

Tourism in Central Himalayan Region: Types and Consequences

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Abstract

The status of tourism as an economic activity is recognized throughout the world. The tourism industry in Uttarakhand state in central Himalayan region of India has flourished with the pilgrimage and various activities as trekking, rafting, skiing etc. Uttarakhand has potential to attract the all types of tourists. Tourism has been playing a major role in building and sustaining the economy of the state. This research paper focuses upon the types of tourism and the effects of tourism in Central Himalayan region of India (Uttarakhand state). This is a secondary data-based study.

Keywords : tourism, tourists, uttrakhand, eco-tourism.

Introduction

Tourism is considered to be an important vehicle for economic and social development of the country. Tourism plays an important role in employment generation and economic growth of the nation. Tourism is an important and key industry of Uttarakhand state in central Himalaya region of India and also a major contributor to the economy of the state. The number of tourists visiting Uttarakhand (in central Himalaya region) has consistently increased from around 19.45 million in 2006 to 31.78 million in 2016 and registered CAGR of 5.03%. Tourism contributes around 49.6% in the state gross domestic product. Tourism related activities have a huge scope for development in Uttarakhand. The climate, natural scenery, lakes, pilgrimages and picnic spots appear to constitute the basic tourist attractions of the Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand is the most prominent destination of tourists all over the world. The government has set up Uttarakhand tourism board to function as an upper body for development of tourism. Ministry of tourism in Uttarakhand is responsible for making and generating revenue from tourism in the state. This research paper focuses upon the types of tourism and the effects of tourism in Central Himalayan region of India (Uttarakhand state). This is a secondary data based study.

Uttarakhand state is a part of Central Himalaya's ranges starting from the Shivalik foothills to greater Himalaya's with Tibet its north eastern border and Nepal in the east. On its north-west lies Himachal Pradesh, while the most of its western and south boundary surrounded by Uttar-Pradesh. Uttarakhand is a favourite tourist destination for most of the people. Tourists generally visit Uttarakhand every year during April-May or October-November. The successful development of tourism requires the existence or the provision of a wide range of factors, facilities, and services to meet the demands of actual or potential tourists as, attraction, transportation, accommodations, supporting facilities and infrastructure. Tourism ministry of Uttarakhand has created two tourism corporations for Garhwal and Kumaun region named as Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam Ltd and Kumaun Mandal Vikas Nigam Ltd to offer quality services to the tourists. Domestic and foreign tourists visit different parts of the state almost the whole year round and the tourist traffic is consistently increasing in the region (Uttarakhand Tourism Development Master Plan, 2008). The tourism business in Uttarakhand generated Rs. 23,000 crores during 2013-14 (Wikipedia, <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>).

Table 1
Trends of Tourist arrivals in Uttarakhand during 2001-2020

| S. No. | Year | Domestic Tourist | Foreign Tourist | Total |
|--------|------|------------------|-----------------|----------|
| 1 | 2001 | 9551669 | 44429 | 9596098 |
| 2 | 2002 | 10606504 | 45070 | 10651574 |
| 3 | 2003 | 10835241 | 55228 | 10890469 |
| 4 | 2004 | 11720570 | 62885 | 11783455 |
| 5 | 2005 | 14215570 | 75995 | 14291565 |
| 6 | 2006 | 16666525 | 85284 | 16751809 |

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|----|------|----------|--------|----------|
| 7 | 2007 | 22154250 | 106150 | 22260400 |
| 8 | 2008 | 20546323 | 100000 | 20646323 |
| 9 | 2009 | 21934567 | 106470 | 22041037 |
| 10 | 2010 | 30206030 | 127258 | 30333288 |
| 11 | 2011 | 25946254 | 124653 | 26070907 |
| 12 | 2012 | 26827329 | 124555 | 26951884 |
| 13 | 2013 | 19941128 | 97683 | 20038811 |
| 14 | 2014 | 21991315 | 101966 | 22093281 |
| 15 | 2015 | 29295152 | 111094 | 29406246 |
| 16 | 2016 | 31663782 | 112799 | 31776581 |
| 17 | 2017 | 34581097 | 142102 | 34723199 |
| 18 | 2018 | 36697678 | 154526 | 36852204 |
| 19 | 2019 | 39066776 | 158964 | 39225740 |
| 20 | 2020 | 7836002 | 38763 | 7874765 |

Source: <http://tourism.govt.in/market-research-and-statistics>,<http://www.incredibleindia.org/images/docs/medis-pdf/surveys-and-studios/domestic-and-foreign-tourist-visits-year-2008-10/Fifures.pdf>

The above table reveals the consistent growth of domestic and foreign tourist from year 2001 to year 2007 in Uttarakhand. In 2008 the growth rate became down and in 2009 a slight upward growth is seen. But in 2010 a tremendous growth of domestic and foreign tourist can be observed. In 2011 and 2012 due to natural calamities a negative growth can be observed and during 2013 and 2014 growth rate of domestic tourists is gradually increasing but a sudden fall in foreign tourist inflow can be observed in 2013 due to natural calamity in mid June 2013. The above table shows the continuous growth of domestic and foreign tourist from year 2014 to year 2019. In 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic growth rate became down.

Table 2

Projected Tourists Visits in Uttarakhand (Millions)

| Year | Domestic tourists visit | Foreign tourism visit |
|------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2007 | 21.7 | 0.1 |
| 2008 | 24.9 | 0.1 |
| 2009 | 28.5 | 0.2 |
| 2010 | 32.6 | 0.2 |
| 2011 | 37.4 | 0.2 |
| 2012 | 42.2 | 0.2 |
| 2013 | 47.7 | 0.3 |
| 2014 | 53.9 | 0.3 |
| 2015 | 60.9 | 0.3 |
| 2016 | 68.9 | 0.4 |
| 2017 | 77.8 | 0.4 |

Source: PHD research bureau, compiled from Uttarakhand Tourism Department Masterplan 2007-2022

Above table reveals that, the domestic tourist visit in Uttarakhand during 2007 were about 21.7million while foreign tourist visit were 0.1 million. The domestic as well as foreign tourist visit nearly doubled to 42.2% million and 0.2 million respectively in 2012, further domestic and foreign tourist visit were expected to increase to 77.8% million and 0.4 million respectively during 2017.

Following table reveals the number of tourist arrivals to important national parks as Corbett National Park, Nanda Devi National Park, Valley Of National Parks, Rajaji National Park, Gangotri National Park, Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary, Binsar Wild Life Sanctuary, Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary, Govind Wildlife Sanctuary. The table also indicates the revenue generation in these areas in 2007-2017.

Table 3
Tourist arrivals in important national parks

| Year | Indian | Foreigner | Total | Revenue (in lakhs) |
|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|--------------------|
| 2007-2008 | 231375 | 16463 | 247838 | 341.95 |
| 2008-2009 | 277487 | 15503 | 292990 | 378.31 |
| 2009-2010 | 285412 | 15829 | 301241 | 547.04 |
| 2010-2011 | 218616 | 12211 | 230827 | 729.33 |
| 2011-2012 | 271579 | 13329 | 284908 | 851.19 |
| 2012-2013 | 281232 | 11269 | 292501 | 790.16 |
| 2013-2014 | 273297 | 10764 | 284061 | 869.84 |
| 2014-2015 | 313652 | 9284 | 322936 | 993.91 |
| 2015-2016 | 328126 | 12049 | 340175 | 1060.73 |
| 2016-2017 | 374575 | 11685 | 386260 | 1168.07 |

Source: Forest Department Uttarakhand 2016-2017

The above table shows that the domestic tourist arrivals in important national parks have been on a steady rise whereas there has been a fluctuation in the number of foreigners in the region. The table indicates that revenue generation in these areas is showing an increasing trend which is positive indication for the development of this region. As more revenue can lead to more economic up gradation of the state.

Types of Tourism in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand has a lot of potential for tourism development and various tourist activities. Earlier three types of tourism practiced in Uttarakhand, religious tourism, natural tourism and adventurer tourism. But recently along with these three tourisms' some other types of tourism as eco-tourism, wild life tourism, leisure tourism, business tourism, health tourism and cultural tourism has been introduced.

Religious Tourism: The Uttarakhand is nestled in the lap of central Himalaya region and known as the abode of God and Goddess. Therefore, Uttarakhand is a great religious tourism destination. Uttarakhand has been receiving a large number of pilgrims annually from the time immemorial. Uttarakhand is also known as *Devbhoomi*. The four Dhams: Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamunotri and Gangotri the Panch Badris, Panch Kedars, and Panch Prayags made up of fabric of pilgrimage in the state. The four Dhams receive their source of water from the four pious rivers as Yamunotri from Yamuna, Gangotri from Bhagirathi, Kedarnath from Mandakini, and Badrinath from the Vishnu Ganga. Haridwar hosts the Kumbh Mela every twelve years, which fetches millions of pilgrims from all parts of the India and the world. Hemkund Saheb is a famous spot of pilgrimage for both the Sikh and Hindu communities.

Adventure Tourism: Recently adventure tourism has been introduced in the state which includes river rafting, trekking, mountaineering, and skiing. The trend of adventure tourism is growing fast in the wake of the increasing adventure attitude of the tourists. Uttarakhand is a paradise for adventure spots. Various kinds of adventure tourism activities are found here as, mountaineering (Nanda Devi, Bhagirathi, Pindari, Milam, Choukhamba, Kafni, Gaumukh); skiing (Auli, Dayara Bugyal, Munsyari, Bedani Bugyal); water sports (Nainital lake paradise, Asan barrage water sports resort, Nanaksagar Matta); water rafting sites (lake paradise, Ganges river, Gangotri, Garhwal Himalayas, Asan barrage, Nainital, Kudiala Rafters Club). Institute of mountaineering is located in Uttarkashi, which is among the three big institutes of India. Skiing is developing as a winters sport and the teams are comprised by domestic and international level.

Eco-Tourism: According to Ceballos-Lascurain (1987), travel to relatively intact or historical areas to admire, study, and enjoy natural landscapes, sceneries, flora and fauna, and socio-cultural heritages is known as eco-tourism. Nature and culture are the very source of eco-tourism. Uttarakhand has a rare diversity of fauna and flora (high altitude lakes, Rolling Meadows, dense forests, wet land habitat, snow capped mountains and exotic wild life, birds and plant species) which makes it an ideal area for developing eco-tourism. Besides the

protected areas (PAs) are considered as an important eco-tourism assets. The protected areas include six national parks, seven wild life sanctuaries and four conservation reserves. For the state government and for the particular region these protected areas serve as a significant source of revenue generation. Valley of Flowers along with Nanda Devi National park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Uttarakhand is a suitable place for various activities such as, jungle safaris, trekking on mountains and forest trails nature walks etc. which should be conducted in a manner that promotes awareness of environment and helps maintain the fragile ecological balance (Sati and Kumar,2004).

Wild Life Tourism: Uttarakhand is the best destination for wild life lover, nature lover, photographer, traveller and adventurer. In Uttarakhand wildlife tourism includes 12 National parks and wild life sanctuaries two conservation reserves- the Asan Barrage and Jhilmil tal, two world heritage sites- Nanda Devi Biosphere reserve and Valley of flowers national park. Tourists get opportunity to watch different species of birds and animals. Corbett National Park (Nainital), Rajaji National Park (Doon Valley), Valley of flowers national park (Chamoli), Govind wild life sanctuary (Uttarkashi), Binsar wild life sanctuary in Uttarakhand (Almora) are some popular national parks and wild life sanctuaries in Uttarakhand.

Leisure Tourism: Generally leisure tourism is for vacations, entertainment, relaxation, and recreation to come out from the usual environment. Sometimes people want a break from the stressful life and spend their vacations to refresh themselves. Many places as Nainital, Mussoorie, Dehradun, Kausani in Uttarakhand provides all (snow clad peaks, river, forests, wind, fogs etc.) that a tourist could possibly seek for amusement and leisure.

Business Tourism: Business tourism includes attending conferences, meetings and exhibitions. Tourists included in this category generally travel for their work. This type of tourism is known as MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibition).Uttarakhand has appeared as most attractive industrial destinations in India. The government is actively playing role in motivating private participation in all industrial activities and as a result big companies like HLL and Dabur have already set up their units in the state. New industrial policy shows that while promoting integrated industrial states it may prefer private resources (shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>bitstream).

Health Tourism: Health tourism is very much popular in Uttarakhand. Many health centres from top end spas to affordable resorts to the traditional Ashrams are situated here which provides various kinds of treatments for example, Yoga, Ayurveda and modern healing systems as Reiki. The deemed universities in Uttarakhand and ancient ashrams have now turned into research institutes and colleges like Patanjali Ashram. Rishikesh is known as the 'Yoga capital of the world'. Haridwar is the perfect destination for the ayurveda treatment. Government Gurukul Kangdi Ayurvedic College and Hospital, Ayurvedic College in Dehradun, and Rishikul Government Ayurvedic College in Haridwar are major Ayurvedic colleges in Uttarakhand.

Cultural Tourism: According to WTO cultural tourism accounts for 37% of global tourism, and further more affirms that it will continue to grow 15% each year. Uttarakhand is also a hub to witness some of the finest items of art and craft through which cultural heritage has been kept alive and has the potential for great value addition to the tourism industry of the region. The diverse art, craft and trade identified in state are Aipan, Bamboo ringal craft, woollen crafts, metal ware, pine cone ikebana, decorative candle making etc. There are various local fairs and festivals which are indicative of the immense potential for cultural tourism in Uttarakhand, for example, Nanda Devi mela (Almora and Nainital), Surkanda Devi mela (Tehri), Utrayani mela (Bageshwar), Purnagiri mela (Champawat), Chaiti mela (Udham Singh Nagar), Joljibi mela (Pithoragarh), Magh mela (Uttarkashi), Piran Kaliyar mela (Haridwar) etc. People from different places come and enjoy these events.

Rural tourism: Rural tourism focuses on active participation of tourists in rural lifestyle. It can be an important means for income generation for the communities in the interior regions of the state by providing the direct benefits to locals. A number of tourist destinations are in close proximity to rural areas which opens numerous possibilities of rural tourism related livelihood opportunities for the economy of the state. Uttarakhand livelihoods improvement project for the Himalayas (ULIPH) from October 2004 with financial support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has played the role of an incubator for rural tourism keeping in view the potential of the destination. The current status of ULIPH project shows significant contribution in economic development of the rural areas of the state through tourism activities. "Uttarakhand

Rural Tourism Development Yojna” was launched in 2014 for the enhancement of tourism in the state. Kumaun Mandal Vikas Nigam has been offering home stay services to tourists in some of the remote trekking routes of Kumaun. In the remote valleys of Vyans, Darma, and Chaundas in the Pithoragarh district of Kumaun some villages were selected for the initial phase of the home stay scheme.

Effects of Tourism

Positive effects: The major positive effect of tourism is generating the employment and creating jobs. It provides employment to people especially unemployed youth. It can provide various jobs and business opportunities to local communities close to protected areas, mountain climbing routes, scenic locations and trekking routes as tour guides, drivers porters etc. It generates self-employment. Shops, restaurants, resorts, lodges around the destinations are owned by local people who increase their income. It empowers local community. It promotes women employment. Most of the folk art and handicrafts like Aipan and Woollen crafts are usually practiced by the women therefore tourism enhances the market of handy crafts as well as provides various entry points for women employment. Tourism provides a long term solution to poverty. It brings a better standard of living through development and improvement of infrastructure facilities for the communal benefits such as hospitals, water, education, electricity, roads etc. It has a major role in preventing migration, conserving local art and culture. The eco-tourism wing of the Uttarakhand forest have made arrangements for a series of bird watching camps in different destinations spread across the state which will help to conserve while providing livelihood opportunities to communities. Natural resources which are abundant in the local areas can be utilized for designing various kinds of souvenirs for the tourists such as in pine cones are used to make decorative hand-made items by the locals in Nainital.

Negative effects: Development of tourism raises various issues as pollution of environment, problem of cleanliness, hike in the price of land, water problem, much demand of the goods is hiking the price of daily needs goods etc. Car parking is one of the major problems due to which traffic problem arises. Maximum local people and hotel owners do not have car parking so they park their vehicle in the road-side which results in traffic jam. While tourism brings money and development to the region, it can also do unintentional damage to fragile ecosystem. Forest fires are common in the hilly areas most of them are caused by travellers throwing cigarette butts on the roads passing through forests. A large number of natural springs that dotted the hillside have been damaged due to the cutting of slopes for road building or other activities. This has adversely affected the underground water at many areas. Although there had been a steep rise in the number of tourists visiting different places, there is no corresponding increase in the necessary infrastructure which may take the extra load. Modern tourism is very much different from the pilgrimage. Now tourism is considered as an industry. Modern tourism has considerably affected the different components of the life support system in Uttarakhand. For example Nainital Lake which was so famous for the indigenous mahseer (Tor species) is suffering from eutrophication. As a result, not only the mahseer and other fresh water fish have been exterminated, but the other biotic communities are also suffering (Kumar and Singh, 1989). The study of Das and Pandey (1982) on the physio-chemical and biological indicators of pollution in the Nainital lake has been revealed that the lake is now eutrophic, with a very high number of E.coli and other coliform bacteria. According to Das (1983), the number of coliforms was recorded highest during May to October when the number of tourists is also highest. Simultaneously, the depth of the lake has decreased about 4m during the past 50 years or so.

Pollution of environment is an immediate after-effect of tourism. The rubbish and debris left behind by the tourists are not effectively disposed off. Greater exploitation of the natural forests, the rivers, and the variety of ethnic types with their distinct patterns has resulted in the disturbances in the fragile mountain ecosystem. Vagabonds, in guise of pilgrims infiltrate the holy places. Gangotri in Garhwal Himalaya have suffered considerable damages to the ecosystem. Their evil practices have gradually spoiled the aesthetic values and mass deforestation followed with the construction of many luxurious lodges resulting in soil erosion. Silting in the river due to such activities resulted into floods in the plains (Naithani and Rao, 1989). Most of the tourism activities are controlled, managed and organized by entrepreneurs who are not local. In past planning strategies, increasing emphasis has been given to the construction of luxury hotels by inviting private entrepreneurs, mainly from outside Uttarakhand. Various incentives and provisions for financial subsidies for the constructions of hotels at tourists' sites have been extended to attract increasing numbers of

private builders to the region. Private hotel builders are more interested in maximizing their own profit margins rather than providing accommodation facilities that suit different categories of tourists, particularly middle- and low income groups. Their concerns for local development, increasing incomes of local people, and preserving the environment have been minimal (Sati and Kumar, 2004). If tourism has to contribute to the GDP or GEP of the state, community based tourism should be promoted.

Developmental Strategies for Tourism

The highest body to advise Government on all matters relating to tourism in the state is Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board. The chairman of this board is Tourism minister Govt. of Uttarakhand and vice chairman is chief secretary of Uttarakhand. To promote the arrival of tourists in the state the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) carried out some specific strategies. Some of them are: building main tourism zone administration and marketing offices at most visited tourist places, at main urban centres; sub-offices and deliberately placed kiosk and counters at the important tourists areas to give services and information to the visitors; establishing partnership between public and private sectors; creating quality assurance system to mark tourist facilities in state by following local criteria; establishment inter departmental tourism council to determine the policy concerns that need collaboration and coordination of various department and agencies etc. ([shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>bitstream](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream)). To attract tourism investment in the state the state cabinet has accorded industry status to tourism, considered tourism as a main stay of the state economy. The available incentives and subsidies are: incentives and subsidies under MSME Policy 2015 as amended in March 2016 and 2018 (up to capital investment of INR 10 Cr.), incentives for large tourism project; where capital investment is above INR 10 Cr. Up to INR 75 Cr., mega tourism projects (capital investment more than INR 75 Cr.).

Conclusion

The above discussion shows that the central Himalaya region of India is rich in natural resources. It has potential to attract the all type of tourists. Uttarakhand state in central Himalayan region is rich in natural and cultural resources with opportunities for sustainable tourism providing local impetus to support the conservation of wild life and natural areas. Tourism has been playing a major role in building and sustaining the economy of the state. Through the development of master plan, local awareness and better communication facilities Uttarakhand state can be made a tourist hub for all type of tourists.

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