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***TOURISM INNOVATIONS***  
***A JOURNAL OF INDIAN TOURISM CONGRESS (ITC)***

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## **SCOPE OF ADVENTURE SPORTS TOURISM IN HIMACHAL PRADESH: AN ASSESSMENT**

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### **Abstract**

Present paper assesses the scope of adventure sports tourism in Himachal Pradesh. With the help of pre-structured questionnaire, this paper has taken a study of the 150 service providers regarding the adventure sports tourism in the state. This paper reaches on the conclusion that Adventure is a synonym for Himachal Pradesh. The study, on the whole, brings out the fact that Himachal is a state blessed with a very rich potential for almost all types of tourism, whose potential has not been exploited to its optimum. Further it can also be concluded that technological advancements are also the main factor that continues to facilitate the development of adventure tourism and the hardest barriers factors adventure sports tourism development in Himachal is the tourist satisfaction with the adventure tourism facilities, accessibility of adventure sports specific places, then followed with limited public facilities like medical etc.

**Key Words:** Adventure Sports Tourism, Risk, technological Advancements, Himachal Pradesh

Within the boundaries of tourism industry, adventure sports tourism has been identified as one of the fastest growing segments, with the number of operators and tourists increasing worldwide (Adventure Travel Society, 2002). Adventure tourism has recently grown in popularity as a niche form of tourism (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie, & Pomfret, 2003). It is “characterised by its ability to provide the tourist with relatively high levels of sensory stimulation, usually achieved by including physically challenging experiential components” (Muller & Cleaver, 2000, p. 156). Adventure tourism is viewed at a global level as one of the growing sectors of the visitor attraction industry and this growth has been related to a number of key drivers that engage the visitor. For some destinations, adventure tourism products form a major part of the tourism product but more generally, consumer interest in adventure tourism has been recognized gradually by destination marketers and product developers as one way of creating a niche product in an expanding area of visitor activity. The greater extension of various types of adventure activities to a mass market reflects this growth, where participants do not have to be experts or highly skilled participants to sample an adventure experience. What distinguishes these adventure travel activities from those of traditional outdoor recreation is “the deliberate pursuit of risk and uncertainty of outcome often referred to as adventure” where an individual often faces increasing levels of risk or personal threat. Proposed five concepts of competence related to the adventure experience fear, distress, abilities, and attitudes (Swarbrooke et al., 2003). Negi, Jagmohan (2001) in his book highlights the governmental planning to create

infrastructural facilities for trekking, mountaineering and winter/water related sports and the challenges and difficulties in adventure sports with an element of personal risk. It is an activity not of a routine nature but stretch endurance limits of participants and equipment used. It invariably aims to enhance professional competence and have operational utility.

Adventure tourism has been defined by Weiler and Hall (1992, p. 91) as being:

"A broad spectrum of outdoor tourist activities, often commercialised and involving interaction with the natural environment away from the participant's home range and containing elements of risk; in which the outcome is influenced by the participant, setting, and careful management of the experience."

In regard to this definition, and to outline the general framework under which this study takes place, the focus will be on adventure tourism that is not just 'often commercialised', but 'intrinsically commercialised'.

Much academic focus has been given to adventurous activities conducted as a sporting or recreational pastime (see Cheron and Ritchie, 1982; Ewert, 1985; Ewert, 1989; Ewert and Hollenhorst, 1989; Ewert, 1994; Hall, 1992; McIntyre, 1992; McIntyre, 1994; Priest, 1992; and Robinson, 1992). Therefore, "considering the confusion and overlap in the boundaries of leisure, recreation, and tourism, care must be taken in adopting any definition" (Sung, Morrison and O'Leary, 1996, p. 5).

Sung, Morrison and O'Leary (1996), suggest that six major components: activity, motivation, risk, performance, experience and environment are the key variables in defining adventure tourism. The study conducted by Sung, Morrison and O'Leary surveyed 178 exhibitors and observers at the 1996 International Adventure and Outdoor Show held at the Rosemont Convention Center, Illinois. These service providers were asked to rate their levels of support for different definitions of adventure tourism and the level of importance in regard to the six major components. Of the six major components, all were "clearly found to be highly important characteristics of adventure tourism" (Sung, Morrison and O'Leary, 1996, p. 12) with activity being the most important, followed by experience, environment, motivation, risk and performance. The authors suggest that adventure travel is primarily associated with activities where the purpose of the trip is to be engaged in experiences through participation rather than in sightseeing at traditional tourist attractions. As a consequence, as eight proposed definitions received no convincing popularity among the respondents, Sung suggested that they "might have seemed too theoretical for the surveyed population to interpret" (Sung, Morrison and O'Leary, 1997). Having considered these findings, Sung, Morrison and O'Leary suggested the following revised definition of adventure travel:

A trip or travel with the specific purpose of activity participation to explore a new experience, often involving perceived risk or controlled danger associated with personal challenges, in a natural environment or exotic outdoor setting (Sung, Morrison and O'Leary, 1997).

It can be seen that this definition regards the involvement of "perceived risk or controlled danger" as something that is "often" associated with adventure travel. This suggests that some adventure activities may have no level of perceived risk. This line of thinking is flawed. A

principal argument of this study is that with adventure activities, if the operator were to remove or greatly diminish the level of perceived risk, then the experience could no longer be regarded as adventure tourism and as a result, tourist demand for that 'adventure' activity would diminish. People don't go bicycle-touring primarily to experience the view because "in adventure travel it is the activity which attracts the tourist" (Hall, 1992, p. 144) and it is in the activity that the risk resides.

Table below lists a number of activities which Weiler and Hall (1992, p. 144) describe as being examples of adventure tourism. The hybrid nature of an adventure tourism experience being conducted on either a commercialised or non-commercialised basis is demonstrated when one considers activities such as fishing, bushwalking or bicycle touring. These activities are easily and quite often conducted as a self-organised recreational trip rather than as a professionally guided trip.

<b>Table 1: Examples of Adventure Tourism Activities</b>	
Source: Hall and Weiler, 1992; Sung, Morrison and O'Leary, 1996.	
Arctic Trips	Bicycle-touring
Backpacking (bushwalking, tramping)	Four Wheel Drive trips
Bungy jumping	Motorcycling
Camping	Snow shoeing
Cross-country skiing	Fishing
Hang-gliding	Hot-air ballooning
Horseback riding	Paragliding
Hunting	Mountain biking
Jungle exploring	Walking tours
Mountaineering	Orienteering
Nature Trips	Skiing
Rappelling	River kayaking
Rock-climbing	Rogaining
Safaris	Soaring
Sailing	SCUBA diving
Sea kayaking	Sky-diving
Snorkelling	Survival and wilderness training
Trekking	Bird watching
Whitewater canoeing	Spelunking
Whitewater rafting	Windsurfing
Dog Sledding	

It is apparent that the acceptance or "deliberate seeking of risk and danger by participants in outdoor activities" (Weiler and Hall, 1992, p. 143) makes adventure tourism stand apart from other forms of tourism. "Feelings of competence and enhanced sensations as well as feelings of anxiety or fear - it is this duality of emotions that make risk recreation fundamentally different

from other recreation activities" (Robinson, 1992, p. 53). It is difficult to imagine this particular blend of emotions being present in other forms of tourism, and if removed from the adventure tourism experience, it would change to something more mundane. For example, if an operator were to offer a Whitewater rafting experience where the rapids were extremely small and intermittent, the guide to client ratio was such that the client did not have to do any paddling at all, and the raft was so big that the risk of capsizing was negligible, then it would not be a very exciting, or indeed 'risky', experience.

Ewert (1989), distinguishes many activities commonly associated with outdoor recreation from those in which there is a deliberate seeking of risk and uncertainty of outcome as *adventure*. Diminishing the risk below acceptable levels, and thereby diminishing the level of adventure, will change the experience. If risk is not apparent in the activity, then the activity becomes a type of tourism activity other than adventure tourism. The importance of risk in adventure travel activities is also supported by Sung Morrison and O'Leary, (1996, p. 4) when they predict that "the absence of risk may result in a decrease in satisfaction as well as a decrease in the desire to participate".

Risk has been defined as "the potential to lose something valuable". Robinson, (1992, B, p. 13) speaks of the "unavoidable negative consequences" in regard to activities such as mountaineering and rock climbing. He defines risk as the potential to lose something of value which may take the form of a physical, social esteem, or self esteem injury. Ewert (1989) says that within an outdoor adventure experience, this risk can be physical, emotional or material, but is usually associated with the possibility of being injured or even killed. Cheron and Ritchie (1982) view risk as a multidimensional psychological phenomenon which influences individual perceptions and decision processes.

Uncertain outcomes, as well as challenge and danger were identified as the most important meanings associated with the term "risk" by a sample made up of 309 trappers, 442 skiers, 25 hunters, 49 climbers and 62 day walkers as reported in a study conducted by Johnston (1992). Danger and uncertainty of the outcome were also reported as being significant to the meaning of risk.

Technological advancements are also the main factor that continues to facilitate the development of adventure tourism. For example, tourists may buy the latest ice axes, trekking poles, climbing boots or other adventure sports equipment with the expectation that these will make them more accomplished climbers or adventure activity participants. Furthermore, we can say that access routes towards participating in adventure tourism activities are changing as a result of these influences. Recreation and tourism are becoming less spatially and temporally separated due to advances in tourism and travel technology. As the after result of technological advancements and their implementation in adventure tourism results in making it most important and profitable segment to the service providers, it is no longer necessary to serve an apprenticeship of participating in adventure activity under the protection of experienced peers before being "allowed" to move into more challenging and demanding environments. However, today adventure companies and the packages they offer create the possibility of bypassing this traditional skill requirement and moving directly to the more exotic challenges of the adventure sports segment.

### **Adventure Tourism in Himachal Pradesh**

Adventure sports are synonymous to Himachal Pradesh. It is a land which is majestic, mystic and mesmerizing. Its geography and topography offer amazing opportunities for adventure. The joy of adventure increases manifold amidst the picturesque and beautiful surroundings of Himachal Pradesh. Adventure enthusiasts from across the globe come here to quench their thirst for adventure. Himachal has snow-covered mountains, lovely rivers, dense forests, wonderful meadows, arduous passes, beautiful valleys and lakes. Himachal Pradesh offers all kind of adventure sports one can think of. The Himalayas, free flowing rivers, lush green forests, clean sky, and an overall challenging environment can lure any one to take adventure activities.

Nestled between the vast Himalayan range, Himachal Pradesh has become a hub for adventure activities. The state has numerous wonderful hill stations in store, which are freezing cold in winters and pretty cold in summers. Shimla, Dalhousie, Kullu, Kasauli, Manali, Chail and Kufri are a few of the hill Stations in Himachal Pradesh which offer heaps of adventure sports activities, apart from the breathtaking scenery. Major adventure sports in Himachal Pradesh include trekking, hiking, mountaineering, rock climbing, bungee jumping, hot air ballooning, golfing, skiing, heli-skiing, ice-skating, paragliding, angling, fishing, white water rafting, kayaking, mountain cycling, mountain biking, camping, jeep safari, etc. Manali, Narkanda,

**Figure 1**  
**Tourist Map of Himachal Pradesh**



Source: Figure copied from website [www.mapsofindia.com](http://www.mapsofindia.com)

Bilaspur, Kangra, Dharmsala and Shimla are most ideal places for adventure activities in Himachal Pradesh. Rafting in this state is considered as one of the most exciting and electrifying options (Compiled from website [www.hptourism.nic.in](http://www.hptourism.nic.in) assessed between 11/2/2011 to 23/5/2012)

### **The study and research methods**

The study has taken following objectives

1. To study the concept of adventure tourism
2. To identify the scope and potential of adventure sports tourism activities in Himachal Pradesh
3. To assess the opinion of service providers w.r.t. the scope of adventure sports tourism in Himachal Pradesh

The above objectives were achieved with the help of the following methodology:

- *Fulfilment of the first objective:* This objective was achieved with the help of secondary data available in print as well as online from credible sources like governmental websites.
- *Fulfilment of the second and third objective:* This was achieved with the help of questionnaires. One pre-structured questionnaires was filled from service providers at various places (in and around Manali).

Further to generalise the results, non-parametric test like 'Chi-Square' was applied after checking the normal distribution of data with the help of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z test (Table 1). Statement wise mean score was also calculated (Figure 2).

In the light of overall objectives of the study and after review of existing researches on the subject, the following null hypothesis has been developed for the purposes of testing. "The opinion of sample population over the statements regarding various services regarding scope and potential of adventure tourism are equally distributed and there is no significant difference in their opinions. "

In this secondary literature survey, exhaustive review of existing literature was undertaken in order to assure and the relevant information extraction. Relevant documents were sourced from the corporate studies in the field of adventure tourism along with the contribution of the academic publications. The information from the adventure tourism associations (like ATOI – Adventure Tour Operators of India, IMF- Indian Mountaineering Federation, Mountaineering institutes etc.) was also exhaustively analyzed and was used during the course of study.

As explained earlier also that the primary data was collected using structured questionnaires. The questionnaires comprised of both closed ended and open ended questions. The questionnaires was finalized after inputs from academic and industry experts. The structured questionnaires were administered among the respondents in order to gather information in relation to Demographic Profile (required to understand respondents) and Opinion Survey regarding the scope and potential of adventure tourism opinion were collected on five point likert scale. After the pilot study instrument was modified accordingly.

The universe of study was service providers (intermediaries and stakeholders, and all the professional and unprofessional manpower involved directly or indirectly in adventure tourism Himachal Pradesh). To select the number of respondents' non-proportional judgment quota sampling was used. In non-probability sampling, the sample is not based on chance. It is rather determined by some person. We cannot assign to an element of population the probability of its being selected in the sample. Somebody may use his personal judgment in the selection of the sample. In this case the sampling is called judgment sampling(<http://www.emathzone.com/tutorials/basic-statistics/probability-and-nonprobability-sampling.html> accessed on dated 15.04.10). In total a sample of 150 respondents was selected for this study by taking 50 respondents from three areas of Manali based on purposive quota i.e. from Solang area, Manali town and Kullu-Manikaran area. The description of same has been given in table 1, attached in the end of the paper.

## Study Results

Table 2 represents the profile of tourism service providers, which were surveyed during the study. It is evident from the table that while asking about the number of years in travel trade especially in adventure tourism; it was found that 26.7% of the respondents were relatively new in adventure tourism operations i.e. less than 2 years, 38.6% of total travel agents surveyed, were into adventure tourism operations from more than 5 years and seems to be more experienced.

Survey found that 6% of the service providers were least educated i.e. below matriculation, 10.7% of the service providers were matriculate i.e. educated up to tenth standard, 43.3% of the service providers were graduate, 38.7% were having higher education degree i.e. they were post graduate or having tourism degree and remaining only 1.3% of service providers were having above post graduation educational qualification.

As far as occupational/business profiling of service providers in the sample is concerned the majority 50.7% of the respondents comprises of travel agents, 14% of the respondents comprised of hoteliers/employees, 14.7% of the respondents were either the guides or the escorts and remaining 20.7% were the entrepreneurs or involved directly or indirectly with the adventure tourism.

Table 2 also gives the details of main complaints by the tourist with the service providers, it was found that 32.7% of the tourist complain about accessibility to and within the state, 10.7% of the tourist complain about language problem in the state, 22% of the tourist complain about the problem of water and sanitation, 10% of the tourist complain about crime and cheating experience in the state and remaining 24.7% of tourist complain about the poor quality of services.

Table 3 represents the profile of responses of service providers. Responses were gathered on 19 items based upon five point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing. It is evident from table that Chi-square value came out to be significant at 99% level of confidence. This led to the rejection of null hypothesis and acceptance of alternative hypothesis that the opinion of respondents over various statement differ significantly. The analysis of table revealed that the concentration of frequencies exhibiting the level of agreeing or disagreeing of sample of 150 service providers w.r.t. item no. 1,2,3,4,5,6,8,12,13,14, 17 and 19 lies towards the

positive side of the scale (Figure 3). This may be interpreted that significantly higher number of respondents strongly agree or agree with the above mentioned items. It is also evident from table 3 that concentration of frequencies exhibiting the level of agreement of sample of 150 service providers with respect to item no. 7,9,10,11,15, and 16 lies towards the negative side of the scale(Figure 3). This led to interpretation that significantly higher number of respondents strongly disagree or agree with the above mentioned items. However no clear cut opinion was merged in item number 18 titled 'government should higher Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) to promote adventure sports tourism in Himachal Pradesh.

### **Concluding discussion**

This study was designed and conducted to assess the scope of adventure sports tourism in Himachal Pradesh. The research developed its findings by keeping the Manali as a case study area, since Manali is known as adventure sports capital of India (Lonely Planet India 2010). However, the findings derived from these analyses were presented under the heading 'study results'. For the purpose of ease of understanding and facilitating logical link to the recommendations being offered in this paper, some of the main findings/ conclusions are presented below to serve as a foundations part. Through consultation with major stakeholders and tourists, a number of gaps have been identified in the provision of adventure sports tourism product of Himachal. On the basis of these gaps questionnaire was prepared and opinion of service providers towards the assessment of scope of adventure sports tourism was identified. The study, on the whole, brings out the fact that Himachal is a state blessed with a very rich potential for almost all types of tourism, whose potential has not been exploited to its optimum. However the pinpointed recommendations are as follows:

The stakeholders predominantly agree that ecological resources particularly rivers, mountains, forests, lakes, social life especially villagers and their lives, and cultural resources such as unique traditions are the strength factors of adventure sports tourism development in Himachal and it is the uniqueness of the state. Generating adventure related tourism businesses are the most potential opportunity of tourism development in Himachal. As it has been noticed that adventure tourism opportunities is the true gift of nature to this state. However there are still numerous opportunities generated from adventure tourism such as providing local employments, increasing family incomes, and increasing value of the natural resources.

The hardest barriers factors adventure sports tourism development in Himachal is the tourist satisfaction with the adventure tourism facilities, accessibility of adventure sports specific places, then followed with limited public facilities like medical etc. A number of weaknesses of adventure sports tourism development agreed by the stakeholders is the non-availability of industry data bases. It points about formation of local association and emergent government support. Degradation of natural resources regarded as the riskiest threat of adventure tourism development in Himachal.

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**Table 2: Profile of Respondents**

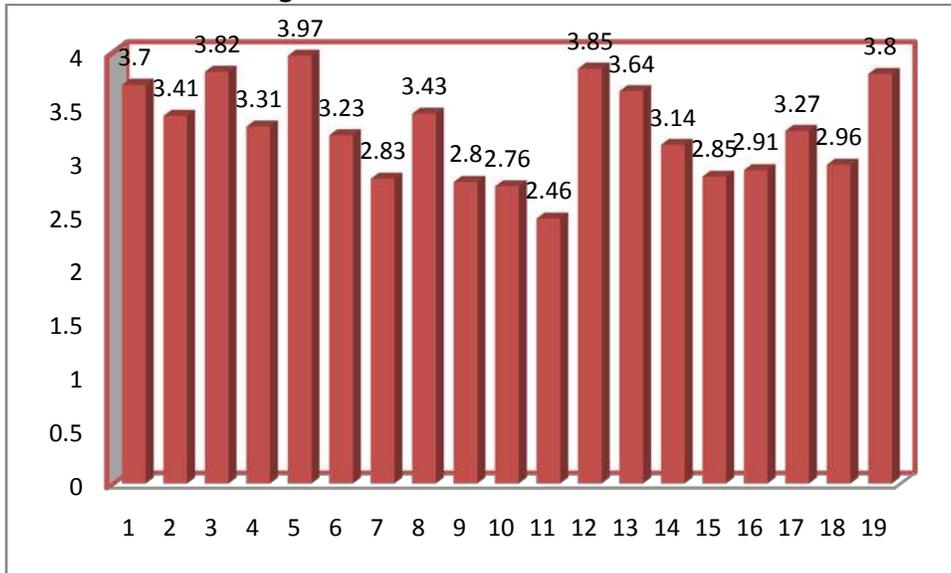
	Number	Percentage
<b>Years in tourism trade</b>		
under 2 years	40	26.7
2-5 years	52	34.7
5-10 years	38	25.3
more than 10 years	20	13.3
<b>Educational level</b>		
below matriculation	9	6.0
matriculate	16	10.7
graduate	65	43.3
post graduate	58	38.7
above post graduate	2	1.3
<b>Business/occupation</b>		
travel agent	76	50.7
hotel employee	21	14.0
guide/escort	22	14.7
entrepreneur	31	20.7
<b>In your opinion what is the main problem about which tourist complain most</b>		
accessibility	49	32.7
language	16	10.7
water and sanitation	33	22.0
crime and cheating	15	10.0
quality of service	37	24.7

Source: Data collected with the help of questionnaires

**Table 3 : Test Statistics**

		Industry database is not readily available	Non-availability of right accommodation during adventure activities	Special need of foreign visitors cannot be satisfied	Payment terms with suppliers are not favorable	Adventure tourism is unique product	Tourist feel satisfaction after participating in adventure activities	Adventure destinations are well managed	There is lack of adequate information about adventure activities	Accessibility to various destinations within the state is appropriate	Medical facilities during the activity are sufficient	Adventure tourism encourages drug abuse	Instructors and guides are fully qualified	Required equipment is available with service providers	Equipments are according to international standard	Garbage collection and disposal systems are working properly	Basic facilities are appropriate at the destinations and base camps	Adventure activities are responsible for degradation of environment	Govt. should hire some DMO to promote Himachal	Behaviour of local population towards the tourist is good
Strongly Disagree		11.3	14.7	8.7	18.7	7.3	20.0	20.7	13.3	16.7	20.7	24.7	6.0	11.3	12.7	12.0	12.0	2.7	14.0	4.7
Disagree		11.3	20.0	10.7	18.0	8.7	19.3	33.3	20.7	40.0	34.0	39.3	11.3	11.3	32.0	44.7	39.3	36.7	31.3	19.3
No Comments		7.3	8.7	9.3	11.3	6.0	6.7	7.3	8.0	7.3	9.3	8.7	12.0	16.0	4.7	4.0	8.7	10.0	11.3	6.0
Agree		36.0	23.3	32.7	18.0	36.0	25.3	20.0	25.3	18.7	20.7	20.0	33.3	24.7	30.0	24.7	26.0	32.7	31.3	31.3
Strongly Agree		34.0	33.3	38.7	34.0	42.0	28.7	18.7	32.7	17.3	15.3	7.3	37.3	36.7	20.7	14.7	14.0	18.0	12.0	38.7
Disagree %		22.6	34.7	19.4	36.7	16	39.3	54	34	56.7	54.7	64	17.3	22.6	44.7	56.7	51.3	39.4	45.3	24
Agree %		70	56.6	71.4	52	78		38.7	58	36	36	27.3	70.6	61.4	50.7	39.4	40	50.7	43.3	70
Difference %		47.4	21.9	52	15.3	62	-39.3	-15.3	24	-20.7	-18.7	-36.7	53.3	38.8	6	-17.3	-11.3	11.3	-2	46
Normal Parameters <sup>a</sup>	Mean	3.70	3.41	3.82	3.31	3.97	3.23	2.83	3.43	2.80	2.76	2.46	3.85	3.64	3.14	2.85	2.91	3.27	2.96	3.80
	Std. Deviation	1.345	1.484	1.290	1.545	1.223	1.534	1.446	1.458	1.385	1.394	1.262	1.214	1.372	1.395	1.323	1.302	1.208	1.295	1.269
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		3.530	2.719	3.292	2.491	3.562	2.833	3.138	2.832	3.489	3.110	3.457	3.147	2.655	2.936	3.763	3.309	3.015	2.745	3.216
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
a. Test distribution is Normal.																				
Chi-Square		57.200 <sup>a</sup>	25.933 <sup>a</sup>	62.867 <sup>a</sup>	21.067 <sup>a</sup>	91.867 <sup>a</sup>	21.133 <sup>a</sup>	25.533 <sup>a</sup>	28.333 <sup>a</sup>	43.533 <sup>a</sup>	24.933 <sup>a</sup>	51.333 <sup>a</sup>	61.000 <sup>a</sup>	34.933 <sup>a</sup>	40.000 <sup>a</sup>	73.400 <sup>a</sup>	47.867 <sup>a</sup>	63.200 <sup>a</sup>	32.400 <sup>a</sup>	68.133 <sup>a</sup>
df		4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 30.0.																				

**Figure 2: Statement wise Mean Score**



**Figure 3: Difference between Agreeing and Disagreeing Percentage**

