

# Is Tourism a Boon or a Bane?

## Local Perceptions on the Impacts of Tourism in the Himalayan Region of Upper Mustang, Nepal During Political Transition.

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### Introduction

Prior to tourism, the people of Upper Mustang subsisted through three occupations; agriculture, animal husbandry, and petty trade<sup>1</sup>. After a 10-year civil war / Maoist insurgency, Nepal became a federalist republic in May 2008<sup>2</sup>. Since the political situation stabilized, the tourism industry has boomed. However, rapid socio-cultural change, environmental stress, and threats to the rich and unique but fragile culture of the area<sup>3</sup> has been attributed to tourism. Data on local perceptions on the impacts of tourism in this region are non-existent. This ethnographic pilot research addresses the gap in the literature by examining the local perception on the impacts of tourism.



### Research Question

What are local people's perceptions on the impacts of tourism in the region of Upper Mustang in the context of political transition?

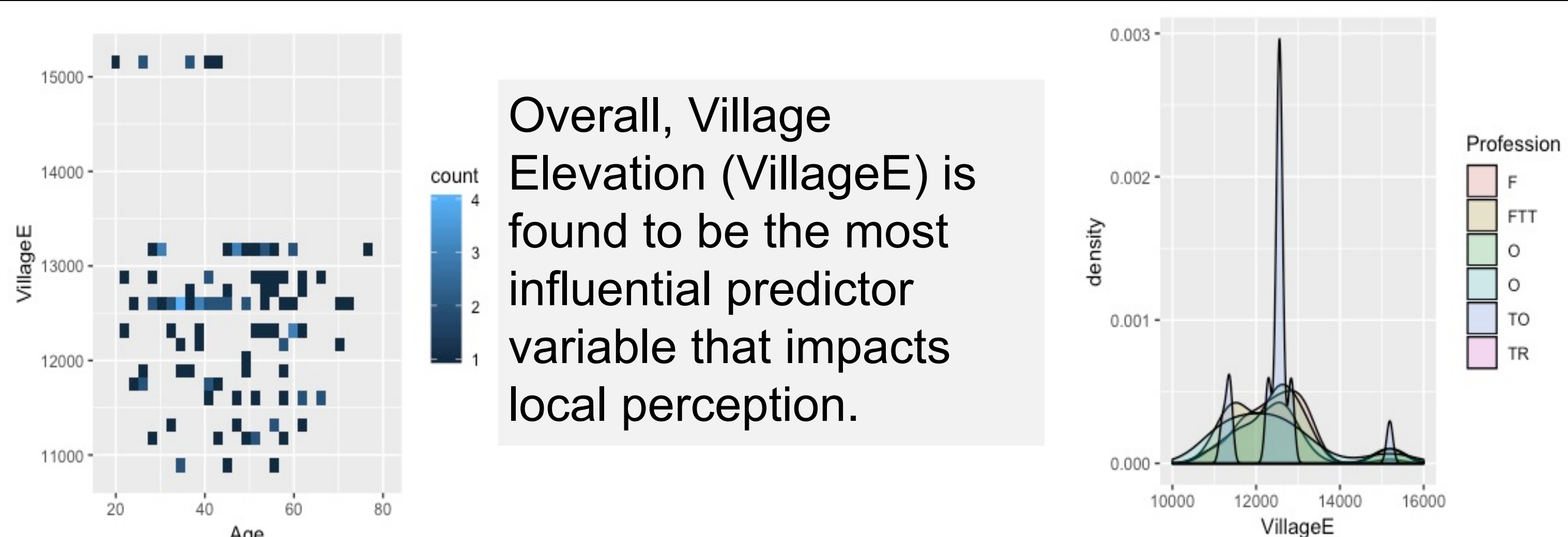
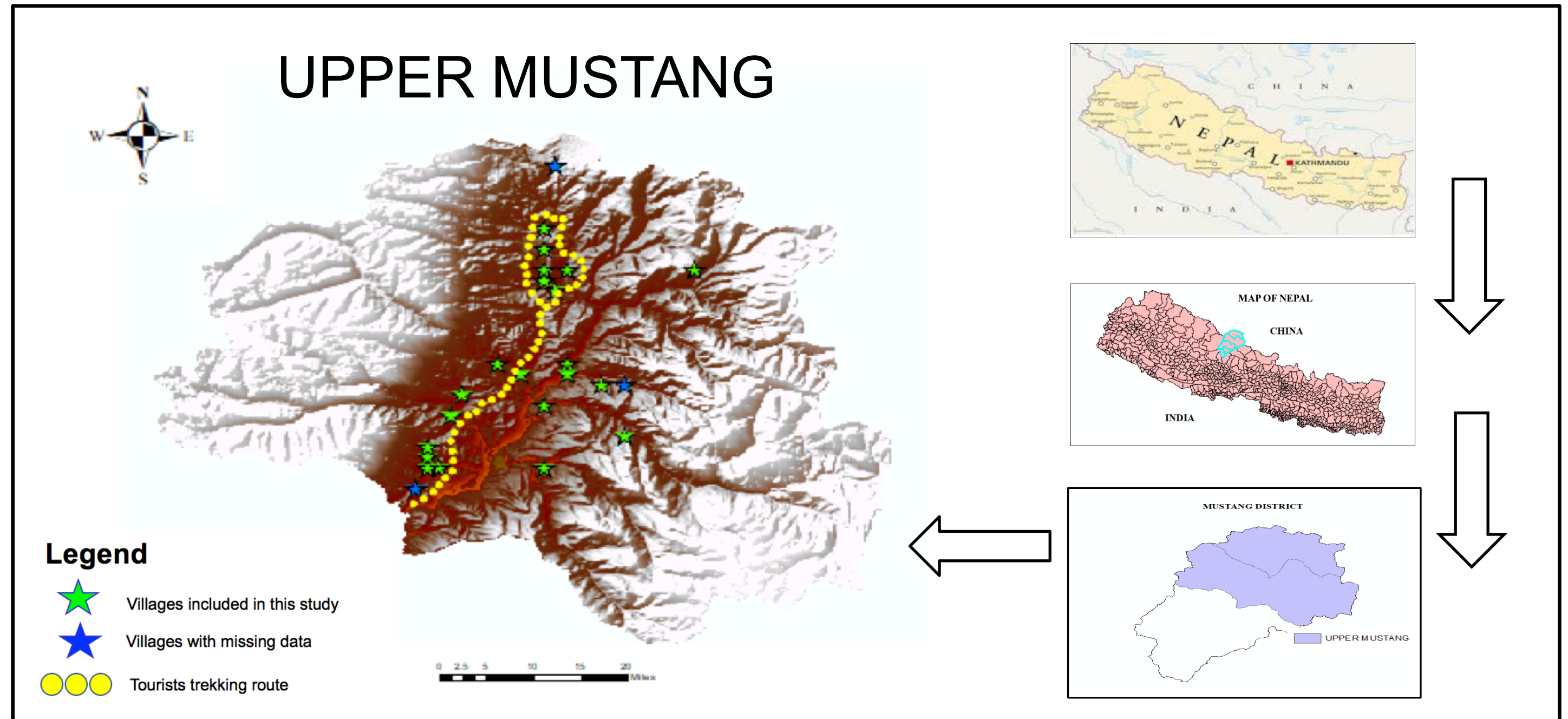
What are the factors that influence local perception on the impacts of tourism?

**Hypothesis:** Profession and Age are the predictor variables that influences the local perception on the impacts of tourism the most.



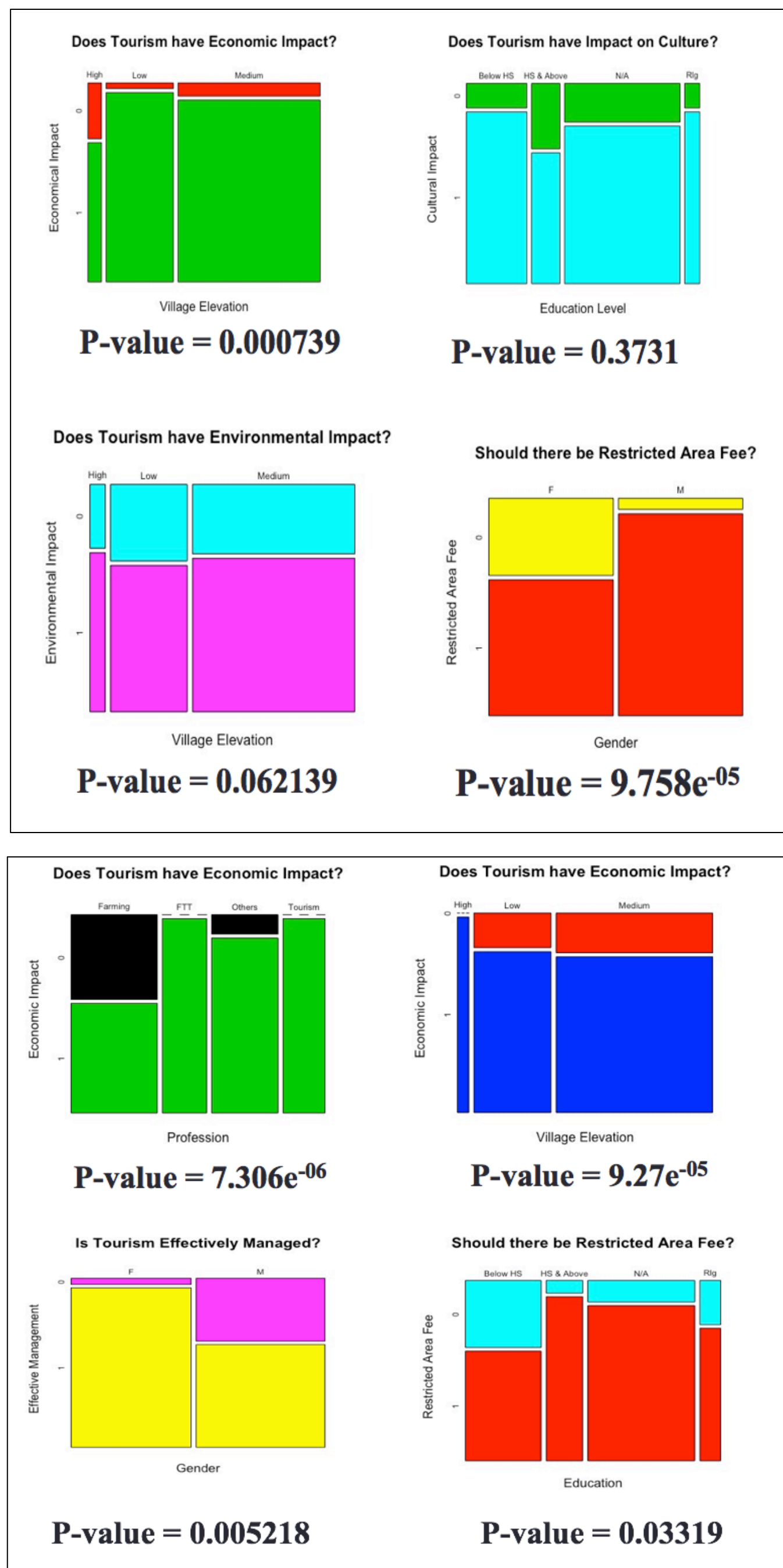
### Field Site Location

Upper Mustang is situated in Nepal's northern border with China and is a part of the Annapurna Conservation Area, one of Nepal's protected areas.



Overall, Village Elevation (VillageE) is found to be the most influential predictor variable that impacts local perception.

### Results



**Phase 1:** There is a positive relationship between the predictor variables (Village and Village Elevation) and all the respondent variables when asked about the impacts of tourism.

Gender, education, and village elevation were found to be crucial factors that influenced whether the participants have any opinions about the current institutions surrounding tourism.

**Phase 2:** There is a positive relationship between the predictor variables (Profession, Gender, Education, Village and Village Elevation) and all the respondent variables.

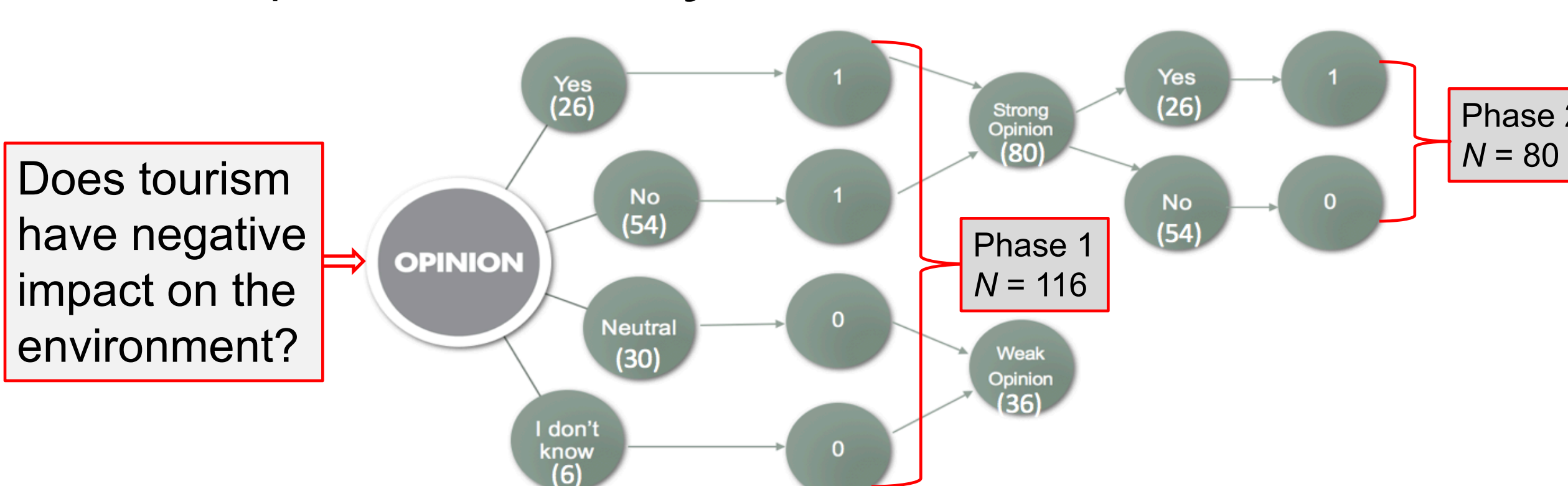
Predictor & Respond Variables (V/N)	X-squared	DF	P-value
Profession VS Economic Impact	26.553	3	7.306e-06
Village VS Economic Impact	55.755	23	0.0001531
Gender VS Effective Management	7.8022	1	0.005218
Education VS RAF	8.7245	3	0.03319

### Methods & Data

- This research was conducted in the summer of 2018. This was an interesting time to be in the field due to the recent political transition.
- The region of Upper Mustang comprises 26 villages across two municipalities. Respondents were recruited from 23 different villages.
- This study used a convenience sampling technique to collect survey data from 116 participants.

Profile of participants				
Gender	Male 58	Female 58		
Age	Young Adults (19-40) 44	Adults (41-60) 55	Senior (60 and above) 17	
Education	Below High School 32	High School Above 15	Religious Studies 8	No Education 61
Profession	Farming 44	Tourism-oriented 19	Tourism Farming, & Trade 20	Others 33
Village Elevation (in feet)	Low (10,000-12,000) 35	Medium (12,000-14,000) 74	High (14,000-16,000) 7	

- The dependent variable of this analysis was the local perception based on the impacts of tourism.
- The predictor variables are age, gender, education, profession, village location in relation to the trekking route, and village elevation.
- Chi-Square test in statistical software R was used to determine if there was a statistical association between variables.
- An example model of binary-tree database.



### Discussion & Conclusion

- Locals have varying degrees of opinions on the impacts of tourism based on village location and village elevation more than age, gender, educational background, and profession.
- Institutional arrangements do play an important part in the robustness of the tourism system. Locals are optimistic concerning the Local Governance Act of 2017.
- Further empirical research is required across different disciplines, independently or collaboratively, to successfully understand the impacts of, and manage, tourism.

### Future Direction

- In the field of tourism systems, the traditional research approach has been linear, reductionist, and mechanistic with an assumption that the outcomes can be predicted with simplified models.
- The study of complex adaptive tourism system (CATS) from a commons perspective with focus on institutional arrangement can help to bridge the gaps in the literature.

**References**

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