

Empowering Local Communities through Vocational Tourism Skills: An Entrepreneurship Framework for Dwarka's Heritage Economy

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Abstract: Dwarka known for its sacred temples, coastal settlements, and rich storytelling traditions represents a heritage landscape where people's daily lives and the region's cultural identity are deeply connected. But even though thousands of visitors come to Dwarka for spiritual and cultural experiences, the local community often receives limited economic benefit. Many traditional knowledge holders priests, boatmen, artisans, guides, and fishermen are unable to convert their skills into sustainable livelihoods. This research paper attempts to address this gap by developing a Vocational Tourism and Entrepreneurship Framework for Dwarka. The study is based on real-life observations from Dwarkadhish temple areas, Gomti Ghat, Bet Dwarka, fishing villages, and artisan clusters. It uses simple participatory tools like community discussions, field interviews, and skill-gap surveys. This research paper suggests that if skill development, entrepreneurship support, and community participation come together, Dwarka can move from a tourist-dependent economy to a community-led heritage economy, where both culture and livelihoods grow side by side.

Keyword: Community Empowerment, Vocational Skills, Entrepreneurship, Heritage Tourism, Dwaraka

I. INTRODUCTION

Dwarka, one of India's Sapta puri sacred pilgrimage cities is witnessing rapid growth as a multi-dimensional tourism destination, attracting vast numbers of domestic and international visitors every year. Tourism in India contributes significantly to national economic growth, accounting for over 5 % of India's GDP and supporting around 46.5 million jobs in 2024, equivalent to about 9.1 % of total employment in the country's workforce. This underlines the sector's potential not only as an economic driver but also as a generator of livelihood opportunities.

Despite this macro-economic significance, much of the tourism value in destinations such as Dwarka remains captured by organized businesses and outside investors. Local residents often participate in informal, seasonal labour in low-income roles without access to structured skills training or entrepreneurial support, a trend mirrored across labour markets where the informal sector comprises a large majority of employment in India.

Vocational tourism skills including heritage interpretation, cultural guiding, small enterprise management, craft and food production, hospitality operations, and coastal or marine experience facilitation are increasingly recognized by both global bodies and national governments as pathways to enhance employability and stimulate grassroots entrepreneurship. For example, the Ministry of Tourism's Destination Based Skill Development Programme has trained over 12,000 local candidates across 145 tourist sites to enhance tourism-linked skills, demonstrating government commitment to human resource development at the community level. Similarly, programmes such as state-level initiatives in Madhya Pradesh's "Tourism Sakhi" project illustrate how women and other community groups are being equipped with vocational and livelihood skills relevant to tourism, leading to tangible income generation ranging from several thousand to tens of thousands of rupees per month.

The burgeoning global tourism agenda championed by organisations like the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) also emphasizes skills development as essential for inclusive, sustainable tourism, especially in heritage destinations where cultural and community assets are key attraction drivers. UNESCO's frameworks for sustainable tourism highlight that tourism not only creates jobs

but can also preserve cultural heritage and foster community identity when local populations are active stakeholders.

In the context of Dwarka's heritage economy, a vocational tourism skills and entrepreneurship framework can offer a realistic, scalable model to tangibly increase community participation in tourism value chains. By mapping local heritage assets to skill requirements, integrating training with business development services, and facilitating access to markets, this research seeks to demonstrate how tourism growth can become a vector for inclusive economic empowerment particularly for youth, women, and traditionally marginalized groups in the region.

This research paper will therefore explore the practical integration of vocational training and entrepreneurship within Dwarka's heritage tourism ecosystem, supported by national tourism data and global development insights, to propose a pathway that aligns economic potential with community prosperity.

Indian Government Schemes/Initiatives:

Here's a structured overview of key government schemes and initiatives (mainly in India) that focus on empowering local communities through tourism by creating jobs, building skills, strengthening local entrepreneurship, and promoting inclusive and sustainable tourism:

1. Swadesh Darshan Scheme & Swadesh Darshan 2.0

A flagship Central Sector scheme by the Ministry of Tourism for integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits across the country. Promotes tourism in lesser-known and rural destinations to create livelihood opportunities for local people (guides, transport services, food stalls, handicrafts). Emphasises sustainable and community-oriented tourism under Swadesh Darshan 2.0 supporting local stakeholder participation in planning and services. More tourists more demand for local guides, home stays, transport, food & cultural programs. Encourages local entrepreneurship in hospitality and tourism services.

2. PRASHAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive)

A Centrally Sponsored Scheme that focuses on the development of pilgrimage and heritage sites with

tourism infrastructure. Enhances facilities around heritage sites this increases visitor footfall, which in turn supports local vendors, guides, artisans & transport providers. Cultural and religious tourism helps preserve local traditions while generating income for communities near heritage spots.

3. Capacity Building for Service Providers (CBSP)

A scheme by the Ministry of Tourism designed to train and skill local service providers in tourism and hospitality. Offers targeted skills training like tour guiding, hospitality services, eco-guiding, language skills especially to women, youth, tribal groups, and local communities. The initiative "Paryatan Mitra / Paryatan Didi" emphasizes empowering women as tourism hosts, guides, and service providers. Skilled community members can earn more, participate professionally in tourism, and reduce migration for jobs.

4. Dekho Apna Desh (Look at Your Country)

A domestic tourism promotion initiative encouraging Indians to explore diverse parts of the country including rural and local spots. Increased domestic tourism spreads economic benefits to smaller towns and villages. Boosts income for small transporters, guides, homestays, and local businesses.

5. Rural & Community-Based Tourism Support

While not always formal national schemes, government-supported rural tourism programmes have been promoted to tap cultural and ecological assets:

- **Rural Tourism Schemes:** The Tourism Ministry has identified many rural destinations for sustainable tourism development, encouraging local cooperatives and community-led tourism enterprises.
- **Homestay & Cultural Tourism Initiatives:** Government and state initiatives support homestay tourism in villages, giving communities control over accommodation and cultural experiences for visitors. Local hosts earn directly from tourists. Encourages preservation of local culture, traditions, food, and crafts.

6. State-Level & Local Schemes

Apart from national schemes, many state governments are launching destination-specific community tourism initiatives:

- Tribal Bike Taxi Services in Andhra Pradesh: Provides transport jobs for tribal youth at tourist spots.
- Eco-tourism and Guide Training programs in Uttar Pradesh: Locals are trained as guides and service staff in wildlife tourism areas.
- Home-Stay and Culture Tourism in Chhattisgarh villages: Local communities showcase their culture to tourists, earning income locally.

Government tourism schemes in India empower local communities by:

1. Creating jobs and livelihoods (guides, transport, hospitality).
2. Enhancing skills and training for direct participation in tourism.
3. Strengthening local businesses and entrepreneurship (homestays, crafts).
4. Promoting sustainable and inclusive tourism models.

Such tourism-linked development ensures that local people are not just beneficiaries but central actors in tourism growth, preserving culture while earning livelihoods.

Collaboration Models for Empowering Local Communities through Tourism-Based Livelihoods: Tourism in developing economies increasingly faces the challenge of growth without inclusion. While destinations expand rapidly, local communities especially those engaged in the unorganized sector often remain confined to informal, seasonal, and low-income roles. This study examines four institutionally supported tourism livelihood models Homestays, Restaurant & Hotel Management, Amusement Parks, and Open-Air Local Market as mechanisms for formalising employment, ensuring income stability, and empowering local communities through structured participation. This conceptual framework is grounded in three interlinked concepts:

- Institutional Collaboration (industry bodies providing standards, branding, and certification)
- Local Community Participation (mandatory inclusion of residents as primary stakeholders)
- Livelihood Formalisation (transition from informal to stable income systems)

- Institutional Market Governance (Public authorities and ODOP-linked facilities)

1. Homestay Model (Institutional Collaboration with Homestays of India)

The homestay model integrates local households into the formal tourism economy through institutional collaboration. Partnering with organizations such as Homestays of India ensures standardization in quality, hygiene, safety, and digital visibility. This model enables local families to monetize existing residential assets while preserving cultural authenticity. Institutional support provides training in hospitality, guest management, and compliance, leading to stable supplementary income. The model promotes inclusive tourism, decentralizes accommodation infrastructure, and enhances community-based livelihood generation.

2. Restaurant & Hotel Management Model (Collaboration with NRA / IRC)

The restaurant and hotel management model focuses on formalizing local food and hospitality enterprises through collaboration with industry bodies such as the National Restaurant Association (NRA) and the Independent Restaurant Coalition (IRC). These institutions provide standardized training in food safety, service quality, operations, and entrepreneurship. The model enables informal workers to transition into structured employment or self-owned enterprises. By linking skill development with market access, it strengthens local value chains and enhances service professionalism. This model supports sustainable employment and boosts destination-level hospitality standards.

3. Amusement Park Model (Collaboration with IAAPI)

The amusement park model integrates local communities into leisure and entertainment tourism through collaboration with industry bodies like Indian Association Of Amusement Parks And Industries (IAAPI). It facilitates skill training in ride operations, safety management, customer service, and facility maintenance. The model creates diverse employment opportunities across technical, operational, and service roles. Institutional oversight ensures safety compliance and operational efficiency. This model expands tourism employment beyond seasonal hospitality and contributes to year-round livelihood stability.

4. The Open-Air Local Market Model

The Open-Air Local Market Model under the One District One Product (ODOP) framework can be practically implemented in Dwarka, where only local community members are allotted organised stalls. Under this model, local artisans, fishermen families, women SHGs, and informal vendors sell district-specific products such as handcrafted conch-shell (shankh) items, religious souvenirs, bead jewellery, wooden idols, handloom textiles, traditional snacks like khajurpak and dry farsan, dried and processed fish products, local spices, and natural salt-based items from coastal areas. Government-backed schemes support skill training, packaging, branding, and stall standardisation, while tourism-oriented vocational training improves customer handling and pricing skills. For example, a women SHG producing traditional snacks can sell hygienically packed ODOP-labelled products directly to pilgrims, while a fisherman family can market dried seafood as a heritage coastal product. This model converts informal street vending into structured micro-entrepreneurship, ensures daily and consistent income, and embeds Dwarka's heritage economy firmly within community-owned tourism development.

Problem statement:

Despite Dwarka's rich religious and cultural heritage and its strong tourism potential, local communities remain marginal beneficiaries of the heritage economy. Tourism activities are largely dominated by external stakeholders, while local residents often lack vocational tourism skills, entrepreneurial knowledge, and institutional support to participate meaningfully in tourism-related enterprises. This skills gap limits employment opportunities, reduces local income generation, and threatens the sustainability of heritage-based tourism. Moreover, the absence of an integrated entrepreneurship framework tailored to Dwarka's socio-cultural context hinders community-led tourism development. Addressing this problem requires a structured approach that links vocational tourism training with entrepreneurship development to empower local communities and ensure inclusive, sustainable growth of Dwarka's heritage economy.

II. RESEARCH STUDY OBJECTIVES

1. To identify how lack of vocational tourism skill affects livelihood security, income patterns, employment stability, of local residents.

2. To analyse the role of vocational tourism skills in enhancing local entrepreneurship and community participation for self-employment.

III. LITERATURE OF REVIEW

1. Aruna A. Singh's (2016) article examines Community-Based Ecotourism in Sikkim, using Darap and Pastanga as case studies. The author argues that local management successfully preserves culture and boosts economies, unlike exploitative tourism. However, challenges remain regarding infrastructure, language barriers, and low youth participation. Singh concludes that better professional training and youth engagement are vital for the industry's sustainability.
2. Joshi and Shaukat (2021) evaluate 36 heritage structures in Dwarka, arguing the city should diversify beyond religious pilgrimage by restoring neglected historic assets. They report that while temples remain pristine, 53% of sites specifically secular structures like stepwells are deteriorating. The study recommends utilizing available government funds to restore these sites, thereby creating a sustainable heritage tourism circuit.
3. Neetu Jain (2025), This article advocates for integrating heritage marketing and entrepreneurship to drive economic growth and employment in India. By comparing India's tourism performance with global leaders like China and the USA, the authors highlight significant untapped potential despite infrastructure challenges. The report concludes with a comprehensive three-phase strategic action plan focusing on stakeholder engagement, digital promotion, and sustainable infrastructure to revitalize the sector.
4. Government of India Ministry of skill Development & Entrepreneurship and N.S.D.C. (2017-22) This report provides a comprehensive analysis of India's Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality sector, projecting significant employment growth across Hotels, Food Services, and Travel Operators. It identifies a dichotomy between robust market expansion driven by rising incomes and new consumer segments and systemic workforce challenges. Specifically, the industry struggles with attrition rates reaching 90-100% in QSRs and a critical shortage of soft skills among entry-level staff. By recommending

standardized training frameworks like National Occupational Standards, the report offers actionable strategies to bridge the widening gap between manpower quality and industry expectations.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive research methodology, which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. The main objective of these methods is to investigate in depth the entrepreneurship and employment opportunities developed for the local community through vocational tourism skills. Quantitative data has been used to clarify and strengthen the qualitative findings, thereby understanding the impact on local communities and their living standards in a multidimensional manner.

Sample Selection:

This study, titled “Empowering Local Communities through Vocational Tourism Skills: An Entrepreneurship Framework for Dwarka’s Heritage Economy” employed an exploratory research design. The research focuses on Dwarka’s local residents. A accidental and convenience sampling method of non-probability sampling has been used to obtain the data. In which 30 respondents have been obtained.

Study Area:

The research is conducted in Dwarka, Gujarat, India, a prominent heritage and pilgrimage destination known for its religious tourism, coastal culture, and traditional occupations. Dwarka’s tourism-dependent local economy makes it an appropriate case study for assessing vocational skill development and community-based entrepreneurship.

Data Collection Tools:

This study employed a rigorous investigation, demanding methods that minimized bias and maximized reliability. Data collection from survey respondents was facilitated using a carefully developed interview schedule. Primary data are collected through Structured questionnaires administered to local residents and tourism entrepreneurs to assess vocational skill levels, entrepreneurial intentions, income generation, and employment outcomes. Secondary data are collected from Government tourism and skill development reports, UNESCO and Ministry of Tourism

documents, Academic journals, books, and policy briefs related to vocational tourism, community empowerment, and heritage economics.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table No:1 Occupation of the respondent

No.	Detail	Respondent	Percentage
1	Tourism-based businesses	12	40%
2	Agriculture	7	23.33%
3	Small-scale businesses	8	26.67%
4	Hotels/Restaurants	3	10%
	Total	30	100%

Table No. 1 presents the occupational profile of respondents in Dwarka, showing that local livelihoods are strongly linked to the heritage-based tourism economy. A combined 50% engaged in tourism businesses and hotels/restaurants indicates direct dependence on pilgrimage-driven tourism. The presence of 26.67% in small-scale businesses and 23.33% in agriculture reflects indirect and seasonal connections with tourism. This occupational mix highlights clear scope for vocational tourism skills to upgrade informal and traditional work into entrepreneurship. Overall, the data supports a community-focused tourism skill framework to strengthen Dwarka’s heritage economy.

Table No:2 Annual Economic of the respondent (in ₹/-)

No.	Detail	Respondent	Percentage
1	Less than 1,00,000	5	16.67%
2	1,00,001 to 1,50,000	12	40%
3	1,50,001 to 2,00,000	4	13.33%
4	2,00,000 to 2,50,000	5	16.67%
5	More than 2,50,000	4	13.33%
	Total	30	100%

Table No. 2 illustrates the annual economic status of respondents in Dwarka, revealing modest income levels across the local community. A majority (40%) earn between ₹1,00,001–₹1,50,000 annually, while 16.67% fall below ₹1,00,000, indicating economic vulnerability. The concentration of respondents in lower and middle-income brackets reflects dependence on seasonal and informal tourism-linked livelihoods. Limited representation in higher income groups suggests constrained entrepreneurial growth. This income pattern underscores the need

for vocational tourism skills to enhance earning capacity and stabilize livelihoods.

Table No:3
Employment opportunities from the arrival of
tourists

No.	Detail	Respondent	Percentage
1	Yes	23	76.67%
2	No	7	23.33%
	Total	30	100%

Table No. 3 explains the impact of tourist arrivals on employment opportunities in Dwarka, where a large majority of respondents (76.67%) perceive tourism as a source of employment generation. This is evident through activities such as pilgrimage guiding, auto-rickshaw and boat services, street vending, accommodation support services, and food-related businesses that expand during peak tourist seasons. These respondents benefit directly from increased tourist footfall, which creates short-term as well as recurring income opportunities. In contrast, 23.33% reported no employment benefits, mainly due to their engagement in agriculture, lack of tourism-specific skills, or absence of linkage with the tourism value chain. For instance, farmers or unskilled workers often remain excluded from tourist spending despite proximity to tourism zones. This disparity highlights the uneven distribution of tourism benefits and emphasizes the importance of vocational tourism skills to enable wider community participation.

Table No:4 Difficulties in tourism-based
employment

No.	Detail	Respondent	Percentage
1	Engaged in tourism-based occupation	12	40%
2	Tourism occupation as an optional	18	60%
	Total	30	100%

Table No. 4 highlights the major difficulties associated with tourism-based employment in Dwarka, with 50% of respondents identifying seasonal employment as the primary challenge. Tourism-related jobs peak during major religious festivals and pilgrimage seasons but decline sharply afterward, affecting income continuity. About 26.67% noted that employment levels remain uneven throughout the year, creating uncertainty for workers dependent on daily or seasonal earnings.

Additionally, 23.33% reported limited employment opportunities after religious festivals, when tourist inflow significantly reduces. These challenges reveal the fragile and fluctuating nature of tourism livelihoods. The findings underline the need for vocational tourism skills and diversified entrepreneurship to ensure year-round and stable employment.

Table No:5
Impact of tourism on the occupation of family
members

No.	Detail	Respondent	Percentage
1	Seasonal employment	15	50%
2	The level of employment is not uniform throughout the year	8	26.67%
3	Less employment is available after religious festivals	7	23.33%
	Total	30	100%

Table No. 5 explains the impact of tourism on the occupations of family members in Dwarka, showing that 40% of respondents have family members directly engaged in tourism-based occupations. These families depend on activities such as homestays, hotel work, guiding pilgrims, boat services, food vending, or handicraft sales, making tourism a primary and regular source of income. On the other hand, 60% treat tourism as an optional occupation, mainly due to its seasonal nature and uncertainty. For example, families primarily involved in agriculture or small retail often participate in tourism only during major religious festivals or peak tourist months. This optional engagement reflects limited skills, capital, and year-round opportunities in the tourism sector. The findings indicate that while tourism influences family occupations, its benefits remain uneven and seasonal. Hence, vocational tourism skill development is essential to transform part-time family involvement into sustainable, full-time entrepreneurial opportunities.

Table No:6 Annual economic benefit from tourist
arrivals (in ₹/-)

No.	Detail	Respondent	Percentage
1	Less than 1000	3	10%
2	1000 to 2500	6	20%

3	2501 to 5000	12	40%
4	More than 5000	9	30%
	Total	30	100%

Table No. 6 presents the annual economic benefits received from tourist arrivals by respondents in Dwarka. A majority of respondents (40%) reported earning between ₹2,501–₹5,000 annually from tourism-related activities, indicating modest but significant supplementary income. Another 30% earned more than ₹5,000, reflecting relatively better integration into tourism value chains such as accommodation, transport, or regular vending. However, 30% of respondents received less than ₹2,500 annually, showing limited access to tourist spending and marginal participation. This uneven benefit distribution highlights the small-scale and often informal nature of local tourism earnings. The findings emphasize the need for vocational tourism skills and entrepreneurship support to enhance income levels and ensure broader, more equitable economic gains from tourism within Dwarka.

Table No:7 People from other regions come to Dwarka for employment

No.	Detail	Respondent	Percentage
1	Yes	20	66.67%
2	No	10	33.33%
	Total	30	100%

Table No. 7 explains the inflow of workers from other regions to Dwarka for employment, with 66.67% of respondents confirming that outsiders come to the city for work. This is mainly due to increased labour demand during peak pilgrimage seasons, especially in hotels, restaurants, transport services, construction work, and street vending—for example, migrant workers employed in hotels during major religious festivals. In contrast, 33.33% respondents felt that people from other regions do not significantly come for employment, as many jobs are short-term, low-paid, and seasonal. For instance, after festival periods, tourist inflow declines and employment opportunities reduce, making Dwarka less attractive for long-term migration. This situation highlights both the pull of tourism-driven demand and its seasonal limitations. The findings further emphasize the importance of strengthening local vocational tourism skills so that residents can fill these jobs sustainably.

VI.CONCLUSION

The combined analysis of all tables reveals that Dwarka possesses a strong but unevenly structured heritage-based tourism economy. A significant share of local livelihoods is already directly or indirectly linked to tourism, yet income levels remain modest and vulnerable due to seasonality. While tourist arrivals clearly generate employment and supplementary income, the benefits are concentrated among those with access, skills, and market linkages. Seasonal fluctuations, post-festival decline, and non-uniform employment patterns create livelihood insecurity for families dependent on tourism. Tourism also functions more as an optional or secondary occupation for many households rather than a stable primary source. The inflow of migrant workers during peak seasons further highlights gaps in local skill availability. Overall, tourism's economic potential is evident but underutilized at the community level. These findings collectively underline that the core challenge is not the absence of tourism demand, but the lack of structured vocational skills and entrepreneurship support. Therefore, a targeted vocational tourism-led entrepreneurship framework is essential to ensure inclusive, year-round, and locally anchored growth of Dwarka's heritage economy.

VII.SUGGESTIONS

First, the Homestay Model should be expanded through institutional collaboration (e.g., Homestays of India) to convert optional family participation into year-round income, especially for households currently dependent on agriculture and small businesses. Second, the Restaurant & Hotel Management Model, supported by bodies such as the National Restaurant Association or Independent Restaurant Coalition, should focus on certified local skill training to reduce reliance on migrant labour and improve income stability. Third, a Heritage-linked Amusement Park Model in collaboration with IAAPI can generate non-seasonal employment for youth by integrating cultural storytelling, coastal ecology, and pilgrimage narratives. Fourth, an Open-Air Local Market under the One District One Product (ODOP) framework should be institutionalized near pilgrimage corridors to ensure direct market access for local crafts, food products, and services. Together, these models can address income vulnerability, employment seasonality, and skill gaps identified in the tables. A digitally enabled vocational training ecosystem aligned with these models will help locals capture higher tourism value.

In the long term, this integrated approach can transform Dwarka from a pilgrimage-dependent economy into a resilient, community-owned heritage entrepreneurship hub.

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