



## Host community attitudes toward tourism impacts: Study of high altitude tourist destination, Himalaya

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### Abstract

At present in the world, the impacts of tourism on local communities have been a subject of increasing concern to planners. Assessment of environmental, economic, social-cultural and infrastructural impacts of tourism is considered as an essential requirement for informed decision making by different stakeholders. The attitude and perception of host community towards tourism impacts shapes their responses and subsequently influences decisions of other stakeholders as well. As a part of cold desert areas in Himachal Pradesh, Nako is experiencing tourist activities and expected that the stiffness between tourism development and local communities will become more pronounced in future. This research study attempts to understand the perception of residents of Nako destination towards impacts of tourism growth. Survey was conducted in June, 2016 of 7 percent population to total destination population. Based on the responses of surveyed respondents, it can be interpreted that tourism development has not diluted the socio-cultural values at Nako.

**Keywords:** residents' perceptions, tourism impacts, nako lake

### 1. Introduction

Development in tourism industries condenses economic, socio-cultural and environmental changes on host community's life. In that some of changes are more beneficial than others <sup>[1]</sup>. The increasing intensity of tourist activities generates numerous impacts at many destinations <sup>[2]</sup>. These impacts are not noticeable in early development stage of tourism <sup>[3]</sup> yet they affected somewhat by tourism <sup>[4]</sup>. Thus, resident's involvement and their support at any destination is domineering for the sustainability in the tourism industry (Gursoy *et al.*, 2010) <sup>[5]</sup>. Furthermore, host communities attitude towards tourism has been a topic that has attracted significant interest in the field of tourism research <sup>[6-17]</sup>. Moreover, they develop their attitudes towards tourism development to evaluating benefits and costs <sup>[18]</sup>. Numerous researches have concentrated on tourism impacts perceived by locals and their attitudes towards visitors and tourism development <sup>[19-29]</sup>. The long term success and to maintain sustainability in tourism industry, assessing the tourism impacts is essential <sup>[30]</sup>. Also, understanding the viewpoint of resident's can facilitate policies which maximize the benefits and minimize the potential negative impacts of tourism development <sup>[31]</sup>. In addition, destinations uniqueness and its recognizing has been given much courtesy to the role of place attractiveness in shaping communities attitude towards impacts and support for tourism development <sup>[32]</sup>. Therefore, the support of local communities is highly crucial at any tourist destination; it becomes more important if it is located in fragile ecosystem where socio-cultural activities are in greater harmony with nature. In view of the aforesaid deliberated, research investigated the resident's perception of tourism impacts (socio-cultural, environmental, economic and

infrastructure) at Nako Lake area and summarize the results of impacts to support for further tourism development.

### 2. Study Area Description

Nako Lake is one of the most attracted tourist destination on account of its beautiful and picturesque location embraced with Buddhist cultural landscape in high altitude of Himalayan region (Fig.1). The research was conducted in Nako, a very small community with a population of 572 persons located in the Trans-Himalayan region of Kinnaur district nearby the Indo-China border in the state of Himachal Pradesh, India. It is situated at an elevation of about 11,893 feet in Hangrang valley covering an area of 282.65 hectares. The community has a variety of potential attractions such as Buddhist culture, traditional handcraft, dining and local fairs & festivals. In addition to extremely hilly terrain, tourism development in this area is largely restricted due to its geographical adjacency to Indo-China border, which is highly concerned from political geography point of view. Consequently, tourist arrivals are varies over time. Looking at number of tourists arrived at Kinnaur, 17860 foreign tourists and 467186 domestic tourists were arrived during 2011. Whereas in 2016 a significant decrease of 2863 (84 percent) and 97864 (79 percent) from 2011 was reported in both foreign and domestic tourists arrivals respectively. Despite that, recently, cultural tourism has emerged as a main source of livelihood and employment generation in the study area. In the same time there is also concern of negative socio-cultural impact of tourism. Hence, periodically there is need of such study in order to maintain & sustain existing socio-cultural pattern which is highly compatible with natural environment. In this view, in May 1998, the University of Vienna in

association with the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) launched a research project focusing to preserve art & culture. Similarly, in July 2002, the Nako Preservation Project (NPP) came to be established for the conservation of monastery and other cultural heritage buildings in Nako (District Census Handbook, 2011).

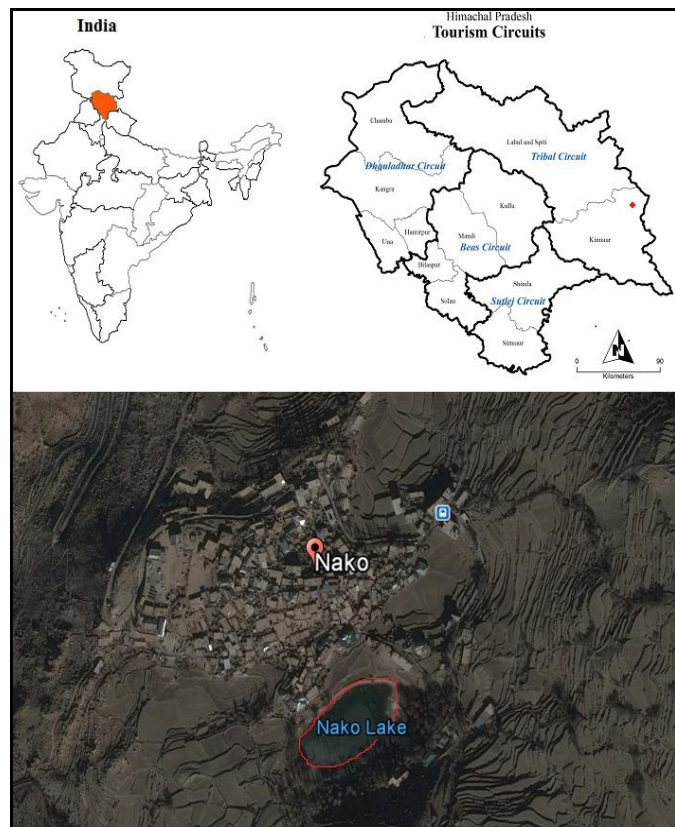


Fig 1: Location map of study area

### 3. Database and Methodology

This research attempted to evaluate the resident’s perceptions towards tourism development on their own community. In order to explore, a field survey of local residents was carried out in June, 2016 with help of questionnaire-cum-schedule. The survey was scheduled just prior to the summer peak period which also peak season of tourist activities at destination in order to avoid a situation where extreme weather conditions reduce tourists inflow. For smaller communities, to ensure a representative sample, in cold desert location as well as entirely rural, the size of sample was based on the proportion of total population. About seven percent sample has been collected of local communities from research destination, Nako (table.1).

Table 1: Sample selection criteria for different destinations

Destination	Household	Population	Sample size	In percent
Nako	128	572	45	7.86

Source: Field survey, 2016

The instrument of face to face interviews was designed and comprising into two sections:

- a. Demographic questions; and
- b. Resident’s perception towards tourism development.

The first section of the questionnaire was collected demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, occupation etc.) of the respondent. The second section was consists questions relating to perceptions about tourism impacts that react to a series of agreed and disagreed statements regarding aspects of tourism on a five point Likert Scale (very strongly disagree – very strongly agree). Statements resultant from a set of questions accumulated from printed literature and these were modified to fit at Nako destination. Four general areas were covered:

- a. Socio-cultural (18)
- b. Infrastructure (8)
- c. Employment (13)
- d. Environmental (8)

### 3.1 Data analysis

One tool is not sufficient to obtain the outcomes because this investigation has a large number of items. The data was captured in Microsoft Excel-13 and then analyzed through Statistical Programme for Social Science (SPSS 20). In addition to descriptive statistics, measurement the data symmetry and degree of distribution were examined through skewness and kurtosis. A normal distribution has skewness and excess kurtosis of 0; if distribution is close to that value then it is probably close to normal. Mean ranking was observed to identify the perception of respondent’s for an item has a strong favourable or least favourable. At last, to concluding results, Radar diagram was used for the graphical representation that how much differences between them.

### 4. Results and Discussion

In the analysis of tourism impacts, have limited knowledge of tourists about tourism impacts at any destination, they can just showed a relatively consent in listing of positive and negative changes because tourists mentioned are mainly of those kind that affect the visit experience while residents perception covered all areas of their entire quality of life.

#### 4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The demographic profile of the sample reported in Table 2. It shows the percent share of local responses in each category. The summary shows that the most common age of the respondents was below 45 years and majority of them do not have formal qualification rather just have knowledge to read and write. About one third of the respondents passed at least metric or secondary class and further about one fifth were graduate and above. The dominant religion was Buddhist and designated as Schedule Tribe. Also, around 90 percent were married and almost two-third lived in joint family. The majority of them are employed in agricultural sector and annual income of each person is reported over Rupees one lakh.

**Table 2:** Demographic profile of survey respondents

Variables	Categories	Percent of respondents
Gender	Male	51.10
	Female	48.90
Age	25-35 years	43.18
	35-45 years	47.72
	45-55 years	06.81
	55+ years	02.27
Religion	Buddhist	95.60
	Hindu	04.40
Caste	ST	95.60
	Others	04.40
Education level	No formal qualification	46.70
	Matric	20.00
	Secondary	15.60
	Graduate	02.20
	Post graduate	06.70
Marital status	Others professional degree/diploma	13.30
	Married	88.90
Family types	Unmarried	11.10
	Joint	66.70
Members in family	Separate	33.30
	1-3 members	22.50
	4-6 members	62.50
	7 + members	15.00
Occupation	No response given	11.11
	Govt. job	22.20
	Pvt. Job	02.20
	Own business	06.70
	Agricultural	35.60
Annual personal income (Rupees)	Others	33.30
	Less than 50000	15.38
	50000-100000	11.53
	100000- 200000	34.61
	200000+	38.46
	No response given	42.20

Source: Field survey, 2016



**Fig 2:** Field survey, 2016

**4.2 Descriptive statistics, skewness and kurtosis**

Many statistics inferences require that a distribution should be normal or nearly normal. The skewness and kurtosis values of

each item was examined to evaluate the normality of data distribution. An item which mean value is not in the center of the distribution is regarded as skewed item. Thus, skewness refers to the symmetry of a distribution (Tibachnick & Fidell, 2001). Positive skewness indicates positive skewed or skewed right and vice-versa for negative values. On the other hand, kurtosis offers the ‘peakedness’ of the data distribution. Higher positive value of kurtosis indicates a sharper peak and vice-versa for negative values. A uniform distribution would be in extreme cases. If the distribution is normal, both values are zero which is seldom achieved and is quite unlikely for real world data. The criteria recommended by Chou & Bentler (1995) has been used in study who suggested that items with skewness greater than 3.0 point would be considered extreme. By applying these criteria, only four items fell outside the ranges for skewness thus showing that all the items are reasonably free from skewness for the study. Another data characteristics, kurtosis: observed ‘cluster around a central point’ for a given standard distribution [33]. A normal distribution has kurtosis exactly 3 are called as ‘mesokurtic’. Distributions that are flatter than normal are referred to as ‘platykurtic’ whereas those that are more peaked than normal

**Table 3:** Descriptive statistics for social impacts items (N = 45)

Indicators	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Living standard have increased	2.69	1.68	.095	-1.847
Improved language skills	4.29	0.51	.399	-.604
Local language have changed	1.24	0.93	3.696	12.441
Broadness in thinking	4.84	0.37	-1.967	1.954
Opportunities to meet new people or outsiders	4.62	0.53	-.983	-.103
Improved hospitality and courtesy towards strangers	4.60	0.72	-3.045	13.329
Helped in removing social barriers like caste, religion and racism	4.16	1.35	-1.520	1.039
Increase stress level of local people	1.64	1.37	1.913	2.006
General problems for local have increased	2.47	1.69	.521	-1.553
Local residents have suffered from living in tourism destinations	1.98	1.23	1.184	.192
Importance of local culture, function, fest. have increased	1.98	1.39	1.371	.573
Religious norms have modified	1.64	1.25	1.757	1.806
Negative custom affects	1.53	1.22	2.015	2.443
People imitating western culture	1.51	1.32	2.276	3.393
Loss of cultural identity	1.18	0.83	4.575	19.811
Encouragement to social evils like drugs, drinking etc.	2.67	1.98	.341	-1.959
Increase in cheating and fraud	2.44	1.74	.491	-1.663
Crime has increased	2.07	1.57	1.060	-.507
Job opportunities have increased	3.53	1.63	-.669	-1.206
Demand for traditional entertainment, art, craft etc.	4.51	0.51	-.046	-2.093
Tourism has benefited economy	3.56	1.27	-1.033	-.071
Dependency on tourism	1.96	1.59	1.202	-.401
Increased in materialistic attitude of local people	2.24	1.60	.735	-1.251
Tourism has commercialized local art	3.73	1.21	-.976	-.070
Increased in value of land and houses	4.60	0.69	-1.475	.820
Increased in price of general commodities and services	4.44	1.32	-2.181	3.087
Local people have shifted occupation from others to tourism related	2.38	1.66	.650	-1.330
Seasonal tourism creates high risk under or unemployment	3.24	1.82	-.263	-1.845
Migration from village to tourist spots	1.20	0.84	4.378	18.414
Migration of pop. From other parts of HP have increased	3.82	1.25	-1.188	.643
Migration from other states have increased	3.78	1.46	-1.062	-.231
Road network have improved	2.67	1.69	.347	-1.664
Means of communication have improved	3.02	0.78	-.634	.391
Development of basic amenities increased	4.69	0.47	-.844	-1.349
Public health (sanitation, hygiene) have improved	3.11	1.48	-.287	-1.463
Increase in recreational activities	2.16	1.71	1.013	-.839
Redevelopment and maintenance of tourist spots	4.36	1.21	-1.785	1.821
Increase in traffic accidents	4.22	0.79	-1.281	2.122
Effort of tourism dept.	2.51	1.70	.328	-1.790
Environmental awareness and its management	4.89	0.32	-2.561	4.769
Air pollution has increased	2.13	1.44	1.000	-.358
Noise pollution has increased	2.91	1.77	-.091	-1.896
Exploitation and decline of water	2.18	1.80	.920	-1.151
Degradation of natural vegetation /species	2.33	1.64	.570	-1.523
Disruption of wild life	1.62	1.21	1.506	.327
Loss of open space	2.56	1.24	.018	-1.634
Problems of sanitation and garbage dumping have worsened	2.98	1.41	-.164	-1.529

**Note:** Responses were based on a five-point Likert scale

Are called 'leptokurtic'. From the explore results, all kurtosis values had lower than the cutoff value of 3.0 except only seven items. The mean score, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of each items associated with factor are represented in table 3.

#### 4.3 Residents' attitudes towards perceived impacts of tourism

Table 4 reveals the descriptive statistics including mean values and standard deviations for 47 items of tourism impacts perceived by local residents. Moreover, a mean ranking was

used to describe the impact items which have most or least favourable by them. As evidenced by mean responses, respondents evaluated some of socio-cultural impacts as good for the local communities, while others were bad. An agreement was found most favourable with the items of social enhancements (3.80) by residents. Indeed, residents gave the highest level of agreement with items that are associated with community social developments are 'environmental awareness' (4.89) and 'broadness in thinking' (4.84). Community has a much intimacy with environment, in that concern on personal bases the culture and youth affairs of

village located dustbins at many locations (Fig.3). Furthermore, residents do not perceive that tourism causes a decline in their traditional culture and habits. In reference to the items about ‘loss of cultural identity’ (1.18), ‘religious norms modification’ (1.62), ‘changes in local language’ (1.24), ‘people imitating western culture’ (1.51), ‘negative custom affects’ (1.53) and ‘modification of religious norms’ (1.64) scores suggest that residents do not perceive that tourism diminishes their cultural values. Generally, at most of destinations, residents perceived a relationship between tourism and crime and it is expected, as tourism increases, crime has increase (Milman & Pizam, 1988; Lawson *et al.*, 1998). However, present study found that residents do not perceived tourism as the cause for increase in crime (2.07) or cheating and fraud (2.44). According to department of crime branch at Reckong-Peoo, single



Fig 3: Field survey, waste management by residents

Case was registered in 2012 under the head in attempt to rape against Japanese woman. The residents indicated slight changes in the context of drugs or drinking encouragement (2.67), as tourism developed, liquor consumptions are raising

at destinations. However, it is difficult to differentiate that these are the outcome of tourism impacts or the other processes of modernization which results changes in entertainment facilities. Nevertheless, a major proportion of the local respondents, suggested that there should be a strict prohibition on drugs and alcohol drinking. With regard to economic developments, tourism is a foremost basis of income for hilly areas in Himalaya. The finding of tourism impacts especially, economic impacts are perceived most favorably by local residents. Residents of Nako considered that tourism have commercialized their local art (3.73) as well as a benefitted economy (3.56) to increase job opportunities (3.53) at their



Fig 4: Field survey, news cited Kinnaur pollution free district of India

Destinations and vice-versa, its creates many effects on their economy i.e. seasonal tourism creates high risk of under or unemployment (3.24), increased in values of land and houses (4.60) and general commodities and services (4.44). Infrastructures especially, road network, has no improvement (2.67) with development of tourism industry at their destination. Instead, residents believed that tourism has increases in traffic accidents (4.22). Regarding environmental tourism impacts, residents perceived that still; tourism activity has not connected with environmental concerns at their locations. The district ‘Kinnaur’ has been also declared the India’s most pollution free district (Fig.4). The mean response was attributed to ‘noise pollution’ and ‘air pollution’ are 2.91, and 2.13 respectively.

Table 4: Tourism impacts perceived by local residents

Components	Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Socio-cultural	Living standard have increased	45	2.69	1.68	23
	Improved language skills	45	4.29	0.51	10
	Local language have changed	45	1.24	0.93	45
	Broadness in thinking	45	4.84	0.37	2
	Opportunities to meet new people or outsiders	45	4.62	0.53	4
	Improved hospitality and courtesy towards strangers	45	4.60	0.72	5
	Helped in removing social barriers like caste, religion and racism	45	4.16	1.35	12
	Increase stress level of local people	45	1.64	1.37	40
	General problems for local have increased	45	2.47	1.69	28
	Local residents have suffered from living in tourism destinations	45	1.98	1.23	37
	Importance of local culture, function, fest. have increased	45	1.98	1.39	38
	Religious norms have modified	45	1.64	1.25	41
	Negative custom affects	45	1.53	1.22	43
	People imitating western culture	45	1.51	1.32	44
	Loss of cultural identity	45	1.18	0.83	47
	Encouragement to social evils like drugs, drinking etc.	45	2.67	1.98	24

	Increase in cheating and fraud	45	2.44	1.74	29
	Crime has increased	45	2.07	1.57	36
Employment	Job opportunities have increased	45	3.53	1.63	17
	Demand for traditional entertainment, art, craft etc.	45	4.51	0.51	7
	Tourism has benefited economy	45	3.56	1.27	16
	Dependency on tourism	45	1.96	1.59	39
	Increased in materialistic attitude of local people	45	2.24	1.60	32
	Tourism has commercialized local art	45	3.73	1.21	15
	Increased in value of land and houses	45	4.60	0.69	6
	Increased in price of general commodities and services	45	4.44	1.32	8
	Local people have shifted occupation from others to tourism related	45	2.38	1.66	30
	Seasonal tourism creates high risk under or unemployment	45	3.24	1.82	18
	Migration from village to tourist spots	45	1.20	0.84	46
	Migration of pop. From other parts of HP have increased	45	3.82	1.25	13
	Migration from other states have increased	45	3.78	1.46	14
Infrastructure	Road network have improved	45	2.67	1.69	25
	Means of communication have improved	45	3.02	0.78	20
	Development of basic amenities increased	45	4.69	0.47	3
	Public health (sanitation, hygiene) have improved	45	3.11	1.48	19
	Increase in recreational activities	45	2.16	1.71	34
	Redevelopment and maintenance of tourist spots	45	4.36	1.21	9
	Increase in traffic accidents	45	4.22	0.79	11
Environmental	Effort of tourism dept.	45	2.51	1.70	27
	Environmental awareness and its management	45	4.89	0.32	1
	Air pollution has increased	45	2.13	1.44	35
	Noise pollution has increased	45	2.91	1.77	22
	Exploitation and decline of water	45	2.18	1.80	33
	Degradation of natural vegetation /species	45	2.33	1.64	31
	Disruption of wild life	45	1.62	1.21	42
	Loss of open space	45	2.56	1.24	26
	Problems of sanitation and garbage dumping have worsened	45	2.98	1.41	21

Note: Responses were based on a five-point Likert scale

#### 4.4 Residents’ attitudes towards perceived impacts of tourism by components

On the basis of expert, the 47 indicators were divided into four major components on the nature of variable. As results of research, residents gave their highest level of agreement with the items that associated with infrastructure whereas they were least favourable with the items of their social-cultural.

Table 5: Tourism impacts perceived by local residents

Components	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Infrastructure	3.34	1.23	1
Employment	3.31	1.30	2
Environmental	2.70	1.35	3
Socio-cultural	2.64	1.20	4

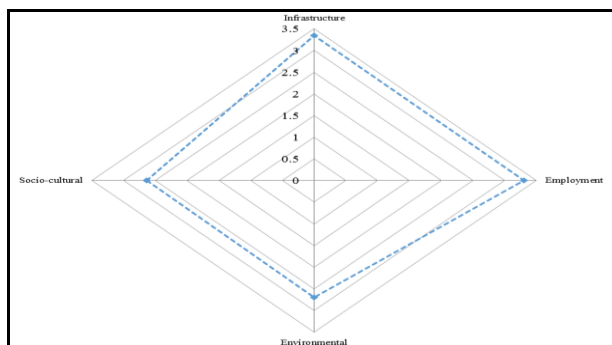


Fig 5: Radar diagram

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Using 47 tourism impacts items subjected to four components, this study has made an attempt to identify the resident’s perceptions towards tourism impacts in Nako. The findings of the study indicate that the locals seemed to be aware concerning environment and its management. They perceived the infrastructure aspects of tourism impacts most favorably. However, some negative item i.e. increases in traffic accidents was evident.

Thus, need to develop a good network of roads and safekeeping expertise to avoid landslides in great Himalaya. In addition, several indication of discomfort was shown, concerning with the price increased of land, houses, services and general commodities. Other negative impacts of tourism development that residents perceived favourable are commercialized local art, seasonal employment and migration from other areas i.e. Nepal, Bihar and Kashmir. Further, as an initial stage of tourism, host communities attitude were least favourable to any change in their customs and traditional values. Yet, as to combat drug use, alcoholic, criminality, and decay in the moral values, the researcher recommend that the existing border control be strengthened to keep drugs out. Simultaneously, there is need for continuous monitoring of tourists regarding drug abuse. The results might well be positive in the supportive level to development of tourism activities at destination. In addition to the result of currently impact items, ensure a lot of potentiality to tourism development. Therefore, implications for the study are that the national tourism policymakers should refine the existing

policy framework. Researchers recommend that government should take steps to manage the economic system properly at destination and should introduce price control mechanism on the basic staples, so that local can have access to, and benefits from the tourism facilities that are available in Nako. Knowledge of resident's perceptions of tourism impacts is essential to destination policy makers in developing tourism strategies/policies. The findings are relevant for destination policy makers to develop environmentally-friendly tourism and try to establish better conditions to improve socio-cultural and some economic tourism impacts in order to develop sustainable tourism, preventing the conflict between tourists, locals and the tourism industry

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