



Sustainable development of tourism in Uttarakhand, (India)

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the sustainable development of tourism in Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand is a state in the Northern Himalayan Region in India and it has been a hot spot of tourism due to its magnificently diverse landscapes, high biodiversity, enough religious tourist potential and rich cultural heritages, which has also generated a good source of income and employment to youths and rural masses. Uttarakhand Himalaya is known for its natural beauty and pilgrims have been attracted to the region for many centuries. The presence of pilgrimages as four dhams is the major attraction for the pilgrims. Tourism is one of the biggest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the global economy and has significant environmental, cultural, social, and economic effects, both positive and negative. Tourism has been noted as the world's largest and fastest growing industry. The main objectives of the study are the formation of tourist circuits, to find out the problems and suggest a suitable plan for sustainable tourism development in Uttarakhand. This form of sustainable tourism, oriented towards the viability of tourism industry, is referred to as the 'economic sustainability of tourism' or 'tourism imperative'. Sustainable tourism can be taken in four different interpretations that include economic sustainability of tourism, the ecologically sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism development with both focus of environment as well as long term feasibility of the industry and finally tourism as a part of a strategy for sustainable development. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to adopt integrated approach and establishment of new plans for the sustainable development of tourism in Uttarakhand. And finally to synthesis all the findings and give feasible suggestions and recommendations for further development of tourism in this region.

Keywords: sustainable development, tourism, cultural, environmental, integrated approach

Introduction

The concept of sustainable tourism, as developed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in the context of the United Nations sustainable development process, refers to tourist activities "leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems".

In Uttarakhand tourism is considered to be an important vehicle for economic and social development. The tourism industry has the potential to generate foreign exchange earnings, create employment, promote development in various parts of the region, reduce income and employment disparities among regions, strengthen linkages among many sectors of the national as well as state economy and help to alleviate poverty. However, this standard view of the tourism industry does not give a complete picture of the potential contribution that tourism can provide for parts of country in general and other countries in particular. A more complete viewpoint can be provided by the concept of sustainable tourism development, because it can help policy-makers make more effective policies and plans designed to realize the full social and economic potential of the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism development is premised on the responsibility of governments and all stakeholders in the tourism sector to ensure that long-term prosperity and the quality of life of future generations is not placed at risk. (Mohanty, 1992).

Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. Thus, sustainable tourism should:

- Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Sustainable tourism in its purest sense is an industry which attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment, and the conservation of local ecosystems. It is responsible tourism that is both ecologically and culturally sensitive. In order to sustain tourism, it is necessary for countries to address various issues arising from tourism's contribution to development in a comprehensive, systematic way. Issues of policy-making, planning, management and the participation of the private

sector and other stakeholders must be addressed in terms of opportunities for action and possible constraints that need to be overcome by concerted efforts.

The location of Uttarakhand is between 30°03'N to 30°05'N and 79°19'E to 79°31'E. Uttarakhand has a total geographic area of 51,125 km², of which 93% is mountainous and 64% is covered by forest. It has a population of about 6.0 million at 94.4 per sq. km. Most of the northern parts of the state are part of Greater Himalaya ranges, covered by the high Himalayan peaks and glaciers, while the lower foothills were densely forested till denuded by the British log merchants and later, after independence, by forest contractors. There is no dearth of tourist hot-spots in Uttarakhand. For everyone, there is some place to visit whether you are interested in pilgrimage, spirituality and adventure sports or camping. The tourist places that are hit with visitors are Dehradun, Nainital, Almora, Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudrapur, Haridwar and Tehri Garhwal. Uttarakhand borders Tibet to the north, Nepal to the east, and the states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh (of which it formed a part before 2000) in the west and south respectively. The region is traditionally referred to as Uttarakhand in Hindu scriptures and old literature, a term which derives from the Sanskrit for Northern Country or Section. In January 2007, the name of the state was officially changed from Uttaranchal, its interim name, to Uttarakhand, according to the wishes of a large section of its people. The provisional capital of Uttarakhand is Dehradun which is also a rail-head and the largest city in the region. Uttarakhand, one of the Hinduism's most spiritually auspicious pilgrimage circuits. Rishikesh near Haridwar is known as the preeminent yoga centre of India while the spectacular view from Hemkund is of special significance to Sikhs. Leisure, adventure, and religious tourism play a prominent role in Uttarakhand's economy, with the Corbett National Park and Tiger Reserve and the nearby hill-stations of Nainital, Mussoorie, Almora and Ranikhet being amongst the most frequented destinations of India. The state also contains

numerous peaks of interest to mountaineers, although Nanda Devi, the highest and best-known of these, has been off-limits since 1982. Other national wonders include the Valley of Flowers, which along with Nanda Devi National Park form a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Objectives

The present study has certain specific research objectives. They are as follows:

- To contribute toward the Conservation of the Environment, Natural and Cultural Resources.
- To assess the growth of tourism based on a Sustainable Market Position.
- Environmental Sustainability.

Methodology

Wide range of data was collected through secondary sources mainly from Directorate of Tourism, Dehradun. Similarly, data were also collected from the two regional offices of tourism, Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam (GMVN), Dehradun and Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam (KMVN), Nainital. References from research papers, books, articles and newspapers were taken appropriately for interpretation of data. To discuss about the impact of tourism on environment and economy, observations after rapid field visits of the tourist places were made.

Social indicators of tourism in Uttarakhand

Social indicators play an important role for the development of the tourism industry in a region. Although both the social as well as the environmental indicators are interdependent on each other, but in the modern concepts of tourism more emphasis given on the social indicators. Social indicators include place of living, health, longevity, nutrition, literacy, employment, education, people, transport, tourist services and more others.

Table 1: Tourists opinion regarding various social indicators in percentage.

Tourist's opinion regarding various Social indicators in percentage.	Excellent	Average	Below average
Place	85	10	5
Accommodation	51	25	24
Food	24	40	36
Transport	12	29	59
Tourist service	54	33	13
Security	70	25	05
Climate	80	10	10

Source: Based on secondary data collection

Types of tourism in Uttarakhand

▪ Natural Tourism

Natural tourism has developed in Uttaranchal after establishment of hill towns. In the late 1830's, the hill stations became more attractive for the civilian residents of India (especially for the colonial middle and upper class), due to the fact that they were an opportunity to escape the hot pre-monsoon months and the summer monsoon, at the same offering a stay in a more pleasant region with a beautiful landscape (Glotzbach 1985 a.). Mussoorie (founded in 1827), Nainital (1839), Almora, Pithoragarh and Ranikhet (1889)

became the major centers of attraction. Modern mass tourism started in 1960s and the number of tourists visiting the hill stations increased by the huge numbers.

▪ Adventurer Tourism

Adventurer tourism is getting enormous attraction in the Uttaranchal Himalaya as winter sports skiing is developing in Auli (Chamoli District), river rafting in the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda Rivers, trekking in various natural places and pilgrimages (Tungnath, Rudranath, Madhyamaheshwar, Triyuginarayan, Rookmd, Gomukh, Purnagiri, seven lakes of

Nainital district, national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and mountaineering in many of the snow-clad peaks.

▪ **Wildlife Tourism**

Uttaranchal Himalaya is famous for national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, bird sanctuaries and biosphere reserves. Its 67% geographical land is covered by forest. Among national parks Rajaji National Park, Govind Ghat National Park, Chilla National Park and Corbett National Park are prominent. Rajaji and Chilla National Parks are world famous for conservation of elephants, while Corbett National Park is known for conserving tigers and known as ‘tiger project’. Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve is declared as world heritage site and known for Kasturi (mrig) deer. There are also many sites, where bird sanctuaries (in Asan barrage, Dehradun District) are found. These areas have altogether the potentials of promoting wildlife tourism.

Sustainable tourism development by four pillar concept

The sustainable tourism development is actually based on four pillars, economic, ecological, and cultural and community. Various guidelines have been given for development of each pillar.

1. Economic sustainability - that is profitable in both the immediate and long term

- Form partnerships throughout the entire supply chain from micro-sized local businesses to multinational organizations.
- Use internationally approved and reviewed guidelines for training and certification.
- Promote among clients an ethical and environmentally conscious behavior.
- Diversify the products by developing a wide range of tourist activities.

2. Ecological sustainability - development that is compatible with the maintenance of essential ecological processes, biological diversity and biological resources

- Codes of practice should be established for tourism at all levels.
- Guidelines for tourism operations, impact assessment and monitoring of cumulative impacts should be established.
- Ensure tourism in protected areas, such as national parks, is incorporated into and subject to sound management plans.
- Monitor and conduct research on the actual impacts of tourism.
- Identify acceptable behavior among tourists.
- Promote responsible tourism behavior.

3. Cultural sustainability - increase people's control over their lives and is compatible with the culture and values of those affected and strengthen the community identity

- Tourism should be initiated with the help of broad based community input.
- Education and training programs to improve and manage heritage and natural resources should be established.
- Conserve cultural diversity.

- Respect land and property rights of traditional inhabitants.
- Guarantee the protection of nature, local and the indigenous cultures and especially traditional knowledge.
- Work actively with indigenous leaders and minority groups to insure that indigenous cultures and communities are depicted accurately and with respect.

4. Local or community sustainability - that is designed to benefit local communities and generate/retain income in those communities

- The community should maintain control over tourism development.
- Tourism should provide quality employment to community residents.
- Encourage businesses to minimize negative effects on local communities and contribute positively to them.
- Ensure an equitable distribution of financial benefits throughout the entire supply chain.
- Provide financial incentives for local businesses to enter tourism.

While responsible ecotourism and other sustainable tourism strategies may bring significant socio-economic benefits to host communities, they are not necessarily aimed at poverty alleviation. Given that the United Nations Millennium Declaration has placed poverty at the centre of the international development agenda, it can be argued that sustainable tourism development should go beyond the promotion of broad socio-economic development and give greater priority to poverty reduction. This priority shift would also address a somewhat ignored recommendation of the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development which, interlaid, urged Governments “to maximize the potential of tourism for eradicating poverty by developing appropriate strategies in cooperation with all major groups, and indigenous and local communities” (see UN, 1999c). A pro-poor tourism (PPT) approach differs from ecotourism and other sustainable tourism strategies in that its overriding goal is to deliver net benefits to the poor. While PPT and ecotourism may have some similar objectives, the key difference is that poverty reduction is the core focus of the PPT approach, rather than a secondary component of a mainly environmental sustainability strategy. In other words, although environmental protection remains an important PPT goal, the quality of the environment in which targeted poor groups live is only one part of a broader poverty reduction strategy. There are several reasons why tourism development could be a particularly effective tool of poverty reduction. Firstly, tourism offers considerable employment opportunities for unskilled labour, rural to urban migrants and lower-income women. Second, there are considerable linkages with the informal sector, which could generate positive multiplier effects to poorer groups that rely on that sector for their livelihoods. Third, tourism tends to be heavily based upon the preservation of natural capital such as, wildlife and scenery and cultural heritage, which are often “assets that some of the poor have, even if they have no financial resources”.

Suggestions to improve the scenario

In spite of the constraints as listed above, Uttarakhand is still

maintaining a bright prospect of economic development in terms of tourism industry. But for this, some immediate as well as long term measures, as mentioned below, are to be adopted:

- A strong political will is of excessive in need for the restoration of peace and political stability in the area with a whole hearted efforts including political dialogue with the local communities should be made to redress their grievances so that sustainable tourism is flourished and locals are benefited by the developmental process.
- Government should make huge investment to break the geographical isolation and remove communication-bottlenecks from Uttarakhand.
- Planned efforts are to be made by the Government to build up the required infrastructure of the state.
- Proper tourism development policy is the need of the hour and for this Government should make a thorough survey in the state.

Conclusion

This paper has introduced some of the key features behind sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism concepts have grown out of the idea of sustainable development which was first identified about 15 years ago. The principles of sustainable development focus on taking a longer-term and more cautious approach to development to ensure that our children can enjoy a quality life. Sustainable tourism is built around four pillars of tourism, economic sustainability, ecological sustainability, cultural sustainability and local sustainability. All four of these elements must be addressed if we are to achieve sustainable tourism. As somebody from a business school background, sustainability can be considered as a strategy, which moves it away from the abstract into the practical. Strategies are designed to move an organization or destination from a current less favoured position to a more favoured future position. In doing so, strategic decisions are based on vision, the identification of shared goals, and leadership.

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