LOCAL PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS TOWARD TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF MORNİ HILLS (HARYANA)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the local people perceptions towards tourism of Morni Hills in Haryana. The study focused on residents in the vicinity of popular heritage attraction on the Morni Hills. According to a survey, at the respondents recognizes the positive and negative impacts of tourism towards the local people. Among the impacts the positive social impacts of tourism were most favourably perceived by the local people. The finding of semi-structured interviews with residents supported the survey results.

Keywords: Local People, Tourism impact, Perceptions, Morni.

Introduction

Although there is an increasing community understanding of the benefits, tourism brings to communities, there are still many who are yet to appreciate the significance of tourism, including policy makers and the general public. Because community support, Or lack of it, can have a significant effect on the success or failure of a tourist destination, awareness-raising activity about the significance of tourism play a crucial role in the future development of the industry. Tourism simultaneously portrayed as a destroyer of culture, undermining social norms and economic, degrading social structures, stripping communities of individuality, and as a saviour of the poor and disadvantaged, providing opportunities and economic benefits, promoting social exchange, and enhancing livelihoods.

“Multiplier effects” are often cited to capture secondary effects of tourism spending and show the wide range of sector in a community that may benefit from tourism. Community support is important for tourism as it is an activity that affects the entire community. Tourism businesses depend extensively on each others well as with other businesses, government and residents of the local community. Community decisions over tourism often involve debates between industry proponents touting tourism’s economic impacts (benefits) and detractors emphasizing tourism’s costs. Sound decisions rest on a balanced and objective assessment of both benefits and costs and an understanding of who benefits from tourism and who pays for it.
The present day tourism is not the same as the travels of the early period of human history. Tourism is the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal place of work and residence. Such a pleasure-seeking tourist is a traveller moving from place to place or visiting the same place repeatedly. Tourism includes all economic activities, which are organised to fulfil the needs of such travellers. Any travel for holidaying, business or professional trips become a part of tourism if it is temporary, undertaken voluntarily and does not aim at earning any livelihood the tourism is travel for recreational, leisure or business purpose. Tourism has different meaning in different languages and different regions and can be defined in different ways. The word ‘tourism’ was first used in 1811 and ‘tourist’ in 1840. Tourism word is composed of two words- ‘tour’ and suffix ‘ism’, the word tour is derived from the Greek, ‘Tornos’, meaning thereby ‘a circle; the movement around a central point, ‘ism’ is defined as the action of movement around a circle, i.e. the act of leaving and then returning to the original starting point.

Ziffer (1989) defined “Tourism involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspect (past and present) found in these areas”.

In today’s world, tourism is an important socio-economic activity. Tourism now recognised as an international industry, generating a number of social and economic benefits. It promotes national integration and international understanding, helps an improving infrastructure, creates employment opportunities and augments foreign exchange earnings. Thus, tourism is as much a part of social-economic development as any other related activity.

**A Case Study: Morni Hills**

Morni, the hill station in Haryana around 45 kilometres from Chandigarh, 35 kilometres from Panchkula as its district and is known for its Himalayan views, flora, and lakes. The name of Morni believed to derive from a queen who once ruled the area. The Morni Hills are offshoots of the Shivalik range of the Himalayas, which run in two parallel ranges. A hill divides the two lakes, but there is theorised to be a hidden channel linking them, as the water level of two lakes remains roughly the same. Morni locale looks upon the lakes as sacred.

Fig.

**Location of Morni Hills**
As Morni hills are relatively unexplored, they offer a rich opportunity for adventure seekers and explores. Trek to the lakes named Tikkar Tal, are sure to be a source of pleasure. Trek to Ghagger offers another chance to explore the unknown. Morni is a splendid green hillside dotted with flowering trees. The low hill tracts of Morni filled with neem, pepal, jamun, dhak, amaltas, jacaranda trees and yes, the delightful pine. The pine or ‘chill’ as the locals call it, crowns the hill tops and is one of the most delightful sights of the Morni Hills. Lakes of Morni afford an opportunity for wonderful camping and relaxing amidst nature. The flora and fauna are there to give company and serenity of the lake to bless you. When the flowering trees blossom, the hillsides are awash with colour, presenting a delightful sight. Morni is paradise for wildlife enthusiasts and birdwatchers with its teeming population of birds like quails, partridges, sand grouse and common doves as well as animals like jackals, hare, hyenas, Neel gai, sambhars and even leopards. Although some initiatives for the development of tourism in Morni have been taken by the Govt. Of Haryana, but the real tourist potential of Morni yet has not been explored. The Haryana government has also developed the hill resort to facilitate the tourists. The government has laid roads connecting Morni hills with state highway near Panchkula, to help visitors have a smooth ride to Morni Hills. Forest tourist huts, rest houses like Lal Munia and a PWD rest house have been built for the convenience of visitors and trekkers.

The Morni hills divide a lake into two and has hidden channel underneath which helps in maintaining the water level of the lakes the same, around the year. Both the lakes are considered very sacred. The inhabitants perform many religious ceremonies in these lakes. On the banks of a lake, is a small temple, which has a Trimurti idol belonging to the twelfth centuries. A few years ago, this place said to have had a Shiv Mandir also. The sceneries all the way to Morni is no less beautiful than Morni Hill. The climate in Morni Hills is salubrious. Above all, Morni hills are unpolluted and presents a wide range of attractions to all who love nature, birds, animals, lakes, gardens and hills to add fun from trekking, mountaineering and rock climbing to simple travel over mountains.

Main Aspects of Tourism

Economic Aspects

- Increases employment opportunities.
- Improves transport infrastructure.
- Increases opportunities for shopping.
- Creates new business opportunities.
- Contributes to income and standards of living.
- Economic (direct, indirect, induced spending) is widespread in the community.

Environmental Aspects

- Protection of selected natural environments or prevention of further ecological decline.
- Improvement of the area’s appearance (visual and aesthetic).
- Pollution (air, water, noise, solid waste and visual)
- Loss of natural landscape and agricultural lands to tourism development

Social and cultural Aspects

- Excessive drinking, alcoholism, gambling.
- Crime, drugs and prostitution.
- Negative changes in values and customs.
Unwanted lifestyle changes.
Displacement of residents of tourism development.
Exclusion of locals from natural resources

Review of Literature
A review of the literature of the present study is based on development and trends in tourism:

Christaller (1955): have applied ‘central place theory’ to the spatial system of tourism. His hypothesis were ‘Zones more distant from urban and industrial agglomerations offered more favourable conditions for tourism development’. Through his study, he tried to conclude that tourist’s keen to go on natural but pollution and congestion free area for comfort and that’s why tourism spots develop away from the urban or industrial areas. However, until the 1960s, there was not any direct research work on leisure and tourism. Tourism research in its early phase confined to western countries only. Researchers conducted mainly in U.S.A., Britain and Germany. The inclination of work was towards economic geography, but few studies have also been conducted at the direction of the spatial distribution of tourist destinations and seasonal impacts on tourists ‘motivations.

Roy (1970): focused on the importance of the valuable information network to ensure the steady flow of tourists to a destination. He explained the existing gaps in information arrangements which may cause dissatisfaction for a visitor.

Till (2000): The dominant themes in tourism research were tourism and economy, tourist, destination, physical attractions, impacts of tourism on society, culture and environment. In recent years, researchers are interested in finding out the solution and providing suggestions to control and minimise the negative impacts of tourism in all respects.

Sapna, L.K. (2012): emphasised the travelling and tourism has been an integral part of Indian culture & tradition. The tourism industry is the most vibrant tertiary activity and a multibillion industry in India. The potential of India’s tourism industry need to gauge in terms of its socio-economic magnitudes. This study, discusses how India is emerging as a popular tourist destination in the world, driven by the focus on innovation and creating value for tourists. It aimed to change the attitude and behaviour toward tourists by stressing on the aspect that a guest has been held in high esteem in India since ancient times. It also examines the impact of India’s economic growth on tourism, contributors to economic growth, the role of the tourism industry in India’s GDP, foreign versus domestic tourists. This study also explores that there has been a tremendous growth in tourism in India because of the policies of the government and support from all levels.

Sandeep, K. & Vinod, K. (2014): analysed tourism is a short term temporary movement of people from one place to far from where they work and reside, for leisure pleasure, recreation and business purpose. The tourist will not involve in any remunerative activity at the destination. It is the natural phenomenon the host and guest will come interact with each other at the destination, which will influence mainly on the host culture. At present tourism has become an area of social science analyses. Tourism is a multidisciplinary and become complex phenomena, which has been investigated from various perceptions of social science, including sociology. This study investigates the socio-cultural and sociological effect of contact between tourist from developed nations on the host of a developing country. The study is mainly conceptual in nature a review and based on the available literature on tourism impacts. The primary objective of the study is to highlight the positive and negative impacts of tourism on the basis of finding and researches available in the form of cultural impacts of tourism at a destination and how negative impacts can be minimized at the destination.

Singla M. (2014): focused on the community perception of the social-cultural and heritage tourism in particular and examine the extent to which they coincide with the tourism impact literature. This study not only deals with socio-cultural impacts perceived by residents as the impacts of tourism development, but also identify the effects of demographic variables on the resident attitudes towards tourism. Considering the relationship between
resident and tourism, the present study also tries to analyse this relationship in the context of what residents consider as important: community or personal issues. The study uses Rajasthan as an example to illustrate the multifarious impacts of tourism. Data obtained from the questionnaire and interviews are the main sources of inputs for analysis. However, the dominant views reaffirms that they represent an optimistic side of tourism.

Objectives, Data Source and Methodology

- To assess socio-economic and environmental aspects, perceptions of the local people towards tourism in Morni.
- To examine the perception of people towards tourism with respect to initiatives taken by Govt. for the promotion of tourism in Morni.

To achieve the above stated objectives the primary data have been collected from a sample of 36 residents drawn out of the population of Morni hills based on convenient sampling by interviews scheduled. The responses were noted down on a well-designed questionnaire comprising of ten questions. The data regarding various socio-economic indicators such as age, education, occupation, gender, etc. was also taken under consideration. Simple statistical tools such as averages, percentages were used. Cross-tabulation was used where ever need to arrive at the results.

Research Findings

With regards employment opportunities it has noted that 66.7 percent respondents agreed with the fact that tourism in Morni has given the boost to employment opportunities. However, surprisingly, the employment opportunities were mostly availed by daily wage earners. The labourer person had a more number of days to work than before, the time when the government has not recognised Morni as a tourist place. From fieldwork, it has found that 86.11 per cent respondents were literate, whereas only 14 per cent were illiterate. Among the literate respondent, 87.5 percent had a positive view regarding increased employment due to tourism.

Twenty-four respondents out of 36 i.e. 67 per cent replied that their business has expanded because of tourism. Among the shopkeepers, 8 out of 14 respondents i.e. 57.1 per cent responded that the employment opportunities have increased and their business ha expanded. Out of the sample, eight were students. All of them were of the view that employment and business has increased due to tourism. Even the non-resident have established their business in Morni.

A particular question pertaining to the improvement in infrastructure facilities by govt. was ask to seek the opinion of people whether there has been any improvement or not. Forty-six percent responded that they are satisfied with the government spending, i.e. investment made or cost incurred by the government on the infrastructure whereas 64 per cent were of the view that there is a lack of infrastructural investment. However, the real potential of Morni is yet unexplored which needs further investment by the government.

55.6 per cent of the respondents reported that tourism has contributed to the increased incidence of parent child conflict. The educated respondent (86 percent) from the sample relied that tourism has led to unwanted lifestyle changes. 40 per cent shopkeepers were of the view that the tourism has increased parent child conflict.

From the findings, it was concluded that 69.4 per cent respondents said that tourism has contributed towards moral degradation among local youth. While interviewing the respondents, the majority of them highlighted the negative impacts of tourism viz. Tourists especially the females are not properly dressed, they consume alcohol and drugs and create nuisance thereafter leading to a negative impact on the children.

With the tourism activities in Morni Hills, they're found increase in the crime rate. 52.8 per cent of the respondents emphasized that were insufficient police personnel to control crime. Among the respondent, 94.7 per cent educated respondents, 73.7 percent male and 36.8 per cent shopkeepers endorsed the viewpoint that tourism has posed a threat to the safety of women in the area.
From the analysis, it inferred that 6.11 per cent respondent agreed that tourism had led to environmental degradation of Morni. Among the 31 educated respondents, 28 have opined that there has been a loss of landscape and agricultural land due to tourism development. Seven out of fifteen shopkeepers stressed that tourism has increased traffic congestion. Analysing the data gender wise, the fact was further strengthened by 16 out of 23 males (68.2 percent) who responded positively that tourism has increased pollution in the area.

**Further suggestions**

The government should make more investment towards the promotion of tourism in Morni Hills. More police personnel should be deployed. Proper laws regarding the construction of tourist hotel/places should be implemented in the area. More business and job opportunities should be created for the local residents. There should be proper solid waste management and a proper check on property dealers.

**References**


Websites