



A Study on Tourist Perception and Level of Satisfaction

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Abstract

Tourism activities in the Sikkim have started after the merger of the state with the Indian Union. The tourism industry in the Sikkim is in its infancy stage. The main of this research was to find out the tourist satisfaction with regard to the quality of the facilities and services provided in Sikkim. Both primary and secondary data has been used to get information about the status of rural tourism Sikkim. Primary data was collected through field survey and personal observation. Secondary data was collected through the research paper, government report and web sources. Data has been analyzed by using various methods and techniques and presented in the form of map works, diagrams, pie charts, etc. From the analysis of data, it was found that the majority of tourists are satisfied with the behavior of the host population but the services provided over there are not up to the mark.

Keywords: Tourism, Sikkim, Perception, Satisfaction.

Introduction

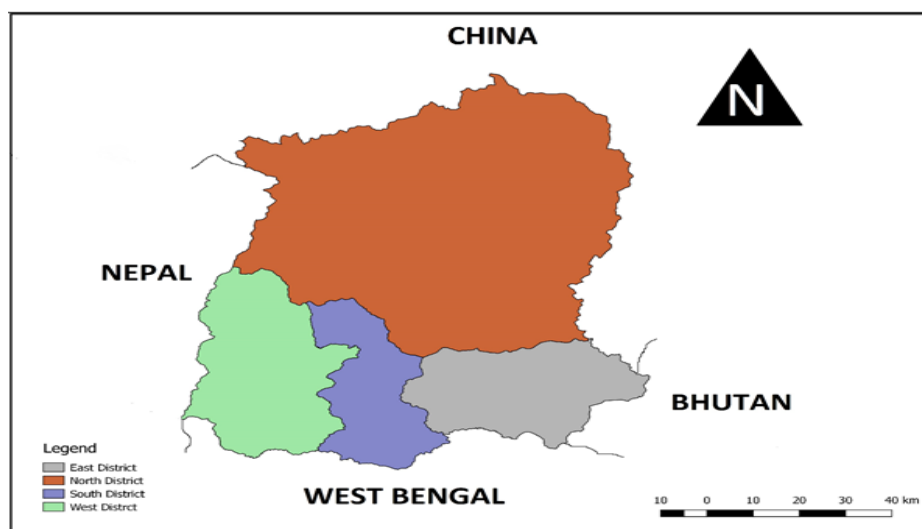
Tourism has been defined as the “activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside of their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes” (essays, 2017). Tourism is considered to be one of the global industries which has a higher growth rate compared to other sectors of economy. Tourism is not only a sector for growing economy of a country but is promoted by a region to balance the inequality of economic development by providing employment. According to WTO, 2013 almost 4.7 million jobs were created across the world due to tourism activity (Gnanapala & Sandaruwani, 2016). Tourism is a global phenomenon in which millions of people around the world travel to different countries for leisure, exploration, and experiences. In 2017, around 1,322 million tourist arrival was found around the globe (WTO, 2017). The basic purpose of travelling to different countries has converted the travel into business and eventually benefitting the host and the country’s economy. Tourism impact can be seen in different types varying from country to country. Tourism has 3 major impacts mainly economic, cultural and environmental (Kumar, et al 2015). These impacts of tourism are not easily identified and easy to measure as they do not appear easily. The changes are seen only when tourist bring changes with the living style and behavior onto the host

community. Tourist when travel they not only bring themselves but they too bring their luggage with living habits, culture, and behavior. India with its natural and cultural diversity has a foot forward in not only attracting tourist but has a potential and strength to flourish tourism development. Tourism development is necessary as tourism is the only sector which has an ability to boost the economy of any country at a faster rate in this day to day changing world. It is deemed necessary to grow economy fast as to be in a global system (Sawant, 2017). The change of tourism development can be positive only if planned, implemented and managed properly. India being a developing country cannot rely fully on tourism sector as many authors have stated that uneven participation of ownership and investment may bring inequality in the distribution of profit and contribution of revenue leading to social conflicts and disparities between the hosts. Tourism development is all round development in which it not only develops tourist destination it also increases foreign exchange, increase in income of local people, new ideas, and infrastructural development bringing changes in various sector of economy and society. Tourism industry is also stated as “industry without chimney” (Manivannan,2015).But there are also many other positive and negative impacts of tourism with different sides varying country to country. Some developed western countries have already reached its limit of tourism development that it has set its limit of tourist arrival on a particular time to avoid themselves from over-tourism. Therefore, multi-level planning needs to be important and should play an utmost importance in tourism development. In this paper social and economic impacts will be considered as main impacts of tourism.

Study Area

Sikkim is a small state in the northeastern part of India having an area of 7096 sq. km with latitude extension of 27.5330⁰ N and longitude extension of 88.5122⁰ E. The population of the state is 6.11 lakhs with a density of 86 person per sq. km (census, 2011). Sikkim is bounded by Bhutan in the west, Nepal in the west, Tibetan plateau in the north and Indian state of West Bengal in the south with two main rivers Teesta and Rangit marking a boundary between two states. Sikkim is diverse in culture and heritage with three main ethnic groups the Lepchas, the Bhutias, the Nepalese, and the Limbus. The Lepchas are known to be the original settlers of Sikkim mainly in the north district. Later followed by the Bhutias from Tibet who later ruled Sikkim for more than 300 years and the Nepalese and Limbus from Nepal.

Sikkim is not only diverse in its culture but is also in its biodiversity. Sikkim biodiversity is enriched with over 5500 flowering plant, 557 Orchids, 38 Rhododendrons, 16 Conifers, 28 Bamboos, 1681 Medicinal plants, and many more with more than 144 mammals, 568 Birds, 48 Fishes, and over 689 Butterflies and 7000 species of Moths. The figures stated above are still not complete. The diversity of insects like beetles and moths are yet to be discovered. Sikkim also has 28 mountain peaks with more than 80 Glaciers, 534 high altitude lakes, and around 104 rivers and streams (ENVIS,2019) making it a place of tourist attraction.



Source: QGIS

Figure 1. Location map of Sikkim on India map

Sikkim with its culture and biodiversity for tourism development also add up the climatic differences with varying altitudes. Sikkim experience tropical climate in the west to extreme cold climate in the north. Tourist at one visit can experience all types of weather from snowfall to rain and cloudy to clear sky. Sikkim economy in present time runs on agriculture, manufacturing, resources and power, transportation and tourism as being the backbone of the economy. Alsike, India being an agrarian country with more than 70% of people depending on agriculture. Sikkim economy and more than half the population is dependent on agriculture. The manufacturing sector in Sikkim is quite small due to its rugged topography putting the limitation on its development. Sikkim main resources and power is the hydropower plants generating electricity taking the potential of the major river named Teesta. Sikkim transportation is not that extensive as its major mode of transport is roadways. Sikkim highway is National Highway 10(NH 10) in northeast connecting Siliguri, district of West Bengal to Gangtok, capital of Sikkim. Sikkim tourism is a sector which can be called an employment generator. For example: if one invests 5 lakh rupees in the industry it can generate 10-15 jobs but if we invest in tourism development it can generate 20-25 jobs. Sikkim tourism is attracted due to the presence of its natural beauty, rich in biodiversity, favorable climate. In Sikkim maximum number of tourist arrival can be found in east district of Sikkim as being the capital city of the state. The district covers an area of 954 sq.km with a population of about 2.5 lakhs and density of 295 person per sq.km (census, 2011). Apart from other district east district has all kinds of tourism motivator resulting in attracting maximum number of tourists.

Database and Methodology

To analysis the growth and development of the tourism industry in the Sikkim and the perception of the tourists with regards to infrastructure and the services available over there. Both primary and secondary were used, primary data was collected with the help of a questionnaire survey. The purposive sampling technique was used for the collection of the data. The secondary data was collected from the tourism department Sikkim, from the government's reports, journals, the research paper has been utilized websites and other relative sources from the internet have also

been incorporated. The data collected from both the sources were tableted and analyzed with the help of simple statistical techniques and was presented in the form of the pie chart and bar graphs.

Results and Discussion

Sikkim before merging with India, tourist inflow was very difficult to trace as well as it was negligible. It was from the beginning of the 21st century that the tourism sector in Sikkim got flourished as restricted areas came under relaxation by the government and it gained popularity as the safest and healthiest tourist destination in India. The growth of tourism was very slow till the 1980s as many areas were restricted for tourists but from 2005 there was a rapid flow of tourists in the state because most of the area was open for tourism purposes. The growth of the tourism from 2001 to 2018 is depicted in the figure below.

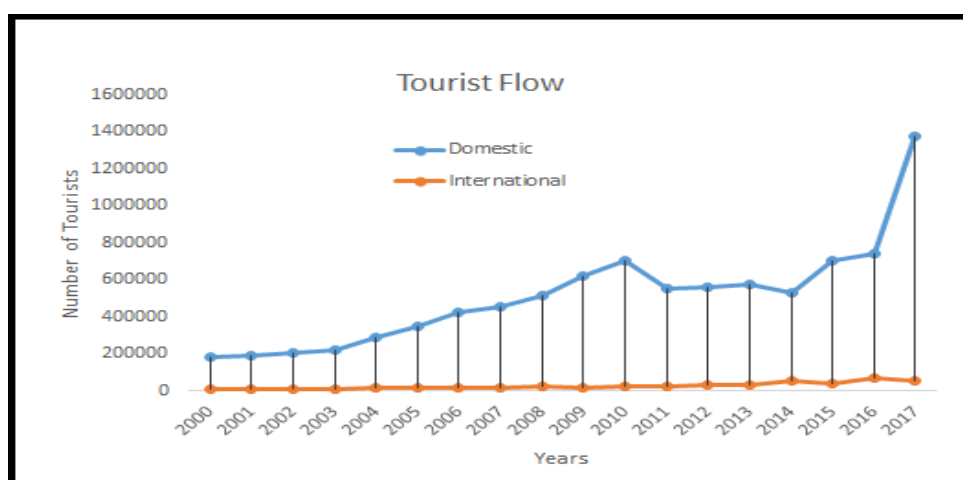
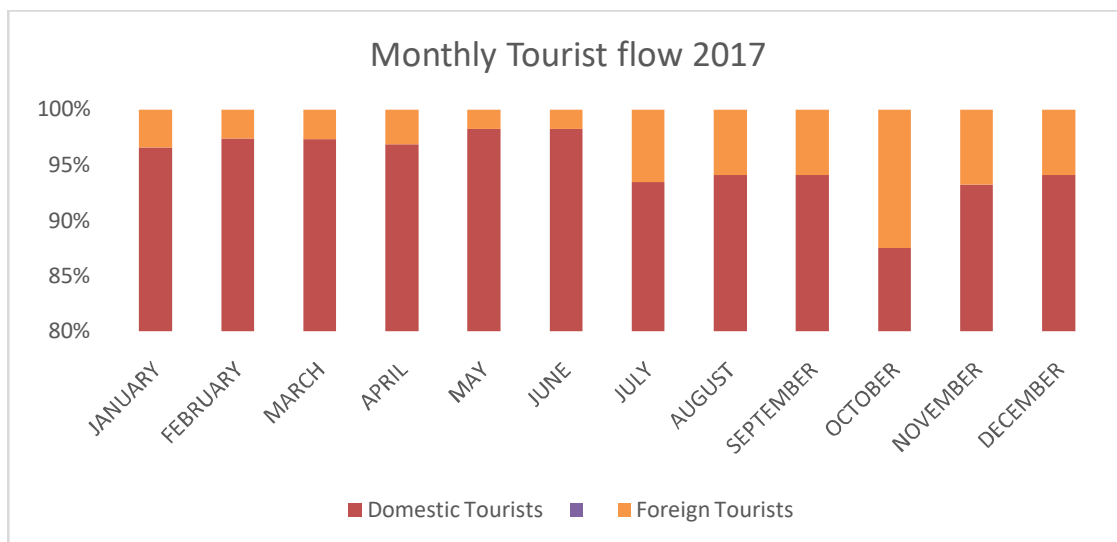


Figure 2. Growth of the tourism from 2001 to 2018

There has been a tremendous growth rate in both domestic and foreign tourist arrival of 86% and 81% respectively from 2000-2018. It was found during the field survey that the main reason behind the tremendous growth of tourist inflow in the tiny Himalayan state is due to the best hospitality, its mesmerizing scenic beauty, peaceful nature. Furthermore, the department of tourism and civil aviation has been constant as regular training is given to the local stakeholders in tourism sectors like guides, tour operators, bird watching, trekking, etc. Furthermore, the institution has been made which contributes towards tourism like the Institute of Hotel Management in Rumtek and the Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure and ecotourism in Chemchey (Sikkim Tourism Policy, 2018). There has been a good inflow of tourists till 2010 then the graph slightly came down in 2011 as Sikkim was hit by a massive earthquake which made the tiny Himalayan disastrous and inflow came down. Till 2015 the inflow was quite regular as it was recovering at that phase with infrastructural, transportation, etc. After 2015 tourist inflow again increased as it was declared as the first organic state in the nation and many tourists were attracted to it. The year 2017 was recorded as the year where maximum tourist arrival was recorded. The month wise tourist flow as shown in the figure below it is clear that the maximum number of tourists that visit Sikkim is in the month of May and June and high arrival of domestic tourists is seen as compared to foreign tourists. Along with more arrival of domestic

tourists then foreign tourists what we also see is that their visiting month also differ with each other. As from my study during the time of survey with the stakeholder it was known that the busiest months and the profitable months were also may and June. From 2011 data of domestic tourist arrival what we can see is the total number of tourists is. more than 5 lakhs which is almost the population of the state i.e.6,10 lakhs(census,2011) where the domestic tourist arrival in 2017 is more than 13 lakhs which means the tourist arrival has been three times more than the state population.



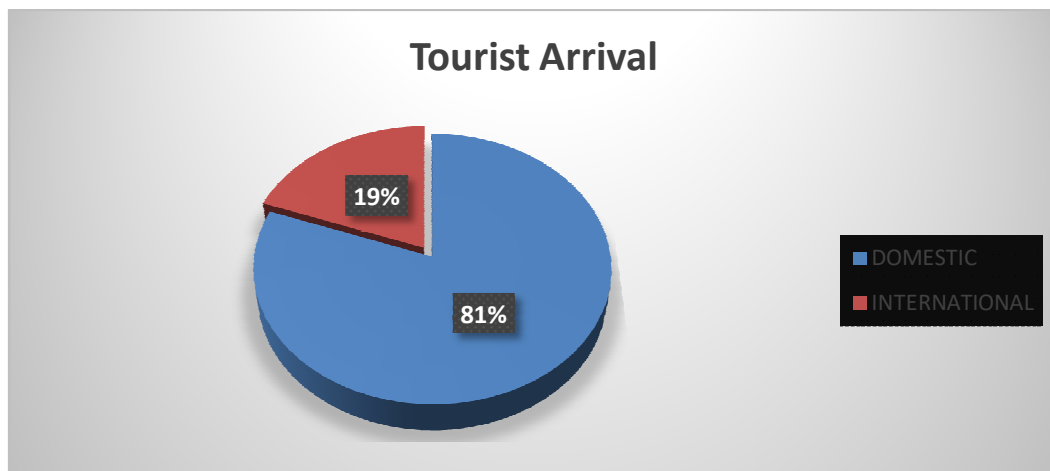
Source: Tourism and civil aviation, Govt. of Sikkim (2017).

Figure 3.Monthly Tourist Flow 2017

As the recent scenario of tourism in Sikkim is to become the 365 days tourism state which means that the state is trying to attract tourists for all 12 months by providing good and safe tourism facilities and services. In recent periods, the state is only having a few months of tourists' season mainly from May to June, October and late December to January. The rest of the month seems to have a normal period. As with the development in tourism by providing facilities and services, the state is also facing drawbacks of the development like the online reservation of hotels through different types of websites. As tourists are booking their hotels for easy stay in the state but when they reach to the destination, they seem to be suffering from some problems like cancellation of hotels even after the reservation. This high increase in the arrival of tourists, both domestic and foreign, is a positive indicator in the development of the tourism industry in Sikkim but when it comes in between is the quality of the facilities and services provided to the tourists. As every development is a cycle in which it starts, it flourishes and gets shut down. So, to provide the shutdown of the development in the tourism industry, it should have a quality tourism rather than quantity tourism.

Analysis of Tourist Satisfaction in East Sikkim

The tourists' satisfaction is very much needed for growing the tourism industry in east Sikkim. The variables to understand the level of satisfaction of tourists were by knowing the quality of the facilities and services provided in east Sikkim.

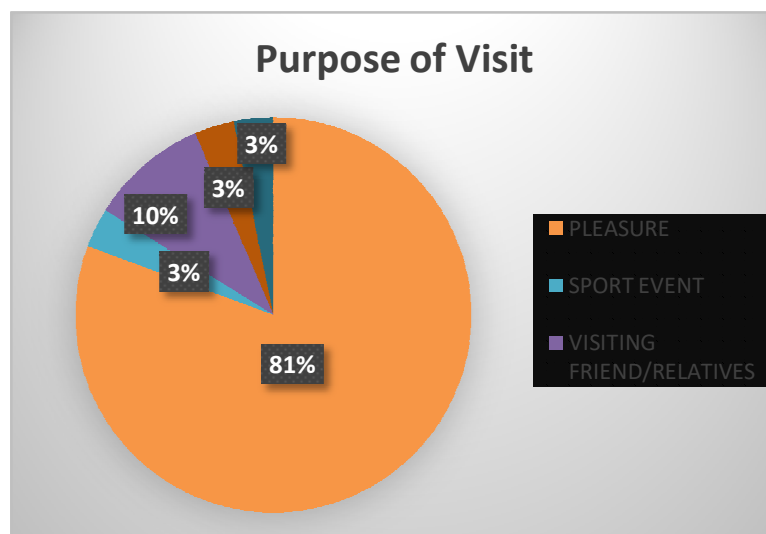


Source: Field survey (2019)

Figure 4. Tourist Arrival in East Sikkim

From the above fig, it shows that the maximum number of tourists who visited east Sikkim are mainly domestic or national tourists (81%), while only 19% of international tourists were found mainly from neighboring countries like Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

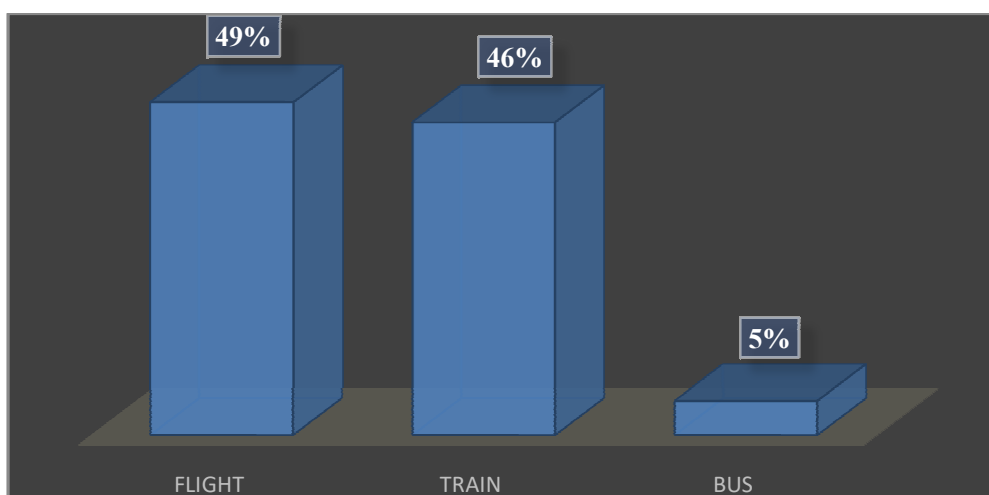
As the data also shows that the maximum tourist who visits Sikkim are mainly domestic tourists than international Tourists.



Source: Field survey (2019)

Figure 5. Purpose of Travel of Tourist in East Sikkim

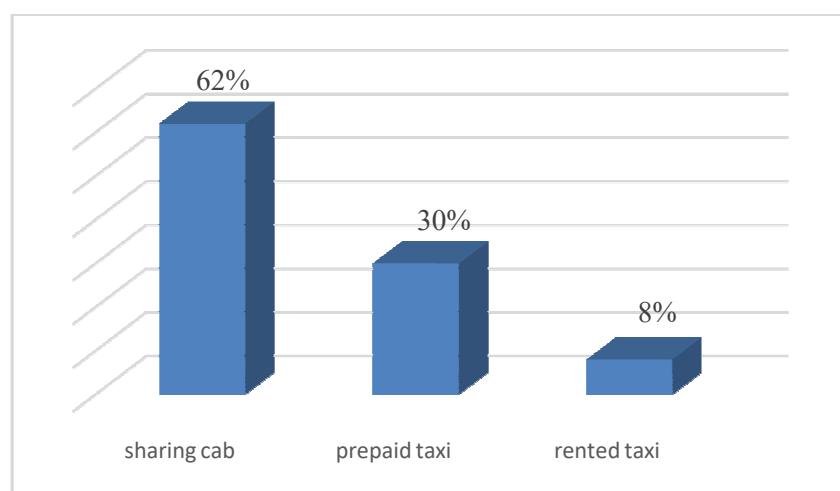
People travel from one place to another for a different purpose. It can be for pleasure, business or visiting friends and relatives. The data drawn from the sampled population shows fig 5 that the maximum number of tourists that visit east Sikkim come for pleasure (81%) because it provides natural beauty and pleasant climate which attract more tourist. As from the other result drawn from the data when brought altogether also cannot take on pleasure as a purpose of travel.



Source: Field survey (2019)

Figure 6. Mode of Travel From Your Native Place To Last Destination

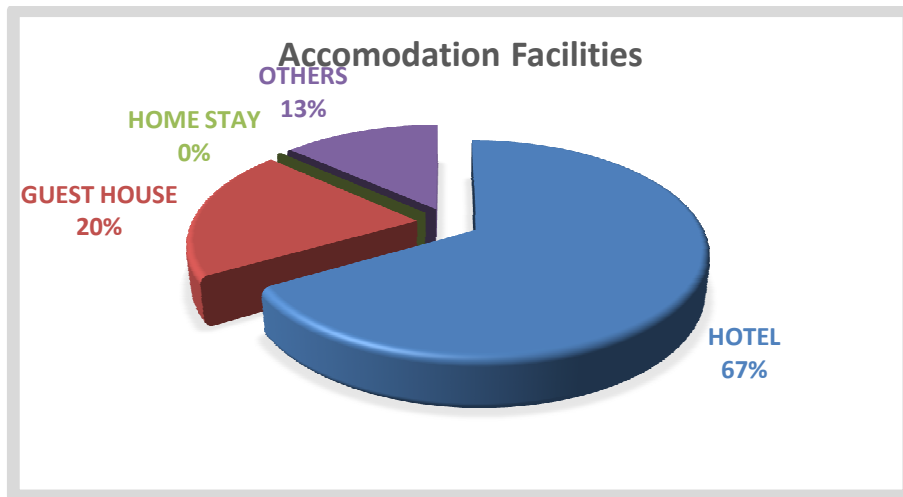
The mode of transport also plays an important role in tourism development. As people come out of their everyday life in search for leisure, pleasure. The data taken from the surveyed tourist on their mode of travel from their native place shows (fig. 6) that the maximum tourist travel through air transport which is 49% as it is the fastest means of transport compared to any other means of transportation and sometimes cheaper than other means of transportation looking at the facilities provided by it. The other two mode of transport were train and bus which is of less significance because travelling train or bus takes more time than the air transport.



Source: Field survey (2019)

Figure 7. Mode of Travel to Sikkim From Last Available Destination

The mode of travel to Sikkim from any other place is very complex. Sikkim only provides the facility of road transport which creates a gap between the state and tourists. The data are taken from the surveyed tourist on their mode of travel from their last reach out destination shows (fig. 7) that the maximum tourist travel through sharing cab which is 62% as compared to prepaid taxi which is 30% and rented taxi which is 8%. This is because the sharing cab which is available at the last reach out destination is cheaper and is easily available at any time of need. Sikkim does not have the facility of air transport nor rail transport which creates a leakage in the economy in terms of tourism.

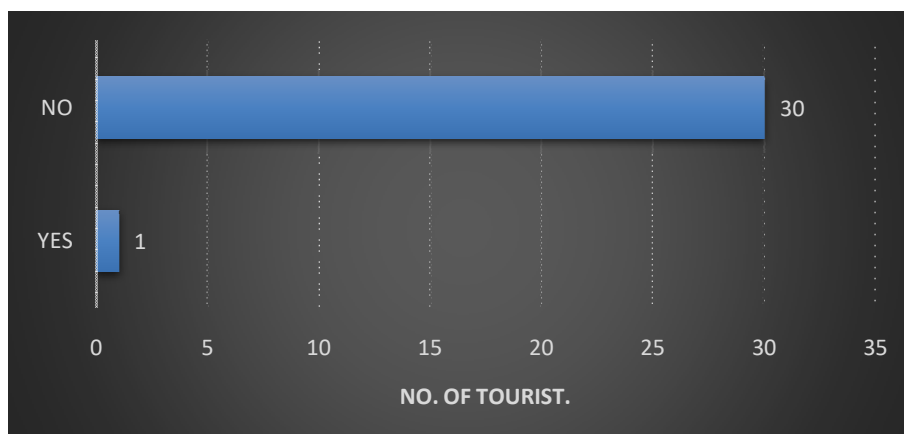


Source: Field survey (2019)

Figure 8. Percentage (%) of accommodation facilities taken by tourist in East Sikkim

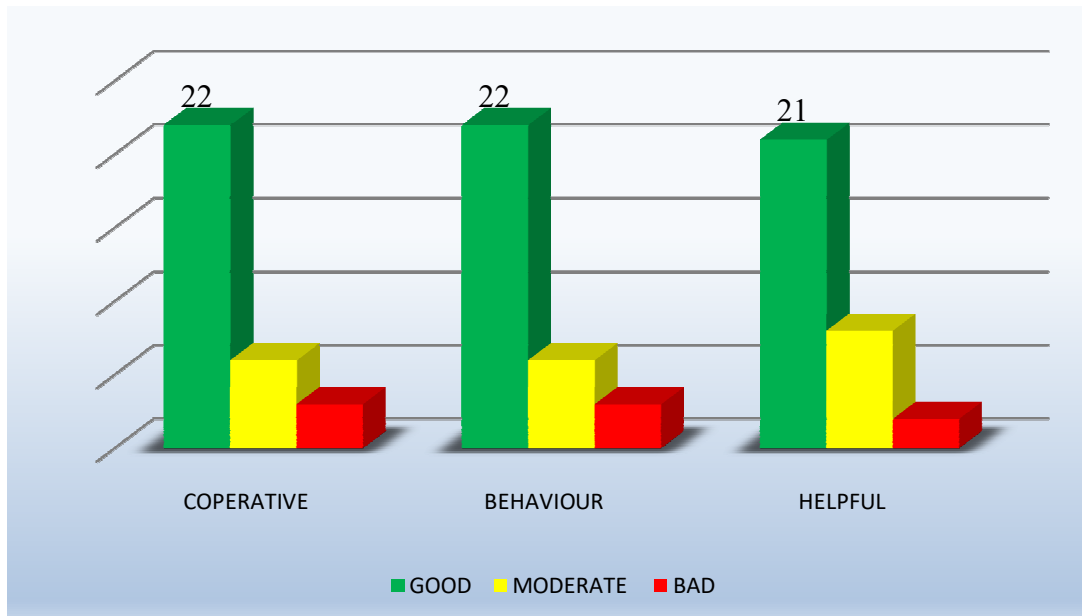
Every tourist needs good accommodation during their leisure time. In East Sikkim, all kinds of accommodation facilities are available whether it be a hotel, homestay, guest house or any other. The fig 8 above depicts that the maximum number of tourists out of 31 (100%), 67% preferred to stay in a hotel rather than a guest house or homestays because east Sikkim consists of tourist spots mainly situated near or in urban areas. During the time of the survey, the tourist who was staying in guest house stated that they had friends or relatives who were residing in east Sikkim and some tourist also stated that they were unknown of the guest house and home stay which were available in the area. So, it is evident the fewer tourist residing in a guest house and home stays is due to lack of information about accommodation facilities.

The most spoken language in Sikkim is Nepali, Hindi, and English. There are also come cultural dialects that are spoken but not in much. As from the fig 9 shows that out of 31 respondents in total 31 respondents had no problem in terms of communication while only 1 out of 31 respondents came out with a language problem as he was an international tourist. So, overall, we can say there is no problem in oral communication between the host and the tourist.



Source: Field survey (2019)

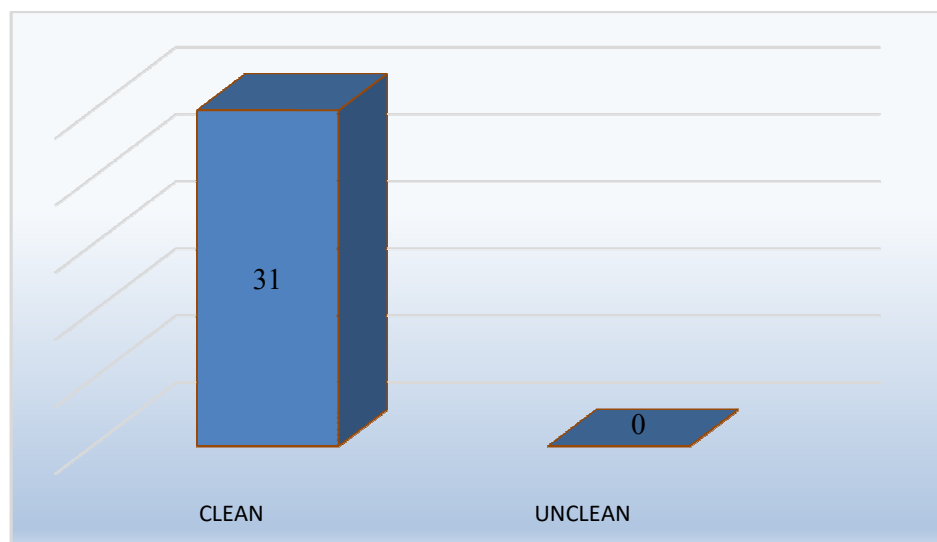
Figure 9. Level of language problem faced by tourist in East Sikkim



Source: Field survey (2019)

Figure 10. Behavior of local people to tourist on their visit to east Sikkim

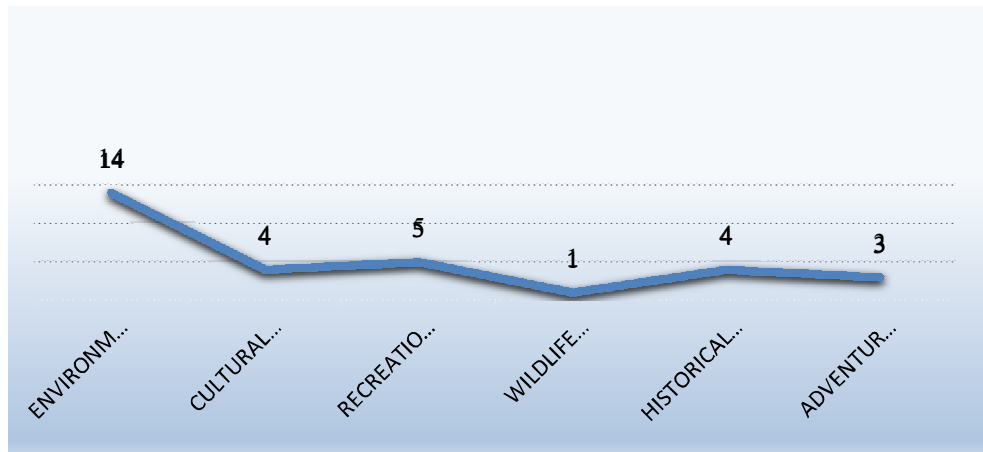
The tourist view of the general public seems to be very positive. The study and the above fig reveal that out of 31 respondents in total 22 responded for good in the cooperative section, 22 responded for behavior and 21 for helpful which means that the local people in east Sikkim are very hospitable and helpful to the tourists. Other than this, the other respondents who responded for moderate i.e. 6 respondents for cooperative and 3 respondents for behavior were because of dual pricing in their taxi fares which was high from the actual pricing.



Source: Field survey (2019)

Figure 11. Showing the Rate of Cleanliness of Tourist Places in East Sikkim.

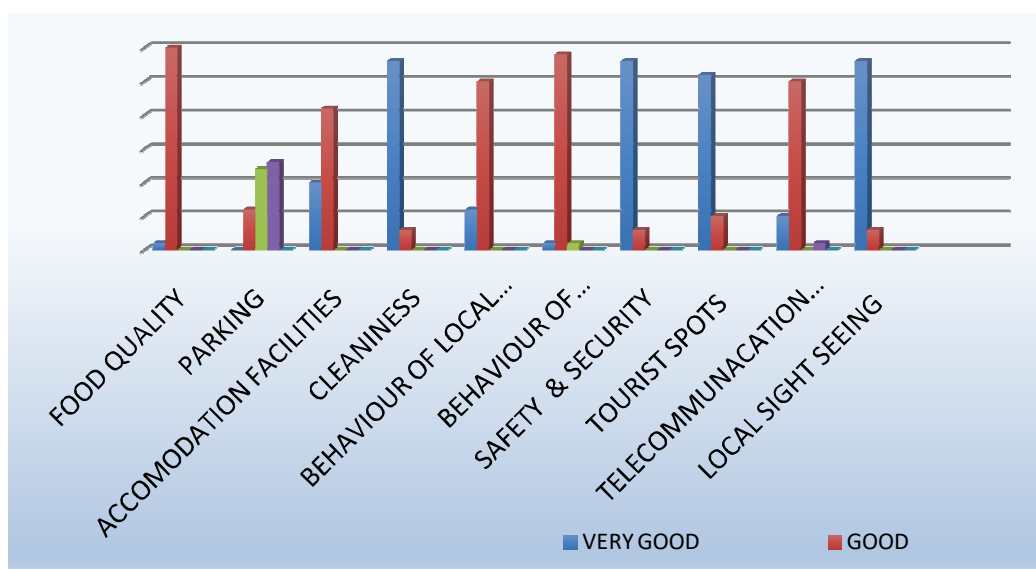
It is very important to keep the tourist attraction clean as the cleanliness portrays the image of that area. The result in the above fig shows that the total of 31 respondents have answered that the tourist spots that they visited were clean.



Source: Field survey (2019)

Figure 12. Most Tourist Attraction in East Sikkim

The fig 12, shows that the 14 respondents out of 31 respondents are attracted to the environmental sites. These environmental sites consisted of waterfalls, viewpoints, sightseeing which is evident in east Sikkim. However, 4 respondents had gone for cultural sites consisted of temples, church, mosque, monastery followed by recreational sites consisting of market, gaming zones, resorts to which 5 respondents responded to it. While 1 respondent responded for wildlife sites consisting of national parks, plant conservatory, even though it has a larger area than the other tourist attraction. This is because we do not have a good amount of varieties of animals in the national park and good species of flora in the plant conservatory. Then 4 respondents responded for historical sites consisting of the historical palace, Ruins remains of past (Rabdentse), then followed by adventure sites consisting of the ropeway to which 3 respondents responded to it.



Source: Field survey (2019)

Figure 13. Rate of Satisfaction of Tourist on Services and Facilities Provided in Sikkim

There are many factors for tourism to flourish in every area. The area which can fulfill all the needs and wants of the tourist can automatically flourish in the development of the tourism

industry. The factors which affect the tourism industry of any area depend on the facilities and services like food quality, transport facilities, parking facilities, tourist information facilities, the behavior of telecommunication facilities, the behavior of businessman, safety, and security of tourists and good local sightseeing. These facilities and services were kept in mind during the time of the survey and were questioned to the tourists on their experience. After the data were collected and tabulated we can see from the fig that almost all the respondents responded positively for excellent and very good for all the facilities and services provided to them which is a great achievement for East Sikkim which is just an emerging industry in the field of tourism but except for some facilities and services like parking facility because for that huge number of tourist we need a huge area for parking and Sikkim has a rugged terrain, it cannot have a huge parking facility.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study was mainly focused on the socio-economic impacts of tourism in East Sikkim. Thus, to conclude, East Sikkim has great potential in the development of the tourism industry. The study reveals that tourism as an industry does not impact directly. All the impacts that can be observed are indirectly related to tourism as it is based on activities related to tourism like employment generation, women empowerment, overcrowding, pollution, etc.

In addition to the study from the analysis, it is evident that tourism gives a prominent number of economic benefits to any country or a nation that receives a steady flow of tourists all year long. However, it is also seen that in East Sikkim the main season(months) for tourist to visit are less which create a less rate of economic benefits as compared to all year long tourist visits. International visitors are also a valuable source of foreign assets. However, the international tourist arrival in the state is very less as compared to domestic tourists. The study also reveals that the economic benefits due to tourism like employment generation, increase in hotel industry, increase in income of people related to tourism activities, and finding other sources of income related to tourism activities are the positive impacts of tourism in East Sikkim where some negative impacts pop out like the leakage of economy due to the maximum number of non-local workers in the tourism-related activities, increase in price of land and housing, etc. can be seen.

In addition to the impact of tourism on social terms, the impacts seem to be both positive and negative. The positive impacts of tourism on social in East Sikkim are improved standard of living as we saw the increase in income of the people to which we can correlate that the increase in income would improve the standard of living. The other positive impacts are the involvement of women in the tourism-related activities which not only empowers women by also makes them self-dependent on themselves.

This self-dependent value would act as a motivator to achieve more goals and would raise the status of women in society. The negative impacts of tourism in social terms are the increase in the social gap which seems to be less prevalent in East Sikkim according to the study. The increase in the social gap can create internal conflicts between people of different social backgrounds. This social conflict occurs when we have an increase in population which is also another negative impact of tourism. Not only tourism impacts have been found, but tourists visit

to all tourist spots has also been seen lacking. This concentration of tourists in just a few spots could create an economic disparity between people in different Eastern Sikkim areas.

Furthermore, from the study, it has been found that both positive and negative impacts run hand in hand along with impacting the social as well as economic together. The increase in employment from tourism is a positive impact but the maximum non-local workers working under it is a negative impact. Similarly, the increase in tourist arrival is a positive point but the occurrence of overcrowding and congestion, an increase in population is a negative impact. Tourism is stated as industry without chimney (Manivannan, 2015), but concluding from the study that tourism is an industry with invisible chimney.

Lastly, the study has found that people of East Sikkim are enjoying the development of the tourism industry as the positive impacts seem to be more than the negative impacts of tourism. As the positive impacts of tourism are visible and can be found easily but the negative impacts of tourism are only found or observed when one goes through it.

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