal consistency of measurement scale. The scales all demonstrated more than the typical 0.70 level of internal consistency, with scores of 0.903 to 0.922. The highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.922$) and the closest were for the cultural and environmental sustainability scale, followed by local economic development ($\alpha = 0.919$), tourism infrastructure development ($\alpha = 0.918$), and tourism governance and management ($\alpha = 0.903$). Finally, data were analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and frequency), Pearson correlation analysis and linear regression analysis and Cronbach's alpha procedure was used to confirm scale reliability. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analysed thematically, which aimed to discern patterns and ideas concerning the development and sustainability of tourism. The two strands of findings were then combined to give one integrated account about tourism dynamics at Pathivara.

Results and Discussion: Pathivara Temple at a Glance

The study was conducted in Pathivara Temple situated in Taplejung district Koshi Province. The temple is locating at high altitude (3800m.) with impressive mountain scenery and greenery jungle. It is one of the most popular shakti peeths of eastern Nepal. Its remoteness, along with the approach route, which is challenging, have historically kept visitors away but, in recent years, the number of people who visit has increased significantly due to the reputation that the approach is gaining with domestic and international pilgrims. The nearby villages are mostly populated by indigenous Limbu and other ethnic groups and the activities of the people have been mainly based on subsistence farming and petty businesses. Pilgrims are also affecting the local

economy, especially during peak seasons, creating a demand for accommodation, food, porters and guides; and intermittent, but high demand for the use of the fragile alpine ecosystem, water resources, and waste management systems. The Pathivara area is a compelling study area given its spiritual importance, sensitivity to the environment and the growing economic opportunity in the region, which presents an interesting lens for the interconnection of tourism development, governance and sustainability.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents (212) are summarised in Table 1. Almost half of the respondents (47.6%) had a master's degree, 18.4% had an MPhil., 17.5% had a bachelor's degree, 13.2% had a Plus Two qualification and 3.3% had a PhD, which shows that the respondents were well-educated. In terms of age, the largest group fell within the 36–45 year bracket (29.7%), closely followed by those above 45 years (28.8%), those aged 25–35 years (24.5%), and those below 25 years (17.0%). Most local residents were by occupation service providers (guides, hotel staff) (23.1%), tourism entrepreneurs (20.8%) and government or other stakeholders (11.8%) followed by the largest group, local residents by occupation (44.3%). Most respondents were experienced users of the local tourism economy—40.1 percent had over 15 years of such experience and 27.4 percent had 10-15 years. Together, these traits suggest that the sample consisted of knowledgeable and well-experienced people with a history and stable involvement in tourism and local life in the Pathivara region, making their responses to the infrastructure and governance conditions credible.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 212)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Qualification	PhD	7	3.3
	M.Phil.	39	18.4
	Masters	101	47.6
	Bachelors	37	17.5
	Plus Two	28	13.2
Age Group	Below 25 years	36	17.0
	25–35 years	52	24.5
	36–45 years	63	29.7
	Above 45 years	61	28.8
Occupation/Role	Tourism Entrepreneur	44	20.8
	Local Resident	94	44.3
	Service Provider (Guide/Hotel Staff)	49	23.1
	Government/Stakeholder	25	11.8

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Experience	Less than 5 years	32	15.1
	5–10 years	37	17.5
	10–15 years	58	27.4
	More than 15 years	85	40.1

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of the 15 items related to tourism infrastructure development, tourism governance and management, local economic development and cultural and environmental sustainability. All the items had their mean score above 4.0 on five-point scale which represents a generally positive perception of tourism conditions at Pathivara. For infrastructure, availability of transportation facilities was the most highly rated ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.99$), followed by quality of basic facilities (water and sanitation) ($M = 4.18$) and support for tourism growth ($M = 4.10$). In the governance sphere, the highest rating was for effective tourism policies ($M = 4.32$), followed by regulation of tourism activities ($M = 4.16$) and environmental management practice ($M = 4.11$).

Within the local economic development domain, increase in local income had the highest mean score ($M = 4.40$), and employment opportunities ($M = 4.12$) and economic stability of the region ($M = 4.11$) were rated positively, as was respondents' general sense that the tourism industry has positively affected household income. Preservation of cultural practices had the highest average rating in the cultural and environmental sustainability component of the instrument ($M = 4.42$), while protection of the natural environment had the comparatively lowest rating for the whole instrument ($M = 3.99$), indicating that respondents saw cultural practices as being done better than environmental protection measures. The standard deviations on items are rather small, all being within the range 0.85 to 1.02, which suggests a fair level of agreement among the respondents.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (n = 212)

Variable	Item	Mean	SD
Tourism Infrastructure Development	Availability of transportation facilities	4.39	0.99
	Adequate accommodation services	4.01	0.91
	Quality of basic facilities (water, sanitation)	4.18	0.92
	Accessibility to the temple area	4.05	0.91
	Support for tourism growth	4.10	0.94
Tourism Governance & Management	Effective tourism policies	4.32	0.97
	Coordination among stakeholders	4.01	0.92
	Environmental management practices	4.11	0.98
	Regulation of tourism activities	4.16	0.86
	Community participation in decision-making	4.06	0.93
Local Economic Development	Increase in local income	4.40	1.00
	Employment opportunities	4.12	0.96
	Growth of local businesses	4.07	0.91
	Improvement in living standards	4.04	0.97
	Economic stability in the region	4.11	0.93
Cultural & Environmental Sustainability	Preservation of cultural practices	4.42	0.94
	Protection of natural environment	3.99	0.91
	Promotion of local traditions	4.11	0.94
	Sustainable use of resources	4.11	1.02
	Balance between tourism and culture	4.06	0.92

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients between the four study variables are presented in Table 3. The relationships in all cases were positive and strong, and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The local economic development and cultural and environmental sustainability aspects of tourism infrastructure development were highly correlated with each other ($r = 0.908$ and $r = 0.884$, respectively). The most significant bivariate relationship in the study was between tourism governance and management and local economic development ($r = 0.858$) and the tourism governance and management and

cultural and environmental sustainability ($r = 0.911$). These findings suggest that in Pathivara, the quality of infrastructure and governance are more or less correlated with the performance of the economy and the sustainability performance in cultural and environmental aspects, respectively, and that governance quality is, if anything, more closely related to cultural and environmental sustainability than the quality of infrastructure.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis among Study Variables ($n = 212$)

Variable	TID	TGM	LED	CES
Tourism Infrastructure Development (TID)	1	—	0.884**	0.908**
Tourism Governance & Management (TGM)	—	1	0.858**	0.911**
Local Economic Development (LED)	0.884**	0.858**	1	—
Cultural & Environmental Sustainability (CES)	0.908**	0.911**	—	1

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

Regression Analysis

Table 4 shows the results of four simple linear regression models, all of which test the predictive power of one independent variable for one dependent variable. Local economic development is significantly predicted by tourism infrastructure development ($R = 0.884$, $R^2 = 0.781$, $F = 750.663$, $\beta = 0.884$, $t = 27.398$, $p < .05$) and this indicates that 78.1 percent of the variance in local economic development can be explained by tourism infrastructure development rating. Infrastructure development was found to be a more powerful predictor of cultural and environmental sustainability ($R = 0.908$, $R^2 = 0.824$, $F = 981.645$, $\beta = 0.908$, $t = 31.331$, $p < .001$) and accounts for 82.4 percent of the variance in cultural and environmental sustainability.

Tourism governance and management likewise predicted local economic development significantly ($R = 0.858$, $R^2 = 0.737$, $F = 587.6$, $\beta = 0.858$, $t = 24.24$, $p < .001$), accounting for 73.7 percent of the variance, and was the strongest single predictor of cultural and environmental sustainability in the study ($R = 0.911$, $R^2 = 0.830$, $F = 1026.343$, $\beta = 0.911$, $t = 32.037$, $p < .001$), explaining 83.0 percent of the variance. The strong and statistically significant t-values for both sets of models indicate that both infrastructure and governance have strong, statistically meaningful positive effects on each outcome examined, with governance exhibiting a slightly stronger effect on the sustainability outcomes and infrastructure on the economic outcomes.

Table 4. Regression Analysis of Study Variables (n = 212)

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R	R²	F	β	t	Sig.
Tourism Infrastructure Development	Local Economic Development	0.884	0.781	750.663	0.884	27.398	.015
Tourism Infrastructure Development	Cultural & Environmental Sustainability	0.908	0.824	981.645	0.908	31.331	.000
Tourism Governance & Management	Local Economic Development	0.858	0.737	587.600	0.858	24.240	.000
Tourism Governance & Management	Cultural & Environmental Sustainability	0.911	0.830	1026.343	0.911	32.037	.000

Qualitative Findings

The narrative information generated from interview complement and serve to expand the quantitative results. Tourism infrastructures were consistently viewed as an important factor influencing pilgrim access, numbers of visits and economic activities of local residents, and 80% of respondents were positive about recent developments regarding tourism infrastructures, including roads, accommodation and basic amenities. Despite this, the overcrowding for certain festival days was mentioned by several informants as something they were concerned with, as the infrastructure is unable to cope with the large numbers of pilgrims during these times. Governance and management was seen as critical for the future of the site, but informants felt it was important that more people were involved in decision making, there was better oversight and coordination between the agencies involved in the site, and there was more clarity and commitment regarding policy.

In the economic aspect, participants noted that tourism has been successful in contributing to the income of the local people and the expansion of their work, especially in the tourism industry, which includes the provision of accommodation, food and the accompanying porter services to the pilgrimage season. In terms of culture and environment, the informants mentioned that the growing awareness of the local people about the tourism related issues have made local customs and rituals around the temple more preserved in certain aspects. Concurrently, they noted waste management as an unsolved issue that demanded more conscious action, and pressure on natural resources as the other.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

There is a close convergence between quantitative and qualitative strands of the study. The statistical findings are congruent with the strong and significant relationships between tourism infrastructure development and governance and management and local economic development and cultural and environmental sustainability; and the qualitative results independently support this trend and respondents outlined the clear benefits of increased income, employment, and cultural preservation that they believe are linked directly to improvements in infrastructure and governance and management. The qualitative data brings a degree of nuance that cannot be captured by the statistical data, to highlight the lack of uniformity in the provision of infrastructure, the lack of coordination between governing bodies and the growing pressure on the environment as the main concerns that are not addressed. When combined, both strands of evidence point to a consistent overall conclusion: The long-term sustainability of tourism demand at Pathivara is linked to the governance and environmental gap identified by both sets of evidence, and so far this growth has been generally good.

Discussion

The results of this study support the theoretical propositions listed in Section 5. The focus by the respondents on seasonal issues of overcrowding and infrastructural stress reiterates the principle of tourism resilience theory (Gossling et al., 2020) which indicates that Pathivara's resilience to disruptive events such as extreme weather or infrastructure failures or unexpected crowds of pilgrims are bound to be limited and there is urgent need to invest in adaptive capacity to reduce this vulnerability. The high statistical correlation between the variables of governance quality and cultural and environmental sustainability ($r = 0.911$) directly provides empirical evidence to support the theory of sustainable tourism governance that coordinated institutional arrangements, not only infrastructure, are what really shape whether tourism development can be more or less beneficial for the host's community and its ecosystem (Goodwin, 2021). The comparative lower score for the protection of the environment, compared to the protection of cultural practice, also indicates that, at Pathivara, governance capacity has been directed more towards cultural preservation than towards environmental protection, similar to other Himalayan pilgrimage sites (Nepal, 2022; Nyaupane et al., 2020).

The relationship of infrastructure and sustainability is also strong ($r = 0.908$), as per the smart tourism destination theory (Gretzel & Sigala, 2021) which suggests that a strong relationship between infrastructure and sustainability can be expected with regard to economic, environmental and cultural outcomes, as the good design of physical infrastructure, the placement of waste facilities, the management of trails, the regulation of accommodation, would reduce incidental environmental damage associated with unplanned growth of visitors. The qualitative results, however, warn against interpreting

the high quantitative correlations as an indication of current satisfaction levels. The fact that multiple stakeholders were frequently perceived as uncoordinated and that environmental safeguards were not properly implemented shows that governance quality, though positively related to good outcomes, is not a proven reality at Pathivara and is still a work in progress. These findings corroborate the main tenet of the conceptual framework, namely, infrastructure and governance are not mutually exclusive but complements to one another to generate sustainable tourism outcomes. There is little that will happen to sustain if only one of them is invested and the other one is neglected. When a site is like that of Pathivara, with a high level of sacred and ecological concern, it is necessary to step up the governance capacity for each step of expansion.

Conclusion and Implications

The study concludes that local governance and religious tourism development has positive economic and sustainability outcomes. Higher local income and employment levels are related to accessibility, service quality, and better practice of management for cultural and environmental assets. The study pinpoints real and unmet constraints, environmental pressure, inequitable infrastructure, and gaps in coordinated governance, all of which needs to be tackled to ensure the sustainability of the site's growth path. The infrastructure investment and participatory governance, practices found satisfactory in Pathivara temple area. The findings have a number of practical implications for policy makers, tourism planners, and local stakeholders. Investments in transportation, accommodation and basic services should be seen as a consistent top priority as they always appear as the single best lever to increase economic and sustainability effects. The governance of tourism should be enhanced through better design of tourism policy, better coordination of the wide variety of agencies and community groups involved, and greater opportunities for robust community engagement in the decision making process. The environmental protection has been less successful than preservation of culture, and thus special attention is warranted to waste management, resource conservation and monitoring the environment. Lastly, there is a need to increase the economic benefits of tourism to more than just those of existing entrepreneurs to a more diverse spectrum of the local population as a whole if growth at Pathivara is to lead to an equitable and community-wide prosperity.

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