

UNVEILING THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM AT BOUDHANATH STUPA IN KATHMANDU, NEPAL

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Abstract: This study explores the socio-cultural and economic impacts of religious tourism at Boudhanath Stupa, Kathmandu, Nepal, examining their influence on the quality of life and cultural integrity of the local community. It aims to gauge community perceptions and assess the sustainability of tourism practices at this heritage site. Employing a positivist paradigm and a deductive approach, this research used quantitative methods to analyze the socio-cultural, economic, and perceptual effects of religious tourism. Utilizing Cronbach's Alpha, descriptive and Analytical statistical techniques, the study analyzed local community perceptions, providing insights into sustainable tourism practices relevant to religious tourism. Community perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs significantly impact the dynamics and outcomes of religious tourism at Boudhanath Stupa. These findings underscore the complex impacts of religious tourism, including cultural, social, economic, and perceptual dimensions, highlighting the importance of these factors in the planning, management, and promotion of religious tourism at the site.

Keywords: Religious tourism, Boudhanath Stupa, Kathmandu, social impact, cultural exchange, Quality of life, Economic Benefits, Community Perception

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INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism, often described in both theoretical and practical contexts, revolves around travel primarily driven by religious motives (Rinschede, 1992). Destinations for such tourists generally include holy, pilgrimage, or religious heritage sites, which not only represent but also celebrate the unique cultures and traditions of their locales (Nolan and Nolan, 1992; Shinde, 2010; Smith, 1992). These places are often perceived as peaceful, awe-inspiring locales that encourage meditation, stimulate reflective thought, and foster an appreciation for religious tenets (Levi and Kocher, 2013). Additionally, religious sites often integrate natural, cultural, and architectural elements that underscore the interconnectedness of humanity and the environment (Verschuuren, 2007). Religious tourism not only offers a pathway to the financial preservation of natural landscapes and ancient cities but also enhances both local and visitor awareness of conservation issues while dissuading local communities from pursuing unsustainable ways of living (Borges et al., 2011). This form of tourism significantly contributes to economic development by creating job opportunities and stimulating local economies (Ghimire, 2019; Levi and Kocher, 2009). The maintenance of these sacred sites enables communities to enrich their understanding of their own cultures and traditions, and the growth of religious tourism ensures these places and their attractions are preserved and protected (Simone-Charteris and Boyd, 2010). In terms of conservation, religious sites tend to be focal points for understanding ritual practices rather than a comprehensive view, which holds considerable importance for both religious and non-religious individuals alike (Gilchrist, 2020; Thouki, 2019). The terms pilgrimage and religious tourism are often used interchangeably, though they do not always mean the same thing, as pointed out by Digance (2003) and Tsironis (2022).

The sustainability of tourism at religious sites involves balancing the sanctity of these locations with their communal and touristic use, necessitating an understanding of how sacredness is perceived by individuals (Levi and Kocher, 2013). Beyond their religious functions, holy sites like Buddhist temple complexes serve broader community roles, providing social and educational services to the Sangha and others (Levi and Kocher, 2013). These locations represent the unique cultures and traditions of the cities or regions where they are found (Singh and Rana, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious tourism, one of the oldest forms of tourism, plays a pivotal role in the economic framework of both developed and developing nations, often acting as a critical economic development tool in Asian countries (OECD, 2008). It not only supports cultural preservation but also sustains livelihoods (Abereijo and Afolabi, 2017; Levi and Kocher, 2013). Recognized as a global phenomenon within the history of religion, religious tourism continues to thrive and evolve (Abad Galzacorta et al., 2016; Hassan et al., 2022; Rinschede, 1992). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) highlights that cultural and heritage tourism, closely linked with religious tourism, brings considerable economic benefits and represents a significant achievement for the host countries. The tourism sector is notably fragmented and diverse, mainly comprised of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, which make up about 85% of all business entities within OECD member countries (OECD, 2022).

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Fleischer (2000) observed that pilgrims and other religious tourists are avid consumers of religious products, with the economic impacts of religious tourism surpassing those of other sectors. Moreover, religious tourism supports the preservation of cultural and religious heritage sites and attractions (Fleischer, 2000). According to Shackley (2002), the perceptions of religious sites are shaped by individuals' personal and cultural backgrounds. While religious tourists may feel a profound sense of divinity, non-religious visitors often find these sites to be spiritually enriching, offering tranquility and inspiration (Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, travel and tourism were significant contributors to the global economy, representing 10% of global GDP and 6% of the world's total exports (Behsudi, 2020; Rasool et al., Citation, 2021; UNWTO, 2015). Data from the United Nations World Tourism Organization indicated that in 2016 and 2019, about 27% of international travel was driven by motives such as religious activities, visiting friends and relatives, or medical reasons (UNWTO, 2016, 2021). Tourist statistics from Nepal's Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation in 2019 revealed that holiday or pleasure travel drew the largest number of visitors, followed by those traveling for pilgrimage purposes, highlighting the diversity of tourists' motivations which include pleasure, pilgrimage, trekking, and mountaineering (MoCTCA, 2020). Pilgrimage tourism uniquely blends traditional shrine visits with cultural journeys, orchestrated and facilitated by religious groups with spiritual goals (Gautam, 2021). Religious tourism and entrepreneurship are closely interconnected with Nepal's unique religious history, customs, culture, and tradition (Gautam, 2023).

The literature revealed a comprehensive exploration of religious tourism's impacts on communities, focusing on economic benefits, cultural preservation, and quality of life improvements. The study highlights how religious tourism supports economic growth through job creation and enhancing local economies, which is consistent with findings from Ghimire (2019) and Levi and Kocher (2009). Cultural aspects such as the preservation of heritage and enhancement of local culture through tourism echo the benefits outlined by Simone-Charteris and Boyd (2010).

Ghimire (2019) studied the economic impact of religious tourism on small businesses in Shikoku, Japan, finding that 73.3% of respondents reported a significant economic influence on their lives from these enterprises (Ghimire, 2019). Kusi et al. (2015) investigated the role of micro and small businesses in generating employment, increasing income, and alleviating poverty within developing countries (Kusi et al., 2015). It was also found that small businesses located in areas with historical religious significance play a crucial role in poverty alleviation (Ghimire, 2019), as evidenced by improvements in individuals' education, health, and standard of living (Ghimire, 2014; 2019). The local community's perception of tourism significantly influences their support and involvement in future tourism development (Almeida-Garcia et al., 2016; Nafi and Ahmed, 2017; Gu and Wong, 2006) and impacts their quality of life (Rojulai et al., 2018). The development of tourism significantly reduces the proportion of vulnerable employment, enhancing the socio-economic conditions by creating more job opportunities and increasing income (Scarlett, 2021). The local community recognizes that tourism development stimulates the regional economy through the creation of various job opportunities and the enhancement of their earnings (Bello et al., 2017). Additionally, the expansion of tourism contributes to overall infrastructure improvement and facilitates the establishment of new small businesses (Acha-Anyi and Ndolose, 2022). However, the influx of tourists can have adverse effects if tourism development is pursued solely as an economic strategy without considering the environmental impact, potentially leading to unsustainable mass tourism (Castilho et al., 2021).

Historically, tourism research largely focused on tourist satisfaction rather than the host community's perception of tourism development (Belisle and Hoy, 1980; King et al., 1993; Pizam, 1978). However, in recent decades, the opinions of host communities have become central to research across various regions (Andereck et al., 2005; Besculides et al., 2002; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017; Sharma and Dyer, 2009; Tsai et al., 2016; Tsundoda and Mendlinger, 2009; Vareiro et al., 2013; Zaidan, 2016; Roy et al., 2021). Without local engagement and consideration of their views, tourism development is unlikely to succeed (Pekerşen and Kaplan, 2022). Pramanik and Ingkadijaya (2018) found that enhanced tourism settings bolster the local community's attitudes towards embracing cultural diversity and transform their perceptions to respect others' customs, ultimately leading to an improved quality of life. The primary aim of this study is to evaluate the multifaceted impacts of religious tourism at Boudhanath Stupa in Kathmandu, Nepal, focusing on cultural exchange, quality of life, economic benefits, and community perceptions which was not studied by other researchers and is a literature gap. This research investigated how religious tourism fosters cultural exchange and contributes to the economic development of the area, assessing its correlation with the quality-of-life improvements for the local community and the shaping of community perceptions towards tourism activities. By analyzing these dynamics, the study uncovered how religious tourism at Boudhanath Stupa influences the socioeconomic fabric and the sustainable development of the local community, using indicators cultural exchange, quality of life, economic benefits, and community perceptions

OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the relationship between cultural exchange and religious tourism of Boudhanath Stupa.
- To assess the association between the development of quality of life in the local community and religious tourism.
- To examine the correlation between religious tourism and economic benefits at Boudhanath Stupa.
- To analyze the influence of community perceptions on religious tourism at Boudhanath Stupa.

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1

Ho: There is no significant relationship between cultural exchange and religious tourism of Boudhanath stupa

Ha: There is a significant relationship between cultural exchange and religious tourism of Boudhanath stupa

Hypothesis 2

- Ho: The development of quality of life in the local community is not significantly associated with religious tourism.
 Ha: The development of quality of life in the local community is significantly associated with religious tourism.
- Hypothesis 3
 Ho: There is no significant positive relationship between religious tourism and economic benefits at Boudhanath stupa.
 Ha: There is a significant positive relationship between religious tourism and economic benefits at Boudhanath Stupa.
- Hypothesis 4
 Ho: There is no significant influence of religious tourism on community perceptions at Boudhanath stupa.
 Ha: There is a significant influence of community perceptions on religious tourism at Boudhanath stupa.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study posits that community perceptions of religious tourism play a crucial role in shaping its social consequences. It outlines key factors influencing how communities perceive religious tourism and its societal effects. The framework illustrates the interplay between the dependent variable, religious tourism, and independent variables such as cultural exchange, quality of life development, economic benefits, and community perceptions. Additionally, the study draws upon social exchange theory, which suggests that individuals engage in social interactions based on perceived costs and benefits. This theory is relevant to understanding how local residents view religious tourism as a social exchange involving both advantages (e.g., economic opportunities, cultural exchange) and disadvantages (e.g., overcrowding, loss of privacy). Halim et al. (2022) evaluated how local communities perceive the impacts of tourism and their willingness to support its future development. Their research indicates a positive correlation between social, economic, and environmental factors which collectively enhance the local community's quality of life.

The study also highlights the community's favorable views on the prospects of future tourism development. It suggests that if tourism effectively improves the overall quality of life for residents, this enhancement is likely to foster greater community backing for future tourism initiatives. Building on this concept, the upcoming study aims to thoroughly examine the diverse impacts of religious tourism at Boudhanath Stupa in Kathmandu, Nepal, with a particular focus on cultural exchange, quality of life, economic advantages, and community perceptions. The theoretical model proposed in the study draws from understanding the reciprocal relationship between the community and the tourists, framed within the broader context of religious tourism.

Building on the initial theoretical framework and incorporating the insights from Halim et al. (2022), it becomes evident that the community's perceptions are not only reactive but play an active role in shaping the trajectory of religious tourism development. This dynamic can be understood more profoundly through the lens of the framework, which posits that these perceptions are based on the continuous assessment of the costs and benefits associated with tourism.

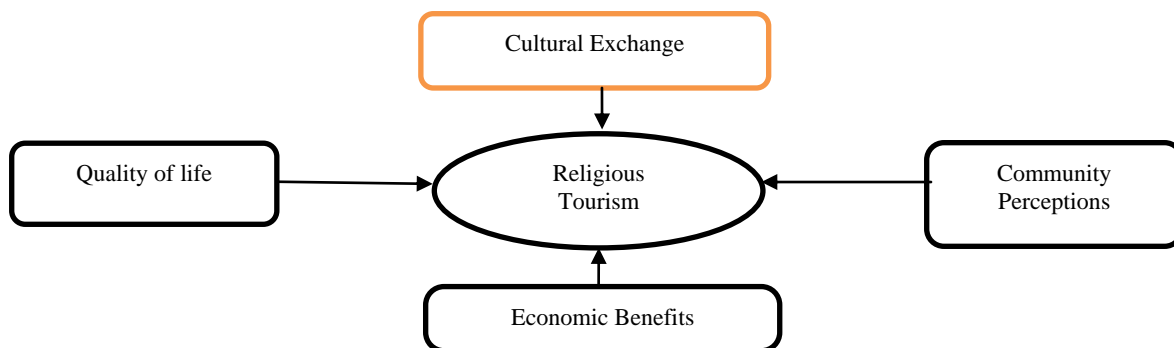


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework (Source: Halim et al., 2022)

METHODOLOGY

The study focused on understanding the community's perceptions of religious tourism and its social impact on local residents of Boudhanath. The study was quantitative in nature. The study incorporated a descriptive research design to identify the relation between dependent and independent variables. The study adopted a descriptive and inferential research design to depict the socio-demographic, economic, and social characteristics of the respondents. The survey method was utilized to collect data from the participants. The primary objective of this study was to examine the social impact on local residents of Boudhanath and to establish a correlation between community perceptions of religious tourism and its social impact on the local community. A deductive approach has been used in this study and the researcher has formulated four hypotheses with the support of the literature, after that relevant research methods were chosen and applied to test the hypothesis. The survey method utilizing a survey instrument i.e. questionnaire was employed to collect data for this study. Sampling technique adopted was purposive sampling. The data for this research was collected specifically from the area of Boudhanath, focusing on the responses of the local residents in that region. In case the selected person was not able to fill up the questionnaire due to different reasons such as language barrier and time, the questionnaire was given to the next tourism business stakeholders. A total of 420 questionnaires were distributed among the local people, of which 402 were found to be complete in all respects. Since the population is unknown and the minimum sample size being 384, a sample of a minimum of 402 respondents with a 95% confidence interval was used for this study. The data was collected in January, 2024. According to Delafrooz et al., 2014:1-9.

$$n = z^2 \times p \times q / e^2$$

$$n = (1.96)^2 \times (0.5) \times (0.5) / (0.05)^2 = 384$$

- z: The standardized value associated with the chosen confidence level.
- p: The estimated value of the observed attribute variable within the community.
- q: The estimated value of other unobserved objects or variables.
- e: The permissible error within the measurement range of observations.

The research employed a questionnaire method to gauge the perceptions and social impact levels of the local community in the Boudhanath area. Selected attributes encompassed significant elements pertinent to socioeconomic evaluation, such as cultural exchange, local lifestyle development, changes in identity and values, economic growth, and community perceptions of religious tourism. A self-administered questionnaire in English was crafted, divided into two sections based on the literature review. The first section aimed to gather demographic and characteristic data from local residents, while the second section assessed their perceptions of Boudhanath’s social impact and economic contribution from religious tourism. Participants used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' (5) to 'strongly disagree' (1), to indicate their agreement levels with the attributes related to social impact and economic generation.

The questionnaire underwent pre-testing by locals of Boudhanath, with several items revised based on feedback to enhance clarity. Reliability and validity of measuring instruments focus on the adequacy, scope, and truthfulness of research validity. The questionnaire design underwent thorough review and finalization before involving respondents, followed by pilot testing on a sample size of 30. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to determine the questionnaire's reliability, a statistical metric assessing internal consistency. A Cronbach's Alpha value exceeding 0.5 indicates reliable data. Based on the pilot test results, the prepared questionnaire demonstrated reliability, as Cronbach's Alpha is considered a robust indicator. Typically, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.7 or higher is deemed good, while below 0.5 is unacceptable. The reliability test results are presented in the Table 1.

The computed Cronbach's alpha for the dataset is 0.652, indicating internal consistency and suggesting both reliability and validity. This confirms the reliability of the questionnaire used in the study. With an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.652 (Number of items = 23), the data is deemed reliable and valid for research purposes.

Table 1. Reliability Test

S. No	Variables	Cronbach’s Alpha	No. of Items
1	Independent Variables	0.539	19
2	Dependent Variable	0.265	4
	Overall	0.652	23

Data Collection

This research utilized primary data collected through a survey questionnaire, employing the survey method as the research approach. Only primary data were considered during the analysis phase. A structured questionnaire was distributed to respondents, with a total of 420 questionnaires randomly distributed using a simple random sampling approach. However, 402 valid responses were collected as they were complete in all respects, gathered over one week from 17th to 23rd February 2024.

Primary Data Collection

Primary data collection involved the use of a survey questionnaire, distributed and collected through a self-administered method to ensure comprehensive completion and minimize missing data. This approach facilitated addressing participant queries and enhancing data accuracy. The data collection phase lasted approximately one week, with closed-ended questions presented to respondents aligned with the study's variables.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis utilized IBM SPSS Statistics 26 software, with each data point manually entered for effective organization. Cronbach's Alpha was employed to assess data reliability. Data was categorized based on various demographic characteristics, allowing identification of respondent features like age group, gender, and education level. Subsequently, respondent opinions on research variables were categorized, and relationships were analyzed using statistical techniques such as correlation and regression, aligned with the theoretical framework. Descriptive statistics including frequency count, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were employed to analyze variable average values and deviation extents from the average.

RESULTS

Data analysis was performed using the software application SPSS. This section provides detailed insights into respondents' profiles and includes a descriptive analysis of their responses regarding conflict management styles and their correlation with dependent and independent variables. The main aim here is to explore the relationship between community perceptions of religious tourism and its impact, considering variables such as social impact, economic benefits, and community perceptions as independent variables, and religious tourism as the dependent variable.

Descriptive analysis

The collected data from the questionnaire during the research process were subjected to descriptive analysis. The descriptive analysis involved calculating statistical measures such as mean and standard deviation for all the items of the dependent variable as well as the items of the independent variables i.e. Cultural Exchange, Development of quality

lifestyle of locals, community perceptions, economic benefits on religious tourism was measured on five point Likert scale anchored by "Strongly Disagree" represented by '1', "Disagree" represented by '2', "Neutral" represented by '3', "Agree" represented by '4', and "Strongly Agree" represented by '5'. These values assisted in analyzing the data by examining frequencies and aggregating information about research questions and variables. The questionnaire used for the study measures the underlying local perception regarding religious tourism and its influence on the society of Boudhanath. Cultural Exchange (Factor 1) contains four attributes. Development in the Life Style of Local (Factor 2) contains the four attributes. Community perceptions of religious tourism (Factor 3) contains four attributes. Economic Generation (Factor 4) contains the four attributes. Religion Tourism (Factor 5) contains the four attributes. These four factors cultural exchange, development in the lifestyle of locals, economic generation/benefits community perceptions on religious tourism were the independent variables in this study. The dependent variable for this study was religious tourism. Furthermore, the research deals with community perceptions and the social influence of Boudhanath.

Cultural Exchange

The independent variable in this research is cultural exchange. The study includes a descriptive analysis of each question related to cultural exchange and an overall descriptive study on staff cultural exchange, as presented below:

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Cultural Exchange

Opinion Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cultural conservation and restoration in Boudhanath through religious tourism	402	4.19	0.462
Religious tourism preserves cultural identity of host community in Boudhanath.	402	4.40	0.552
Tourism improves understanding and appreciation of different cultural community in Boudhanath.	402	4.11	0.744
Religious Tourism creates a good image of our local community.	402	4.26	0.559

The attributes associated cultural exchange deal with the cultural terms, including "cultural conservation", "cultural identity", "cultural understanding", and "cultural activities". These items are explained with the statement presented in the table. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of cultural exchange. The mean values of all the items related to cultural exchange are above the level of 4.0. among the four statements, " Religious tourism preserves cultural identity of the host community in Boudhanath." scored the highest mean of 4.40 with a standard deviation of 0.552, and the statement "Tourism improves understanding and appreciation of different cultural communities" scored the lowest mean of 4.11 with a standard deviation of 0.744. This states that the locals of Boudhanath find cultural conservation a restoration in Boudhanath. This shows that religious tourism is conserving the culture of Boudhanath.

Development of Quality Life Style of Locals

The independent variable of this research is the development in the lifestyle of the local community. A descriptive study was conducted for each question drafted, and an overall descriptive analysis was performed to examine the development in the lifestyle of the local community. The results of the descriptive study are presented below in Table 3. The attributes associated Development of quality life style of locals with the increment in life style items, including "The resident's behavior and attitudes are changed positively in Boudhanath", "More security and stability in life in Boudhanath", "Local residents of Boudhanath have recognized the importance of education", and "Living standard of local has been improved at Boudhanath". These items are explained with statements presented in table. Table shows the descriptive statistics of development in lifestyle item. Among four statements, the statement 'Living standard of local has been improved in Boudhanath " has score the highest mean of 4.29 with a standard deviation of 0.621, and the statement with " More security and stability in life in Boudhanath." scored the lowest mean of 2.81 with a standard deviation of 1.198. This states that the locals of Boudhanath find the living standard of locals have been improved but they notice that resident behavior and attitudes have not met their expectations. This shows that locals are moderately satisfied with the development in the lifestyle of locals in Boudhanath.

Table 3. Descriptive Static of Development in Life Style of Locals

Opinion Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The resident's behavior and attitudes are changed in positive way at Boudhanath.	402	4.00	0.805
More security and stability in life in Boudhanath.	402	2.81	1.198
Local residents of Boudhanath have recognized the importance of education.	402	4.04	0.620
Living standard of local has been improved at Boudhanath.	402	4.29	0.621

Religious Tourism

The dependent variable of this research is religious tourism. Descriptive study was conducted for each question drafted, and an overall descriptive analysis was performed to examine the impact of religious tourism. The results of the descriptive study on religious tourism are presented below in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statics of Religious Tourism

Opinion Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Religious Tourism has enhanced Handicraft products at Boudhanath.	402	4.43	0.543
Religious Tourism has reduced the migration of locals to other places around Boudhanath.	402	3.83	0.987
Religious Tourism has augmented promotion of the local cultural, tradition and values at Boudhanath	402	4.25	0.648
Education and awareness towards the religious tourism has augmented social impact at Boudhanath	402	4.17	0.711

The factors associated with religious tourism reflect the transformations occurring in Boudhanath Stupa due to tourism activities. These factors are elucidated through items such as "Enhancement of handicraft products at Boudhanath due to religious tourism," "Reduction in the migration of locals to other areas," "Promotion of local culture, traditions, and values at Boudhanath through religious tourism," and "Heightened awareness of education regarding religious tourism and its social impact at Boudhanath." These items are expounded upon in the provided statements within the table 4. The table showcases the descriptive statistics of items related to religious tourism. The mean scores of all items fall above the threshold of 4.0 and below 5.0. Among the four statements, "Religious tourism has enhanced handicraft products at Boudhanath" achieves the highest mean score of 4.43, with a standard deviation of 0.543. Conversely, the statement "Reduce the migration of locals to other areas of Boudhanath" records the lowest mean score of 3.83, with a standard deviation of 0.987. This indicates that the locals mostly agree or strongly agree that handicraft products are significantly enhanced in Boudhanath due to religious tourism, but they perceive that the migration of locals to other areas within Boudhanath has not decreased.

Economic Benefits

The focal independent variable in this research pertains to economic benefits. A descriptive and inferential analysis was conducted for each drafted question, and an overarching descriptive analysis ensued to assess the impact of economic generation. The findings of this descriptive study on economic generation are outlined below in Table 5.

The attributes related to Economic benefits focus on aspects concerning the generation of business and economic activity, as indicated by statements such as "Religious tourism has facilitated the creation of employment opportunities for local residents of Boudhanath," "Both direct and indirect employment opportunities have been provided to locals in Boudhanath," "Religious tourism serves as a platform for earning foreign currency," and "Religious tourism has contributed to the increase in revenue for Boudhanath." These statements are elaborated upon in the table provided, which displays the descriptive statistics of the economic benefits items. The mean scores for all items are above 4.0, indicating a favorable perception. Among the six statements, the assertion "Religious tourism has become a platform for earning foreign currency" attains the highest mean score of 4.40, with a standard deviation of 0.608, while the statement "Prices have increased due to the rising demand from tourists at Boudhanath" achieves a mean of 4.23, with a standard deviation of 0.693, indicating a noticeable rise in prices attributable to tourism.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Economic Benefits

Opinion Statement	N	Mean	SD
Religious tourism has helped to generate employment opportunities for local people of Boudhanath.	402	4.28	0.622
Religious tourism has created opportunity of both direct and indirect employment.	402	4.34	0.595
Religion Tourism has become a platform for earning foreign currency.	402	4.40	0.608
Religious tourism has helped to increase the revenue of Boudhanath.	402	4.34	0.652
Prices have been raised due to the increasing demand of Tourists at Boudhanath.	402	4.23	0.693
Religious tourism has led to major economic growth of Boudhanath	402	4.25	0.774

Community Perceptions on Religious Tourism

The focal independent variable in this study is the community's perceptions of religious tourism. A descriptive examination was conducted for each drafted question, and an overall descriptive analysis was conducted to assess the impact of community perceptions on security. The findings of the descriptive study on security are outlined below in Table 6.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistic of Community Perceptions on Religious Tourism

Opinion Statement	N	Mean	SD
Religious tourism has helped to preserve culture and tradition of Boudhanath.	402	4.42	0.599
Religious tourism has helped to increase the income of local people of Boudhanath.	402	4.34	0.548
Religious tourism has improved the infrastructure of Boudhanath.	402	4.32	0.662
Religious tourism has promoted the waste management and sewage disposal of Boudhanath.	402	4.07	0.804
Religious Tourism has led to overcrowd, noise to the local people and on stupa itself.	402	4.39	0.722

The attributes related to community perceptions on Religious Tourism encompass various aspects, as indicated by items such as "Religious tourism has contributed to the preservation of the culture and tradition of Boudhanath," "Religious tourism has increased the income of local residents of Boudhanath," "Religious tourism has enhanced the infrastructure of Boudhanath," and "Religious tourism has facilitated waste management and sewage disposal in Boudhanath." Additionally, the item "Religious tourism has resulted in overcrowding and noise for the local residents and the stupa itself" is included. These items are elucidated in the provided table, which presents the descriptive statistics of the religious tourism items. The mean scores for all items fall above 4.0 and below 5.0. Among the statements, "Religious tourism has helped to preserve the culture and tradition of Boudhanath" achieves the highest mean score of 4.42, with a standard deviation of 0.599, while "Religious tourism has promoted waste management and sewage disposal in Boudhanath" obtains the lowest mean score of 4.07, with a standard deviation of 0.804. This indicates that the local residents of Boudhanath perceive religious tourism as positively impacting waste management and sewage disposal in the area.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis is utilized in this study to evaluate the relationship between various independent and dependent variables. This statistical method quantifies the magnitude and direction of the linear correlation between two

variables. The correlation between the dependent variable, social impact (including cultural exchange and development of quality life), economic generation, community perceptions on religious tourism, and the independent variable, religious tourism, is presented in the following Table 7.

Table 7. Correlation Analysis * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

		Religious tourism	Cultural exchange	Development of quality life	Economic benefits	Community perception
Religious tourism	Pearson Correlation	1	*			
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	402				
Cultural exchange	Pearson Correlation	.366**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000				
	N	402	402			
Development of quality life	Pearson Correlation	.100*	0.071	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.044	0.154			
	N	402	402	402		
Economic generation	Pearson Correlation	.453**	.420**	.314**	1	*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		
	N	402	402	402	402	
Community perception	Pearson Correlation	.380**	.255**	0.078	.363**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.118	0.000	
	N	402	402	402	402	402

Results shown in the above Table 7 are discussed as below:

Relation between Cultural Exchange and Religious Tourism

The correlation analysis results as depicted in the table, reveal a Pearson Correlation Coefficient of $r = 0.366$ between cultural exchange and religious tourism. This indicates a positive correlation between the two variables. Furthermore, the correlation is found to be statistically significant at a 1% level of significance, as indicated by the p-value is less than alpha i.e. $0.000 < 0.01$.

Relation between Development of Quality life and Religious Tourism

The correlation analysis results, as depicted in the table, indicate a Pearson Correlation Coefficient of $r = 0.100$ between the development of quality life and religious tourism. This suggests a positive relationship between these two variables. The correlation is significant at 1% level of significance as the p-value is more than alpha i.e. $0.044 < 0.05$.

Relation between Economic benefits and Religious Tourism

The results of the correlation analysis, as displayed in the table, indicate that the Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Celebrity Image and Destination Image Promotion is $r = 0.453$, indicating a positive correlation between the two variables. Moreover, this value indicates that there is significant level correlation between Economic Generation and Religious Tourism. The correlation is statistically significant at a 1% level of significance, as indicated by the p-value being less than i.e. $0.000 < 0.01$.

Relation between Community Perceptions and Religious Tourism

The correlation analysis results in the table indicate that the Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Community Perceptions and Religious Tourism is $r = 0.380$. This implies a positive correlation between the two variables. Moreover, this value suggests a significant correlation between Community Perceptions and Religious Tourism. The correlation is significant at 1% level of significance as the p-value is less than alpha i.e. $0.000 < 0.01$

Regression Analysis

Impact of religious tourism on social aspect (Cultural Exchange)

Table 8, 9 and 10 displays regression analysis between religious tourism and social aspect including cultural exchange, development of quality life of local community of Boudhanath stupa.

Table 8. Regression analysis (a. Predictors: (Constant), Cultural exchange)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.366 ^a	0.134	0.132	0.29571

Table 9. ANOVA^a (a. Dependent Variable: Religious tourism b. Predictors: (Constant), Cultural exchange)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	5.414	1	5.414	61.910	.000 ^b
	Residual	34.979	400	0.087		
	Total	40.393	401			

Table 10. Coefficients^a (a. Dependent Variable: Religious tourism)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	3.116	.144		21.713	.000
	Cultural exchange	.269	.034	.366	7.868	.000

According to Table 8, the R-value of 0.366 reflects a positive relationship between religious tourism and the social aspect of the local community of Boudhanath. Similarly, the R square value of 0.134 denotes that only 13.4% of change in cultural exchange towards religious tourism. Table 8 provides evidence that the regression model is able to make reliable statistical predictions for the dependent variable as sig. p – value $0.000 < 0.05$ (α). The β coefficient according to Table 10 indicates that 1 point increase in religious tourism would lead to 0.269 unit increase in social aspect of local community of Boudhanath. However, since the significant p – value $0.000 < 0.05$ (α), B coefficient is statistically significant. The standard error of the estimate, which is measured at 0.295, signifies the degree of variability observed in religious tourism activity from the regression line, with a magnitude of 0.295 units.

Impact of religious tourism on the social aspect

Tables 11, 12, and 13 display regression analysis between religious tourism and social aspect including the development of the quality of life of the local community of Boudhanath stupa.

Table 11. Model summary (a. Predictors: (Constant), Development of quality life)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.100a	.010	.008	.40814

Table 12. ANOVA^a (a. Dependent Variable: Religious tourism; b. Predictors: (Constant), Development of quality life)

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.678	1	.678	4.068	.044b
	Residual	66.630	400	.167		
	Total	67.307	401			

Table 13. Coefficients^a (a. Dependent Variable: Religious tourism)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.388	.198		17.105	.000
	Development of quality life	.095	.047	.100	2.017	.044

Table 11 shows that there is a weak positive relationship between religious tourism and the social aspect of the local community of Boudhanath, as indicated by an R-value of 0.100. Similarly, the R square value of 0.10 denotes that only 10% of change in social variance through religious tourism. Table 12 reflects that the regression model statistically predicts the dependent variable as sig. p – value $0.000 < 0.05$ (α).

According to Table 13, the β coefficient suggests that a one-point increase in religious tourism corresponds to a 0.095 unit increase in the social aspect of the local community of Boudhanath. However, since significant p – value $0.000 < 0.05$ (α), B coefficient is statistically significant. The standard error of the estimate, which is measured at 0.408, reflects the amount of variability observed in the religious tourism activity from the regression line, with a magnitude of 0.408 units.

Impact of religious tourism on economic benefits aspect

Tables 14, 15, and 16 display regression analysis between religious tourism and the economic aspect of the local community of Boudhanath stupa. Table 14 demonstrates that there is a positive relationship between religious tourism and the economic aspect of the local community of Boudhanath, as indicated by an R-value of 0.453. Additionally, the R-square value of 0.205 indicates that only 20.5% of the variation in economic outcomes, attributed to religious tourism, has been accounted for in the model. The table 15 reflect that the regression model statistically predicts the dependent variable as sig. p – value $0.000 < 0.05$ (α). The β coefficient according to Table 16 indicates that 1-point increase on religious tourism would lead to 0.388 unit increase in economic aspect of local community of Boudhanath. However, since significant p – value $0.000 < 0.05$ (α), B coefficient is statistically significant. Standard error of the estimate of 0.330 indicates the variability of the observed value of tourism activity from regression line is 0.330 units.

Table 14. Coefficients^a (a. Dependent Variable: Religious tourism)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.688	.160		16.782	.000
	Economic Benefits	.388	.038	.453	10.152	.000

Table 15. Model Summary (a. Predictors: (Constant), Economic benefits)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.453 ^a	.205	.203	.33008

Table 16. ANOVA^a

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.228	1	11.228	103.054	.000b
	Residual	43.582	400	.109		
	Total	54.810	401			

Impact of religious tourism on community perceptions

Tables 18, 19, and 20 display regression analysis between religious tourism and local community perceptions of Boudhanath stupa.

Table 17. Model Summary (a. Predictors: (Constant), Religious tourism)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.380a	0.144	0.142	0.37576

Table 18. ANOVA^a (a. Dependent Variable: Religious Tourism; b. Predictors: (Constant), Community perception)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	9.513	1	9.513	67.375	.000b
	Residual	56.478	400	.141		
	Total	65.991	401			

Table 19. Coefficients^a (a. Dependent Variable: Religious tourism)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.820	.182		15.461	.000
	Community perception	.357	.044	.380	8.208	.000

According to Table 17, the R-value of 0.380 reflects a positive relationship between religious tourism and the economic aspect of the local community of Boudhanath. Similarly, R – square value of 0.144 denotes that only 14.4% of the change in community perception variance has been explained. The table reflects that the regression model statistically predicts the dependent variable as sig. p – value $0.000 < 0.05$ (α). The β coefficient according to Table 19 indicates that a 1-point increase in religious tourism would lead to a 0.357 unit increase in local community perceptions of Boudhanath. However, since the significant p-value $0.000 < 0.05$ (α), B coefficient is statistically significant. The standard error of the estimate of 0.375 indicates the variability of the observed value of tourism activity from the regression line is 0.375 units.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: A significant relationship exists between cultural exchange and religious tourism.

The findings depicted in Table 7 reveal that the Pearson correlation coefficient between cultural exchange and religious tourism stands at $r = 0.366$. This correlation demonstrates statistical significance at the 1% level, given the p-value falling below the predetermined alpha threshold of 0.01 ($p = 0.000$). Therefore, the affirmation of Hypothesis 1 confirms a notable and positive association between religious tourism and cultural exchange within the Boudhanath community.

Hypothesis 2: Religious tourism significantly impacts the development of quality of life at Boudhanath Stupa.

Table 7 illustrates the results, showcasing a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.100$ between the development of quality of life and religious tourism. This correlation is statistically significant at the chosen significance level, as indicated by a p-value of $0.000 < 0.01$. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported, suggesting a meaningful connection between religious tourism and the enhancement of quality of life.

Hypothesis 3: There exists a significant positive relationship between religious tourism and economic benefits at Boudhanath Stupa. The data in Table 7 demonstrates a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.453$ between economic generation and religious tourism. This correlation is statistically significant at the 1% level, with a p-value of $0.000 < 0.01$. Consequently, Hypothesis 3 is upheld, indicating a significant positive relationship between religious tourism and economic benefits within the Boudhanath community.

Hypothesis 4: Community perceptions significantly influence religious tourism at Boudhanath Stupa.

Examining Table 7, the Pearson correlation coefficient between economic generation and religious tourism yields $r = 0.380$. This signifies a statistically significant correlation at the 1% level, supported by a p-value of $0.000 < 0.01$. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is confirmed, suggesting a notable positive relationship between religious tourism and community perceptions within the Boudhanath community.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The findings from hypothesis testing provide valuable insights into the intricate relationship between cultural exchange, quality of life, economic benefits, community perceptions, and religious tourism at Boudhanath Stupa. Hypothesis 1 confirmed a significant and positive association between cultural exchange and religious tourism, as evidenced by the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.366$) and its statistical significance ($p = 0.000$). This highlights the importance of cultural exchange in shaping perceptions and experiences of religious tourism within the Boudhanath community. Similarly, Hypothesis 2 revealed a meaningful connection between religious tourism and the development of quality of life ($r = 0.100$, $p = 0.000 < 0.01$), emphasizing the potential of religious tourism to contribute to enhancing the overall well-being and living standards of the local community. Hypothesis 3 further underscored the significant positive relationship between religious tourism and economic benefits ($r = 0.453$, $p = 0.000 < 0.01$).

This suggests that religious tourism plays a pivotal role in stimulating economic growth, generating employment opportunities, and boosting local revenue at Boudhanath Stupa. Lastly, Hypothesis 4 elucidated a notable positive relationship between community perceptions and religious tourism ($r = 0.380$, $p = 0.000 < 0.01$), indicating that the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of the local community significantly influence the dynamics and outcomes of religious tourism in the area. Overall, these findings highlight the multifaceted impacts of religious tourism on the Boudhanath community, encompassing cultural, social, economic, and perceptual dimensions.

The confirmation of each hypothesis underscores the importance of considering these various factors in planning, managing, and promoting religious tourism at Boudhanath Stupa. However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of the study, such as its focus solely on Boudhanath Stupa and the reliance on quantitative methods. Future research endeavours could adopt a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative insights to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subjective experiences and perspectives of the local community and tourists.

Additionally, expanding the scope of the study to include other religious sites and communities would contribute to a broader understanding of religious tourism dynamics in Nepal and beyond. The study confirms the profound influence of religious tourism on cultural exchange, quality of life, economic benefits, and community perceptions within the local community. Religious tourism fosters a deepened appreciation and preservation of local cultural identity, enhancing intercultural understanding among visitors and residents alike. There is a tangible improvement in the quality of life for the local community, attributed to the infrastructural and economic developments driven by tourism.

The economic boost from tourism is evident in job creation, increased local spending, and enhanced business opportunities for small enterprises. The perceptions and attitudes of the local community towards tourism are generally positive, influenced significantly by the economic and cultural benefits perceived. These findings underscore the integral role of religious tourism in promoting sustainable economic and cultural development

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Future Research

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of how religious tourism affects socio-economic dynamics in heritage sites. For practitioners and policymakers, the study highlights the importance of stakeholder engagement in tourism planning to ensure that the benefits of tourism are equitably distributed and culturally respectful. Further research is recommended to explore longitudinal impacts of tourism, potential negative effects over time, and comparative studies with other religious sites to generalize findings.

Recommendations

To address and enhance the socio-cultural impacts of religious tourism at Boudhanath Stupa, the author recommends the following approaches

First, increasing community participation in the planning and decision-making processes related to tourism is crucial. This ensures that development efforts are aligned with the needs and values of the local population, fostering a sense of ownership and inclusivity.

Second, the introduction of educational programs aimed at tourists can help in preserving local customs and traditions. By informing visitors about the cultural significance of the site and expected behaviours, these programs aim to promote respectful engagement and prevent the dilution of the cultural heritage.

Third, the adoption of sustainable tourism practices is advocated to minimize the environmental footprint of tourism activities. Measures such as controlling the number of visitors during peak times can significantly reduce the wear and tear on the site, helping to preserve it for future generations.

Fourth, the development of economic mechanisms, such as community funds or cooperatives, is recommended to ensure that the financial gains from tourism are equitably shared among all community members. This approach not only boosts local economies but also helps in reducing economic disparities.

Lastly, it is suggested to implement a regular monitoring system to assess the impacts of tourism. By continuously evaluating these effects, the community can adjust its strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability and well-being of both the site and its inhabitants. These adjustments will help in maintaining a balance between welcoming tourists and preserving the heritage site's integrity

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