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## Heritage Tourism Opportunities and Challenges: A Case Study on Kalaburagi Heritage Sites

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the linkages between cultural heritage tourism and environmental protection in the town of Kalaburagi (previously Gulbarga) in the state of Karnataka. This examines the consequences of heritage tourism development on local communities, the perceptions of tourist development and conservation by the residents, and the opportunities and obstacles of sustainable heritage tourism. This study aims to evaluate the effects of heritage tourism on the local community and analyze residents' perceptions of heritage tourism development and conservation, and opportunities and challenges. This study was conducted in selected heritage tourism sites in Kalaburagi city. Explanatory research was used, and primary data were gathered using a 5-point Likert-scale structured questionnaire from local inhabitants. This study provides a response to the scarcity of empirical studies on the CHT development of Kalaburagi and adds to the awareness of the sustainable development of CHT. This shows high community acceptance, with strong preference shown for community-based management and cultural preservation, and community-based collaborative governance. Socioeconomic and cultural benefits were identified by the residents, with inadequate training and capacity building identified as a key constraint. This cross-sectional study had a small sample size of 147 respondents, limiting the generalizability of the findings. This study provides empirical evidence of community perceptions and identifies some strategies for improving participation, heritage protection, governance, and enhancing local capacity building for sustainable tourism.

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## 1. Introduction

Heritage Tourism is an important sector that highlights the significance of preserving historical sites, traditions and cultural practices while simultaneously promoting nation's economic growth Dattatraya & Smita (2024). Every location in the world has a legacy, and many areas have used tourism to leverage their cultural history for economic growth (Timothy, 2014). Numerous definitions of heritage have been put out from various academic disciplines, but they all concur that heritage is what humanity uses now and inherits from the past (Timothy, 2014). However, there are two major misconceptions about what heritage means (Timothy, 2014). The first is that for something to qualify as heritage,

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it must be ancient (Timothy, 2014). This perspective of view demonstrates a lack of knowledge regarding the past as a cultural asset (Timothy, 2014). According to the second widespread misconception, heritage ought to be material. This assumption is also incorrect (Timothy, 2014). Only one aspect of the past that is utilized for tourism and other reasons now is represented by built heritage. Intangible cultural heritage includes things like dance, music, language, religion, folklore, art forms, traditional knowledge, culinary customs, social relationships, customs, ways of hunting, and ceremonies (Timothy, 2014). The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States defines heritage tourism as 'traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past' (National Trust for Historic Preservation) (Pisolkar et al., 2025). Although cultural heritage is prized as a communal asset, tourism businesses frequently center their operations around it (Hughes & Carlsen, 2010).

Karnataka has four UNESCO recognised world Heritage sites among them 3 Cultural; heritage: Hampi group of monuments, Pattadakal Group of Monuments, Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala, and 1 natural heritage: Western Ghats. They are quite popular due to their UNESCO tag. Other districts in Karnataka have too many Heritage sites which are not popular and attracts few tourists towards it. Cultural Heritage guided Walks, walkathon, Community involvement is crucial for developing sense of ownership and creating economic opportunities Pisolkar et al. (2025) In India, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, and Mysore have successfully conducted heritage walks and drives in their respective cities(Pisolkar et al., 2025). This was to spread information among the people and to educate them by hosting Heritage Festivals, Tonga Tours, Heritage Awards, and street plays, and also by publishing a Heritage Newspaper for the promotion of effective management (Pisolkar et al., 2025). Finally, this scholarly research Paper is to address the answers for following questions:

1. What is the impact of heritage tourism development on the socio-economic conditions of local communities?
2. How do local residents perceive heritage tourism development and conservation efforts in their area?
3. What are the key opportunities and challenges faced in the development of heritage tourism?

## 2. Literature Review

The data set on heritage tourism, over the last 20 years (2000-2020) is analyzed into three clusters, including authenticity, heritage management, and the perception of tourists (Bhowmik, 2021). Legacies are valuable resources in community development, cultural identity, and economic development both material and intangible (Arun Sharma et al., 2017). The numerous stakeholders of sustainable development and conservation of heritage tourism in India are the local communities, governmental bodies, and the tourists (Arun Sharma et al., 2017). The opportunities consist of economic development due to higher incomes and local development Arun Sharma et al. (2017) & 1 other improved cultural awareness and heritage preservation funding Jadhav Vikrant Patilba et al., (2025), and possible skill development and community participation Parul G. Munjal et al., (2019). Nevertheless, problems are always present in the literature: environmental destruction and overcrowding (Jadhav, Vikrant Patilba et al., 2025), cultural commercialization S. K. Bhargava et al., 2022), insufficient funding and coordination of stakeholders Arnab Gantait et al., (2018), and the government emphasis on Heritage Tourism in India: A Stakeholder Perspective, revenue over the real conservation (S. Paul et al., 2017). It is based on eight India-specific studies based on various locations, such as Pune, Nashik, Murshidabad, Pauni, and Haryana towns, which use surveys, interviews, and field observations (Y.

Pisolkar et al., 2025 & 1 other). Yet, the majority of the studies are case studies which are small in scale with limited sample sizes, as such, there is a need to study the topic empirically on a larger scale.

### 3. Research Methodology

The research has been completed based on Heritage Tourism sites of Kalaburagi city, Karnataka, India. The researchers have undertaken explanatory research for which primary data has been collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contains closed-ended questions to best understand the respondent's views. Overall, responses were recorded.

**Table 1.** Notable Heritage, Archaeological, Historical, and Culinary Sites of Kalaburagi City

| Category             | Site / Item                  | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Heritage Sites       | Sri Sharanbasaveshwar Shrine | The Shree Sharana Basaveshwara Temple is dedicated to Shri Sharana Basaveshwara, a prominent 18th-century Hindu religious scholar and social reformer. He is widely known for promoting the principles of <i>Dasoha</i> (charitable giving) and <i>Kayaka</i> (dignity of labour).                                                                                                                   |
| Heritage Sites       | Khwaja Bande Nawaz Dargah    | Hazrat Khwaja Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraz, also known as Syed Muhammad Hussaini, was a renowned Indian Sufi saint of the Chishti Order. He promoted harmony, tolerance, and interfaith understanding. Born on 13 July 1321 and passing away on 1 November 1422, he was a disciple of Hazarath Khwaja Pir Naseeruddin Mahmood, popularly known as the "Chirag of Delhi."                                   |
| Heritage Sites       | Ganagapur Dattatreya Temple  | Ganagapura is regarded as the sacred site of Kshetra Shree Dattatreya. It is associated with Sri Narasimha Saraswati Swami, considered the second incarnation of Dattatreya. Located in the Afzalpur Taluk of Kalaburagi district, the site is famous for the Nirgun Math, where the Nirguna Padukas are worshipped.                                                                                 |
| Heritage Sites       | Buddha Vihar                 | Buddha Vihar is located on Sedam Road near Gulbarga University, approximately 6 km from the district headquarters. Spread across 18 acres, the complex includes a meditation centre, a Lord Buddha Chaitya (Pali temple), and a large dome measuring 70 feet in height and 59 feet in diameter, constructed using traditional Buddhist architectural styles.                                         |
| Heritage Sites       | Sannati                      | Sannati and nearby Kanaganahalli gained historical significance after the collapse of the Kali Temple in the Chandralamba temple complex in 1986. During the excavation, an Ashokan edict was discovered, drawing national and international scholarly attention to the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka and the early history of Buddhism. The discovery also led to extensive ASI excavations in the region. |
| Archaeological Sites | Kanaganahalli                | Kanaganahalli is renowned for the discovery of the majestic Maha Stupa, referred to in inscriptions as the <i>Adholoka Maha Chaitya</i> . The site is particularly significant for the discovery of a                                                                                                                                                                                                |

| Category             | Site / Item       | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Archaeological Sites | Government Museum | <p>stone sculpture of Emperor Ashoka accompanied by queens and female attendants, believed to be the only surviving depiction of the Mauryan emperor bearing the Brahmi inscription "Raya Asoko."</p> <p>The Government Museum of Kalaburagi preserves and promotes the region's cultural heritage. Its collections include sculptures, coins, ceramics, manuscripts, and textiles, reflecting the artistic excellence and historical richness of the area. The museum provides valuable insights into the region's kingdoms, civilizations, and cultural traditions.</p> |
| Archaeological Sites | Kalaburagi Fort   | <p>Kalaburagi Fort was originally built by Raja Gulchand, a feudatory of the Warangal Kakatiyas. Later, Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah of the Bahmani dynasty strengthened the fort using West Asian and European military architectural styles. The fort is particularly noted for its centrally located citadel.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Historical Monuments | Haft Gumbaz       | <p>Haft Gumbaz, also spelled Haft Gumbad, is a group of tombs belonging to the Bahmani dynasty located in Kalaburagi, Karnataka. Constructed during the 14th and 15th centuries, these tombs are important examples of early Indo-Islamic architecture.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Historical Monuments | Do Minar          | <p>Do Minar, often associated with the Shaikh Roza minarets, refers to the architectural structures within the Dargah complex of Shaikh Sirajuddin Junaidi in Kalaburagi. The site is well known for its impressive domes and minarets, reflecting Islamic architectural traditions.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Historical Monuments | Shor Gumbaz       | <p>Shor Gumbaz served as a watchtower and checkpoint during the Bahmani period. Situated atop a hill in Kalaburagi, it is famous for its whispering gallery and echo effects, making it a significant example of Bahmani architectural design.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Culinary Heritage    | Malpuri           | <p>Malpuri is one of the most popular traditional desserts of Kalaburagi, prepared using natural ingredients and high-quality khawa. Popularly referred to as "Mamu Ki Malpuri," the sweet is best enjoyed warm and is commonly sold during the evening hours.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Culinary Heritage    | Jolad Rotte       | <p>Jolad Rotte, also known as Jowari Bhakri, is a staple food of the region prepared from jowar (sorghum) flour. It is traditionally consumed with spicy curries and peanut chutney powder. The cuisine of Kalaburagi is widely recognized for its spicy flavour profile.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Culinary Heritage    | Sengada Holige    | <p>Sengada Holige is a traditional sweet flatbread stuffed with a mixture of peanuts and jaggery. The dish combines a flaky outer layer with a soft filling and is valued for both its taste and nutritional benefits, including protein and iron content.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| Category          | Site / Item | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Culinary Heritage | Sajje Roti  | Sajje Roti, also known as Bhajra Roti, is prepared using pearl millet flour. Rich in phosphorus and other nutrients, it is considered beneficial for bone health and suitable for diabetic individuals and those seeking weight management due to its complex carbohydrate composition. |
| Culinary Heritage | Pundi Palya | Pundi Palya is a traditional Karnataka dish prepared using pundi leaves, which naturally impart a tangy flavour to the curry. Enhanced with garlic and mild spices, the dish represents the distinctive culinary traditions of the Kalaburagi region.                                   |

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

A survey was administered to 147 residents of the community linked with the heritage tourism sites. The socio-demographic characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 1. There is a significant difference between the numbers of male and female respondents (69.4%, n=102, to 30.6%, n=45 respectively) which could be due to a gender bias in public involvement in surveys related to heritage in the study area. The respondents were relatively young and economically active as a substantial majority (67.3%) fall in the age group 21-30, followed by 31-40 (22.4%). When it comes to education, 71.4% of the respondents have postgraduate or higher qualifications, indicating a basis of educated respondents that would be able to have the nuances with the perception of the tourism development. There are more people in the private sector (59.2%) than students and self-employed (12.2% each). In terms of household income, the top household group has a range of income between ₹10,001 and ₹25,000 per month, which is low to middle income. Regarding the proximity of the heritage site, 59.2% of the respondents had no direct relationship with the heritage site and 40.8% lived in proximity, had their own property nearby, ran businesses catering to tourists, or worked in the heritage management. The results of the tourism involvement show that 59.2% of them have no relation to tourism activities, 18.4% have direct relations with tourism activities (e.g., guides, homestay operators, craft sellers), and 22.4% have indirect relations (e.g., supply chain, transport). Importantly, 53.1% of respondents have lived in the community for more than 6 years and 38.8% of the sample were born in the community, providing a representative sample base of community views with an established grassroots foundation.

**Table 2.** Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 147)

| Variable   | Category                 | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|------------|--------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender     | Male                     | 102           | 69.4           |
|            | Female                   | 45            | 30.6           |
| Age Group  | Below 20 years           | 3             | 2.0            |
|            | 21–30 years              | 99            | 67.3           |
|            | 31–40 years              | 33            | 22.4           |
|            | 41–50 years              | 9             | 6.1            |
|            | Above 50 years           | 3             | 2.0            |
| Education  | Secondary education      | 9             | 6.1            |
|            | Graduate                 | 33            | 22.4           |
|            | Postgraduate and above   | 105           | 71.4           |
| Occupation | Employed (Private)       | 87            | 59.2           |
|            | Student                  | 18            | 12.2           |
|            | Self-employed / Business | 18            | 12.2           |

|                      |                       |    |      |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----|------|
|                      | Employed (Government) | 15 | 10.2 |
|                      | Unemployed            | 6  | 4.1  |
|                      | Others                | 3  | 2.0  |
| Monthly Income (INR) | Below ₹10,000         | 9  | 6.1  |
|                      | ₹10,001–₹25,000       | 60 | 40.8 |
|                      | ₹25,001–₹50,000       | 48 | 32.7 |
|                      | ₹50,001–₹75,000       | 15 | 10.2 |
|                      | Above ₹75,000         | 15 | 10.2 |
| Tourism Involvement  | Not involved          | 87 | 59.2 |
|                      | Indirectly involved   | 33 | 22.4 |
|                      | Directly involved     | 27 | 18.4 |
| Residence Length     | Less than 1 year      | 6  | 4.1  |
|                      | 1–5 years             | 21 | 14.3 |
|                      | 6–10 years            | 24 | 16.3 |
|                      | 11–20 years           | 18 | 12.2 |
|                      | More than 20 years    | 21 | 14.3 |
|                      | Born here             | 57 | 38.8 |

## 4.2 Reliability Analysis

To evaluate the internal consistency for each of the six thematic dimensions, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was used before inferential analysis. The reliability statistics for each dimension are presented in Table 2. The four dimensions of the instrument showed good reliability ( $\alpha > 0.80$ ), which meets the commonly accepted criterion for social science research (Nunnally, 1978). The Community-Based Model dimension ( $\alpha = 0.730$ ) is within the acceptable range, and the Challenges dimension ( $\alpha = 0.614$ ) is just below 0.70; therefore, it should be interpreted with caution. The results show the overall construct validity of the instrument on five dimensions.

**Table 3.** Dimension-Wise Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients

| Dimension                           | Items   | No. of Items | Mean | SD    | Cronbach's $\alpha$ | Interpretation |
|-------------------------------------|---------|--------------|------|-------|---------------------|----------------|
| Socioeconomic Impact                | Q10–Q13 | 4            | 3.50 | 1.154 | 0.843               | Good           |
| Cultural Identity & Community Pride | Q14–Q17 | 4            | 3.72 | 1.057 | 0.871               | Good           |
| Conservation & Sustainability       | Q18–Q20 | 3            | 3.99 | 0.910 | 0.829               | Good           |
| Challenges in Heritage Tourism      | Q21–Q23 | 3            | 3.63 | 1.113 | 0.614               | Acceptable     |
| Governance & Policy                 | Q24–Q27 | 4            | 4.04 | 0.906 | 0.835               | Good           |
| Community-Based Model               | Q28–Q29 | 2            | 4.21 | 0.895 | 0.730               | Acceptable     |

Note: Mean scores are on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). SD = Standard Deviation.

## 4.3 Descriptive Analysis and One-Sample t-Tests

Each of the 20 Likert items were analyzed using descriptive analysis and one-sample t-tests ( $H_0: \mu = 3.0$  (the neutral response value), to check if community perceptions are significantly different from neutrality. The mean (M), standard deviation (SD), t-statistic, significance level and percentage of the items with 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' (Agree+) are displayed in table 3.

The results for all 20 items were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) and were above the neutral point, suggesting that community residents have mostly positive or proactive attitudes in all the constructs of the heritage tourism. Multi-stakeholder collaboration (Q28 — 'Collaboration

between heritage experts, local residents and tour operators ensures better results') was endorsed overwhelmingly with a score of 89.8% (M = 4.37,  $t(146) = 20.64$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Agree+). Other top-ranking items are Q26 'Community involvement leads to sustainable outcomes' (M = 4.14, Agree+ = 93.9%), Q17 'Heritage tourism preserves traditional culture and values' (M = 4.14, Agree+ = 91.8%) and Q27 'Government policy is crucial for heritage tourism' (M = 4.10, Agree+ = 85.7%).

The item with the lowest score was Q21: There are sufficient training and skill development programs for local people in the tourism sector (M = 3.18,  $t(146) = 1.98$ ,  $p = 0.049$ , Agree+ = 49.0%). It is a marginal significance and the almost even split of responses signify the lack of capacity building efforts as the most critical unmet need in the data set.

**Table 4.** Descriptive Statistics and One-Sample t-Test Results (N = 147)

| Item | Statement (abbreviated)                | M    | SD   | t     | p      | Sig. | Agree+ (%) |
|------|----------------------------------------|------|------|-------|--------|------|------------|
| Q10  | Standard of living improved            | 3.51 | 1.08 | 5.75  | <0.001 | ***  | 61.2       |
| Q11  | More employment opportunities          | 3.45 | 1.33 | 4.09  | <0.001 | ***  | 63.3       |
| Q12  | Better infrastructure & facilities     | 3.55 | 1.11 | 6.01  | <0.001 | ***  | 69.4       |
| Q13  | Increased cost of living               | 3.47 | 1.09 | 5.20  | <0.001 | ***  | 55.1       |
| Q14  | Community pride & identity             | 3.63 | 1.12 | 6.83  | <0.001 | ***  | 67.3       |
| Q15  | Residents support promotion            | 3.55 | 1.01 | 6.58  | <0.001 | ***  | 63.3       |
| Q16  | Community participates in conservation | 3.57 | 1.09 | 6.35  | <0.001 | ***  | 61.2       |
| Q17  | Preserves traditional culture & values | 4.14 | 0.88 | 15.68 | <0.001 | ***  | 91.8       |
| Q18  | Authorities respect local traditions   | 4.02 | 0.85 | 14.59 | <0.001 | ***  | 83.7       |
| Q19  | Conservation priority over tourism     | 3.94 | 0.90 | 12.47 | <0.001 | ***  | 79.6       |
| Q20  | Sustainable income source              | 4.02 | 0.98 | 12.59 | <0.001 | ***  | 83.7       |
| Q21  | Training programs sufficient           | 3.18 | 1.12 | 1.98  | 0.049  | *    | 49.0       |
| Q22  | Overcrowding a challenge               | 3.65 | 1.08 | 7.31  | <0.001 | ***  | 71.4       |
| Q23  | Opportunities for local businesses     | 4.06 | 0.96 | 13.41 | <0.001 | ***  | 87.8       |
| Q24  | Management gaps a challenge            | 4.10 | 0.93 | 14.30 | <0.001 | ***  | 85.7       |
| Q25  | PPP models effective                   | 3.80 | 1.05 | 9.16  | <0.001 | ***  | 71.4       |
| Q26  | Community involvement = sustainability | 4.14 | 0.81 | 17.09 | <0.001 | ***  | 93.9       |
| Q27  | Government policy crucial              | 4.10 | 0.77 | 17.46 | <0.001 | ***  | 85.7       |
| Q28  | Collaboration ensures better results   | 4.37 | 0.80 | 20.64 | <0.001 | ***  | 89.8       |
| Q29  | Community-based model best approach    | 4.06 | 0.96 | 13.41 | <0.001 | ***  | 85.7       |

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; df = 146 for all tests;  $H_0: \mu = 3.0$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; Agree+ = combined percentage of 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' responses.

#### 4.4 Correlation Analysis Among Dimensions

Pearson's correlation coefficients were obtained between all six thematic dimension scores to test the inter-dimensional relationships (Table 4). The analysis finds that there is a very strong relationship between the variables, Socioeconomic Impact and Cultural Identity ( $r = 0.910$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that the respondents' economic and cultural understandings of heritage tourism are closely related. There were moderate to strong positive correlations between Cultural Identity and Conservation & Sustainability ( $r = 0.692$ ), and between Governance & Policy and Community Based Model ( $r = 0.619$ ), meaning that there is a strong relationship between governance orientation and advocacy for community-based models.

Notably, the correlations between socioeconomic impact ( $r = 0.354$ ) and cultural identity ( $r = 0.337$ ), as well as between cultural and economic interest and socioeconomic impact, were weakest for governance and policy, indicating that there is a clear distinction between respondents' grassroots-level cultural and economic experiences and macro-level policy considerations. All the correlations were positive and significant and substantiated the consistency of the general attitudinal attitude.

**Table 4.** Pearson Correlation Matrix of Dimension Scores (N = 147)

| Dimension                        | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6 |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---|
| 1. Socioeconomic Impact          | —       |         |         |         |         |   |
| 2. Cultural Identity             | 0.910** | —       |         |         |         |   |
| 3. Conservation & Sustainability | 0.592** | 0.692** | —       |         |         |   |
| 4. Challenges                    | 0.560** | 0.628** | 0.514** | —       |         |   |
| 5. Governance & Policy           | 0.354** | 0.337** | 0.498** | 0.328** | —       |   |
| 6. Community-Based Model         | 0.409** | 0.493** | 0.581** | 0.451** | 0.619** | — |

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

## 4.5 Inferential Group Comparisons

Because Likert-scale data were ordinal and groups were not equal in size, non-parametric tests were used to determine whether there were significant differences between the perceptions of the different demographic subgroups. Multigroup comparisons (income, length of residence) were performed using Kruskal-Wallis H tests, and two-group comparisons (sex) were performed using Mann-Whitney U tests. The statistically significant findings are shown in Table 5.

The endorsement of Governance & Policy ( $H = 14.46$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ) and Community Based Model ( $H = 24.53$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) were highly significant variables, where higher income groups showed greater support for the two models. This could be due to increased knowledge of mechanisms and formal tourism management among higher-income travellers. Gender differences were present only for the CBM ( $U = 2956$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), in which the female respondents scored significantly higher, consistent with the larger literature showing that females are more oriented toward community solidarity and cooperative use of resources. The length of residence was also an important predictor of Governance & Policy perceptions ( $H = 13.63$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ) with longer-resident groups showing better developed and more positive attitudes towards policy-driven heritage management.

**Table 5.** Significant Group Comparison Results

| Comparison               | Dimension             | Test           | Statistic   | p-value | Sig. | Finding                                           |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|---------|------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Income group differences | Governance & Policy   | Kruskal-Wallis | $H = 14.46$ | 0.006   | **   | Significant variation across income brackets      |
| Income group differences | Community-Based Model | Kruskal-Wallis | $H = 24.53$ | <0.001  | ***  | Higher-income groups show stronger endorsement    |
| Gender differences       | Community-Based Model | Mann-Whitney U | $U = 2956$  | 0.003   | **   | Females score significantly higher than males     |
| Residence length         | Governance & Policy   | Kruskal-Wallis | $H = 13.63$ | 0.018   | *    | Longer residents show stronger policy orientation |

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Community perceptions of socioeconomic impact

The results regarding the socioeconomic consequences of heritage tourism show a positive but moderate attitude of the members of the community (dimension mean = 3.50). Similar to the literature on the link between heritage-based rural and peri-urban development, residents generally agree that the introduction of heritage tourism has increased their quality of life and opportunities for employment, as well as improving the public services they receive (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000; Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Interestingly, the

matching of the increased cost of living ( $M = 3.47$ ) highlights one of the 'double-edged swords' of heritage tourism economies: the positive economic impacts for some groups of residents are counterbalanced by negative economic impacts for others, particularly those living on lower incomes (Garrod & Fyall, 2000).

The relatively low mean score for this dimension compared to the governance and community-model dimensions could be a result of inequitable or limited socioeconomic benefits perceived by the respondents. This is in line with the political economy tourism literature, which argues that heritage tourism can reinforce and reiterate existing socioeconomic structures and imbalances instead of changing these (Tucker & Carnegie, 2014). Thus, there is a need for policy measures to achieve equitable benefit-sharing arrangements, including community trust funds and local procurement requirements.

## **5.2 Cultural identity, pride and conservation attitudes**

The Cultural Identity & Community Pride dimension had the highest internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.871$ ) and the highest mean score (3.72), and the subitem on culture and values preservation had the highest agree+ (91.8%). This indicates that the community members view heritage tourism as a means of cultural continuity and cultural pride and as a means of passing on traditions to the next generations, in line with other studies on living heritage communities in South and Southeast Asian countries (Smith, 2006; Winter, 2007).

Conservation attitudes were also high (dimension mean = 3.99). The proportion of those who said that conservation should come first when considering the development of tourism (79.6%) is a strong indication of a community that is very conservative. The implications of this for planning are large: heritage site managers and tourism authorities should not presume that communities are the same and are willing to compromise on cultural integrity for economic benefits. Instead, conservation-compatible models should be incorporated into tourism master plans, such as carefully managed visitor numbers, cultural impact analyses, and community management of the heritage.

Three major challenges were identified: overcrowding, management gaps, and skill deficits. Three key challenges were identified: overcrowding, management gaps, and skill deficits.

The Challenges dimension had a lower reliability level ( $\alpha = 0.614$ ), but it highlights significant contextual issues. Substance-related threats are perceived as overcrowding and commercialization, with means of 3.65 and 85.7%, respectively (Agree+). Proper management is perceived as a major problem ( $M = 4.10$ , Agree+ = 85.7%). Such findings are similar to those from other highly visitable heritage sites, which, lacking carrying capacity frameworks, suffer from physical deterioration and social conflict (Fyall & Garrod, 1998; UNWTO, 2018).

The most salient single result from the overall dataset was for training program adequacy, with a  $M = 3.18$  and a  $p = 0.049$ , just slightly above neutrality. This indicates a serious institutional deficiency: In the communities, the value of heritage tourism is well understood and they actively want to be involved, but the skills base and system to enable meaningful local involvement are underdeveloped. This is consistent with the results of the evaluations of the National Tourism Policy framework that have been conducted in India, where the capacity of human resources is identified as the weakest link in the chain of community-based tourism (CBT) (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2020). Vocational training, hospitality management, and cultural entrepreneurship programs are clearly in need of increased investment.

### 5.3 Governance, Policy, and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

The Governance & Policy dimension ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $\alpha = 0.835$ ) and the highest scoring item, collaboration between experts, residents, and operators ( $M = 4.37$ , Agree+ = 89.8%) both demonstrate that community residents have a sophisticated and institutionally aware perspective on heritage tourism governance. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models ( $M = 3.80$ , Agree+ = 71.4%) and government funding mechanisms ( $M = 4.10$ , Agree+ = 85.7%) are strongly endorsed, demonstrating an awareness that sustainable heritage tourism needs to be governed through structured architectures involving multiple actors, and not just through ad hoc or market-driven approaches.

Theory-wise, the finding that the perceptions of governance are significantly different according to income ( $p = 0.006$ ) and length of stay ( $p = 0.018$ ) is interesting. Community members with longer tenures and higher incomes seem to have clearer institutional orientations, which may be a result of being more involved in previous planning processes, community governance, and civic involvement. This discovery points to the need for community participation processes to be inclusive of newer and lower-income residents, who might not otherwise be involved in formal heritage governance decision-making (Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher, 2005).

Community-based tourism is the best development paradigm, as stated in the 4.5 Community-Based Tourism Model. In terms of the dimension, the Community-Based Model had the highest mean of all dimensions ( $M = 4.21$ ) and the only dimension that demonstrated significant gender differences ( $p = 0.003$ ), with females endorsing more highly than males. The question 'A community-based tourism model would best support both conservation and development goals' had the highest level of positive agreement (85.7%) in the whole survey, the most clearly normative (positive) signal.

This discovery is in line with the international tendency to promote community-based tourism (CBT) as a preferred model in the context of heritage sites, such as UNESCO's Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011) and ICOMOS' Tourism at World Heritage Cultural Sites (2002). High governance aspirations, along with a conservation ethic and preferences for a community model, indicate a view amongst that respondents do not simply want to be a part of development driven by external actors but are active, co-designed processes in which local agency is structurally part of the process. The findings support the 'sustainable livelihoods' concept for the development of tourism (de Kadt, 1979; Salazar, 2012) that emphasizes that tourism development is legitimate and resilient when it is based on and answerable to the local communities that manage the heritage that is being commercialized.

### 5.4 Results and Discussion

The results reveal that the local people have a very positive Socio-economic impact of heritage tourism (Mean = 3.50). Heritage tourism helps create jobs, improve infrastructure and improve living standards were confirmed by respondents while the cost of living has increased. The results in this study indicate that tourism has some socioeconomic costs even though it offers economic opportunities, as reflected in tourism development literature. The result is consistent with the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Ap, 1992) that suggests that tourists' support of tourism development depends on their perspectives that the benefits of the tourism development exceed the costs. The moderate mean score suggests residents are aware of positive and negative outcomes, from a balanced perspective rather than a blind approval. Similarly, Timothy and Boyd (2003), Ashworth and Tunbridge (2000) and Sharma et al. (2017) found that heritage tourism is beneficial to local economies, but can also lead to inflationary pressures and the unequal distribution of those benefits. Thus, the results indicate that the policy makers should attend to the equitable distribution of the

tourism benefits by generating local jobs, supporting entrepreneurship, and involving community participation.

The study finds that there is a strong interest and support for heritage conservation and cultural preservation among residents. Cultural identity and community pride had a high mean score (Mean = 3.72) and preservation of traditional culture and values had one of the highest agreement levels (91.8%). There was also strong support for Conservation and Sustainability (Mean = 3.99), meaning that tourism development is seen as important to be considered in the context of the conservation of heritage resources. The results confirm the Sustainable Heritage Tourism concept that states the importance of balancing the conservation and economic development of tourism in order to achieve long-term success (UNESCO, 2011; Timothy, 2014). The findings also further validate the cultural sustainability framework, indicating that residents view heritage as more than a tourism product, it's a part of their community. The results are consistent with those of other studies, such as Smith (2006); Winter (2007); and Hughes and Carlsen (2010) that found that community pride rises where heritage assets are preserved and interpreted responsibly.

There are several statistical opportunities that are significant. Community based tourism had the highest overall dimension score (Mean = 4.21) and collaboration between heritage experts, local communities and tourism operators was the most robust individual statement (Mean = 4.37). The respondents also strongly agreed on the need for government intervention, community participation and public-private partnerships. In contrast, the lowest mean score was identified as insufficient training and skill development programmes (Mean = 3.18), which means that the capacity building is still the most pressing issue. Overcrowding and management gaps were among the main concerns respondents mentioned. The above results are congruent with the theory of Community Based Tourism (CBT) which states that sustainable tourism can only be accomplished with the involvement of local communities in the planning and decision-making process (Murphy, 1985; Salazar, 2012). The results also confirm the stakeholder theory as collaboration is crucial among governments, tourism businesses, heritage managers and local inhabitants. Munjal (2019), Paul and Roy (2017) and Pisolkar et al., (2025) reported similar findings about governance weaknesses, lack of community training and poor coordination of stakeholders as major challenges to the development of heritage tourism. Students use statistical relationships to interpret relationships between two categorical variables. Correlation analysis shows that all the six study dimensions are highly positively correlated. Socioeconomic Impact was most correlated with Cultural Identity ( $r = 0.910$ ), where people who felt the greater the impact of socioeconomic development, the greater their cultural identity. This implies that there is no conflict between the goals of economic development and cultural conservation. In the same way, Governance and Policy showed significant positive relationships with the Community Based Tourism model ( $r = 0.619$ ) suggesting that good governance positively influences the acceptance of participatory tourism management. The results validate the theories of sustainable tourism which state that sustainable economic development, conservation, governance and participation of the community are interconnected factors forming a sustainable destination management system. Students will interpret the differences in demographics. There were a number of significant demographic differences for the inferential analysis. The clear conclusion was that higher income individuals had a greater degree of support for governance initiatives and community-based tourism models. This can be attributed to their higher awareness of tourism planning processes, higher levels of education and greater economic involvement in tourism related processes. Women respondents were found to be more pro than men in terms of support for community-based tourism. This has been suggested by previous research that women tend to exhibit greater community-oriented values, cultural values,

and collaborative values, which could account for this. There were also significant differences between long-term residents and newer residents in their support for governance and policy interventions. They have spent a long time with local heritage resources, which may have increased their awareness of issues concerning the conservation of these resources and the need for institutional support. The demographic differences suggest that tourism policies need to be developed with consideration to the different stakeholder groups, rather than an assumption of a homogeneous community perception. The interpretation of unexpected findings is covered under 4.6 Interpretation of Unexpected Findings. While respondents were generally supportive of the development of heritage tourism, the rather low score for training and skills development is an interesting and unexpected result. This therefore implies that for successful community participation, positive attitudes are not enough. The results suggest that there is a willingness to participate in tourism among local communities but no strong institutional support, professional training and entrepreneurial capacity to take advantage of this opportunity. In the absence of specific government interventions, this capacity gap could limit the sustainability of community-based tourism initiatives in the long-term. A very significant result of this study is the presence of positive attitude towards tourism development at the same time as concerns about the increase in living costs. This illustrates that people are already aware of the opportunities and challenges of tourism development, indicating a level of tourism maturity and understanding of the multidimensional impacts of tourism.

The study provides a number of theoretical insights into the heritage tourism literature.

First, it builds upon Social Exchange Theory as it shows that, besides perceived economic benefits, cultural identity, conservation values and governance quality are the factors that shape residents' attitudes towards heritage tourism. Second, it introduces a new concept by demonstrating that while cultural identity and governance quality can influence the support for heritage tourism, this influence is dynamically linked to the residents' perception of their economic benefits.

Second, it is adding to Community Based Tourism literature by empirically showing that local capacity building, community participation and collaborative governance are inter-reinforcing aspects of sustainable heritage tourism.

Third, the study constructs an integrated model that integrates socioeconomic impacts, cultural identity, conservation, governance, challenges and community participation in one empirical model. The interrelationships of these constructs have been explored in relation to an emerging heritage destination, and none of the previous studies have focused on these constructs simultaneously.

Lastly, the study takes a holistic approach to Kalaburagi, a relatively under-researched heritage site, to broaden the geographic coverage of heritage tourism research that is traditionally confined to UNESCO World Heritage sites and the empirical evidence it provides from an emerging context of cultural tourism. The results fill the existing body of knowledge on sustainable heritage tourism and suggest the need for local governance, inclusive planning and community empowerment in order to ensure sustainable destinations for the future.

## **6. Conclusion**

This research study aimed to understand the opportunities and challenges of developing a heritage tourism in Kalaburagi, with reference to the perceptions of the local residents, on six aspects: socioeconomic impacts, cultural identity and community pride, conservation and sustainability, challenges, governance and policy, and community-based tourism. The results offer comprehensive evidence that heritage tourism is generally recognized as a valuable tool for the preservation of cultural heritage and for sustainable regional

development. The first research objective aimed to explore the impact of heritage tourism on the local community was accomplished by showing that local people believe that the heritage tourism has positive effects on employment opportunities, infrastructure and living standards. Nevertheless, one challenge mentioned by the respondents was the increased cost of living, which shows that tourism development has its own economic and social costs and benefits. The second research aim, which aimed to explore the residents' perceptions of heritage tourism development and conservation, showed that the community is supportive of cultural preservation, sustainable management and planning heritage tourism with a conservation focus. Residents felt heritage tourism to be a significant way of preserving local identity and cultural-historical heritage for the future of Kalaburagi. The third research objective, which was to deliberate on opportunities and challenges for heritage tourism development, revealed that the opportunities for sustainable development of the destination are community-based tourism, stakeholder cooperation and supportive governance. Meanwhile, lack of training programmes, institutional capacity and management problems were identified as the most pressing challenges and barriers that need to be addressed immediately by policy. In addition to the research goals, this study also highlights the overall importance of Kalaburagi as a new place of heritage tourism. Whereas internationally recognised heritage destinations are usually dominated by archaeological sites, monuments, religious sites and historical architecture, Kalaburagi is a culturally rich heritage landscape with lesser explored intangible cultural heritage, historical architecture, religious sites and archaeological sites. The results indicate that the emerging heritage destinations are highly touristic when supported by good governance, community involvement, heritage protection and sustainable destination management. Thus, Kalaburagi serves as an important empirical example that will help to understand the development of heritage tourism in the secondary cultural destinations of India and developing countries in general. Theoretically speaking, this study adds to the body of literature on HT and CbT by synthesizing the socioeconomic impacts, cultural identity, conservation, governance, and community participation in a single analytical frame. The study adds to the Social Exchange Theory, as it not only shows that economic value is a crucial factor for participation in heritage tourism but also cultural values, institutional control, and the conservation agenda. Moreover, the study underlines the significance of collaborative governance and active involvement of communities in developing infrastructure for sustainable tourism development of heritages, which reinforces the concepts of Community Based Tourism and Stakeholder Theory. The study offers practical and policy-based recommendations for policy makers, tourism authorities, heritage managers, and local government, on the basis of evidence. The results highlight the importance of strengthening the involvement of communities in tourism planning, enhancing multi-stakeholder approach to heritage governance, training more local workers and entrepreneurs, supporting more heritage conservation projects, upgrading tourism facilities, and creating integrated tourism marketing strategies. Such interventions have the potential to improve heritage conservation, as well as local socio-economic development and ensure fair distribution of tourism benefits. Though these contributions, there are some methodological and contextual constraints that the study has. First, the research used a cross sectional survey design that allows to measure perceptions at one time, and does not inform about changes in perceptions due to tourism development or policy actions. Second, the study was limited to 147 respondents in Kalaburagi district which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other heritage sites. Third, even though the respondents are familiar with the concept of heritage tourism, the purpose of sampling might limit the representativeness of the sample. Fourth, the study was conducted using only quantitative data obtained using structured questionnaires, thus failing to investigate residents'

experience and motivations to a greater extent. Thirdly, the study incorporated one emerging heritage site, which could result in a different outcome if applied to a different set of characteristics that are unique to Kalaburagi. Comparative, longitudinal, mixed method and technology-oriented research methods should be used in future research, then. Multiple heritage destinations (e.g. UNESCO World Heritage Sites, state-protected monuments, religious heritage centres, and emerging heritage destinations) should be compared to look for similarities and differences in community perception and governance would help to understand how different community perceptions and governance are in relation to one another. Further longitudinal research is needed to explore the change in attitude of residents after implementing Tourism Development Projects, Conservation Projects or policy changes. The use of mixed method studies, which integrate survey and in-depth interview, focus group discussion, participatory observation and stakeholder consultation would give more in-depth explanation of community attitudes and decision making. Finally, digital heritage tourism (AI, VR, AR, digital storytelling, mobile heritage apps, smart tourism, GIS-based heritage management, social media marketing and digital visitor engagement) is an emerging field that should be explored in future research in order to further promote the conservation of heritage and enhance the visitor experience. Moreover, the future study can construct and test the structural model of the study with the method of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and/or PLS-SEM to examine the causal relationships between governance, community participation, conservation, satisfaction of visitors, and the development of sustainable heritage tourism. The study in general, suggests that sustainable heritage tourism can't be realized only by investment in infrastructure or by promotion of a tourist destination. Instead, long term success relies on the ability to maintain a balance between heritage conservation, community empowerment, participatory governance, capacity building and inclusive policy frameworks. Local communities as active players in the process of managing the local heritage can preserve cultural heritage, improve the local livelihoods and contribute to the sustainable development of local tourism while emerging places like Kalaburagi can be created.

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