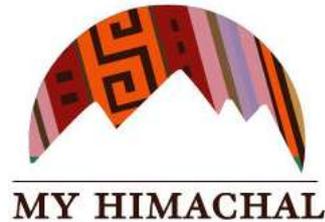


## **Great Himalayan National Park**

**Name of Institute:** SP Jain Institute of Management and Research

**Location:** Mumbai

**Name of NGO:** My Himachal (Himachal Pradesh)



As a part of the DOCC (Development of Corporate Citizenship) project, the students of the institute, at the end of the first year of the two-year course, undertake a project of six weeks with an NGO. The aim of undertaking this project is to sensitize the future managers to Indian culture and ethos and help them create ties between the government, the NGOs, and the corporate to bring about a socio-economic development.

On completion of the project we plan to submit a copy of the report, which would include the study of the current operations of the Park, the bottlenecks identified in the model and the recommendations to remove the same to the Director, Great Himalayan National Park, Forest Department (Kullu Region), Deputy Commissioner (Tourism Dept), Biodiversity Tourism and Community Advancement (BTCA), Official Tour operator for GHNP and NGOs.

### **Names of Project Members:**

1. Gautam Bhatia (Marketing Specialization)
2. Divya Sawant (Marketing Specialization)

### **How can you help us?**

Help us to implement the awareness campaign we have designed for the Great Himalayan National Park. This can be achieved by

- Dedicate a section of your newspaper to the campaign
- Publish articles for a few days concerning the issues at hand

- Publish opinions of the people involved with the park.
- Publish posters for the campaign
- Report results of the consumer survey conducted
- Provide references to the online material available for the Great Himalayan National Park also provide contact information for the concerned personnel.
- Provide success stories for ecotourism across India and the world and models that can be replicated for GHNP.

### *Great Himalayan National Park – The Campaign*

#### **Article for Day1:**

## Nature Trails:

From the bustling streets of Mumbai to the tranquil environment of GHNP

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As two nature enthusiasts from SP Jain Institute of Management and Research, Mumbai we were quite excited when we were lucky enough to get an opportunity to work as part of our curriculum (Development of Corporate Citizenship - DOCC) with My Himachal on an ecotourism project for the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) in the Kullu district.

Almost three days into our project we were still struggling to come up with a suitable definition for the word 'Eco tourism' with respect to the GHNP and spending hours researching online was not getting us anywhere. We decided the best way to define our objectives for this project and to actually understand our role here was to visit the park and get a firsthand experience on what the park has to offer.

We began our journey to the hallowed portals of the Great Himachal National Park with a visit to the main office at Shamshi. The officials there were very helpful and on such short notice arranged for our transport and accommodation at the Park. On reaching Sairopa we eagerly awaited the trek into GHNP. We were told that it is a 9 km trek from Gushaini (a small village on the outskirts of the park) to the GHNP entrance. Though we knew that one can only reach GHNP on foot, a 9 km trek seemed a little difficult for us business school students used to a life across our laptop screens, buried into our assignments. But our excitement knew no bounds since we were astounded by the beauty of Sairopa and we waited for what would greet us in the interiors of this untouched land called GHNP.

The genuineness of the people of this region was no shock to us since each soul we met in Himachal was out to make us feel as comfortable as we city-breed students could. Our guide for the trek was a lad named Charan Chauhan, a sweet, enthusiastic, knowledgeable and energetic trekker. He kept us engrossed throughout the 9 km walk to the park with stories on how the park's existence had come about and how he came about being a trekking guide at the GHNP.

Our main objective of the trek was to meet the locals staying within the Eco-zone (the western boundary of the Park inhabited by 160 villages historically dependent on forest resources), to talk to them in order to gauge what they feel about their source of sustenance being converted into a protected park. We wanted to know on how they have adapted to this change and in what way have the local governing bodies helped their employment opportunities and income generation activities. We felt a firsthand experience of a journey into the Park would help a long way into understanding its strengths and weaknesses.

We met a quaint family of five living in small log hut en route to GHNP. They used to depend on medicinal plants from the park for their livelihood but since the park had become a protected area they now reared goats for a living. The woman of the house was a part of the

WSCGs here (Women's Saving and Credit Group-an initiative by the Biodiversity Tourism and Community Advancement (BTCA) group) and the man of the house was comparatively inactive. This family's outlook towards life in the valley was quite defeatist and they were resigned to the belief that their life would not improve. On further probing about the initiatives taken by the Government they seemed skeptical and had lost faith in the present governing bodies.

Trekking further we were lucky to meet a man named Harilal from a village called Dhar. We were astounded by his positive attitude, his smiling face was inspiring. He told us that his family relied on a little farming and cattle for sustenance and said that he was on the lookout for more job opportunities. We found that there were primary schools within a radius of 1km around each village though the middle school was quite far. He said that children in his village were studying and he had high hopes for their future. But again he was pessimistic about the present initiatives been taken by the governing bodies.

All the other people we met fell into either one of the above categories but most locals were accepting the fact that the Park was now a protected area and had to look for other avenues for their sustenance. After speaking to the villagers we started our journey back to Gushaini and then to Sairopa.

We learnt about the wide spectrum of activities the Eco zone and GHNP had to offer for a tourist when we spoke to Mr. Shesh Ram, the oldest serving trekking guide in Sairopa. One has an array of choice between adventure sports such as rock climbing, rappelling, river crossing, and fishing in the Eco zone or long treks into the GHNP for bird watching, wildlife spotting and long nature trails in GHNP. Also we were lucky to have the opportunity to speak to some tourists from Mumbai who had been on a trek to Shilt hut in GHNP. They were more than satisfied with the service provided and they could not stop talking about their experiences. But speaking to them we realized that they had carried out a careful search of national parks in India and had extensively planned their trip unlike most Indian tourists. We wondered if these nature lovers would have come to GHNP if they had not had the patience to keep researching and not giving up each time they met a road block in the planning of their trip - be it the fact that there is no brochure/website about GHNP which mentions the prevailing rates or the fact that there is not even a mention of GHNP on the Himachal Pradesh Tourism website!

Over the last 3 days spent at the GHNP we have realized the road ahead is long and has many obstacles. GHNP is a paradise on earth but its inaccessibility (by road) and lack of information about it do pose a major challenge in attracting people to it. Providing alternate means of sustenance to locals who previously depended on the forest also is an uphill task especially since most villagers are losing faith in the present system and further time passing by without any action is not helping. Handloom, handicrafts, medicinal plants in the Eco zone etc are few of the employment opportunities which are being explored, but some strong decisions need to be taken accompanied with a implementable action plan is the need of the hour. Keeping in mind that responsible tourism has to be the key outline we have come to understand what really eco tourism is about. We have realized that developing small scale tourism in GHNP while striving to have as little impact on the fragile and pristine protected areas of GHNP is one of our primary objectives. Educating the traveler while directly benefiting the social stability, economic development and political empowerment for the local communities (Community Based Ecotourism) will be another key objective of our study.

Our visit to the GHNP has been a completely new experience from the bustling streets of Mumbai to being surrounded by lush mountains roofed by clouds. GHNP gives the mind the peace which no place else can give and has lot to offer an adventurous traveler. Over the next few weeks we hope to bring about a significant positive impact to this region to the best of our abilities.

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The above article has been written by Divya Sawant and Gautam Bhatia. Both of them are students of SP Jain Institute of Management and Research, Mumbai. They are currently on a 6 week internship with My Himachal as part of their DOCC (Development of Corporate Citizenship) program. They are presently working on a plan to develop a sustainable model for eco tourism in the GHNP area. Their immediate plan is develop a marketing strategy for ecotourism in GHNP.

### **Survey Results: (Article for Day 2):**

In order to gauge the consumer awareness levels on Ecotourism and Great Himalayan National Park, a survey of 100 respondents was conducted. The average age hovered around 30 years with a majority of the respondents belonging to the middle class. The male to female

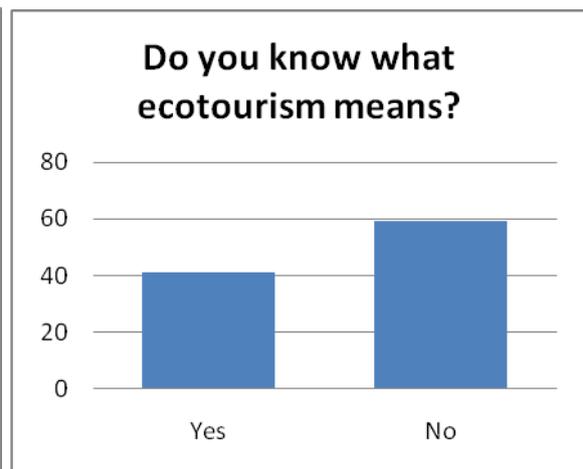
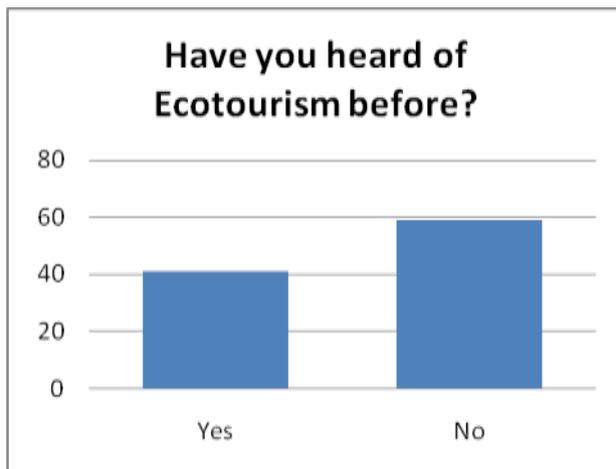
ratio was 75:25. The respondents represented a major cross section of the society with diverse backgrounds that included journalists, students, housewives, doctors, businessmen etc.

### **Awareness of Ecotourism:**

Only 65% of the respondents have heard of ecotourism.

But only 44% of the respondents think they know what ecotourism means.

On actually asking the respondents of what they think ecotourism is; only 10% actually have a correct idea of what eco tourism is.

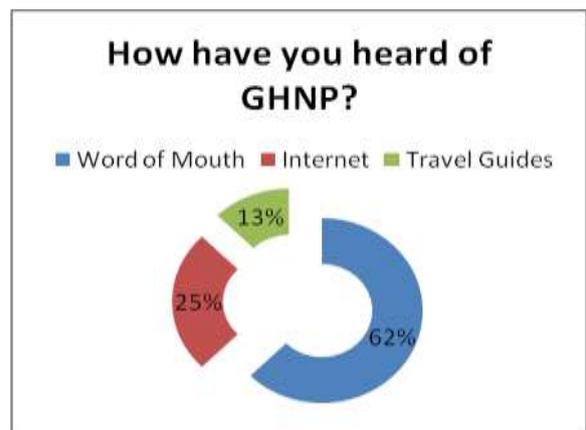
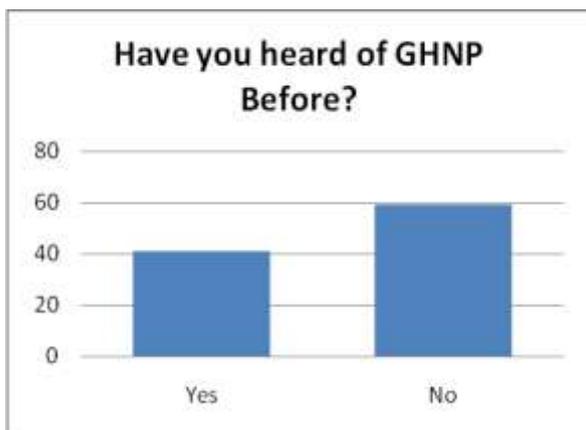


### **Awareness of GHNP:**

Only 40% of respondents have heard of GHNP.

Only 30% actually knew where GHNP is located.

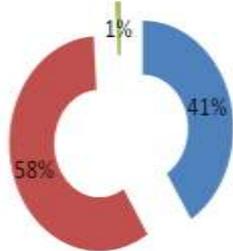
62% of the respondents who have heard of GHNP have heard of it through the word of mouth.



- 95% of respondents were looking at ecotourism as a viable vacation option.
- 58% of respondents felt 5-10 days duration was ideal for a vacation.
- 41% of respondents felt 1-5 days duration was ideal for a vacation

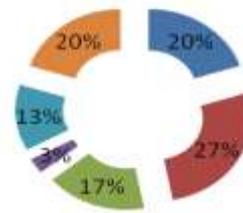
### How long do you think the ideal getaway should be?

■ <5 days ■ 5-10 days ■ >15 days



### What would be the price you will be ready to pay for an ecotourism vacation?

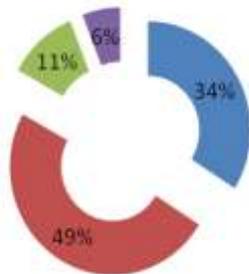
■ <1000 ■ 1000-1500 ■ 1500-2000  
■ 2000-3000 ■ >3000 ■ Not Aware



- While 49% of respondents were looking for private modest rooms while on vacation 34% were looking at homestays for their accommodation requirements.
- 27% of the respondents would be interested in an ecotourism vacation if it was priced between 1000-1500 per day.
- 20% of the respondents were not aware of an ecotourism vacation and thus did not choose their preferred price range.
- 57% of the respondents use the internet as their primary source for information on travel and tourism.
- 20% of the respondents also use travel guides as a source for information on travel and tourism.

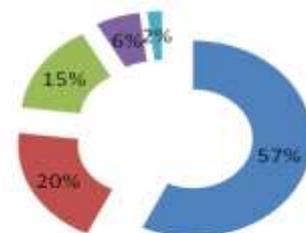
### What kind of accomodation are you looking for in your vacation?

■ Homestays  
■ Private Modest Rooms  
■ Luxury Rooms  
■ Dormitories



### Where do you get your information about tourist destinations?

■ Internet  
■ Travel Guides  
■ Word Of Mouth  
■ Tourism Ads/Newspapers  
■ Travel Agents



### **Article for Day 3:**

## ***ROLE OF PARK ADMINISTRATION & FOREST DEPARTMENT***

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The Director, GHNP was very clear in defining the role of the government. Park Administration will foster CBET development by working in partnership with ecotourism society in the area to supply the needed training, technical and financial assistance, and resource management infrastructure. Other than this they were hoping private players would come forward and develop the area further in which case the Government would supply the necessary assistance to these players. Also private players who develop the Eco-zone area will get tax and other benefits as regulated by the Himachal Pradesh tourism law.

But we feel the government currently is not doing enough for the park. In the park itself, trails, lodging facilities, and waste management infrastructure all require proper maintenance, especially along ecotrek routes. Some upgrades and/or additional construction may also be required. Permitting and reservation systems for rest houses and other type of government accommodations also need restructuring to make them more efficient, convenient and reliable. Currently most of the rest houses are in very poor condition and are in no way ready for accommodation.

An option to consider is leasing selected park buildings to individuals (private players) or local villages to operate tourism enterprises. The rest houses in GHNP and the Sairopa tourist centre itself should be leased out to private players as then they can be developed in to world class facilities for accommodation. These buildings are currently seldom used and with some minor improvements could provide an option for accommodation for family retreats. Currently the Sairopa tourist centre does not have any arrangement in terms of staff like cooks. Obviously staff costs thus the government should hand over the operations to a private player so as to increase occupancy which will in turn help improve the facilities in the centre.

Once these are in place, they can help market the area by providing information to visitors, including a user-friendly map, specific details about area attractions and activities, a list of villages with accommodations (with price, standards, access and other information), and directions on how and where to secure porters. These are small steps which go a long way in increasing convenience to the traveler. All this information can be put up on the website for ease of access. Also brochures and pamphlets can be created for tour operators so as to give

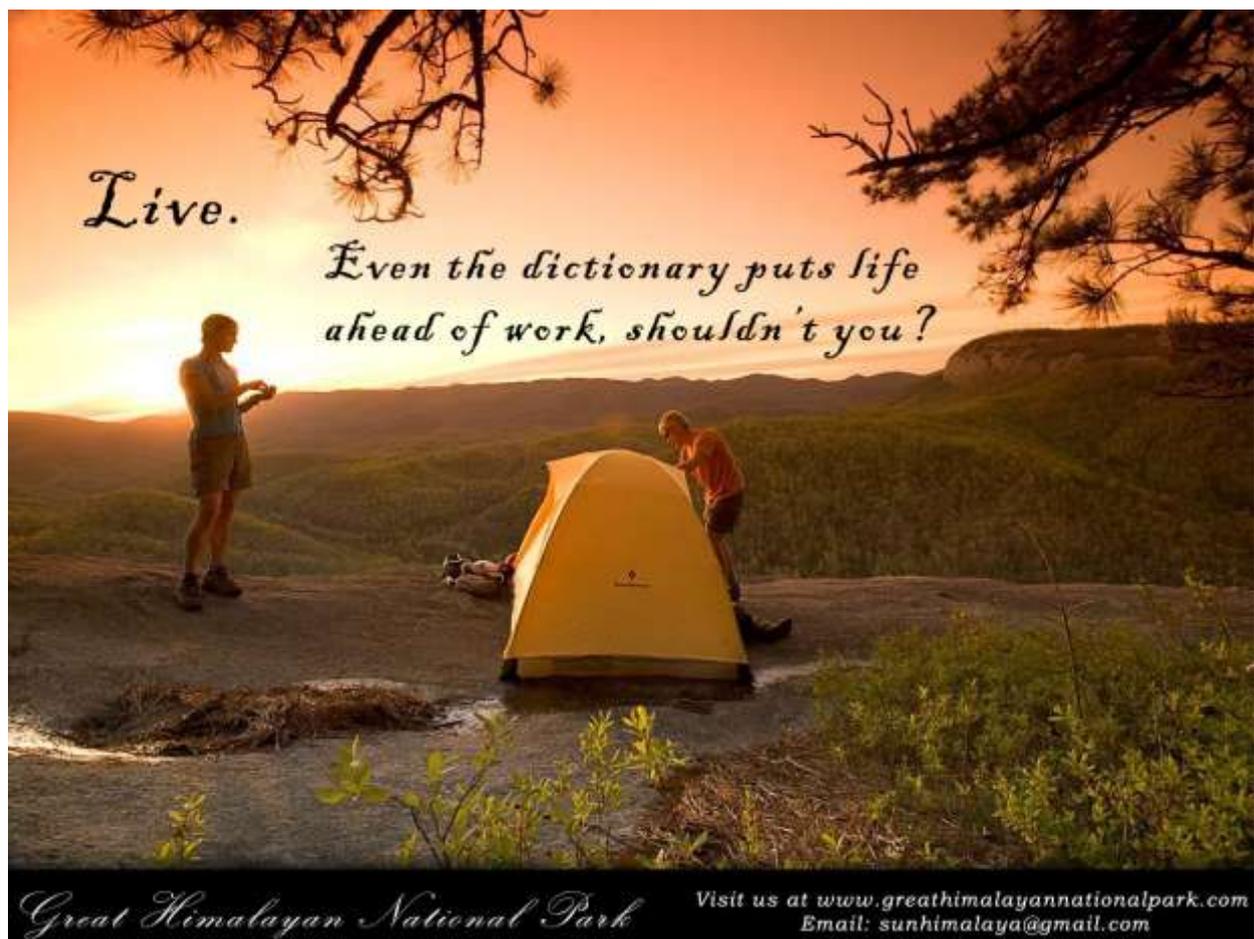
the traveler more information. All this requires financial assistance where in the forest department can help.

All these functions can be guided and implemented in cooperation with the eco tourism society created specifically for the GHNP.

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#### **Poster for Day 4:**



For More Details of this campaign visit [www.himachal.us](http://www.himachal.us)

## Article for Day 5:

# *The Great Himalayan National Park*

## *The Road Ahead...*

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Not many of us know that just 60 km away from Kullu town lays a 765 sq km area known as the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP). As management students we were given the task to build a sustainable model for ecotourism in the park but when we started our project on the its promotion of we were clueless about the complexities of the issue at hand. Two weeks into this project and we realized that there are three main issues that plague the GHNP accessibility, awareness and improper flow of information among concerned authorities.

The poor condition of the roads leading to the park which is aggravated by other uncontrollable forces such as persistent rain is a major obstacle in the way of tourism in the Great Himalayan National Park. The lack of available transport on this route is another major issue. The government should look at starting a special bus service for travelers to the park which would provide convenience, comfort and ease of luggage space for the tourists. Currently the GHNP is targeting only the adventure trekkers and the Eco-zone treks are not really highlighted or given any importance when they can attract a large set of tourists looking for a family getaway with a little adventure. The Eco-zone (the western boundary of the Park inhabited by 160 villages historically dependent on forest resources) treks provide the right mix of small treks and a few adventure activities for the complete family trip.

One of the most important issues for the GHNP is the lack of awareness about it among people in and out of Himachal Pradesh. Internet being one of the most used avenues for travelers to research their planned destinations, it is a shame that GHNP being a national park is not even present as a tourist destination on the HPTDC website. Most Indian ecotourism websites have no mention of GHNP as an ecotourism destination. Even the Lonely Planet – India (a travel guide) which is considered the bible for tourists has just a mention about the park with no contact information or website information about the park. The lack of sign boards on the road leading to the park - only two sign boards from Sairopa up to the GHNP Gate doesn't provide a pretty picture. Boards providing interesting facts about the park and eco tourism need to be put along the trek to at least keep the tourist focused on the eco tourism and the idea behind the concept.

The need of the hour is a new and improved comprehensive website with information such as varied packages for the varied consumer (with prices), a reviews section, a query section and one which is regularly updated with the latest happenings in and around the park. Brochures, posters and postcards need to be made available to key locations (Shops, HPTDC hotels, other key tourist destinations) in Himachal to make the traveler aware that such a destination exists. A documentary about the GHNP on travel shows on television channels like Discovery, National Geographic and NDTV will go a long way in making tourist all over the country aware of such a location in Himachal.

People need to be aware that such a park exists in the country which houses many an endangered species. Ecotourism itself in India needs to be encouraged. Responsible tourism which boosts the local economy while conserving the pristine environment of the park needs impetus.

The key factor in an ecotourism model is to bring an overall positive effect to the locals of the region. The GHNP has the potential to develop an ecotourism model which can then be followed by many around the country. Presently the governing bodies as well as the BTCA group are ineffective and are struggling to bring any improvement to the region. Any suggestion (either from BTCA or the locals of the region) has to go through so many levels for approval and most of the time is lost in the paperwork of the governing offices that hardly any improvement has been brought to the region. A new empowered governing body is the need of the hour. This would not only provide a channel for local villagers to raise their concerns but having locals on the board may build trust level among the villagers. This body should be a nonprofit organization consisting of representation from locals, government as well as the local NGO and it should be given the authority to act on behalf of the government. It will also ensure the training and skill development of the locals; provide avenues for locals to sell their home made products and co-ordinate home stays in the region to bring direct benefit to the locals. The information flow would be quick, effective and this body will work towards bringing about the quick development of the region.

Currently there is no fixed structure to either make your bookings or to raise your queries about the park. Most queries are lost in a chain of mails going from one person to another before finally reaching the concerned person after two weeks. An attempt to make the bookings by phone is struggle as there is no fixed pricelist nor is there a single person handling all the queries. It is quite possible for duplication of information or even inconsistent information passing to the same customer. This ineffective and inefficient operating model must be changed immediately. Allocation of at least two resources for

bookings/answering queries is very important and their contact information should be available on the website as well as any other mode of communication to the traveller. Making a standard price list and bringing about consistency in the information been given out to consumers is the least one expects from any service.

The problems in the GHNP are vast but solutions exist to bring about a quick change. It is up to the concerned authorities to take up the challenge and take the necessary strong decisions to bring about that change. A lot of people have come before us and highlighted the problems and most people working in the park are aware of these problems but still no action seems to be taken. The road ahead for the GHNP has to be carved by the concerned authorities; it can be one leading to becoming a key tourist destination in India or one in which GHNP remains an unexplored paradise.

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