

# Perceptions of Local Community towards the Impacts of Tourism: A study In Kodagu District Of Karnataka

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*Kodagu, a small picturesque district of Karnataka, also called as the 'Coffee Bowl of India' and the Switzerland of the South is a popular tourist destination. Tourism is a major revenue earner for the district after coffee. Tourists from all over the country as also the world visit this place for enriching experiences. This study examines the local residents' attitude towards tourism development, its impact on the economic and socio-cultural life of the people here and the environment. A questionnaire based survey was conducted. Tourism has a positive impact on the economic and socio-cultural aspects as perceived by the respondents but they also voiced their concerns towards the environmental impact. The relationship between demographic variables and the perception of tourism impacts was studied.*

**Key Words:** Tourism, Perceptions, Socio-cultural impacts, economic impact, environmental impacts

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## I. Introduction

Tourism is a great contributor to economic development. It influences not only the economy of a place but also the society, culture and environment. The local community is the most important stakeholder of any tourism activity. Any tourism activity which is planned must consider the community opinions and hence their attitude towards the impact of tourism on their socio, cultural, economic life and also on the environment must be considered before setting out tourism objectives for a particular region. Tourism definitely has far-reaching effects on the economic lives of the community in terms of monetary benefits by creating additional employment avenues for the local populace. Especially when the region's economy depends on agriculture and allied activities, and where the region is bestowed with potential attractive tourist destinations, tourism will generate jobs, enhance infrastructure and improve the quality of life of the people. Besides it influences the social and cultural fabric of a region so also its environment. Tourism hence impacts all spheres of life of the local community. Kodagu, a small, picturesque district of Karnataka is one of the sought after a destination for tourists from all over the country as also attracts large number of international tourists throughout the year. This study examines the local residents' attitude towards tourism development, its impact on the socio, economic and cultural life of the people here.

### Study Area:

Kodagu (Anglicized term- Coorg) is a small district situated in the state of Karnataka, the birthplace of River Cauvery. It is called as *Coffee Bowl* of India as 40 % of India's coffee is grown here. Besides coffee, pepper and other spices, oranges and certain other exotic fruits and paddy are predominantly grown here. Agriculture and predominantly plantation is the backbone of the economy here. Of late tourism is one of the major revenue getters for the district. Ecotourism is becoming more popular. The hilly district of Kodagu is a place of scenic beauty with many poets penning beautiful lines explaining the glory of the place. The coffee bushes laden hills, small and large waterfalls, whispering springs, lush green paddy fields; a place with reminisces of archeological monuments which are still standing tall, wide-life sanctuary, places of religious worship with ancient historical leanings create an enchanting experience for tourists. All in all a total tourist package. People who want a brief getaway from the hustle bustle of a city life can come here and get rejuvenated.

The tourism sector is almost three two decades old but it has created a huge impact on the local community. Homestays are an offspring of the tourism sector where the locals throw open their homes for tourists for cultural experiences. It has created employment avenues and improved the economic life of the people. Tourism also has created entrepreneurial ventures with many local residents donning the entrepreneurial hats with the setting up of certain local businesses such as honey processing, wine- making, extracting juice from indigenous and exotic fruits, chocolate making and so on. Many national and international tourists visit

every year and are enthralled with nature's serenity and beauty, hospitality of the people, the culture and the unique traditions here and also the local cuisine. The experiences want them to return year after year.

### **Objectives of the study**

- To understand the perception and attitudes of the local residents to the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism
- To test the relationships between demographic attributes and attitude toward impacts of tourism.

## **II. Review Of Literature**

Tourism activities have a considerable impact on the local communities. These impacts can be economic, social, cultural and environmental.

Hernandez, SA et.al (1996) in separate studies to understand the residents' attitudes towards tourism impacts identified economic benefits for the community such as increased employment opportunities for the locals, improving the economic structure of the region and upgrading the community's economy. But few negative economic impacts too have been cited by the residents in the study such as increased prices, inequalities in income distribution and increased cost of living. According to Korca (1996) who conducted a study in Turkey found that tourism led to increased cost of land and housing and also increased the prices of goods and services. A similar such result was reported by Brida, Osti and Faccioli (2011) when studying the rural community attitudes in Folgaria, Italy. However many studies to examine the economic impacts have identified positive economic benefits for the host community. These include generating employment opportunities, increased tax revenue and economic development of the community

(Fredline & Falkner, 2000; Kim & Petrick, 2005). Lee, Kim & Kang, 2003 opined that tourism can help in the development of business opportunities for the local community. In a study at Kumily, India, by Sebastian & Rajagopalan, 2009, the local residents felt that tourism led to the improvement of their standard of their community. Similar view was put forth by Allen et. al (1993) in his study where residents opined that tourism would lead to higher quality of life for the community. Yoon Y., et.al (1999) and Kim S., et.al (2014) in a study at Laos, Hanafiah, M.H et.al (2013) in a study at Tioman Island, Malaysia and in many similar studies highlighted that the local residents perceive tourism positively because of the economic benefits it brings especially creation of job opportunities.

Positive socio-culture impacts due to tourism such as increased community pride, strengthening cultural traditions and values were reported by studies conducted by Ritchie (1984). Akis S, Peristianis & J. Warner (1996) studied the resident attitudes to tourism development at Cyprus where they concluded that tourism can lead to social problems for the host community especially bringing about undesirable changes in the ways of life and the culture and traditions. Such observations were also reported in few other studies. Also Sebastian and Rajagopalan, 2009 reported in their study at Kumily and Kumarakom that residents perceived that tourism brought about undesirable changes in the value system of children.

A study at Annapurna Sanctuary in Nepal by Nyaupane & Thapa, 2004, reported certain negative environmental impacts such as plastic litter and deforestation due to tourism. Sharma & Dyer, 2009, in a study of the residents of Sunshine in Queensland Australia identified traffic congestion due to tourism development as a major environmental concern.

Many studies examined the relationship of demographic attributes and the perception towards tourism impacts. Some studies showed younger people tend to be more positive about the impacts of tourism (Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996). With regard to gender Harill & Potts (2003) found females to have more negative attitude towards tourism impact when compared to males. On the contrary Akyeamong (2011) did not find any relationship between gender and perception of tourism impacts. Also in the study by Sharma & Dyer (2009), age, gender and level of education did not have any influence on the residents' perception to tourism impacts. Christopher Mensah (2012) in a study at Ghana found significant gender based differences of perception towards tourism impacts including economic and sociocultural impacts.

## **III. Methodology**

In this study, the perceptions of the local community towards the social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of tourism are presented. The study is based on primary data. A questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagrees to strongly agree was designed. The survey instrument developed for the study had questions relating to demographic profile of the respondents and their perception towards economic, socio-cultural and environmental impact of tourism. The secondary data was collected with the help of books, internet and journals. A convenience sample of 130 residents of Kodagu constituted the respondents of this study.

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviation) and ANOVA are the statistical techniques used.

**Hypothesis:**

Ho: There are no significant differences in the perceptions of the respondents towards the socio-economic, cultural environmental impacts of tourism based on certain demographic characteristics.

**IV. Results**

**Profile of Respondents:**

The demographic profile of respondents is summarized in the following table. Of the 130 respondents, 46.2% were male and 53.8% were female. 34.6% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 26-35 years, 30.7% were below 25 years, 15 % between 46 to 55 years, 11.5 % between 36 to 45 years and 7.6 % above 55 years of age. 60% of the respondents were graduates, 34 % were post graduates in the sample. Half of the sample respondents (50%) are staying in Kodagu for more than 30 years, 23% of the respondents have been residing here for 20-30 years, 19% of them have been living here for 10-20years. Hence most of the respondents have spent considerable part of their lives in Kodagu.

**Table1: Demographic Features of Respondents**

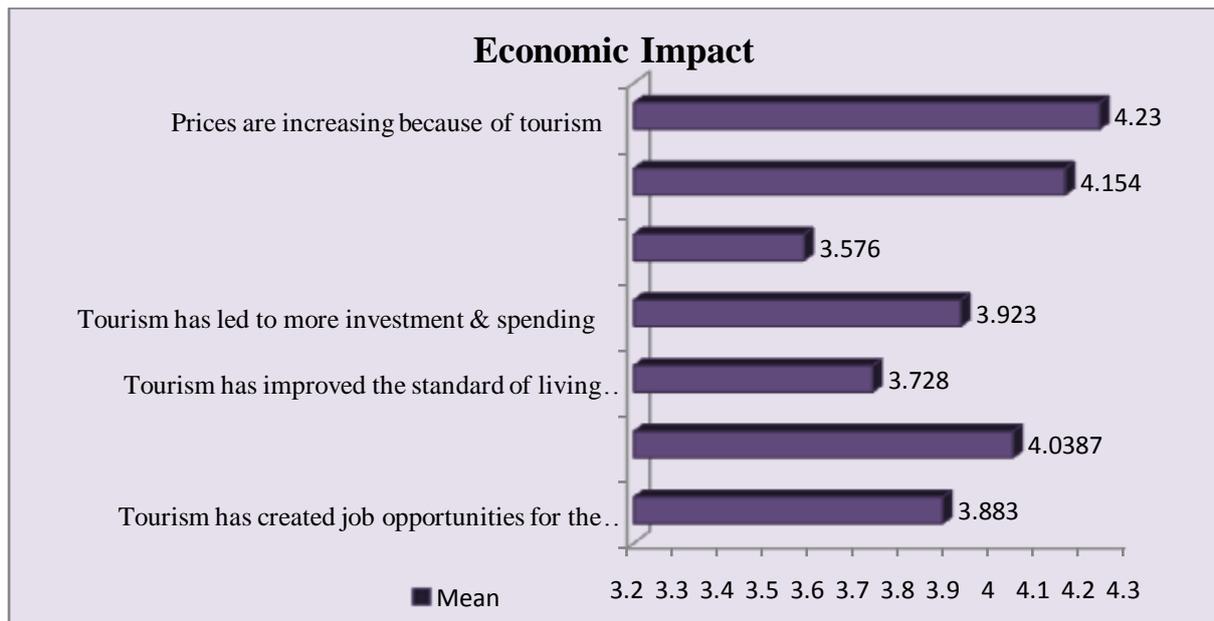
Variables	Category	Number	%
Gender	Male	60	46.2
	Female	70	53.8
Age	< 25 years	40	30.7
	26-35 years	45	34.6
	36-45 years	15	11.5
	46- 55 years	20	15.3
	>55 years	10	7.6
Educational Level	SSLC	3	2.3
	PUC	5	3.8
	Graduate	78	60
	Post-Graduate	44	33.8
Length of stay In Kodagu	< 5 years	5	3.8
	5- 10years	5	3.8
	10-20 years	25	19.2
	20-30 years	30	23.1
	>30 years	65	50

**Table 2: Tourism Impacts as perceived by Local Residents (N= 130)**

Components	Indicators	Mean	SD	Ranking Based on level of Agreement
ECONOMIC IMPACT	Tourism has created job opportunities for the locals.	3.883	0.806	12
	Tourism has given economic benefit to the local people	4.0387	0.764	9
	Tourism has improved the standard of living of the people.	3.728	0.768	14
	Tourism has led to more investment & spending	3.923	0.677	10
	Tourism activities has led to reduced income gaps in society	3.576	0.795	17
	Local/ village industries(honey, wine, chocolates etc) have developed due to tourism	4.154	0.664	6
	Prices are increasing because of tourism	4.230	0.641	5
SOCIO-CULTURAL	Tourism activities help preserve traditional culture and traditions.	3.230	1.124	18
	The image of Kodagu has been enhanced because of tourism	3.884	1.090	11
	Tourism has led to restoration of historical sites	3.692	1.070	15
	Tourism provides an opportunity for locals to interact with other's culture	3.615	0.926	16

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	The migration of local youth to cities for employment is reduced because of tourism	2.961	1.095	19
	Tourism has an undesirable effect on our way of life/ causing changes in our culture and traditions	4.076	0.783	8
	Tourism has increased law and order problems	3.846	0.991	13
ENVIRONMENTAL	Community has become crowded/ congested because of tourism	4.153	0.820	7
	Waste management problems have increased because of tourism	4.576	0.691	1
	Maintaining local cleanliness is a problem.	4.538	0.636	2
	Tourism activities have increased noise and air pollution	4.348	0.835	3
	The natural environment is gradually degrading due to tourism.	4.346	0.832	4



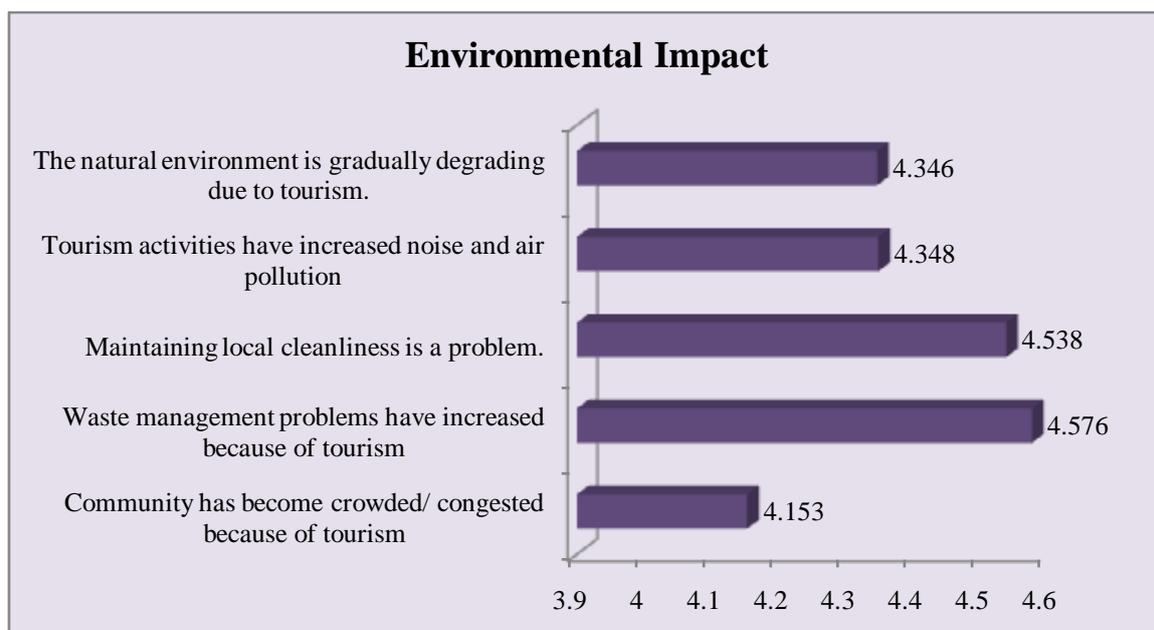
**Fig. 1** Local Residents’ Perception of Economic Impact of tourism

For all the indicators to understand perception towards economic impact of tourism the mean values range from 3.6 to 4.2. This shows that there is quite high agreement among the respondents that is, tourism has definitely resulted in positive economic benefits to the community. Among the factors, the development of local industries is ranked highest. The local community has processed the indigenously and the exotic farm produce into wines, chocolates, honey etc. and this has led to additional income avenues. Tourism has created job opportunities for the locals, reduced the income gaps and improved the standard of living of the people. But there is also a high agreement among the respondents that the prices have arisen due to tourism. Overall tourism has created positive economic impact to the local community.



**Fig. 2** Local Residents’ Perception of Socio-Cultural Impact of tourism

For all the indicators to understand the level of agreement of the respondents to the socio-cultural impact of tourism the mean values range from 2.9 to 4.0. This shows that there is moderate level of agreement to the positive indicators and high level of agreement to negative statements. Though the respondents felt that tourism has enhanced the image of Kodagu worldwide and the local community is provided with an opportunity to understand others’ culture, there is a lot of concern that gradually it is causing undesirable changes in the way of life or the culture here especially among the younger lot. Though they do not feel that tourism diminishes or dilutes their cultural values but still they opine that certain changes are gradually happening. Also the respondents are not very sure that tourism helps preserve traditional culture as evidenced by a mean of 3.23. Also certain law and order issues are another concern. Though tourism has created additional employment avenues, it has not reduced the migration of local youth as opined by many.



**Fig. 3** Local Residents’ Perception of Environmental Impact of tourism

For all the indicators to understand perception towards environmental impact of tourism the mean values range from 4.1 to 4.5. The statements to indicate the environmental impact are negative and hence high level of agreement to these statements show that the respondents are quite concerned with the negative impact of tourism activities on the environment. Tourism has created waste management problems, led to congestions, increased noise and air pollution and local cleanliness is becoming a challenge. Overall the respondents felt that

tourism activities are gradually degrading the natural environment of the place. This is quite a concern opined by almost all the respondents.

**Results from hypothesis testing**

**Perception of Tourism Impacts and Gender**

Ho: Gender has no significant influence on the perception and attitudes of the host community towards the tourism impacts.

**Table 3** Perceived Tourism Impacts with Gender of Respondents

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	0.291257	1	0.291257	1.488076	0.23091	4.130018
Within Groups	6.65473	34	0.195727			
Total	6.945988	35				

One -way ANOVA analysis was also carried out with the assumption that the perceived impacts of tourism do not differ across the gender of respondents. It is observed that there are no significant gender based differences of opinion towards the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism. That is both the male and female respondents in the sample have similar perception towards tourism impacts. Hence we do not reject the Null Hypothesis.

**Perception of Tourism Impacts and Age**

Ho: Age has no significant influence on the perception and attitudes of the host community towards the tourism impacts.

**Table 4** Perceived Tourism Impacts with Age of Respondents

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	1.122569	4	0.280642	0.920537	0.455935	2.479015
Within Groups	25.9138	85	0.304868			
Total	27.03637	89				

One -way ANOVA analysis was carried out with the assumption that the perceived impacts of tourism do not differ across the age of respondents. The results show no significant differences of opinion towards the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism. Hence we do not reject the null hypothesis.

**Perception of Tourism Impacts and Education Level**

Ho: Education Level has no significant influence on the perception and attitudes of the host community towards the tourism impacts.

**Table 5** Perceived Tourism Impacts with Education Level

ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	0.115614	3	0.038538	0.124576	0.945271	2.739502
Within Groups	21.03608	68	0.309354			
Total	21.15169	71				

One -way ANOVA analysis was carried out with the assumption that the perceived impacts of tourism do not differ with the education level of the respondents. The results show showed no significant differences of opinion towards the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism based on educational qualifications. Hence we do not reject the null hypothesis.

**Perception of Tourism Impacts and Length of Stay**

Ho: Length of stay has no significant influence on the perception and attitudes of the host community towards the tourism impacts.

**Table 6** Perceived Tourism Impacts with Length of Stay

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	4.402225	4	1.100556	1.877661	0.121775	2.479015
Within Groups	49.82117	85	0.586131			
Total	54.2234	89				

Respondents' perception to economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism is not influenced by the length of stay in Kodagu. People residing for more than thirty years in this place as also less than five years have similar perceptions.

## V. Conclusion

The 19 impact items relating to three components namely, economic impact, socio-cultural impact and environmental impact were used to study the attitudes of the local residents towards tourism in Kodagu district. The findings indicate that all the items showed a very high level of agreement (mean > 3.5). Overall the host community was favorably inclined towards tourism and showed positive attitude towards economic and socio-cultural benefits. However the local residents are aware and concerned about the environment impact of tourism activities. The study found no significant differences in the perception of tourism impacts based on certain demographic variables such as gender, age, education and length of stay. These results are consistent with results obtained in similar such studies.

It is impossible for tourism activities to sustain itself without the support of the local community. Hence as an important stakeholder, the community should be involved especially in an advisory role. The interests of the community as well as any apprehensions should be addressed by the concerned officials. Any tourism activity or a project should be planned taking into consideration the socio-cultural, economic and environmental aspects. This ensures a successful sustainable tourism model and the community will perceive it positively as it brings tangible and intangible benefits for them.

Hence to conclude, tourism activities have a considerable impact on the local communities. The knowledge of the local residents' perceptions about tourism impacts is very important for the well-being of the community and for the sustainable development of tourism. Involving all stakeholders in the planning and designing of tourism activities is very important in the small but ecologically sensitive district Kodagu.

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