

Existing Sustainable Green Tourism Practices in Nainital: A Tourist and Stakeholder Assessment

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*green tourism;
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carrying capacity;
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ABSTRACT

Nainital, a hill town based on a lake, in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, is a very popular weekend and seasonal tourist destination and is overburdened with the heavy tourist load. A questionnaire with 12 items at five Likert scale was used for structured questionnaires with 300 respondents divided equally between tourists (n = 150) and tourism stakeholders (n = 150). The following statistical procedures were used to analyse the data: Cronbach's alpha, exploratory factor analysis, one-sample and independent-samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA with Tukey post-hoc tests, correlation and multiple regression. Three dimensions were identified (66.6% cumulative variance: Waste, lake and traffic management; Community and cultural welfare; Regulation, awareness and business adoption). The overall scored was significantly higher than the neutral point (M = 3.48, $p < .001$) and it was proposed that existing practices can effect on environmental and community outcomes, however the weakest part was tourist awareness of green practices (Q10, M = 3.05). Practices were rated lower by tourists than stakeholders ($p < .001$), perceptions varied by five types of respondents, and the three dimensions accounted for 49.7% of the variance in perceived overall effectiveness, with community and cultural welfare being the best predictor. Implicit suggestions are made for the destination managers, hoteliers and policy makers of Uttarakhand.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nainital is located in the foothills of the Himalaya in Kumaon of Uttarakhand at a height of 6358 ft above sea level, some 276 km from Dehradun and 314 km from New Delhi. The eye-shaped Naini Lake, forested hills and colonial heritage make it one of the most visited hill stations of northern India, and a popular weekend getaway for visitors from the National Capital Region and the city of Delhi, who can reach it within a day's drive (Kumar et al., 2023; Pintilli & Draghici, 2010). Tourism generates revenue and jobs, promotes infrastructure and culture for the host community (Singh, 2018; Ahmed, 2013).

The same popularity puts pressure. Roofs, parking, accommodation and water supply become overcrowded, litter is found in abundance, road congestion is an issue, and the behaviour of visitors to the hills changes, all of which have been documented for peak time holidays in the hills (Cooper, 2016; Taiminen, 2018; Gupta et al., 2022). The overtourism issue in Nainital is discussed by Barbhuiya (2020), while Melkani and Kumar (2021) highlight the unplanned and unbalanced development in Kumaon area, and Jacob et al. (2024) explore the correlation between uncontrolled tourism, inadequate planning and pollution. Barbhuiya (2020) discusses overtourism in Nainital, Melkani and Kumar (2021) discuss unplanned and unbalanced development in Kumaon area, and Jacob et al. (2024) explore the correlation between uncontrolled tourism and inadequate planning and pollution in Uttarakhand. The question of how destinations can handle this pressure is a practical one as the concept of carrying capacity (McCool, 2001) and the evidence that crowding negatively affects visitor satisfaction (Zehrer, 2016) have prevailed for a long time

One answer is green tourism practices. The efforts they can make comprise waste separation and recycling, plastic bans, protecting the lake, curbing traffic, conserving forests, and using eco-friendly resources by the hotels and involvement of the communities (Andari & Setiyorini, 2016; Tan, 2021; Markose et al., 2022). Nainital has adopted some of these such as lake wardens, fines for plastic waste and door-to-door waste collection (Lad, 2020), heavy vehicle ban near the lake and a solid-waste programme for the community (Pande, 2011) and prohibition on encroachment by forest-department (Negi, 2019). However, the storyline outlined in this paper does uncover a gap; a systematic study measuring tourists' and the destination's stakeholders evaluation of these practices does not exist. This paper aims to fill some of the gaps by using a survey of tourists and tourism stakeholders to study the existing Green practices in Nainital. It serves four purposes: It implements the current practices with a twelve item Likert scale; it validates a three-dimensional structure; it tests four hypotheses related to effectiveness, group differences and drivers of overall effectiveness; and it prioritizes practices for enhancement of green practice.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Tourism, carrying capacity and over-tourism

Tourism enhances the incomes and employment of the host-community, but the more successful it is, the more visitors are attracted and the more pressure it puts on the community and the environment (Cooper, 2016). Where infrastructure is not keeping up, the effects on the environment include contaminated water, lack of drinking water, waste and changes to topography, and Gupta et al. (2022) warn that tourists shouldn't be fully blamed as inadequate infrastructure and policy gaps are just as responsible. As water consumption increases, as can litter, prices and rents, which can displace residents, adds Taiminen (2018). Adie (2019) found that there is a difference between the rural and urban residents in their perception of over-tourism, indicating variance among groups. In the context of Nainital, Barbhuiya (2020) has found that there is an issue of over-tourism in Nainital while Melkani and Kumar (2021) found that the region of Nainital is facing an issue of uneven development in it and Badar (2020) found the issue of unbalanced development between the core and outskirts of Shimla. Tourism on the weekend is a significant contributor. Pintilli and Draghici (2010) demonstrate that visitors come to nature during brief breaks and Dissart et al. (2009) demonstrate that these visitors, although they do not utilise many facilities, make a significant contribution to local economies. These dynamics mean peak demands for Nainital over weekends and holidays.

2.2 Green practices and initiatives in Nainital and Uttarakhand

The administration of Nainital has implemented a few measures. Lad (2020) speaks about the lake development authority's lake wardens, municipal board and forest department, fines on plastic waste and door-to-door waste collection. Heavy trucks were banned from entering the vicinity of the lake by the high court (Pande, 2011), and an integrated solid-waste programme set up by the community at major drop-off locations and recycling centres. Negi (2019) attributes the forest department with good control of encroachment. Beg et al. (2018) and Ahmed (2013) have done review on sustainable tourism development in Nainital and in Uttarakhand and Kumar et al. (2023) have done evaluation on tourism in Nainital district with a focus on socio-cultural integration. These sources are used to describe practices without trying to indicate how the practices are assessed by the user or stakeholders, which is why the first hypothesis is motivated. H1: Existing green tourism practices in Nainital (waste, lake and traffic management; community and cultural welfare; regulation, awareness and business adoption) are perceived significantly above the neutral scale midpoint.

2.3 Community, culture and sustainability pillars

Singh (2018) argues that economic, ecological, cultural and local sustainability should all be taken into account when developing destinations and Habimana et al. (2023) present a critique of sustainable tourism development from a similar perspective. The participatory involvement of the community is a key factor: Kala and Bagri (2018) discuss the challenges of local involvement in tourism in Uttarakhand; Dewi et al. (2023) demonstrate the role of local wisdom in green tourism in Bali. Evidence from Wayanad (Markose et al., 2022), Bhutan (Matharu & Xalxo, 2017), Da Nang (Tan, 2021), Telangana (Vijaya Lakshmi et al., 2024) and the entrepreneurship literature (Al-Romeedy, 2024; Daneshwar & Revaty, 2024) points to the importance of regulation, awareness and business adoption in turning green intentions into practice. The position of tourists and various stakeholders differ: tourists are users of practices, while the other stakeholders are operators, beneficiaries or enforcers of practices. The tourists in Uttaranchal were satisfied with hygiene and heritage as observed by Masarrat (2012). Hence:

H2: Tourists and tourism stakeholders differ significantly in their perception of existing green practices.

H3: Perceptions of existing green practices differ significantly across the five respondent categories (tourists, accommodation and restaurant owners/staff, transport, boatmen and parking operators, craft sellers and guides, and government, police and healthcare personnel).

2.4 Drivers of perceived effectiveness and conceptual framework

Perceptions of current green practices vary greatly between the five categories of respondents (tourists, accommodation and restaurant owners/employees, transport staff, boatmen and parking owners, craft sellers and guides, and government, police and health workers). H4: Waste, lake and traffic management, community and cultural welfare, and regulation, awareness and business adoption each have a significant positive effect on the perceived overall effectiveness of green practices.

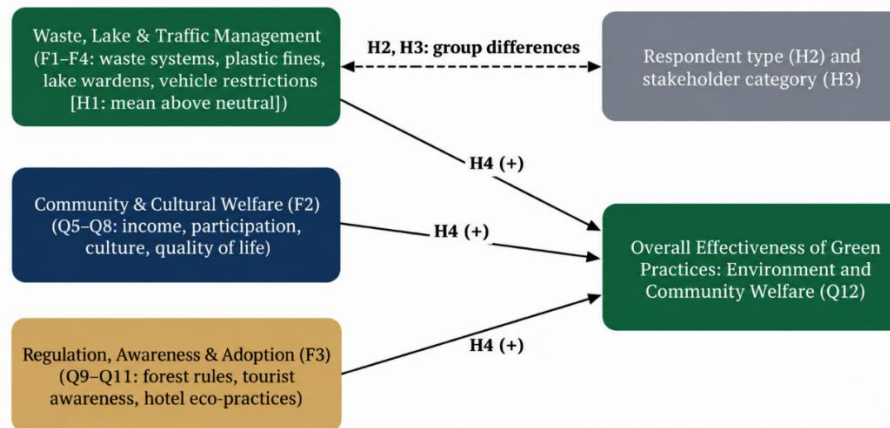


Figure 1. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design and study area

The design of the study was cross-sectional descriptive and analytical survey. The study area is Nainital city in Uttarakhand which is the part of the larger tourism system which includes lake destinations around Nainital such as Bhimtal, Naukuchiyatal, Ramgarh and Mukteshwar. The paper reports the questionnaire strand which aims to study the present practises and initiatives adopted by the sustainable green tourism in Nainital and to test the hypothesis that is to test the hypothesis of the synopsis part 1.

3.2 Sample and sampling

Stratified sampling was used to obtain the sample, with the ratio of tourism stakeholders to tourists being the same; this is described in the synopsis. The final sample consisted of N = 300 tourists and N = 150 stakeholders (accommodation providers, hotel & restaurant owners and employees (n = 51), transport providers, boatmen and parking contractors (n = 39), art and craft sellers and tourist guides (n = 30), and government officials, tourist police and healthcare professionals (n = 30)). The respondents' participation was voluntary and anonymous and informed consent was obtained.

3.3 Instrument

There were two sections to the questionnaire. Part A collected data on the following: Respondent category, gender, age, education, and monthly household income and place of residence. Part B consisted of 12 statements rated on a five point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Q1-Q4: Waste, Lake and Traffic management; Q5-Q8: Community and cultural welfare; Q9-Q11: Regulation, awareness and business adoption; Q12: Overall effectiveness to improve the environment and community welfare. The wording of the items has been taken from the literature (e.g., Lad, 2020; Pande, 2011; Negi, 2019; Kala & Bagri, 2018) and is provided in Table 2.

3.4 Data analysis

The analysis was conducted as per the synopsis which includes frequencies for the demographic profile, item descriptives (including skewness and kurtosis), Cronbach's alpha, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, Bartlett's test, principal component analysis with varimax rotation, one-sample t-tests against the neutral value of 3 (H1), independent-samples t-tests with Levene's test (H2), one-way ANOVA with Tukey post-hoc comparisons (H3), and Pearson correlation and multiple regression (H4). The level of significance was 5%. Construct score is item means, green practice index is the mean of Q1-Q11. Significance tests are always accompanied by effect sizes (Cohen's d, eta squared).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

The sample is summarised in table 1 and in figure 2. The design of the survey makes 50% of visitors the respondents. Men are 63.7% and women 36.3%. The respondents are predominantly aged 25-44 (59.0%) and have at least a graduate degree (73.7%). The tourists are mostly from Delhi-NCR and other states while the stakeholders are mostly from Nainital district, with 41.0% of all the respondents residing in the district and 31.0% in Delhi-NCR.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (N = 300)

Variable / category	Frequency	Percent
Respondent category		
Tourists	150	50.0
Accommodation and restaurant owners/staff	51	17.0
Transport, boatmen and parking	39	13.0
Craft sellers and tourist guides	30	10.0
Government, police and healthcare	30	10.0
Gender		
Male	191	63.7
Female	109	36.3
Age (years)		
Below 25	38	12.7
25-34	91	30.3
35-44	86	28.7
45-54	56	18.7
55 and above	29	9.7
Education		
Up to higher secondary	79	26.3
Graduate	130	43.3
Postgraduate and above	91	30.3
Monthly household income (INR)		
Below 20,000	71	23.7
20,000-40,000	106	35.3
40,001-60,000	72	24.0
Above 60,000	51	17.0
Place of residence		
Nainital district	123	41.0
Rest of Uttarakhand	27	9.0
Delhi-NCR	93	31.0
Other states	57	19.0

Source: Survey data.

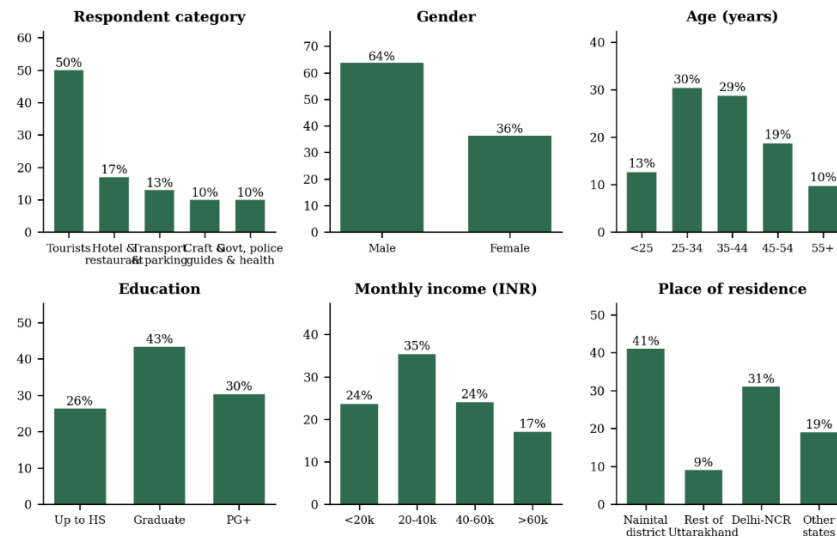


Figure 2. Demographic profile of respondents (percent of N = 300)

4.2 Descriptive analysis of Likert items

Table 2 and Figures 3 and 4 show the item results. Means range from 3.05 to 3.77. The majority of the respondents agreed that green practices have improved employment and income in the region (Q5, $M = 3.77$; 62.3%), followed by systems of waste management (Q1, $M = 3.70$) and forest and environmental regulation (Q9, $M = 3.68$). The lowest scores were obtained for tourist awareness of green practices ($M = 3.05$; 26.7 % disagree), community participation ($M = 3.20$; 26.7 % disagree) and plastic fines ($M = 3.35$; 26.7 % disagree). Skewness and kurtosis are within ± 1 indicating that parametric tests are appropriate.

Table 2. Item-wise descriptive statistics

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Skew.	Kurt.	% Agree (4-5)	% Disagree (1-2)
Q1	Waste collection, segregation and disposal systems work effectively	3.70	0.99	-0.42	-0.40	60.3	12.0
Q2	Fines and rules against plastic waste are enforced effectively	3.35	1.05	-0.12	-0.61	44.0	21.0
Q3	Lake wardens and lake-protection measures keep Naini Lake clean	3.57	1.01	-0.22	-0.65	53.0	15.0
Q4	Restrictions on heavy vehicles and traffic near the lake are effective	3.57	1.02	-0.23	-0.60	52.3	14.3
Q5	Green practices have increased local employment and income	3.77	0.97	-0.36	-0.63	62.3	10.3
Q6	The local community actively participates in green initiatives	3.20	1.00	-0.21	-0.57	42.3	25.3
Q7	Local culture, fairs and crafts are preserved alongside green practices	3.55	0.97	-0.12	-0.67	51.3	13.7
Q8	Green practices have improved the quality of life of the host community	3.51	0.97	-0.21	-0.42	50.7	14.0
Q9	Forest and environmental regulations protect nature from encroachment	3.68	1.04	-0.41	-0.63	60.0	15.0
Q10	Tourists are made aware of green practices through signage and campaigns	3.05	0.99	-0.10	-0.29	31.7	26.7
Q11	Hotels and restaurants follow eco-friendly practices (water, energy, waste)	3.33	1.02	-0.27	-0.40	45.7	20.0
Q12	Overall, existing green practices have improved Nainital's environment and community welfare	3.57	0.92	-0.34	-0.14	55.3	11.3

Note: Scale 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; N = 300 for all items.

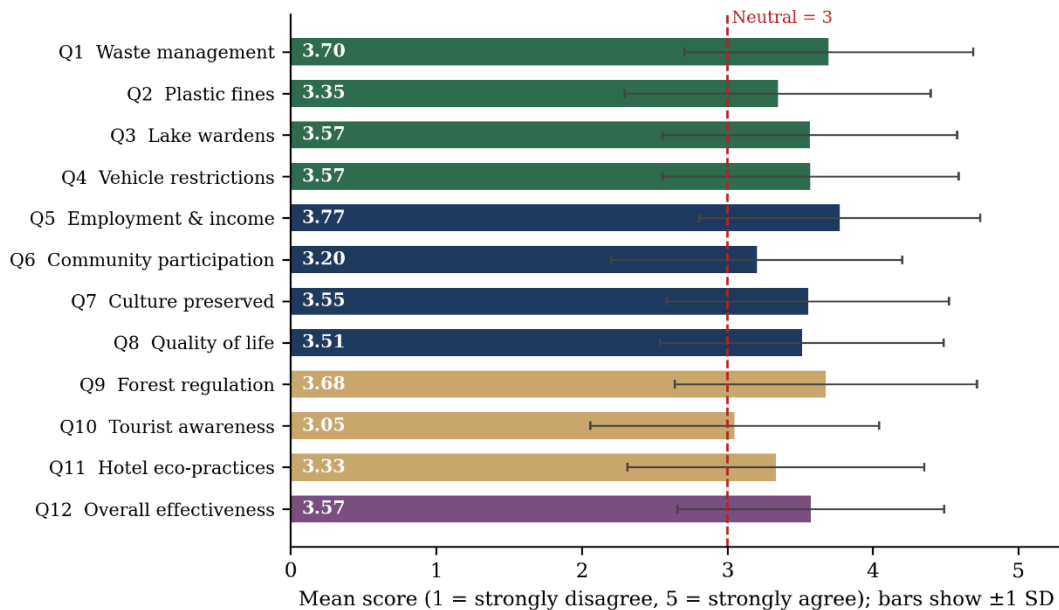


Figure 3. Mean scores of the twelve Likert items

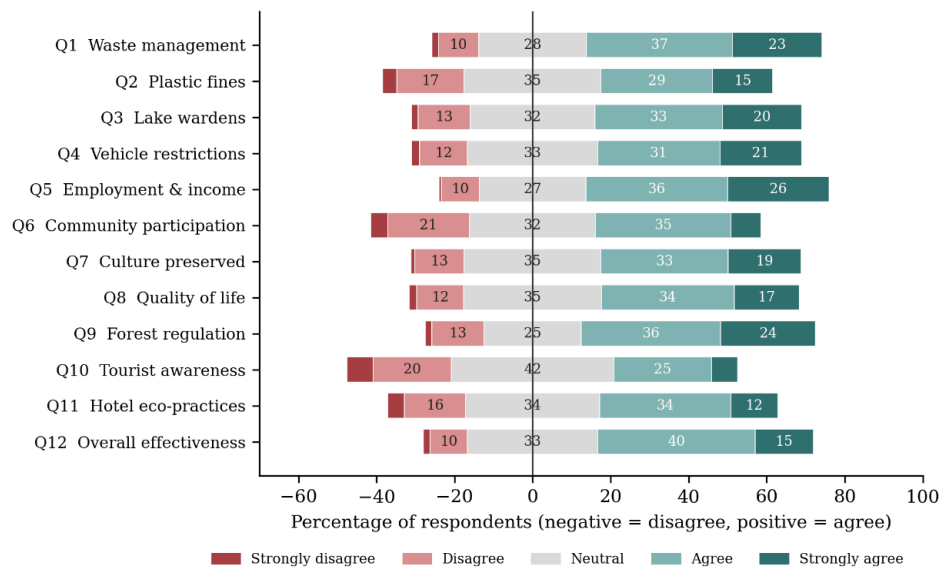


Figure 4. Response distribution of the twelve Likert items (percent)

4.3 Reliability and dimensionality

The correlation matrix of Q1-Q11 was suitable for factoring (KMO = 0.859; Bartlett's chi-square = 1183.8, df = 55, $p < .001$). Three factors having eigenvalues over 1 (4.27, 1.75, 1.30) accounting for 66.6% variance were extracted using the Principal component analysis with varimax rotation. No cross-loading (more than .25) occurs when each item loads at .70 or higher on the intended component (Table 3). Cronbach alpha is 0.821 for waste items, 0.818 for community and cultural welfare items and 0.787 for the regulation, awareness and business adoption items, and 0.862 for all 12 items, which is higher than the recommended .70.

Table 3. Factor loadings (varimax rotated), communalities and reliability

Item	F1 Waste, lake & traffic	F2 Community & culture	F3 Regulation & awareness	Communality
Q1 Waste management	0.806	0.150	0.104	0.683
Q2 Plastic fines	0.761	0.115	0.210	0.636
Q3 Lake wardens	0.764	0.184	0.153	0.641
Q4 Vehicle restrictions	0.803	0.042	0.134	0.665
Q5 Employment and income	0.132	0.726	0.170	0.574
Q6 Community participation	0.136	0.813	0.177	0.710
Q7 Culture preserved	0.110	0.812	0.080	0.678
Q8 Quality of life	0.105	0.758	0.224	0.636
Q9 Forest regulation	0.127	0.191	0.794	0.683
Q10 Tourist awareness	0.168	0.183	0.805	0.710
Q11 Hotel eco-practices	0.170	0.122	0.816	0.710
Eigenvalue (rotated SS loadings)	2.589	2.579	2.158	
% of variance	23.5	23.4	19.6	66.6 (cum.)
Cronbach's alpha	0.821	0.818	0.787	0.842 (11 items)

Note: Extraction: principal components. KMO = 0.859; Bartlett $\chi^2(55) = 1183.8$, $p < .001$. Q12 is analysed as the outcome variable.

4.4 Hypothesis testing

H1: Practices against the neutral value

Table 4 provides a comparison of each construct with the median (midpoint) of 3. All are well above neutral: waste ($M = 3.54$, $d = 0.66$), lake and traffic management ($M = 3.51$, $d = 0.65$) and regulation, awareness and business adoption ($M = 3.35$, $d = 0.42$), $p < .001$ for all. The overall index is 3.48 ($t(299) = 13.33$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.77$), a moderate-to-large effect. H1 is supported. Regulation and awareness and business adoption – which also includes the weak tourist-awareness item – have the least advantage over neutral.

Table 4. One-sample t-test against the neutral value of 3 (H1)

Construct	Mean	SD	t (df = 299)	p	Mean diff.	95% CI	Cohen's d
Waste, lake and traffic management	3.54	0.82	11.49	< .001	0.54	[0.45, 0.64]	0.66
Community and cultural welfare	3.51	0.79	11.27	< .001	0.51	[0.42, 0.60]	0.65
Regulation, awareness and business adoption	3.35	0.85	7.19	< .001	0.35	[0.26, 0.45]	0.42
Overall green practice index (Q1-Q11)	3.48	0.62	13.33	< .001	0.48	[0.41, 0.55]	0.77
Overall effectiveness (Q12)	3.57	0.92	10.83	< .001	0.57	[0.47, 0.68]	0.63

Note: Test value = 3.

H2: Tourists versus stakeholders

As Table 5 shows, stakeholders rated the green practice index higher ($M = 3.68$) than tourists ($M = 3.28$), $t(298) = -5.90$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.68$. This gap is marked on the three dimensions—waste (difference = 0.37, $p < .001$); lake and traffic management (difference = 0.34, $p < .001$); and largest of all, regulation, awareness and business adoption (difference = 0.52, $p < .001$). H2 is supported.

Table 5. Independent-samples t-test: tourists versus stakeholders (H2)

Construct	Tourists (n = 150) M (SD)	Stakeholders (n = 150) M (SD)	Levene F (p)	t (df = 298)	p	Mean [95% CI]	diff.	d
Waste, lake and traffic management	3.36 (0.81)	3.73 (0.79)	0.31 (.579)	-4.04	< .001	-0.37 [-0.56, -0.19]	-	0.47
Community and cultural welfare	3.34 (0.79)	3.68 (0.75)	1.04 (.310)	-3.85	< .001	-0.34 [-0.52, -0.17]	-	0.45
Regulation, awareness and business adoption	3.09 (0.80)	3.62 (0.82)	0.14 (.707)	-5.60	< .001	-0.52 [-0.71, -0.34]	-	0.65
Overall green practice index	3.28 (0.60)	3.68 (0.59)	0.00 (.947)	-5.90	< .001	-0.40 [-0.54, -0.27]	-	0.68

Note: Two-tailed tests; Levene's test was non-significant for all constructs, so equal variances were assumed.

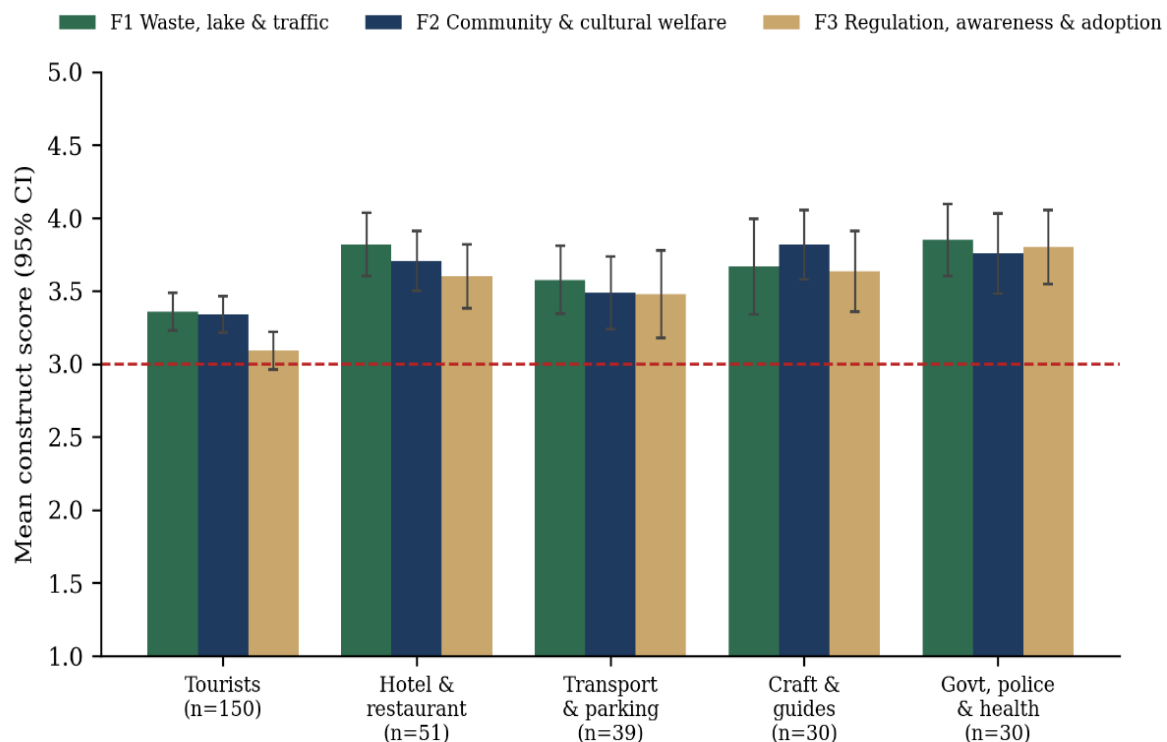


Figure 5. Construct means by respondent category with 95% confidence intervals (dashed line = neutral value)

H3: Differences across respondent categories

The differences across the five categories are significant ($p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.118$) on the green practice index, and significant for each of the three dimensions (all $p < .01$) according to a one-way ANOVA (Table 6). Levene's test was not significant, therefore Tukey post-hoc procedures were used. For the index, there were significant differences between tourists and the accommodation and restaurant workers (0.44, $p < .001$); there was also a significant difference between tourists and the craft sellers and guides (0.43, $p = .003$) and tourists and the government, police, and health care workers (0.52, $p < .001$); but no two categories of stakeholders were significantly different and no difference between tourists and transport, boatmen and parking operators was significant. The main source of variation is the position of the tourists to the stakeholders and is supported by the results of post hoc. As seen in Figure 5, the craft sellers and guides are most positive about community welfare, while those in the government, police and healthcare fields are the most positive about regulation and awareness, and tourists are the lowest-scoring group across all dimensions.

Table 6. One-way ANOVA across respondent categories (H3)

Construct	SS between	SS within	df (b, w)	F	p	η^2
Waste, lake and traffic management	12.320	189.323	4, 295	4.80	< .001	0.061
Community and cultural welfare	10.983	173.419	4, 295	4.67	.001	0.060
Regulation, awareness and business adoption	22.400	194.147	4, 295	8.51	< .001	0.103
Overall green practice index	13.772	102.616	4, 295	9.90	< .001	0.118

Note: Levene's test non-significant for all constructs ($p > .05$); Tukey HSD used for post-hoc comparisons.

H4: Correlation and regression

Table 7. Pearson correlation matrix of constructs

Construct	F1	F2	F3	Q12
F1 Waste, lake & traffic	1			
F2 Community & culture	0.330**	1		
F3 Regulation & awareness	0.388**	0.412**	1	
Q12 Overall effectiveness	0.495**	0.572**	0.544**	1

Note: $p < .01$ (two-tailed). $N = 300$.

All constructs are positively and significantly correlated (Table 7) with inter-correlations between the antecedents ranging from 0.33 to 0.41. The regression in Table 8 is significant, $F(3, 296) = 97.58$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.497$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.492$). The strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.365$) is community and cultural welfare, followed by regulation, awareness and business adoption ($\beta = 0.292$), and waste, lake and traffic management ($\beta = 0.262$) which are all significant ($p < .001$). Variance inflation factors are all less than 1.2 and Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.95. H4 is supported.

Table 8. Multiple regression predicting overall effectiveness (Q12) (H4)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	-0.014	0.215		-0.07	.948	
F1 Waste, lake & traffic	0.292	0.051	0.262	5.73	< .001	1.23
F2 Community & culture	0.427	0.054	0.365	7.91	< .001	1.26
F3 Regulation & awareness	0.314	0.051	0.292	6.17	< .001	1.32

Note: $R^2 = 0.497$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.492$; $F(3, 296) = 97.58$, $p < .001$; Durbin-Watson = 1.95.

Summary of hypothesis tests

H2 (practices above neutral): supported. H2 (Tourist-stakeholder difference): supported. H3 (differences across respondent categories): supported. H4 (Three dimensions predict overall effectiveness): supported. Together these results support the alternative hypotheses of the synopsis that existing practices make a measurable contribution to environmental and community outcomes.

5. DISCUSSION

The study concludes that the current green practices in Nainital are perceived favourably ($MS = 3.48$) by the tourists and the stakeholders, thus making the synopsis proposition that the current initiatives lead to environmental and community benefits. The pattern is in line with the administrative record, with lake wardens, plastic fines and door to door waste collection (Lad, 2020), vehicle restrictions and community waste management (Pande, 2011) and forest regulation (Negi, 2019) all scoring above neutral. It also fits the picture of local administrations who take the issue of sustainability seriously and the moderate size of the margins (around $\frac{1}{2}$ scale point) indicates good rather than outstanding results.

There are three weak spots. First, tourist awareness of green practices (Q10, $M = 3.05$) is the only item that sits at neutral, and plastic-fine enforcement (Q2, $M = 3.35$) and community participation (Q6, $M = 3.20$) are close behind. Awareness is important in a site where visitors stay for just a few days but use facilities extensively (Pintilli & Draghici, 2010; Zehrer, 2016) and participation of the community is known to be an obstacle in Uttarakhand (Kala & Bagri, 2018). Second, tourists rate practices lower than stakeholders on all dimensions with the largest gap on regulation and awareness and business adoption. This aligns with the view of short-stay visitors that they only see one aspect of the system, and stakeholders that they experience enforcement and outcomes first-hand, and reflects the perception that there is an unequal perception of over-tourism between these groups (Adie, 2019). Third, the post-hoc tests indicate that the variation is across tourists and stakeholder groups, not between stakeholder groups, which means that the key factor in closing the gap is visibility and communication, not reconciling conflicting stakeholder perspectives, although unplanned and uneven development is still a concern (Melkani & Kumar, 2021; Barbhuiya, 2020; Gupta et al., 2022).

The regression shows that the perceived overall effectiveness ($\beta = 0.37$) is associated with community and cultural welfare more than with regulation and awareness ($\beta = 0.29$) and waste and lake management ($\beta = 0.26$). The perceived impacts of green practices on livelihoods, participation, and culture are considered more important than the lake state as in other destinations there is an emphasis on local wisdom and community involvement in green practice (Dewi et al., 2023; Markose et al., 2022; Tan, 2021), and the multi-pillar view of sustainability (Singh, 2018).

Several implications follow. Invest in awareness measures that are visible, like entry-point signage, digital messaging and weekend campaigns, for destination managers aimed at the least aware short-stay visitors. There must be a greater consistency and visibility in plastic fines enforcement. Hotels and restaurants, among the more positive groups, can take the lead in promoting their eco-friendly practices (Al-Romeedy, 2024; Daneshwar & Revaty, 2024). The most vulnerable to congestion, such as transport, boatmen and parking operators, should be included in planning and capacity management, and congestion during peak hours should be mitigated by dispersing the crowd to other parts of the region (Melkani & Kumar, 2021; McCool, 2001). Finally, community-participation mechanisms would increase the impact of the single most important predictor of perceived effectiveness.

6. . CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the existing sustainable green tourism practices in Nainital are mostly perceived positively by the tourists and tourism stakeholders despite the difference in the effectiveness in different dimensions and by different groups of respondents. The overall tenor of the green practice index was still higher than the neutral level, which indicates that the measures linked to waste management, environmental protection of the lake, traffic control, community welfare, environmental regulation and awareness of the importance of green practice and participation of businesses are still beneficial to destination sustainability. Tourist awareness, however, as well as involvement and enforcement of plastic-related rules, were found to be relatively weak areas and need a lot of attention. The perception gap between tourists and stakeholders was greater, and green practices were consistently assessed as less good by tourists than stakeholders, suggesting many sustainability initiatives may not be visibly present or well communicated to tourists. There were also some variations between stakeholder groups, but this tended to be influenced by the tourists' relatively low ratings. The most important factor that was found to influence the effectiveness of the perceived overall effectiveness of green practices was community and cultural welfare, followed by regulation, awareness and business adoption and waste, lake and traffic management. The results indicate that environmental management is not enough for sustainable tourism, livelihoods, culture conservation, community participation and communication are also crucial. Nainital should hence increase the awareness of the tourists, community involvement, regular implementation and coordination of stakeholders to ensure sustainability and effectiveness in its green tourism project. Pasted text.

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