

## **UNDERSTANDING RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL INDIA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**

Anurag Singh\*  
and  
Saurabh Gupta\*\*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Tourism is a dynamic industry which is continuously evolving in response to the changes in the micro and macro environment. Over the years, new forms of tourism have come up like medical tourism, sports tourism, eco tourism, rural tourism, etc. The development of rural tourism has come to be regarded as a potent tool to foster development of rural communities. It has led to extensive impacts on the local rural communities. It has been widely recognised that tourism development is a double-edged sword for host communities. Not only does it generate benefits, but it also imposes costs. By evaluating these benefits and costs, local residents develop their attitudes toward tourism. Numerous studies have examined how rural residents perceive such impacts in their communities. However, these research findings are often contradictory. As perceptions and attitudes of residents towards tourism are particularly important for the future success of the tourism industry, this study bases its focus on the perception of residents towards the rural tourism development in the central region of India. In the present study, six variables such as age, gender, education level, involvement in tourism, residential proximity and length of residence, were tested. It was found that none of these six variables had a significant difference existing in the perception of rural tourism impacts, both positive and negative.*

**Keywords:** Rural Tourism, Residents' Perception, Rural Development, Local Community Empowerment, Policy Implications.

---

\*Assistant Professor, Institute of Management Studies, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India, E-mail: anuragbhadauria@gmail.com, Mobile: 08004926090

\*\*Assistant Professor, Invertis Institute of Management Studies, Invertis University, Bareilly - 243 123, Uttar Pradesh, E-mail: gupta.kankane@gmail.com, Mobile: +91-9795848506

## Introduction

Tourism, at present, is one of the largest and fastest growing industries throughout the world. Tourism development has become an important instrument for the growth and development of underdeveloped regions like rural areas in various parts of the world. Strong empirical evidence of regional development due to tourism has compelled the policymakers to recognise the value of tourism industry, which not only helps in generating employment opportunities and ensuring better standard of living for the masses, but also leads to the overall development of the region. Hence, policymakers have started taking initiatives for the development of tourism so that it can contribute more significantly to the economic development of the country.

The successful performance of tourism development projects, to a great extent, is dependent upon the cooperation received from the local population. The people residing in the tourism project development areas are an important stakeholder in the tourism development. Their support is said to be a critical feature as it decides the success and failure of tourism project. Getting the support of local community for the tourism project depends on the residents' perceptions towards tourism and the manner in which they frame their outlooks towards it. If local community has positive perceptions, they may contribute to tourism projects through their participation in the planning, development, operations of tourist attractions, and by providing good hospitality. Local residents' role in influencing the tourism

development activities through working together with the destination management organisation is very important (Jamaludin, Othman & Awang, 2012). Moreover, Cottrell & Vaske (2006) argued that the perception of the local residents towards tourism was the most prominent factor in evaluating the current situation towards the destination due to the closeness of the area.

Their perception of the impact of tourism development on their standard of living largely determines the sustainability of the tourism projects. It is simply due to the fact that tourism development, just like any other economic activity, has its own pros and cons. While it has several benefits, at the same time, it leads to certain problems. As for instance, few researchers have found that regional societies face the adverse effects of tourism such as seasonal populace variations, unwanted business control, and increased social and economic problems related to water, energy, safety, pollution, traffic gridlocks, and price rise of necessary items, etc. (Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Millman & Pizam, 1988). Consequently, mere development of tourism in a certain area is not sufficient to judge that it has led to better quality of life for the residents. The residents' cooperation towards the development of tourism is thus greatly influenced by their perception of the costs and benefits associated with the tourism projects.

It has been argued that tourism development usually involves a trade-off between economic benefits and environmental or cultural costs, residents cope by downplaying the negative impacts based and emphasising the

economic gains to maintain satisfaction with their community (Dyer et al., 2007; Cavus and Tarrisevdi, 2003; Faulkner and Tideswell, 1997). Even after the adverse effects of tourist movement in the region, many times the local community supports the tourism activity as it enhances the economic prosperity, but sometimes opposition is also registered. Harrill (2004) highlights that residents receiving economic gains are the most supportive of the tourism development. Economic gains are most dominant in influencing the perception of residents towards tourism development.

In the last one decade, tourism has attracted the attention of Central and various State governments in India. The number of rural tourism development projects has slowly increased over the years. Unfortunately, their performance has been below the mark. There are a few successful examples of rural tourism development projects (Hodka in Kachchh of Gujarat and Kumbalangi in Ernakulam of Kerala) but majority of them have failed to live up to their expectations. Therefore, in this context, it becomes interesting to examine how far the rural tourism in India is supported by the local community. For the success of rural tourism in India, the support of local community is required. Hence, insights into the perception of local residents towards the rural tourism development projects can provide valuable information for the better management of these projects.

In view of the above discussion and statement, this study aims to assess the residents' support for rural tourism development in central region of India by enquiring the difference in

perception of local communities towards the rural tourism and finding the influence of socio economic issues on their perception.

### **Rural Tourism in India : A Snapshot**

The trends of industrialisation and development have led the people to live in urban centric lifestyle, which lets the populace to suffer from "urbanisation" syndrome. The treatment of urbanisation syndrome is "counter urbanisation", hence the interest of people is developing in rural areas. Seeking mental peace in culture, slow rural life and cooling natural environment are some of the important reasons of rural tourism attraction. Though the rural tourism in India is at its infancy, it holds the wide potential to attract tourists, who think to keep away from hustle bustle life of a city due to many reasons.

The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (GoI), stated in their document in year 2009, that promotion of rural tourism in the country will benefit millions of rural people as 74 per cent of the Indian population reside in seven million villages (Ministry of Tourism, GoI, 2009). The experts estimate that the promoters of rural tourism will be able to earn nearly ₹ 4,300 crore in coming time. Experts also opine that rural tourism has the capability to bridge the gap between Bharat and India.

The Ministry of Tourism has collaborated with UNDP to launch the Endogenous Tourism Project in the year 2004. The project aims to develop rural tourism by building and strengthening tourism livelihoods-linked

capacities of local communities. Development of rural tourism was planned through local institutions, which will develop, manage and control the infrastructure, local materials, crowd, waste, etc. The development of rural tourism is phased in stages. First to develop the local institution aimed to manage and control, then to step in the development of rural tourism.

The Government of India identified few circuits in rural India and promoted these circuits in "Visit India" campaign of the year 2009. The Indian travel industry has supported the project of Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Government of India (GoI), in a big way to promote rural tourism. The Indian travel industry offered a free homestay of up to one night and two days including breakfast, transportation and local sightseeing, as a value addition to the visitors of Indian itineraries. Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) members, publicised the rural tourism experiences of overseas tourist in the road shows organised abroad. The IATO members promoted and focused on few rural tourism spots like Hodka in Kachchh of Gujarat; Kumbalangi in Ernakulam of Kerala; Aranmula in Pathanamthitta of Kerala; Karaikudi (Chettinad) in Sivaganga of Tamil Nadu; Pochampalli in Nalgonda of Andhra Pradesh; Banawasi in Uttar Kannada of Karnataka; Pranpur in Ashok Nagar of Madhya Pradesh and Naggur in Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh.

After seeing the results from these tourist spots, the GoI initiated the scheme of financing

the facility requirements at rural tourist destinations. These initiatives were able to attract many overseas tourists to rural tourist destinations like Raghurajpur in Odisha, Lachen in Sikkim, Samode in Jaipur, Aranmula in Kerala and Pranpur in Madhya Pradesh (Kanjilal.Gour, 2009). Looking at the immense potential of rural tourism, it can be readily concluded that much remains to be done to harness this potential to add to the country's prosperity.

### Literature Review

Recently, the academicians worldwide have tried to study the perception of local community towards tourism and its influence on tourism industry. Though the number of studies which focus mainly on the perceptions and attitudes of local residents towards tourism in general and its impacts (Wall & Mathieson, 2006) is increasing, the results remain inconclusive.

Local residents' support for tourism development is necessary to ensure the commercial, socio-economical, cultural, physiological and political sustainability of the industry. The socio-economic status of the community's residents may influence the structural changes within the tourism industry occurring as a result of the ongoing development of rural tourism such as changes in the local economics (e.g., Manyara & Jones, 2007; Simpson, 2008), social changes (e.g., Bull & Lovell, 2007; Simpson, 2008), cultural changes (e.g., Lee, Kang, Long, & Reisinger, 2010; Nyaupane, Morais, & Dowler, 2006; Simpson, 2008), and environmental changes (e.g., Dyer, Gursoy,

Sharma, & Carter, 2007; Lee et al., 2010; Simpson, 2008).

Allport (1966) defined Attitude as "a state of mind of the individual towards a value" whereas McDougall & Munro (1987) explained it as "an enduring predisposition towards a particular aspect of one's environment." Researchers followed the knowledge of attitude revealed by Allport and McDougall & Munro (1987) found that local community's attitude for tourism are not the results of perception development for tourism impact, but the attitude develops due to interface of local community's perceptions with factors of attitude development (Lankford et al., 1994). The residents have shown the positive and strong attitude for future tourism development in their locality due to personal benefits (Allen et al., 1993, Ap, 1990 and 1992, Getz 1994, Gursoy et al., 2002, Jurowski et al., 1997) and regional benefits (Madrigal, 1995, Perdue et al., 1990, Pizam 1978 and Yoon et al., 1999) of tourist movement.

Factors that influence local residents' support for sustainable rural tourism development have been extensively studied by tourism scholars. These factors such as attitudes (Lai & Nepal, 2006; Lepp, 2008), residents' attachment (Nicholas et al., 2009), and involvement of tourism (Gursoy, Jurowski & Uysal, 2002; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011), may affect residents' support for sustainable rural tourism development. Moreover, earlier tourism research has critically examined the relationship between involvement and support for sustainable rural tourism development and its impact on

community socio-economic development. Tourism activity and development in the region is a great source of benefit for local community (Jafari, 2001). On the basis of benefits and loss, from tourist inflow in the region, local community develops perceptions for tourism. However, there is an evidence of a research conducted by Lankford et al. (1994), which advocates that the perception of local residents towards tourism is not due to perceived social, economic and cultural benefits or loss in the region.

The local residents of tourist destination have a perception that tourism activity is an economic development tool (Gursoy et al., 2002). Murphy (1985) found that residents' perception is affected by economic dependence, significance of area and resident-tourist interaction. The study of Haralambopoulos and Pizam (1996) revealed that local residents' dependence on tourism activity has strong perception for further tourism developments than those who are independent. Tosun (2002) has examined the comparative perceptions of different tourist terminuses. The research of Andereck and Vogt (2000) found that local residents have positive perception towards tourism as it contributes to local economy, elevates the quality of life and helps in developing the infrastructure. The perceptions for socio-cultural impacts on one specific site were inspected by Brunt and Courtney (1999) and Gu and Wong (2006) and they found that the residents had a positive perception for the tourist movement.

Belisle and Hoy (1980) found a positive

relationship between distance of residence from the central tourism zone and perceptions. The socio-economic variables were found to have slight association between residents' perceptions and development (Liu and Var 1986; Madrigal 1993; Pizam 1978). Majority of researches reveal that expectations of high financial gains and individual benefits have a positive relationship with perceptions for tourism (Lankford and Howard, 1994; Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996; Jurowski et al., 1997; Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Sirakaya et al., 2002).

On the other hand, few researches found the negative perception of local residents towards tourism (Allen et al., 1993). More specifically, research has shown that greater length of residency in the community (Liu and Var 1986; Madrigal 1993; Pizam 1978; Urn and Crompton 1987), heavy tourism concentration (Madrigal 1993; Pizam 1978), and native-born status (Canan and Hennessy 1989; Davis, Allen and Cosenza 1988; Urn and Crompton 1987) are the main reasons for negative perception of tourism. Smith and Kranninich (1998) studied the negative relationship between perceptions of tourism with tourism destination development. High tourist movement in the area produces displeasure among residents and it has relationship with transportation problem, corruption and price rise (Pearce, 1980). Heavy tourist inflow to the region has the relationship of perception with traditional culture loss (Perez and Nadal, 2005).

Several studies have assessed the perception of the local residents for tourism development with a focus on the extent to which these residents are involved in tourism (Gursoy et al., 2002; Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Kaltenborn et al., 2008; Nicholas et al., 2009). Residents' involvement is a critical factor in the development of rural tourism (Jones, 2005; Lepp, 2007). Earlier tourism studies provide the view that engaging the local residents in planning, management and decision-making can persuade the community of the need to integrate tourism into the local economy (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005; Simmons, 1994; Wager, 1995). Sebele (2010) indicated that the involvement of the community in tourism provides more opportunities for the local residents to benefit from tourism development.

It has been widely accepted that development of tourism is a beneficial activity for local public. However, on the basis of evaluation from the literature, it can also be said that tourism activity has not been accepted by many local residents due to socio-cultural loss. Taking the clue from the literature and finding the proper gap of the region and the variables, this study tries to focus on the objectives mentioned in methodology section.

### **Methodology**

**Problem Statement of Sites under Study:** The State of Madhya Pradesh (MP) is known as "The Heart of India" due to its location in central India. MP is known worldwide for its cultural legacy,

customs, numerous historical monuments, beautiful ancient temples, stupas, forts and palaces. In the last one decade, the government has taken several initiatives for the promotion of tourism. The State government has endorsed the

USP of many rural sites to attract tourists through integrated promotion communication. Table 1 depicts few of the promoted rural tourism sites along with their USP.

**Table 1: The Rural Tourism Sites and Their USP**

S.No.	Name of the Village	USP
1	Chaugan, Mandla district	Lantana Craft
2	Pranpur, Ashoknagar district	Chanderi Sarees
3	Orchha, Tikamgarh district	Historical and Adventure (River rafting)
4	Amla, Ujjain district	Historical
5	Village Devpur, Vidisha district	Spiritual heritage
6	Seondha, Datia district	Craft on stone and wood
7	Budhni, Sehore district	Historical, Spiritual and Craft on Woodwork

Source: Report of AC Nielsen ORG-MARG on Evaluation and Impact study of Rural Tourism sites.

Out of the above-mentioned seven sites, the MP government initiated the work to develop four sites, which were completed during the years 2004-2007. The information related to the development of these rural tourism sites and the status are summarised in Table 2. Despite the

planning and the initiatives of the MP government to develop these sites, only one site could come up in a moderate way to attract the domestic or international tourists (AC Nielsen ORG-Marg, 2011).

**Table 2: Rural Tourism Projects**

S. No.	Location	Project Name	Year of Completion	Overall Status
1	Pranpur village, Ashok Nagar district	Development of rural tourism project village Pranpur	2004-2005	Disappointing
2	Orchha village, Tikamgarh district	Infrastructure Development Rural tourism project in Orchha village, Tikamgarh district	2005-2006	Moderately Successful
3	Amla village, Ujjain district	Development of rural tourism in Amla village, Ujjain district	2006-2007	Disappointing
4	Chaugan village, Mandla district	Activity/Craft: Block Printing Development of rural tourism project, Chaugan village, Mandla district	2004-2005	Disappointing

Source: Report of AC Nielsen ORG-MARG on Evaluation and Impact study of Rural Tourism sites.



There are many reasons for the disappointing results of rural tourism destinations of MP. Bajaj N (2014) avowed that due to unwilling support of local community with a reason that tourist movement in the area will pollute their culture and environment, the rural tourism destinations of MP could not develop. Whereas Chaudhary (2016) stated that, even after proper local community support, the rural tourism sites of MP could not come up properly. The findings of these two researches are contradictory in nature, which never lets the researcher to conclude with a suitable reason for the disappointing performance of rural destinations of MP. The unclear statements are the real problem, which will never motivate the stakeholders to work on the proper reasons of rural tourist destination failure. Therefore, this study aims at the below mentioned objectives.

### Objectives

- I. To enquire about the difference in perception of local communities towards the rural tourism development on select indicators.
- II. To examine whether the socio-economic variables influence the perception of residents or not.

**Hypotheses:** The difference in perception of local communities towards the rural tourism development will be assessed by different demographic variables such as gender, age and education level. Further, this study also examines the role of socio-economic variables such as

length of residence, residential proximity to the tourist sites and local communities' involvement in influencing the perception of residents towards rural tourism development.

To study the considered objectives of this study, following hypotheses have been formulated and tested:

- H1a: Gender is a significant factor influencing the perception towards positive impact of rural tourism development.
- H1b: Gender is a significant factor influencing the perception towards negative impact of rural tourism development.
- H2a: Age is a significant factor influencing the perception towards positive impact of rural tourism development.
- H2b: Age is a significant factor influencing the perception towards negative impact of rural tourism development.
- H3a: Education level is a significant factor influencing the perception towards positive impact of rural tourism development.
- H3b: Education level is a significant factor influencing the perception towards negative impact of rural tourism development.
- H4a: Length of residence is a significant factor influencing the perception towards positive impact of rural tourism development.



- H4b: Length of residence is a significant factor influencing the perception towards negative impact of rural tourism development.
- a) 18 years or above  
b) Living in the area continuously for one year
- H5a: Residential proximity is a significant factor influencing the perception towards positive impact of rural tourism development.
- H5b: Residential proximity is a significant factor influencing the perception towards negative impact of rural tourism development.
- H6a: Involvement in tourism is a significant factor influencing the perception towards positive impact of rural tourism development.
- H6b: Involvement in tourism is a significant factor influencing the perception towards negative impact of rural tourism development.

**Survey Method and Sample:** It is an empirical study based on primary data. The data have been collected from the villages located within a radius of 10 km where rural tourism projects (in districts Ashok Nagar and Tikamgarh) were conceptualised and implemented. The data were collected during June- July 2016. A total of 120 respondents were included in the final study. These respondents were selected by stratified random sampling. Two conditions were formulated for selection of participants in this study. The respondent must be:

The selected respondents were asked to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire was subdivided into two sections. Section one concerned with the basic information of the respondents. These questions were related to the socio-economic status of the respondents. The second section contained 20 statements related to perceived positive and negative impacts of the rural tourism project implemented in their area. The respondents were asked to mark their degree of agreement with the statements on the five-point Likert scale where 1 stands for 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 implies 'Strongly Agree'.

### Data Analysis and Discussion

This section reports the results of data analysis. Before the results of hypotheses testing are discussed, it is pertinent to present a brief description of the sample included in the final study. To begin with, the distribution of respondents by gender revealed that males accounted for 58 per cent of the total respondents, the rest being female. The respondents were classified into four age categories. The first category of age group represents 10 respondents. Likewise, there were 42 respondents in 26-40 age group, 48 in 41-60 age group, and 20 in the age group 60 and above. The socio-economic status of the respondents and other variables of the study are summarised in Table 3 as detailed below:

**Table 3: Summary of Respondents**

Items	Description	Frequency
Gender	Male	75
	Female	45
Age	18-25	10
	26-40	42
	41-60	48
	Above 60	20
Educational Status	Up to High School	25
	Senior High School	32
	Graduate	35
	Postgraduate or above	28
Length of Residence	Up to 1 year	8
	1 to 3 years	22
	3 years and above	90
Residential Proximity	Within 1 km	18
	1 to 3 km	75
	3 and above	27
Involvement in Tourism	High	77
	Low	43

The key findings regarding the socio-economic status of respondents are as follows:

- Majority of the respondents were educated up to the graduation and above.
- Respondents living in the area for more than three years constituted the largest segment followed by one to three years.
- Close to 63 per cent of the respondents resided in the radius of one to three km from the tourism site.
- Similarly, 64 per cent of the respondents reported high involvement in the tourism projects.

**Scale Reliability:** The reliability of scale is an important issue in the social science researches. Cronbach alpha measures the reliability of scale used to measure the construct. It usually takes any value between 0 to 1. The higher the value, the better the scale. Table 4 contains the information regarding the scale and items used in the study. The value of alpha for positive impact (11 items) is 0.843 and for negative impact (9 items) is 0.791. The item to total correlation is also quite good. The highest correlation of 0.86 was found for the perceived negative impact, and the lowest was for the positive impact.

**Table 4: Summary Table**

Variable	Items	Mean	Items to Total Correlation	Alfa if Items Deleted
Perceived rural tourism positive impact	Increase economic development	3.52	.456	<b>0.843</b>
	Create additional tax revenues	4.23	.501	
	Create local employment opportunities	2.56	.534	
	Increase local residents' income	3.04	.676	
	Improve the area's appearance	4.43	.745	
	Promote cultural heritage protection	3.98	.538	
	Enrich cultural and social life	2.43	.832	
	Improve the life quality	3.45	.743	
	Improve infrastructure facilities	4.12	.601	
	Preserve the natural environment	3.21	.564	
Improve the ecological system	3.34	.485		
Perceived rural tourism negative impact	Increase price of land and housing	4.43	.764	<b>0.791</b>
	Increase the cost of living	4.54	.876	
	Cause local traffic congestion	2.98	.596	
	Increase illegal entertainment	4.76	.790	
	Destroy traditional cultural custom	4.11	.686	
	Increase environmental pollution	4.22	.543	
	Disturb wildlife living environment	3.83	.754	
	Degrade natural environment	4.15	.665	
Destroy the local ecosystem	3.99	.863		

**Results of Hypotheses Testing:** Independent sample 't' Test has been used to test the hypotheses. The family of t tests (one sample t-test, independent samples t-test, and dependent samples t-test) are all parametric tests used at the bivariate level and all compare means

between two groups. The independent samples t-test compares the average values of a characteristic measured on a continuous scale between two sub-groups of a categorical variable (Lee, 2013). The results of the test have been presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: T-test**

Variable	Hypotheses	Perception of Rural Tourism Impact	t	Sig.	Means Difference	Accept/Reject
Gender	H1a	Positive	-3.531	.001**	-0.68	Accept
	H1b	Negative	-3.174	.002**	-0.35	Accept
Age	H2a	Positive	-2.487	.015*	-0.78	Accept
	H2b	Negative	-1.887	.063	-0.03	Reject
Education Level	H3a	Positive	-1.567	.121	0.24	Reject
	H3b	Negative	-2.945	.004**	-0.50	Accept
Length of Residence	H4a	Positive	-1.614	.110	0.24	Reject
	H4b	Negative	-2.325	.023*	-0.75	Accept
Residential Proximity	H5a	Positive	-3.188	.002**	0.58	Accept
	H5b	Negative	-2.287	.025*	-0.02	Accept
Involvement in Tourism	H6a	Positive	-2.519	.014*	0.42	Accept
	H6b	Negative	0.832	.408	-0.27	Reject

Note: \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01.

In order to apply the test, all the respondents were categorised into two classes along with the test variables. Since the variables, gender and involvement in tourism, had only two classes originally, there was no need to reclassify the cases. The variable age was classified into two categories—up to 40 and 41 and above. On the basis of educational status, all the respondents were put into two groups—one having education up to senior high school and the other group included those studied up to graduation and higher. The length of residence had two classes—first being up to one year and the second being one year and more. Residential proximity was also reclassified as up to one km and more than one km.

First, we discuss the results related to the influence of demographic variables namely gender and age and on the perception towards positive and negative impacts of rural tourism projects. The test results led to the acceptance of the first hypothesis that gender is a significant factor influencing the perception towards rural tourism development at one per cent level of significance. Both the sub-hypotheses were supported. Thus, it can be inferred that there is empirical evidence for the fact that gender plays an important role in influencing the perception towards positive and negative impacts of the rural tourism development projects. This finding may be attributed to the fact that though these projects benefit or harm the local population, it is the fairer sex that is more significantly affected

by the outcomes of the projects. Also, gender makes the same benefit, bane for other.

Slowly but surely, the studies are showing that tourism in general and rural tourism in particular, has emerged as an important tool for women empowerment. International agencies like UNWTO and WTTC believe that tourism must respond to the needs of the women and make every attempt to ameliorate their condition. The positive and negative impacts of tourism are profound for females in comparison to males due to several factors (Mishra, 2014). First, it is the females who look after the household after the migration of male members in search for jobs to towns and cities in the backward areas. The State of Madhya Pradesh is also a backward region. Hence, if the rural tourism projects provide some livelihood support to women, then it is of much importance. As a result, they are more likely to develop a positive perception of the rural tourism projects than males. Second, there are spill-over effects of the rural tourism projects. It brings new ideas, technology and know-how to the interior areas. Also, infrastructure is improved. Women, who are mostly engaged in domestic work and find little connect with the outside world, are immensely affected by these developments. Hence, the gender difference in perception towards rural project development is quite obvious and in line with the majority of available literature (Mishra, 2014; Petrzalka et al., 2005).

The second hypothesis, i.e. age, a significant factor influencing the perception towards rural tourism development, has been

accepted from positive impact perspective, but it was not accepted from negative impact side. This is an interesting finding in the context of underdeveloped tourist areas.

It might be due to the fact that while positive pay-offs are different for different age groups, negative impacts are more or less perceived similarly by different age groups. As for instance, the survey revealed that rural population in the 26 to 40 year age group consider that the development of rural tourism will lead to the development of the rural people and will increase the job opportunities. Since, the older age groups require different benefits than the younger age groups their perception varies. The older age groups expect that basic infrastructure, especially transportation, should improve and medical facilities should develop. On the other hand, the people in the younger age groups give priority to the creation of jobs and economic benefits (Gupta, & Singh, 2015). This fact was reflected in the acceptance of difference in the perception towards positive impacts of rural tourism projects. Contrary to it, the side-effects of tourism projects like pollution, increase in living cost, etc., are viewed along similar lines by younger as well as older age groups which was confirmed by the rejection of the second sub-hypothesis.

Now, we turn our attention towards the influence of socio-economic variables on the perception residents have towards positive and negative impacts of the rural tourism projects. Education is considered as a very significant variable in social science researches. It is known

to influence attitude towards various issues ranging from governance to consumer behaviour. That is why, this study investigated the difference in perception towards the positive and negative impacts of rural tourism projects. The t-test indicated that educational level was having a significant influence on the perception of positive impacts, but not on the negative impacts. Thus, this result is similar to the findings related to the influence of age.

Difference in perception towards positive impact of rural tourism projects by education is in line with majority of the earlier studies (Gupta, & Singh, 2015). It can be mainly attributed to the fact that education influences the way people evaluate the outcomes of the events they encounter. A person educated up to high school level has much to do with the job opportunities generated due to the developed tourism projects in comparison to a person having postgraduate degree. Usually, the rural tourism projects benefit more those who are educated up to senior high school, as compared to those having college degrees. It is because the jobs created are not fit for people with higher educational qualifications. Similarly, most of the economic opportunities created in tourism projects are in the form of self-employment. It is well documented that persons with higher education are less inclined to enter self-employment in developing countries. Consequently, people with low educational achievements have benefited more and hence, are more likely to have a positive perception of the rural tourism development projects in comparison to those with higher level of educational attainment (Wang and Pfister, 2008).

Next, we analysed the length of residence as having influence on the perception towards impact of rural tourism projects. The results of t-test led to the conclusion that length of residence was not governing the perception of positive impact, but of negative impact. Amongst all the socio-economic variables, it was the only one that was influencing the negative perception but not positive. This finding can be explained by the argument that usually, it takes less time to understand the benefits, while negative impacts are experienced over a long period of time. As for instance, development of rural tourism projects results in improved infrastructure such as transportation, communication, and financial services, etc., which are immediately noticeable. This is truer if the project has been executed in a backward area. On the contrary, the ill-effects such as pollution and cultural erosion take over a long period of time, and therefore, it takes time to experience them (Sheldon and Var, 1984). Hence, the finding is not surprising.

It was found that residential proximity was influencing both positive as well as negative perception towards rural tourism projects. Since both positive and negative impacts are experienced more strongly by the residents for the closer distance than those living far away from the project site. Hence, the findings can be readily justified. Last but not the least, the test results indicated that involvement in tourism was governing the positive perception, but not the negative one. Nzama (2008) argued that there is a strong positive relationship between the local residents' involvement in tourism development and their perceptions towards an increase in

tourism development. When the local residents are involved in the rural tourism project development, it helps in creating an enabling environment for development of various tourism products. The cost and benefits can be reliably estimated and appropriate steps can be undertaken. Likewise, warm hospitality and tourist-friendly local population have been identified as critical success factors in tourism industry. The possible reason may be traced to the fact that in most of the cases direct involvement in tourism projects is must to garner its benefits. However, the negative impacts have no such condition. They are experienced by all, say rise in the pollution level in the vicinity of the project site.

### **Conclusion and Implication**

New forms of tourism are emerging and rural tourism is one of them. Conventionally, the types of tourism prevalent in India were neither urban nor rural area-centric, but due to sluggish growth of tourism and NGO-initiated development projects, which were neither able to enhance the local economy nor able to improve rural living standard of rural communities, the Government of India envisioned the concept of rural tourism which was mentioned in the National Policy Draft of the year 2002. The concept was well recognised by corporate sector and many initiatives for this sector were undertaken. India being a country of villages, rural tourism is viewed by many as a tool for local and rural development. The Government of India has implemented many rural tourism development projects. While some of them have promoted development of the concerned area, many others have failed. However, it can be said

that rural communities in India can witness significant economic, social and cultural transformations due to the promotion of rural tourism in their region.

The evidences suggest that a community that plans and uses tourism as an alternative means of strengthening its economic development must develop sustainable tourism to meet the needs and demands of its residents (Puczko & Rätz, 2000). The development of rural tourism is difficult without the support and participation of the local residents (Fallon & Kriwoken, 2003; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009). Thus, the support and involvement of residents is a critical factor for sustainable rural tourism development. Therefore, identifying the attitudes and perception of local residents helps in development and implementation of the rural development initiative and programmes (Zhang et al., 2006).

Hence, in order to map the residents' perception towards the positive and negative impact of these rural tourism projects, this study used a sample from Madhya Pradesh. The study clearly demonstrated that the positive impacts are significantly influenced by gender, age, residential proximity, length of stay and involvement in tourism. The perception towards negative impacts is significantly influenced by gender, education level and residential proximity. These findings have implications for the planners of these projects. They must take into account all these factors while planning for such projects in the rural areas, especially in the Hindi heartland. Furthermore, involvement of local people may



improve the success rate of these projects. These findings make a significant and important contribution to the scarce literature on rural tourism development, particularly in the context of India. The most important contribution of our research is to highlight the six factors (gender, age, education level, length of residence, residential proximity and involvement in tourism) influencing the perception towards positive and negative impacts of rural tourism development.

Though it was outside the scope of the study to explore the reasons behind the failure of rural tourism projects, it can be readily concluded that most of the rural tourism projects failed to take into account that demographic and socio-economic environment prevalent in the project area is a prime influencer of the performance of the implemented projects. The projects were implemented in an alien manner. Perhaps, the failure of the authorities concerned to take due care of the interest of women, the expectations of various age groups and those living near to the project site resulted in the non-cooperative behaviour and negative to neutral attitude towards the projects. Since the implemented rural projects did not adequately address the economic needs of the local residents, it led to the less involvement. Since meeting the livelihood requirements of the local rural population is a key goal of rural tourism, the neglect of this aspect greatly reduced the chances of the success of these projects. This has to be understood in the light of the fact that central

India is economically backward. Further, little attempts were made to address the concerns of local residents regarding the ill-effects of such projects. All these factors are accountable for the sub-optimal performance of rural tourism projects.

It is also important to note the limitations of the study. The size of the sample was only 120 that was not quite large and the samples were collected from only two rural tourism sites in the State of Madhya Pradesh. So it is not possible to generalise the results to all rural tourism sites of India as well as many regions of central India. Nevertheless, we could find out whether gender, age, education level, length of residence, residential proximity and involvement in tourism are significant factors influencing the perception towards positive and negative impacts of rural tourism development. But, we could not find out to what extent these factors are influencing the perception towards rural tourism development. This was outside the scope of the study. All these limitations provide scope for further research. Therefore, future research could be undertaken to investigate the causes of this phenomenon. Also, it can be examined whether there exists differences in perception of local residents due to various psychological factors such as attitude, value and personality. Further, the role of demographic factors and other socio-economic factors can be explored. These are some of the questions and issues to be explored in the future research.

### References

- Aas, C., Ladkin, A. & Fletcher, J. (2005), Stakeholder Collaboration and Heritage Management, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32, 28-48.
- AC Nielsen ORG-MARG (2011), Evaluation and Impact Study of Rural Tourism Sites, Retrieved on 28/09/2015 from [http://www.tourism.gov.in/uploaded/tender/0208201104\\_43093.pdf](http://www.tourism.gov.in/uploaded/tender/0208201104_43093.pdf)
- Allen, L.R., Hafer, H.R., Long, P.T. and Perdue, R.R. (1993), "Rural Residents' Attitudes Toward Recreation and Tourism Development", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 27-33.
- Allen, L.R., Long, P.T., Perdue, R.R. and Kieselbach, S. (1988), "The Impact of Tourism Development on Residents' Perceptions of Community Life", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 16-21.
- Allport, G. (1966), Attitudes in the History of Social Psychology. In: N. Warren; M. Jahoda, (Eds), Attitudes, Middlesex, England: Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Andereck, K. L., & Vogt, C. A. (2000), The Relationship between Residents' Attitudes Toward Tourism and Tourism Development Options, *Journal of Travel Research*, 39, 27-36.
- Ap, J. (1990), "Residents' Perceptions to Research on the Social Impacts of Tourism", *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 19, pp. 665-90.
- Brunt, P. and Courtney, P. (1999), Host Perceptions of Socio-cultural Impacts, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26 (3), 493-515.
- Bull, C., & Lovell, J. (2007), The Impact of Hosting Major Sporting Events on Local Residents: An Analysis of the Views and Perceptions of Canterbury Residents in Relation to the Tour de France 2007, *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 12, 229-248.
- Canan, P., and M. Hennessy (1989), The Growth Machine, Tourism and the Selling of Culture, *Sociological Perspectives*, 32:227-243.
- Cottrell, S.P. & Vaske, J.J. (2006), A Framework for Monitoring and Modeling Sustainable Tourism, *Review of Tourism Research*, 4(4), 74-84.
- Davis, D., J. Allen, and R. M. Cosenza (1988), Segmenting Local Residents by Their Attitudes, Interests, and Opinions Toward Tourism, *Journal of Travel Research*, 27(2): 2-8.
- Dyer, P., Gursoy, D., Sharma, B., & Carter, J. (2007), Structural Modeling of Residents' Perceptions of Tourism and Associated Development on the Sunshine Coast, Australia, *Tourism Management*, 28, 409-422.
- Fallon, L. D., & Kriwoken, L. K. (2003), Community Involvement in Tourism Infrastructure: The Case of the Strahan Visitor Centre, Tasmania, *Tourism Management*, 24, 289-308.
- Gartner, W.C. (2005), A Perspective on Rural Tourism Development, *Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy* 35 (1):33-42.
- Getz, Donald. (1994), Residents' Attitudes Towards Tourism: A Longitudinal Study of Spey Valley, Scotland. *Tourism Management* 15, 4: 247- 58.
- Gu, M. and P. P. Wong (2006), "Residents' Perception of Tourism Impacts: A Case Study of Home Stay Operators in Dachangshan Dao, North-East China", *Tourism Geographies*, 8(3): 253-273.

- Gupta, S., & Singh, S. C. (2013), Study of Inter Linkages of Tourism Sector: Empirical Evidences from SAARC & ASEAN Countries, *JOHAR*, 8(1), 68.
- Gursoy, D. and D.G. Rutherford (2004), "Host Attitudes Toward Tourism: An Improved Structural Model", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(3): 495-516.
- Gursoy, D., & Kendall, K.W. (2006), Hosting Mega Events: Modeling Locals Support, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(3), 603-623.
- Gupta, S., & Singh, A. (2015), "Determinants of Tourism Destination Competitiveness: A Case of Bundelkhand, India", *International Journal of Management Research*, Vol. 6, No. 2: 47-62.
- Gursoy, D., Jurovski, C., & Uysal, M. (2002), Resident Attitudes: A Structural Modeling Approach, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29(1), 79-105.
- Haralambopoulos, N. and Pizam A. (1996), Perceived Impacts of Tourism: The Case of Samos, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23, 503-526
- Harrill, R. (2004), "Residents' Attitudes Toward Tourism Development: A Literature Review with Implications for Tourism Planning", *Journal of Planning Literature*, 18 (3): 251-266.
- Jamaludin, M., Othman, N., & Awang, A. R. (2012), Community-based Homestay Programme: A Personal Experience, *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 42, 451-459.
- Jones, S. (2005), Community-based Ecotourism: The Significance of Social Capital, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32(2), 303-324.
- Jurovski, C., Uysal, M. and Williams, D.R. (1997), "A Theoretical Analysis of Host Community Resident Reactions to Tourism", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. XXXVI No. 2, pp. 3-11.
- Kaltenborn, B. P., Andersen, O., Nellemann, C., Bjerke, T., & Thrane, C. (2008), Resident Attitudes Towards Mountain Second-home Tourism Development in Norway: The Effects of Environmental Attitudes, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 16(6), 664-680.
- Kanjilal. Gour, (2009), Rural Tourism - A Niche Tourism Segment in Indian Tourism Scene, retrieved from <http://www.travelbizmonitor.com/Guest-Column/rural-tourism—a-niche-tourism-segment-in-indian-tourism-scene-by-gour-kanjilal-ex-dy-dir-gen—regional-dir-ministry-of-tourism-6413> on dated 25/9/2015.
- Lai, P. H., & Nepal, S. K. (2006). Local Perspectives of Ecotourism Development in Tawushan Nature Reserve, Taiwan, *Tourism Management*, 27(6), 1117-1129.
- Lankford, S. (1994), "Attitudes and Perceptions Toward Tourism and Rural Regional Development", *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 33 No. 4, pp. 35-43.
- Lee, C. K., Kang, S. K., Long, P., & Reisinger, Y. (2010). Residents' Perceptions of Casino Impacts: A Comparative Study, *Tourism Management*, 31(2), 189-201.
- Lepp, A. (2007), Residents' Attitudes Towards Tourism in Bigodi Village, Uganda, *Tourism Management*, 28, 876-885.
- Lepp, A. (2008). Attitudes Towards Initial Tourism Development in a Community with No Prior Tourism Experience: The Case of Bigodi, Uganda, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 16(1), 5-22.

Liu, J. C., and T. Var 1986 Resident Attitudes Toward Tourism Impacts in Hawaii, *Annals of Tourism Research* 13:193-214.

MacDonald. Mott, (2007) Evaluation Study of Rural Tourism Scheme, retrieved on 28/09/2015 from <http://dev01.incredibleindia.org/images/docs/trade-pdf/surveys-and-studies/study-reports-on-evaluation-of-plan-schemes/Evaluation%20Study%20on%20Rural%20Tourism%20Scheme,%202007.pdf>

Madriral, R. (1995). "Residents' Perceptions and the Role of Government," *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22 (1):86-102.

Madriral, R. (1993). A Tale of Tourism in Two Cities, *Annals of Tourism Research* 20:336-353.

Manyara, G., & Jones, E. (2007). Community-based Tourism Enterprises Development in Kenya: An Exploration of Their Potential as Avenues of Poverty Reduction, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 15, 628-644.

Mathieson, A., & Wall, G. (1982) *Tourism: Economic, Physical and Social Impacts*, London: Longman.

McDougall, G. H., & Munro, H. (1987), *Scaling and Attitude Measurement in Tourism and Travel Research*, 87-100.

Milman, Ady, and Abraham Pizam. (1988), Social Impacts of Tourism in Central Florida, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15, 2: 191-204.

Ministry of Tourism, Gol, 2009

Murphy, P. E. (1985) *Tourism: A Community Approach*, New York: Routledge.

Nicholas, L., Thapa, B., & Ko, Y. (2009). Residents' Perspectives of a World Heritage Site: The Pitons Management Area, St. Lucia, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36(3), 390-412.

Nunkoo, R., & Ramkissoon, H. (2011), Developing a Community Support Model for Tourism, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(3), 964-988.

Nyaupane, G. P., Morais, D. B., & Dowler, L. (2006), The Role of Community Involvement and Number/Type of Visitors on Tourism Impacts: A Controlled Comparison of Annapurna, Nepal and Northwest Yunnan, China, *Tourism Management*, 27(6), 1373-1385.

Nzama, A.T. (2008). Socio-cultural Impacts of Tourism on the Rural Areas within the world heritage sites- the Case of Kwa Zulu Natal, South Africa, *South Asian Journal of tourism and Heritage*, 1(1), 1-8.

Perdue, R. R., Long, P. T., & Allen, L. (1990), Resident Support for Tourism Development, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17 (4), 586-599.

Perez, E.A. and Nadal, J.R. (2005), Host Community Perceptions: A Cluster Analysis, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32 (4), 925 - 941.

Pizam, A. (1978), Tourism's Impacts: The Social Costs of the Destination Community as Perceived by Its Residents, *Journal of Travel Research*, 16, 8-12.

Puczko, L., & Rätz, T. (2000), Tourist and Resident Perceptions of the Physical Impacts of Tourism at Lake Balaton, Hungary: Issues for Sustainable Tourism Management, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 8(6), 458-478.

Sebele, L. S. (2010), Community-based Tourism Ventures, Benefits and Challenges: Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust, Central District, Botswana, *Tourism Management*, 31, 136-146.

- Simmons, D. G. (1994), Community Participation in Tourism Planning, *Tourism Management*, 15, 98-108.
- Simpson, M. C. (2008), Community Benefit Tourism Initiatives: A Conceptual Oxymoron? *Tourism Management*, 29, 1-18.
- Sirakaya, E., Teye, V., & Sonmez, S. (2002), Understanding Residents' Support for Tourism Development in the Central Region of Ghana, *Journal of Travel Research*, 40, 151-155.
- Smith, M., & Krannich, R. (1998), Tourism Dependence and Residents' Attitudes, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25 (4), 783-801.
- Tosun, C. (2002), Host Perceptions of Impacts: A Comparative Tourism Study, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (1), 231-253.
- Urn, S., and J. L. Crompton (1987), Measuring Resident's Attachment Levels in a Host Community, *Journal of Travel Research*, 25(3):27-29.
- Wager, J. (1995), Developing a Strategy for the Angkor World Heritage Site, *Tourism Management*, 16, 515-523.
- Wall, G. and A. Mathieson (2006), *Tourism: Change, Impacts and Opportunities*, Pearson Prentice Hall, Essex.
- Yoon Y., Chen J., Gürsoy D., (1999), "An Investigation of the Relationship between Tourism Impacts and Host Communities' Characteristics", *Anatolia*, 10 (1): 29-44.
- Zhang, J., Inbakaran, R.J., & Jackson, M. (2006), Understanding Community Attitudes Towards Tourism and Host-guest Interaction in the Urban-rural Border Region, *Tourism Geographies*, 8(2), 182-204.