THE DETERMINANTS AND MEASURE OF TOURIST'S PERCEPTION: A STUDY OF NAMCHI DISTRICT OF SIKKIM

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	Abstract
Keywords	The study is conducted to measure the tourist perception at the Namachi district of South Sikkim. The study is based on primary survey conducted at the tourist sports of Samdruptse and SiddheshwarDham (Char Dham) in Namchi district. The data collected is analysed using the Croanbach's Alpha test and Principle Component Analysis. A combine index to measure the perception of the tourists is developed. The tourists have a low perception value for the four factors and a medium perception value for one factor. The overall perception also comes out to be low.
Tourism Development;	
Tourist Perception;	
Croanbach's Alpha Test;	
Principle Component Analysis	

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Introduction

The tourism industry in India is a highly potential sector that can boost Indian economy in many ways. India has many destinations that attract domestic and foreign tourists. Tourism can be divided into many types- medical tourism, pilgrimage tourism, adventure tourism, wildlife tourism, eco-tourism, cultural tourism, sports tourism etc. we can find every type of tourism in the Indian case. This industry is playing as one of the important catalysts in the socio-economic development since the last two decades. The tourism industry is contributing to economic development of India in several ways and strengthens inter-connected processes. While this industry is often claimed as a remedy for many evils like underdevelopment, unemployment, development of rural areas, upgrading living standard and so on. Its contribution in creating a global and regional socio-political environment for peaceful co-existence of the cultures, communities, and societies has been established at various research levels. Tourism industry often termed as a peace industry which contributes to connecting people to people, societies to societies and thereby provides a mild platform for development for both rural and urban areas. Many conflicts and economic halt can be removed if tourism sector practiced in a responsible and correct manner. For smooth progress and economic activities, it requires a peaceful and sustainable environment. In this scenario, tourism industry can play a significant role in bringing equilibrium. It has a potential to provide employment to the skilled and unskilled labor force of the country. Through its strong backward and forward linkages, it generates employment in different sectors of the economy both directly and indirectly. These linkages will develop with the progress of time depending up on variety of factors, such as the availability of finance, attitude of the government, allied policies, the diversity and maturity of the local economy, quality of locally produced goods etc. The tourism industry contains four elements that enable it to be a dynamic market force for sustainability of the economy in the future. This industry has the capacity to boost GDP, reducing income inequality, increase exports, and bring in capital investment and technology and employment

North East India including Sikkim is known for its scenic natural beauties and natural importance. This site of India is mostly hilly sites and godown of natural resources. In recent years, the tourism industry rapidly developed in this country side also. Among the all North-Eastern states, Sikkim is a most preferred tourist destination for both domestic and foreign

tourists. Rising tourist arrivals in any region seen as a determinant of economic growth. Increase tourism means increase expenditure on accommodation, food, and beverages, transport, adventure activities, sports activities etc., which has indirectly provides employments and income to peoples. From the supply side, the government also have to bear the expenses of providing infrastructure, security etc. Therefore, there is a clumsy relationship between demand and supply side of economic aspects of tourism. But one thing is prominent that tourism sector is a highly potential sector that can create multiple effects in an economy.

Namchi

Sikkim is one of the most famous tourist destination in India. It became the 22nd state of India on 26thApril 1975. National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), India declares Sikkim as the cleanest state in India in 2016. Sikkim has four districts- East Sikkim, West Sikkim, North Sikkim and South Sikkim and bordered by Bhutan, Nepal, West Bengal and Tibet. According to 2011 census of India, the population of Sikkim is 6, 10,577 which makes Sikkim the least populated state in India. Because of its natural beauty, cultural attraction and religious importance, there has been a tremendous increase in tourist arrival in Sikkim in last decade. There has been a continuous rise in the number of tourists visiting Sikkim. Rising trend in tourist arrivals can be realized from the fact that from 15,000 tourists in 1980 to a mammoth 7, 20,000 tourist in 2010 (source Govt. of Sikkim). In terms of the economic importance of tourism sector in Sikkim, this sector contributes 8% to the State Domestic Product (source Govt. of Sikkim, 2016).Namchi is the headquarter of South Sikkim and often termed as the cultural capital of Sikkim for its cultural and religious importance. The total population is 12,194 (2011 census). Namchi has been playing a vital role in attracting tourists. Namchi is located at an altitude of 5500 ft. from the sea level. The appellation Namchi means sky (Nam), High (Chi) in Sikkimese. Namchi is known as cultural capital as it the home of many statues, monastery, temples, and scenic natural beauties. The world's largest (135 ft.) high statue of Guru Padmasambhava is situated at Samdruptse hill (the wish fulfilling hill). The government of Sikkim establishes a replica of Char Dham of India at Solophok hilltop in Namchi which host 87 ft. statue of Lord Shiva. From the hills of Namchi,tourists can also enjoy the majestic beauty of Mt. Kanchenjunga. Helicopter services also provided by the government to get panoramic views of Namchi. The Namchi monastery,

Ralang Monastery, SedrupChoelingMonastery and TendongHill are important Buddhist pilgrimage centers.

Figure 1 The location of Namchi

Namchi also hosts an annual festival of food, tourism, and culture in October known as NamchiMahotsav. The golden cup football tournament at Baichung stadium held every year at Namchi. Temi tea garden (near the Namchi town) attracts tourist for its beauty and as a sole tea garden in Sikkim which produces international standard tea. The TareyBhir is also a popular point for a visit as it offers breath-taking views of river valleys and upstairs town side. The government of Sikkim by joining hands with private sectors has developed tourism related infrastructure and tourist destination with due consideration environment issues and focus on reducing high tourist pressure at Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim (Mitra S et al.,2015).

Literature Review

Agrusa J. et al (2014), have evaluated the international visitors and local resident's perception towards tourism in Thailand, the international visitors compared to Thailand's local residents preferred ''Nightlife'' of the destination is a most important factor to attract them and the importance of cultural visit and local foods are the most preferred thing for local residents. The result shows international tourist's chances to visit Thailand again is low.

Chaudhary and Lama (2014), have done their work on community-based tourism development in two villages of Sikkim and argued that for the growth of the local community, tourism is an option which relies upon cultural, historical, ethnic, geographic and natural uniqueness and then after it fuelled the economic growth. Community-based tourism is based on the arrangement of local communities and due to lack of information to communities, the cultural diversity might be ignored in tourism development process.

Das and Kumar (2014), summarised that which type of tourism development is extensively related with economic, cultural and environmental development, this perception is based on existing literature and destination specific parameters throw factor analysis with the help of self-administered questionnaire and finally come to conclusion that there is need for community oriented hospitality and tourism literacy awareness. Poor quality of tourism, trap the economy resulting in the serious concern for low spending, less responsible, tourism impact unconscious to domestic tourists. In the conclusion part of this paper, they show that there is an immediate need to supplement the conventional types and form of tourism through sustainable development principle in Sikkim.

Gang A. (2014), the factors related to cultural differences are most affecting factors for risk perceptions for tourists, mass media also influence the perception, decision making of different people for risk perception differs by their own capacity to build it and high-risk perception influence the making of their traveling plans.

P. John (2015), studied the dynamic nature of tourist perception regarding quality services delivered to them. In survey research he has taken tourist perception on attributes; culture, wildlife, landscape, accommodation, restaurants, security and safety, infrastructure and tour guidance in Tanzania. Finding shows that Tanzania is doing well in culture, wildlife, landscape, and accommodation but fairly poor on tour guidance.

Patu D. I. et al (2014), covered outside and local tourists for the study, they considered the perception as a 'prior exogenous variable' and destination as an endogenous variable by using different indicators for these two. The accommodation, restaurants facility and the shopping facilities affect the tourist perception and it is significantly related to the quality of destination.

S. Rai et al. (2017), examined the arrival of tourist to Sikkim and how it is responsible for the environmental degradation. The study is Based on primary and secondary data in three most commonly used tourist destination of Sikkim namely; Tshongo lake, YuksowDzongri, and ChungthangLachungYumthang. This paper illustrated how tourism activities may be implemented and managed sustainably so that vegetation and culture are protected and tourism benefits can reach to the local community. The study concluded that local people are very aware

of increasing tourism activities but due to lack of the impetus for direct participation, it is below expectation. People are also aware of the adverse impact of tourism on resources, environment, and the local community. In terms of different tourism activities, different places have a different approach to promote eco-tourism. The diversification of tourist destination can be helpful in avoiding overcrowding.

Objectives

1.   To study the factors of tourist perception in Namchi district

2.   To build a composite index of tourist perception.

Research Questions

1.   What are the factors that determine tourist perception in Namchi district of South Sikkim?

2.   What can be the index to measure tourist perception?

Key concepts

•   Tourism – tourism means practice to visit a particular destination from the own usual environment.

•   Tourism Development- It means responsible planning to develop and increase tourism in a region or for a country.

•   Principle Component Analysis (PCA) - PCA is a technique to identifying and analyzing the pattern of data and emphasize their similarities and differences with respect to their variance.

•   Index – Index is composite average that measures the changes in groups of variables over a period of time.

•   Perception – understanding or belief based on how things observed or seem.

The Model
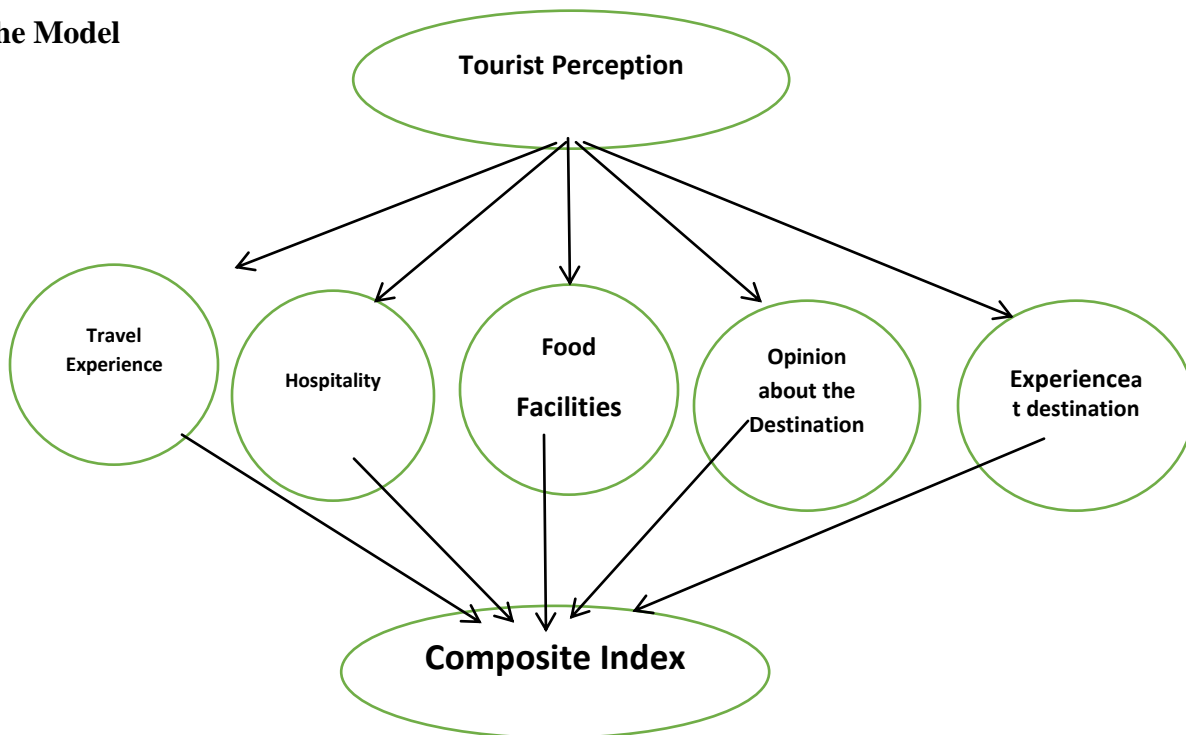
Figure 2. The Model

Data

The field survey was done during the 'Ten Days Research Methodology Workshop for PhD Scholars' held at Department of Management, Sikkim University, Gangtok, Sikkim. The data was collected from the tourists visiting the spots of Samdruptse and SiddheshwarDham (Char Dham) in Namchi district of Sikkim. The data was collected through a primary survey administered by the three scholars. The data was collected using a Questionnaire which consisted of eighteen questions related to different dimensions of tourist perception. Some questions were related to tourists travel experience, others to tourists experience during stay at hotels and some others to questions on onsite experience. The questions were Likert items which were ranked from 1 to 5 with 1 representing 'Strongly Disagree', 2 representing 'Disagree', 3 being 'Neutral', 4 meaning 'Agree' and 5 being 'Strongly Agree'. The respondents were asked to respond to each question based on his/her perception.

Methodology

The data collected consisted of eighteen questions. To check the inernal consistency of the questions as a set of group a Cronbach Alpha test was done. A reliability coefficient of .70 or

more is considered acceptable in most of the social science research. A Principal Component Analysis was carried out in SPSS to find out the main components or factors deciding the tourist perception. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity was done to find out the validity of Principal Component Analysis. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) returns values between 0 and 1. A value less than 0.5 indicate that the sampling is not adequate and remedial measures need to be taken. Bartlett's test of sphericity depicts the significance of the study and shows the suitability of responses in predicting the problem being addressed. To conduct the Principal Component Analysis the Bartlett's test of sphericity must be significant. The extraction of the factors was done based on the Eigenvalues and the Varimax rotation method was followed. The components with Eigenvalues less than one are left. The Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) for individual variables can be done through 'anti-image' box.

Based on the five components or factors a composite index was designed for measuring the perception of tourists. Each question in the factor was assigned a weight of 1/18 and the total weight of the factor was calculated based on the number of components included in it. For the analysis only 14 questions were considered.

The value of the factor index is divided into three categories, namely low perception, medium perception and high perception. The low perception is considered for the value between 47 to 110. The medium perception value lies between 110 to 173 and the high perception value lies between 173 to 235. The total perception value will range from 235 to 1175. The low perception is considered for the value between 235 to 548. The medium perception value lies between 548 to 861 and the high perception value lies between 861 to 1175.

Result and Analysis

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.849	18

The Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability was done on the eighteen questions and it was found that the value of Cronbach Alpha is 0.849 which in the acceptable range (Table 1) So all the questions are internally consistent and they act as a set of group in predicting the desired problem.

Table 2Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q1	64.44	69.586	.156	.852
Q2	64.58	67.583	.383	.845
Q3	64.58	64.344	.643	.836
Q4	65.26	62.243	.487	.840
Q5	64.60	65.673	.515	.840
Q6	65.05	62.998	.481	.840
Q7	65.02	67.261	.269	.849
Q8	64.98	65.357	.455	.842
Q9	65.74	64.766	.363	.846
Q10	65.42	61.630	.668	.831
Q11	65.02	64.309	.570	.837
Q12	65.56	67.110	.248	.851
Q13	65.37	65.906	.398	.844
Q14	65.67	61.796	.534	.837
Q15	65.49	61.256	.575	.835
Q16	65.33	63.272	.405	.845
Q17	65.70	61.359	.551	.836
Q18	65.19	63.631	.479	.840

From Table 2 we can see that each question has high role in deciding the value of Croanbach's Alpha and from the last column (Croanbach's Alpha if item deleted) we can find out that even if any question is deleted there will not be much effect to the value of Croanbach's Alpha.

Table 3KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.621
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	354.828
	Df	153
	Sig.	.000

The Principle Component Analysis was done on the 18 questions to find out the main components/factors which play a significant role in deciding the perception of tourist travelling to Namchi. From table-3 we can see that the KMO test of Sphericity is .621 which is more than .5, so the sampling is adequate and it can be used to predict the desired group of variables. Similarly the Bartlett's test of Sphericity is significant.

Table 4

Components

Component	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.456	30.311	30.311	3.884	21.578	21.578
2	2.268	12.599	42.910	2.958	16.434	38.012
3	1.837	10.203	53.113	2.319	12.883	50.896
4	1.479	8.215	61.328	1.645	9.139	60.035
5	1.204	6.689	68.017	1.437	7.983	68.017
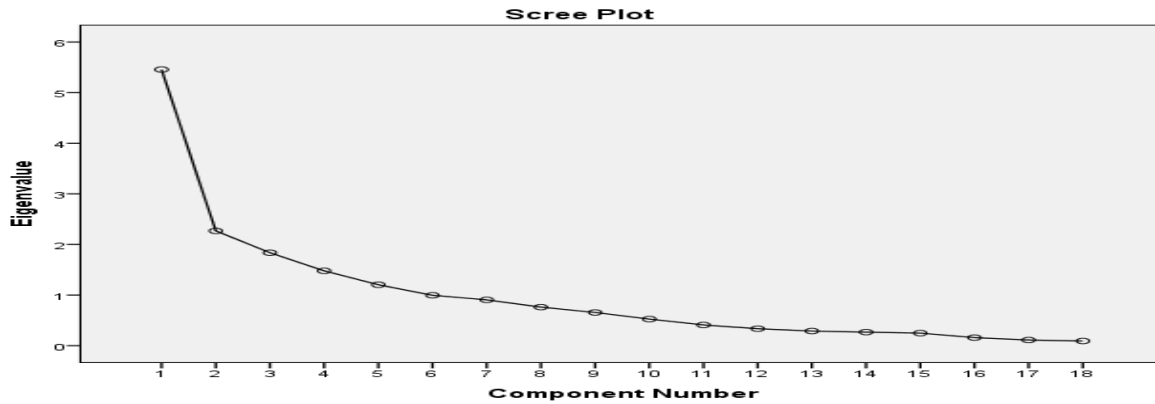
Figure 3 Scree Plot

When Principle Component Analysis was conducted it was found that there are 5 major components which can explain the perception of tourist. These components were chosen based on their Eigen values. The components which have Eigen values less than 1 were not considered for the analysis. The same can also be verified from the scree plot (fig-1). The Eigen values less than 1 have been left out.

The first, second, third, fourth and fifth components explain 30.31%, 12.60%, 10.20%, 8.21% and 6.69% of the total variation respectively. The five components together explain 68.01% of the total variation. From the above we can conclude that the five components can be used to analyse the perception of tourists.

Table 5. Component Matrix[a]

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Q1	.188	.321	-.262	**.802**	.156
Q2	.477	-.281	-.095	**.671**	-.012
Q3	**.738**	-.151	.069	.128	-.167
Q4	.622	-.493	.264	.003	-.103
Q5	.649	-.546	-.071	-.148	-.142
Q6	.556	.055	.192	-.304	**.298**
Q7	.330	-.175	.114	.075	**.765**
Q8	.570	-.298	-.018	-.002	.141

Q9	.497	-.339	-.435	-.230	-.125
Q10	**.762**	-.235	-.096	-.186	.002
Q11	**.667**	.003	-.061	.268	-.400
Q12	.291	.440	**.671**	-.006	-.296
Q13	.420	.306	**.577**	.087	-.028
Q14	.597	.155	**.536**	-.011	.143
Q15	.618	**.488**	-.210	-.053	.201
Q16	.446	**.459**	-.280	-.069	-.137
Q17	.602	.428	-.342	-.178	**.220**
Q18	.515	**.535**	-.343	-.205	-.189

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 5 components extracted.

Table-5 gives the component matrix of the 5 components. The three highest values in the first component are of question 10, 3 and 11 respectively. These questions are about the local transport, safety and fares charged. The factor 1 can be collectively termed as "Travel Experience". The second factor consists of questions 18, 15 and 16 which deal with the health and hygiene, booking services and quality of foods at the hotels. This factor can be termed as "Hospitality at Hotels". Third factor includes questions 12, 13 and 14 which collect information about the availability of restaurants, quality of food and food prices respectively. This factor is termed as "Food Facilities". The fourth factor consists of questions 1 and 2 which are about the beauty of the destination and its closeness to nature. This factor is termed as "Opinion about the Destination". The fifth factor consists of questions 7, 6 and 17, which are about the opening hours, information about the destination and help desk at the destination. This factor is termed as "Experience at the Destination".

Index of Perception

Each question is assign the weight of 1/14 and based on the number of questions in a factor, the total weight of the factor is calculated. For e.g. the factor "Travel Experience" consist of three questions with each question having a weight of 1/14. Thus the total weight of the factor is 3/14. Similarly, for the second factor "Hospitality at Hotels", "Food Facilities and "Experience at the

Destination" each have weight of 3/14 respectively. As the factor "Opinion about the Destination" consist of two Questions, the total weight for this factor is 2/14. The weights of all the factors can be combined to find out the tourist perception about the place.

Tourist Perception= 3/14(Travel Experience) + 3/14(Hospitality at Hotels) +3/14(Food Facilities)

+ 2/14 (Opinion about the Destination)+ 3/14 (Experience at the Destination)

Table 6

Factor	Questions	Total score	Weighted score	Perception level
Travel experience	10, 3 , 11	322	1/3*322=107.33	Low
Hospitality at Hotels	18,15,16	294	1/3*294=98	Low
Food facilities	12,13,14	285	1/3*285=95	Low
Opinion about the destination	1,2	244	½*244=122	Medium
Experience at the Destination	7,6,13	293	1/3*293=97.67	Low

The above table shows low perception values for the factors "Travel Experience", "Hospitality at Hotels", "Food Facilities" and "Experience at the Destination" whereas it is medium for the factor "Opinion about the Destination".

The total perception can be calculated from the above formula. The value for the total perception comes out to be 520 which is also in the low perception range.

Conclusion

The study was conducted as part of the 'Ten Days Research Methodology Workshop for the Ph.D. Scholars" held at management Department, Sikkim University. This study aims to measure the perception of tourist travelling to Namchi district of South Sikkim. The primary survey was carried out at the two tourist spots of Namchi- Samdruptse and SiddheshwarDham (Char Dham).

It was found that there are five major components which plays a vital role in determining the tourist perception. These five components are-"Travel Experience", "Hospitality at Hotels", "Food Facilities, "Experience at the Destination" and "Opinion about the Destination". The low perception values for the four components suggest that there need to be measures taken at the Government level and at the individual level. The travel experience of the tourists can be improved by providing them with better accessibility, connectivity and safety at the destination. The better services can help in improving the tourist perception about the hospitality at hotels. By providing the tourist with variety of restaurants and cafeteria and better quality of foods at reasonable price will lead to improvement in perception of tourists about the food facilities. The tourists have medium perception value on the indicator "Opinion about the Destination" indicates that the place is naturally and well protected. The perception of the tourist at the destination is measured through the indicator of "Experience at the Destination" which has a low perception value. From the above analysis we can find out that the tourist are satisfied with the natural beauty of the place but they are not satisfied with the facilities provided at the destination and the local hospitality. This result is also supported by the combined perception index developed. The tourists have a low perception value on the overall combined perception index.

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Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are Research Scholars at Department of Economics, Banaras Hindu University. We are assigned with a field work as part of the ICSSR sponsored 'Ten Days Research Methodology Workshop' organized by Department of Management, Sikkim University. The topic of our assignment is "**The Determinants and Measure of Tourist Perception: A Study of Namchi District of Sikkim**". The success of the study depends on your cooperation. Enclosed questionnaire aims at seeking information regarding tourist's perception. Kindly give the objective responses to the questionnaire. Your response to this survey will be kept strictly confidential. Responses from all participants will be combined, analysed and the findings will be reported only in the aggregate form. The data gathered will be used only for my academic research.

Your cooperation is solicited.

Yours Sincerely

Siddharth Singh, Anup Kumar Yadava&YadawanandaNeog

Please indicate a tick mark against the appropriate option

1.   Respondent information

i.   Name:

ii.   State:

iii.   Age (in years)

a)   Above 18

b)   30-40

c)   40-50

d)   50-Above

iv.   Gender

a)   Male   (   )   b) Female   (   )

v.   Marital Status

a)   Unmarried (   )   b) Married (   )

vi.   Educational Qualification:

vii.   Current Status:

a.   Employed   b. Unemployed

viii.   Monthly income (Rs)

a.   Less than 10,000   b. 10,000-20,000   c. 20,000-30,000

d.   30,000-40,000   e. 40,000 and above

Questionnaire

Below are questions regarding tourist's perception of tourist's travelling to Namchi. For each question below, please tick mark the response that best describes your opinion.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Tourist Perception

1	The nature of the destination is well protected	1	2	3	4	5
2	The place is close to nature	1	2	3	4	5
3	The drivers/travel agents charges reasonable fares	1	2	3	4	5
4	The destination is convenient to travel	1	2	3	4	5
5	The climatic condition is favourable	1	2	3	4	5
6	The information is easily available to the tourists	1	2	3	4	5
7	The opening hours of the destination is convenient	1	2	3	4	5
8	Service sign & symbols are easily available	1	2	3	4	5
9	Transportation is of reasonable price	1	2	3	4	5
10	Is it easy to understand and use local transport	1	2	3	4	5
11	There is a safe transportation	1	2	3	4	5
12	The destination has varieties of restaurants and cafeteria	1	2	3	4	5
13	The quality of food and beverages is good	1	2	3	4	5

14	Food and beverages are of reasonable price	1	2	3	4	5
15	The booking service is efficient at hotels	1	2	3	4	5
16	There is pleasant hospitality at hotel	1	2	3	4	5
17	Help desk is easily available at the destination	1	2	3	4	5
18	The health and hygiene is properly maintained at hotels	1	2	3	4	5