

A Geographical Analysis of Influx of Tourism and Its Impact in Zaskar and Ladakh Trans Himalayan Region

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Abstract

Tourism has a vital role in the economy of Himalayan region. In the last few decades the influx of tourism has increased tremendously. Each year, millions of tourists visit Himalayas. Sensitive to outside influences, the Himalayan environment of mountain areas has been abruptly exposed to it. The authorities of the Himalayan countries try to conserve them and currently, there are 126 areas under protection. The policy makers nowadays focused on controlled tourism policy in the mountainous region. The Ladakh Trans Himalayan region has seen tremendous influx of tourism since 1974. It has huge impact on the tourism industry of every areas of ladakh. Zaskar is one of the such areas which have highly influenced the tourism sector. Both domestic as well as foreigners are arriving in Ladakh with huge in numbers. These forms of western mass tourism have a huge impact on the environment and on the local social structure. This paper will explain the impact of tourism and influx of tourism in ladakh and Zaskar. For the familiar with local population regarding tourism related activities survey has been conducted. It has been revealed through the survey and investigation that tourism has increased for the last few decades.

Introduction

Himalayas are becoming most important destinations for tourism. The millions of tourist are visiting Himalayan region for the biking, hiking, tracking and study of nature. Thus, mountains have become a mass tourist destination. With the influence of tourism (foreign cultures and ideas); economies and politics, and social, cultural, and psychological conditions are also changing.

However, due to the low level of socio-economic development in the Himalayan countries, there is currently no possibility of realizing a comprehensive, rational and balanced approach to nature protection and tourism industry in the Himalayan region. There are ongoing attempts to selectively preserve areas characterized by primary nature and rare flora and fauna, and balance pro-poor development objectives with conservation goals.

Zaskar has a typical tribal culture has remained in isolation for decades. This region has got connectivity with the rest of world in 1980s when the only road from Kargil to Zaskar built up. The region has experienced impact on their language, costume, food items, culture, lifestyle and education because of interaction with outsider.

Study Area

Nomenclature of Zaskar comes from the local word “Zangskar” meaning white copper. Zaskar is basically a Buddhist area with a small Muslim population. It covers area of some 7000 Km² and is situated at an elevation between 3500 and 7000 meters above the mean sea level. Its climate is very severe and it remains cut off from the rest of the world from November to June when only limited helicopter service is its only link with outside world. The region remains snow-covered during winters and

movement of people comes to nearly within the region. Winter is severely cold and nearly no outdoor activity is possible for four to five months. People live in small houses build of stone, mud and wood. Human beings and domestic animals share the same cooking-cum-

The villages are mostly situated along the two main tributaries of Zaskar River. The first one, the Stot, has its source near the Pensi-La (4400m.) . The second branch is formed by two main tributaries known as *Kurgiakh-chu* with its source near the Shingo-La and *Tsarap-chu* with its source near the Baralacha-La. These two rivers unite below the village of Purne to form the Luknak River also named *Lingti* or *Tsarap*. The Luknak-Chu then flows northwestwards along a narrow

standstill even

sleeping room on ground floor during winter months. Domestic animals are grazed on natural pastures in summers but have to be stall-fed during winters. Fig.1 shows the location map of the project area.

and precipitous gorge towards the Padum village where it unites with Stot River to form Zaskar River.

The Great Himalayan Range is to the south west and it separate Zaskar from Kishtwar and Chamba districts. To the northeast lies Zaskar Range separating Zaskar from Leh district. Zaskar River is the only drainage outlet for whole Zaskar region. It cuts a deep and narrow gorge through the Zaskar range.

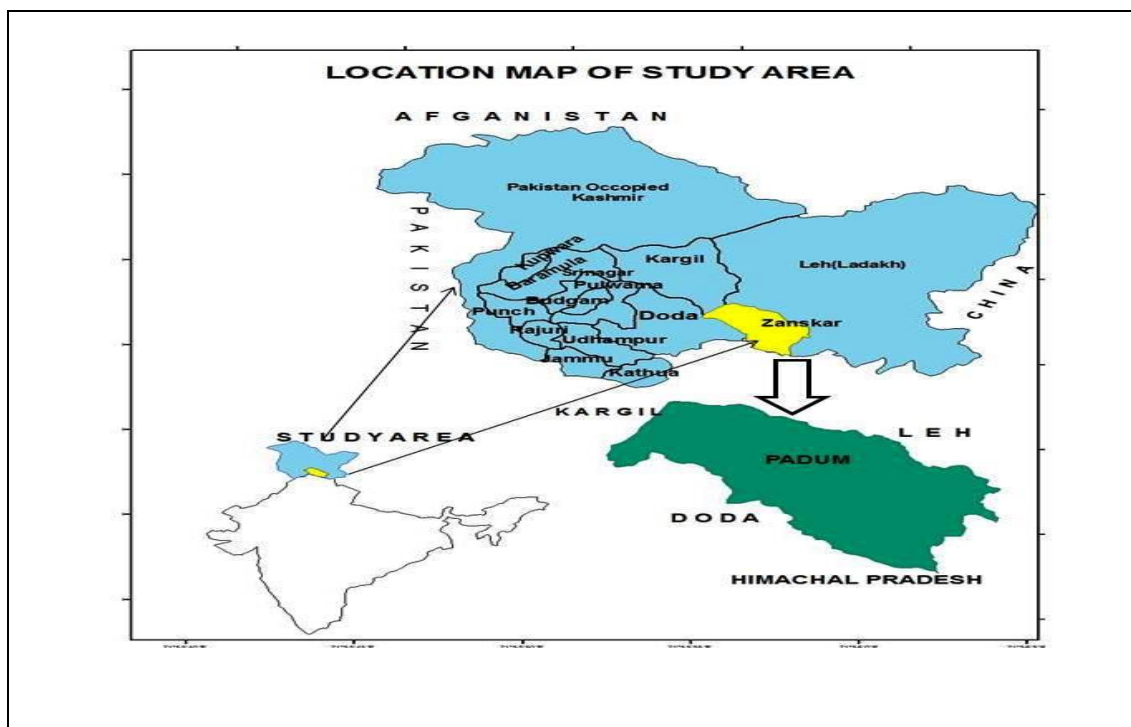


Fig: 1

This topographical configuration makes access to Zaskar difficult from all sides. Communication with the neighbour Himalayan areas is maintained through mountain passes or along Zaskar River.

The river freezes during winter months and provide a route to Leh district. This is called *Chader* route. People track on this route during winter from December to first week of February to reach Leh. The easiest

approach is from Kargil through Suru Valley and Pensi La. It is along this route that only road to was built in 1979 to connect Padum with Kargil. Remoteness of this region also explains why only a few western travelers have visited this area until recent times. Tibetologist Alexander Csoma de Körös was the first Europeans to visit Zaskar in 1823. Moreover, because of its strategic location of entire Ladakh region close to border with Pakistan and China, Zaskar was declared a restricted area and was reopened to foreigners only in 1974.

Discussion

Database and methodology

The prime objectives of present paper is focused on the study of influx of tourism and impact in Ladakha and in Zaskar Trans-Himalayan region. The present paper is based on observation of primary and secondary data sources. The primary survey has been conducted in relevant data to meet the objectives of study have been obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Information pertaining to tourism related issues was not available; therefore, in order to familiarize with the area and to know about these aspects, the researcher conducted four months survey through questionnaires of 237 households in 24 revenue villages of Zaskar in 2014 and 2015.

The paper is based on the analysis of various parameters of tourism related factors acquired through questionnaires. All collected information were tabulated and compiled for further analysis. Statistical techniques have been used to analyze various kinds of data. GIS

software Arc 9.1 has been used to prepare various types of maps.

Local community involvement in tourism related economic activity

Ladakh was a restricted area for the tourism till 1974 because of security reasons. Ladakh has open for tourism in the year of 1974. After that people have got engaged in tourism related economic activities primarily concentrated in Leh and subsequently in areas like Zaskar. In the last few decades tourism has become main source of earning for the youth of the region.

Table 1. shows people involvement in tourism related economic activities as an alternative livelihood. Figure 2 and 3 also explains the same thing. The table inferred that 40 percent of total respondents are associated with tourism related economic activities. At the same time 60 percent respondents are not involved in tourism related economic activity. This shows that Zaskar as being a rural area involvement of 40 percent respondents are involved in tourism industry. Village wise data shows that Techa Khasar (100 percent), Remala (100 percent), Pipcha (100 percent), Padum (67 percent), and Raru Money (86 percent) have highest percentage of respondents who are associated with tourism industry. Padum is the headquarter of Zaskar Sub-Division. The villages which are least involved in tourism related economic activity are Hamiling (100 percent), Phey (100 percent), Tongde (90 percent) and Salapi (82 percent).

The tourism industry starts in the month of May and finished in the ending of August. So there is very short span of time for tourism related economic activity. The prime tourism related activity are

providing taxi services, guide, hotel, guest house, restaurant, providing horse for tracking, cook etc. Some of the educated

youths are also running tour and travel agency in Ladakh.

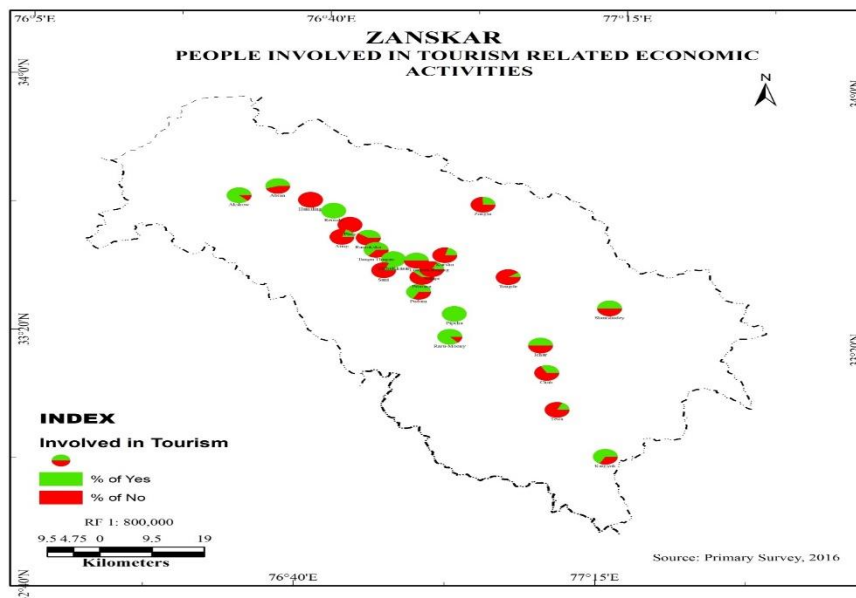


Fig: 2

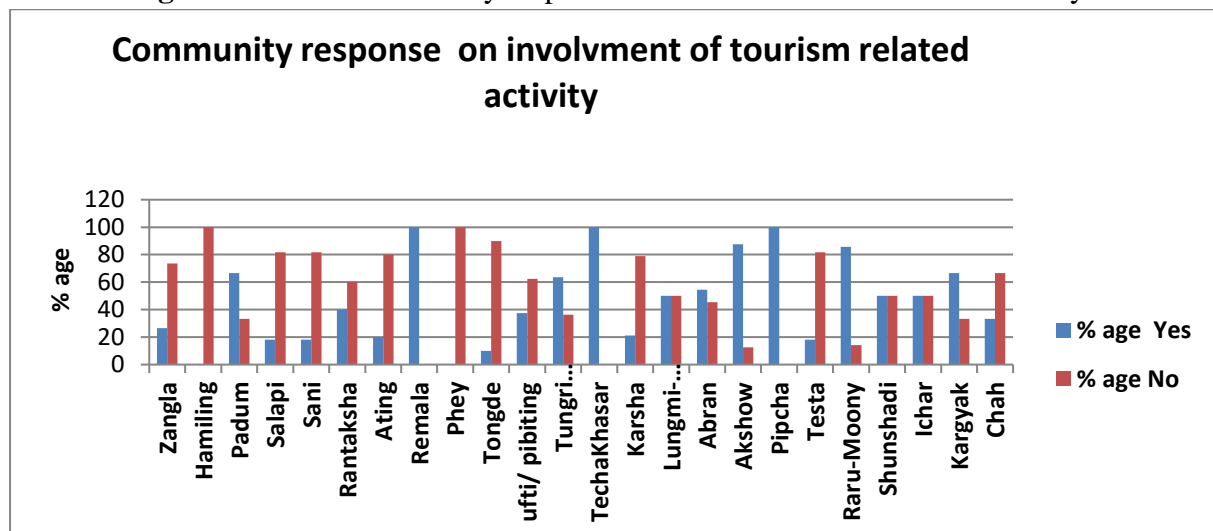
Table 1. People involved in tourism related economic activities

Sno	Block	Village	Total households	Yes	% age	No	% age
1	Padum	Zangla	34	9	26	25	74
2	Padum	Hamiling	2	0	0	2	100
3	Padum	Padum	18	12	67	6	33
4	Zaskar	Salapi	11	2	18	9	82
5	Kargil	Sani	11	2	18	9	82
6	Stoth	Rantaksha	5	2	40	3	60
7	Stoth	Ating	5	1	20	4	80
8	Zaskar	Remala	2	2	100	0	0
9	Stoth	Phey	11	0	0	11	100
10	Padum	Tongde	10	1	10	9	90
11	Padum	ufti/ pibiting	24	9	38	15	63
12	Kargil	Tungri Thagan	11	7	64	4	36
13	Kargil	Techa Khasar	3	3	100	0	0
14	Kargil	Karsha	19	4	21	15	79
15	Kargil	Lungmi- Regin	2	1	50	1	50

16	Padum	Abran	22	12	55	10	45
17	Kargil	Akshow	8	7	88	1	13
18	Kargil	Pipcha	5	5	100	0	0
19	Kargil	Testa	11	2	18	9	82
20	Kargil	Raru-Moony	7	6	86	1	14
21	Kargil	Shunshadi	8	4	50	4	50
22	Kargil	Ichar	2	1	50	1	50
23	Kargil	Kargyak	3	2	67	1	33
24	Kargil	Chahh	3	1	33	2	67
		Total	237	95	40	142	60

Sources: Primary Survey 2016

Figure 3. Shows community respond on tourism related economic activity.



Flow of tourism in Ladakh

Ladakh through for tourism in 1974 and it has a history of 36 years old. During this period approximately 1354540 tourists have visited Ladakht of which 904382 are foreign and 450158 are Indian. An increasing number of visitors are attracted to its unique landscape, monastery, culture, tradition, and environment. The tourism industry is now an important socio-economic factor of Ladakh. Tourism is generating revenue and creating employment opportunities and jobs on a large scale basis in related

sectors such as hotels, guest houses, restaurants, catering services, transport, guides and mule porters, shops, retailers, handicrafts etc..

Today tourism is a major contributor to the local economy (around 50% of the local GDP) but the benefits of the tourism industry are still concentrated mostly in and around Leh town. However, all infrastructural systems (water, sanitation, disposal, power, etc.) are under parallel increasing pressures. Because of tourism there is an excellent backward and forward linkages between the rural economy and

city. Rural economy is dominated with agriculture and they provide milk, vegetables and fruits.

Table 2 and figure 4 shows the arrival of tourism in Ladakh since 1974 to 2019. It can be inferred from the table and diagram that initially tourism flow was negligible. There was only flow of 500 international tourist and 27 domestic tourist. The number has got increased in 1980 i.e 13104 international tourist and 1013 domestic tourist. That is mainly because of connecting Ladakh with Manali in Himachal Pradesh with 472 Km national highway and Srinagar to Ladakh

with 235 Km national highway. The flow trend shows always upward except only for two years i.e 1999 and 2010. The number was got declined in 1999. The total international tourist was 10234 and domestic tourist was 2110. This is mainly because of Kargil war in 1999. There is again declined in the year 2010. The total international tourist were 33750 persons and domestic tourist were 16490 persons. The prime reason for decline is Leh cloudburst in 2010. The number has got increased for international tourist i.e 51619 persons of international and 25221 persons are domestic tourist.

Table 2. Arrival of international and domestic tourist in Ladakh.

year	International	Domestic	Total
1974	500	27	527
1975	650	128	778
1976	1798	253	2051
1977	7127	266	7393
1978	8748	873	9621
1979	9213	621	9834
1980	13104	1013	14117
1981	1400	NA	NA
1982	12786	NA	NA
1983	12833	NA	NA
1984	11785	NA	NA
1985	12245	6666	18911
1986	12828	3683	16511
1987	13668	4114	17782
1988	16256	8608	24864
1989	16079	6669	22748
1990	6342 (12 Percent)	396 (14 Percent)	6738 (12 Percent)
1991	8014	1041	9055
1992	13580	2438	16018
1993	12401	2000	14401
1994	14369	2080	16449
1995	12391	5594	17985
1996	13036	3537	16573
1997	12810	3991	16801

1998	15229	6767	21996
1999	10234	2110	12344
2000	11828 (1 Percent)	6227 (15 Percent)	18055 (1 Percent)
2001	15439	4260	19699
2002	5120	2959	8079
2003	15362	13031	28393
2004	21608	13483	35091
2005	24536	13444	37980
2006	26114	17707	43821
2007	28178	26168	54346
2008	35311	39023	74334
2009	30570	48517	79087
2010	33750	16490	50240
2011	35736	17460	53196
2012	35736	17460	53196
2013	37721	18430	56151
2014	39706	19400	59106
2015	43677	21341	65018
2016	45663	22311	67974
2017	47648	23281	70929
2018	49634	24251	73885
2019	51619 (1 Percent)	25221 (1 Percent)	76840 (1 Percent)

Sources: Department of tourism, LAHDC. Leh

Figure 4. Shows flow of tourism in Ladakh (1974-2019).

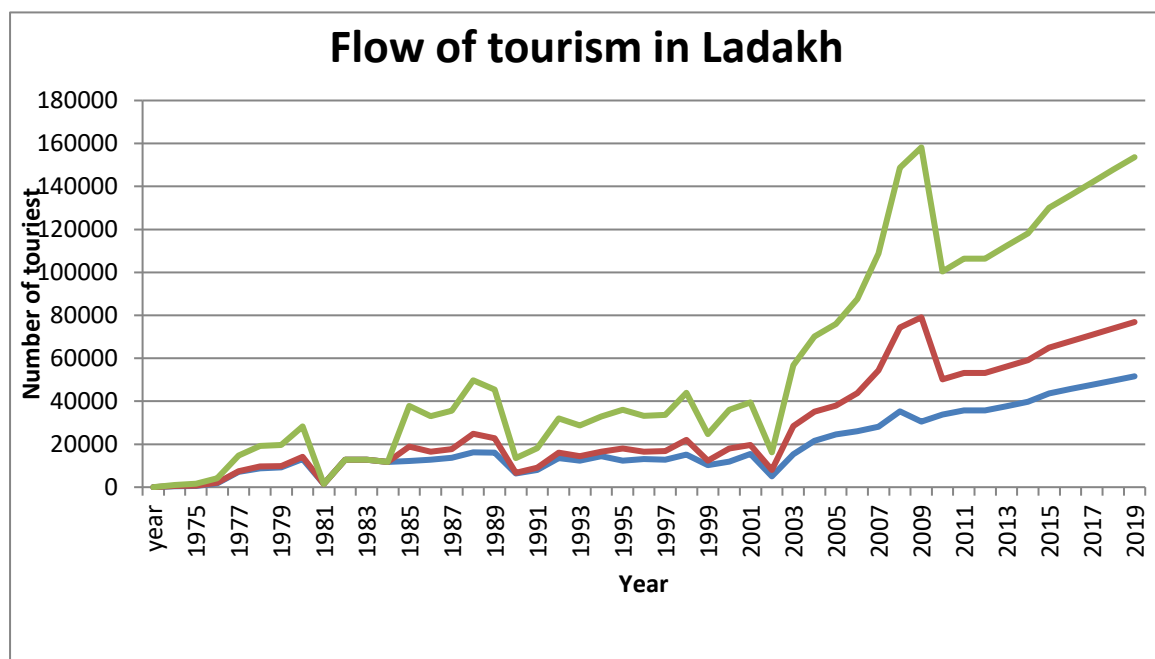


Table 3. The positive effects of tourism in Zaskar.

Sno	Block	Village	Total households	Yes	% age	No	% age
1	Padum	Zangla	34	30	88	4	12
2	Padum	Hamiling	2	2	100	0	0
3	Padum	Padum	18	10	56	8	44
4	Zaskar	Salapi	11	10	91	1	9
5	Kargil	Sani	11	10	91	1	9
6	Stoth	Rantaksha	5	5	100	0	0
7	Stoth	Ating	5	5	100	0	0
8	Zaskar	Remala	2	2	100	0	0
9	Stoth	Phey	11	9	82	2	18
10	Padum	Tongde	10	9	90	1	10
11	Padum	Ufti/ Pibiting	24	24	100	0	0
12	Kargil	Tungri Thahan	11	9	82	2	18
13	Kargil	TechaKhasar	3	2	67	1	33
14	Kargil	Karsha	19	17	89	2	11
15	Kargil	Langmi/ Reging	2	2	100	0	0
16	Padum	Abran	22	22	100	0	0
17	Kargil	Akshow	8	8	100	0	0
18	Kargil	Pipcha	5	5	100	0	0
19	Kargil	Testa	11	10	91	1	9
20	Kargil	Raru-Moony	7	7	100	0	0
21	Kargil	Shunshadi	8	7	88	1	13
22	Kargil	Ichar	2	2	100	0	0
23	Kargil	Kargyak	3	3	100	0	0
24	Kargil	Chah	3	2	67	1	33

Figure 5. Community respond on positive impact of tourism on their life.

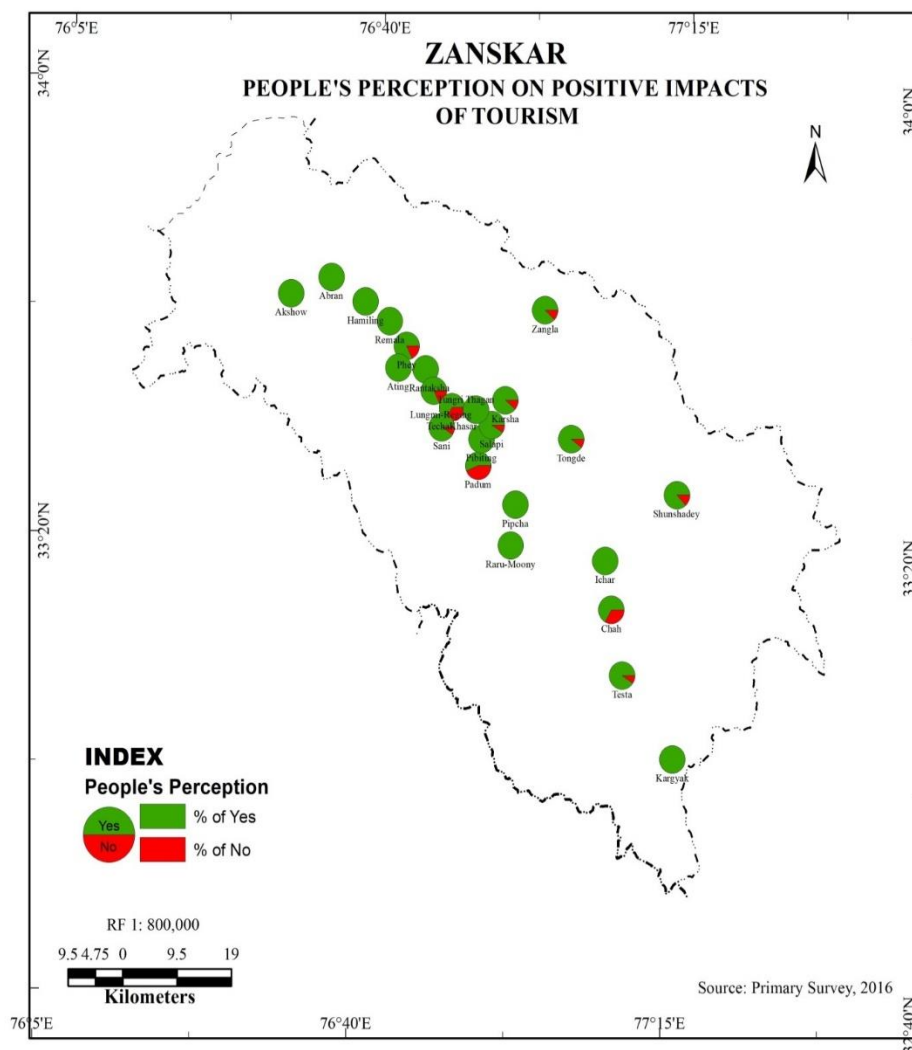
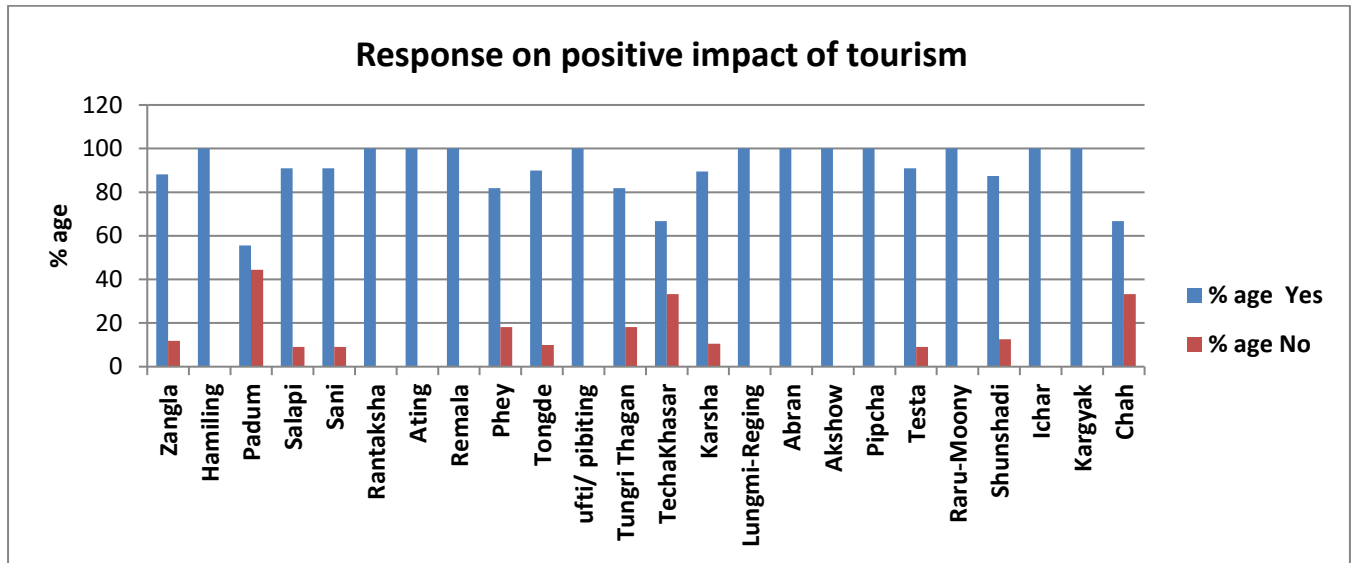


Fig.6

Positive impact of tourism

As we have seen that tourism has wider impact on language, costumes, food habits, lifestyle and moral values. The tourism has positive impact on the overall development of economy. It has wider impact on mountain region as it enhances local micro-economy. The same response has been observed from the local community of Zaskar that they have responded that tourism has wide positive impact on their life.

Table 3, figure 5 and 6 shows that tourism has wider positive impact on society. It can be analyzed from the table that almost every village respondent have a response that their village has a positive impact of tourism. The villages which have seen impact on language are Hamiling, Rantaksha, Ating, Remala, Ufti Pibiting, Langmi Reging, Abran, Akshow and Pipcha have seen 100 percent positive impact of tourism. In these villages have highest respondents who have observed positive impact of tourism on their life.

Conclusion

This can be inferred that tourism industry is an important source of livelihood and has open opportunity for many youths of Zaskar in particular and Ladakh in general. The 40 percent respondents are involved in the tourism industry which is huge percentage in the area. The area is primarily dominated by primary sector.

It can be concluded from the above discussion that local community in this region adopted new sources of livelihood like tourism, business, and government sector. They have adopted themselves for new form of economy. Earlier people used to involve themselves only in the

agriculture and livestock rearing. In the peripheral villages are still practicing their parental occupation because of lack of opportunity. The villages surrounding the headquarter have shifted in other sectors of economy. Almost every local community has responded that they left the transhumance economic activity in every village. It is mainly because of shifting in other sources of livelihood. There are few villages where people are still practicing transhumance economic activity.

The number of tourist in Ladakh has always uptrend. The flow has multiplied many folds after 1980 mainly because of connecting Ladakh with Manali of Himachal Pradesh and Srinagar. In the year 1999 and 2010 there is sharp decline in tourist mainly because of Kargil war in 1999 and Ladakh cloud burst in 2010. It can be inferred from the table that the tourism industry has wider impact on language, costumes, culture, lifestyle, food habits and education. The respondent in Zaskar has responded that they have observed impact of tourism on positive way. It has wider impact on mountain region as it helps to improve local micro-economy.

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