

TOURISM RESOURCES POTENTIAL AND TOURISM FACILITIES IN KUMAON REGION OF UTTARAKHAND

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Introduction

Tourism globally has been recognized as a strong economic force in the world horizon. A place not only in terms of economy but also in terms of influence on the socio-cultural and environmental perspectives. With the increasing awareness in the field of tourism there are *steady improvements in the wayside facilities as well as travels over the ages. Earlier in history* due to the *'antiquated means of transport,' 'lack of way side facilities, safety and security'* and, *non-availability of 'discretionary money and time'* travel and tourism was considered the cup of tea of the elite and well to do class of society. With the middle ages, for the first time a new class of travelers, i.e. *'adventures and explorers'* was witnessed for the first time. This class was not only motivated by 'curiosity' and 'quest for knowledge' but these inquisitive souls, despite their limited means, used to set out on long and arduous voyages, bravely facing the enroute risks and discomforts. Their accounts on 'different land and people' induced a strong urge in the society to travel to 'alien lands and cultures' or to 'explore bounties of nature'. Thus, daring spirits like Marco polo, Columbus and Vasco-de-gama, Benjamin of Tudela, Jewish Scholar, Iban Batutah, Francisco Friar added new dimensions to travel in terms of 'activity', 'concept' and 'philosophy' (Kandari 1984).

Tourism not only helps in improving the balance of payment situation but also provides tremendous employment potential. The fact that one out of every nine persons engaged in the service trade is in tourism business, speaks of it. Almost 300 million people are now directly engaged in travel and hospitality sectors and this number is likely to touch 4300 million marks by the year 2009. Going by the general observations that each job in tourism sector creates approximately 1.5 additional jobs in other sectors, the actual workforce directly and indirectly

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engaged in tourism and allied sectors may come to approximately 750 million in the present context. The WTO forecasts on employment (Figure 1.1) indicates that approximately 25 crore people shall find direct employment in tourism industry by the turn of 2020.



Figure 1.1

Source: WTO

The figures below (1.2 & 1.3), depicts the significance of travel and tourism industry to developing nations in terms of employment potential and annual growth in demand. In terms of jobs being created by the Industry in next ten years, the leading beneficiary nations are China (11, 493, 000), followed by Indonesia (4, 192, 000), Mexico (3, 914, 000) and India (3, 845, 000).

TRAVEL & TOURISM ECONOMY EMPLOYMENT 2004-2013 ('000 of Jobs Created)		
Top Ten Countries		
1 China	11,493	
2 Indonesia	4,192	
3 Mexico	3,914	
4 India	3,845	
5 CIS*	2,221	
6 Brazil	1,854	
7 United States	1,559	
8 Bangladesh	1,104	
9 Spain	971	
10 Pakistan	968	

Figure 1.2

TRAVEL & TOURISM DEMAND 2004-2013 (% Annualised Real Growth)		
Top Ten Countries		
1 Angola	9.5	
2 Mexico	9.5	
3 Turkey	9.2	
4 China	8.9	
5 India	8.8	
6 Botswana	8.5	
7 Laos	8.4	
8 Malaysia	8.2	
9 Hong Kong	8.1	
10 Vanuatu	7.8	

Figure 1.3

Source: WTO

Tourism has various positive impacts like modernization of infrastructure, improving living standard, infusing social, cultural and environmental awareness and helping in protection, preservation and conservation of natural and culture heritage. Its role in social integration and making better understanding among the countries vis-à-vis world peace has been highly acknowledged and appreciated by the United Nations. One of the unique features of tourism industry is that *it can be developed even in areas otherwise deficient in basic minerals and economic geology*. Likewise, the basic product of tourism (i.e., attraction) is non-consumptive by nature and hence can be used as long as its appeal is maintained. Further, since tourists are *on the spot consumers* of the various goods and services, therefore the cost/risks/leakages in transporting the product to the market are also not involved in tourism business. Since, the infra-structural requirements of tourism, except for board and lodging, are largely same as that of general development viz., road and communication networks, safety-security-health and hygiene provisions, power/energy supply, recreation/entertainment facilities, and the diverse range of public utility services, the investment needed for tourism development, in real terms, is much less as compared to any other trade, business or industry, provided that the destinations are strategically planned. 1

Tourism Resource Potential of the Study Area

The Tourist resource potential has been defined and described differently by social scientists. According to Rogers (1989), tourist resources can be defined as “*the inputs required by the transformation process that satisfies tourists needs or wants*”. In fact according to a majority of scholars, any natural, cultural, historical, social or man-made element qualifies to be a tourist resource that has an appeal to attract people. However, it would not be easy to believe that every resource is an attraction. Thus, it has been rightly remarked that, “*Resources are not they become*” (Zimmermann, 1964). The ultimate test of what constitutes a tourist resource and the degree of appeal must be the preferences, interests and requirements of the tourist themselves (Ferrario, 1978). Essentially, the core of tourist product consist of the total appeal of all natural and man made characteristics that an area can offer, supported by an adequate development of catering equipment and promoted by an effective sales organization.



Figure 3.1

Pilgrimage, as has been the oldest form of organized travel, can be credited to pure way for emergence of the present day phenomenon of mass tourism. According to the contemporary definition of tourism, pilgrimage is one of the several touristic motivations. Tourism planners and developers ought to be ever keen to know the degree of attractiveness of a resource or a set of resources, though it is a challenging proposition as the touristic value of an attraction is dynamically changing factor owing to the consistently changing 'tourist demand trends' and the 'resource use patterns'. In this context, there is now a consensus view that the most effective way to assess the touristic appeal of the 'generic' and 'specific' attractions, is to consistently cross-examine the perceptions and priorities of tourists vis-à-vis the attractions in question

The most exclusive feature of tourism industry is that there intrinsically exists potential in the form of conversionable resources ranging from a mountain, river, stream, lake, waterfall, dam, forest, wildlife, beach, island, desert, historical site, museum, monument, art object, fair or festival, tradition and folk dress, to the fact that even a prominent personality can be a tourist resource. It can, thus, be conveniently observed that almost every place has some degree of tourism resource potential (Singh, 1999). The relative touristic value of each of the resource is obviously diverse for different individuals (Kandari, 194), likewise, the use pattern with relation to a given resource varies from person to person i.e., the same landscape may be used by the individuals for photography, trekking, bio and geo-studies, nature spotting, wild life watching and so on. The best resources are those that have mass appeal or say, the strength to attract huge number of people from widest possible psychographic segments.

Undoubtedly, India has had splendid heritage for offering hospitality to the strangers, as aptly exemplified from the age-old dictum, '*Atithi Devo Bhav*', i.e., *Guest is God*. Uttarakhand with its rich historical, cultural, natural and environmental heritage, salubrious climate, scenic locale, snow-clad mountains coupled with colorful fairs, festivals and friendly people has become a favorable destination for tourists from all over the world, it has the best to offer to tourist of diverse interest.

Uttarakhand is the State known for its temples, with its own fairs and festivals, which are inherent to the culture here and have been passed on from one generation to another since centuries. During these auspicious occasions, places of worship like temples turn into venues for fairs and celebrations, attracting people from far and wide. A fair held in the state is not just linked with its cultural identity but is also an important mark of its socio economic fabric. It offers glimpses of all aspects of a culture. A common trend in India and in Uttarakhand therefore is that many festivals come with their attached fairs. In the fore-going a brief description is provided on the popular resources of tourist attractions of the study area.

Major Fairs and Festivals:

In Kumaon, fairs and festivals are not only expression of its cultural heritage and deep-rooted religious traditions and beliefs, but they also provide a stage for regular socio-cultural and

economic interaction. Celebrated in spontaneous continuity and with great enthusiasm, fairs and festivals are also vital for consistently enriching the spiritual life of the people. They are so varied, lively and colourful that Kumaon can easily be termed 'The Land of Festivities'.

The largest fairs in Kumaon are dedicated to local deities and are organised at the change of season such as Bikhori various fairs are organised on different occasions of Shivaratri, Janmashtami, Dussehra and also on sankranti, Deepawali and Vaikunth Chaturdashi. All major and minor temples hold their annual fairs with religious fervour. Animal sacrifices take place in the festivals devoted to Shakti. There are several fairs associated with agriculture such as Bikhori and Harela, a mass participation in crop transplantation and harvesting.

Then there are processions taken out to appease local deities. Some are annual, some happen every 12 years such as the Nanda Devi Jat. The divine *dhiya* is sent off to Goddess Nanda Devi's husband's place, Kailash, and this procession traverses a distance of 280 km. A generically similar pattern of events is followed in most of these celebrations. Interestingly the procession starts at Kumaon and then the entire celebration takes place in different parts of Garhwal.

Uttarakhand is full of colourful and distinctive fair and folk festival which are a blend of various natural, social and cultural factors. The people of Uttarakhand also celebrate all the major Indian festivals. Basant Panchami, Bhaitauli, Harela, Phooldei, Batsavriti, Ganga Dussehra, Dikar Puja, Olgi or Ghee Sankranti, Khatarua, Ghuian Ekadashi and Ghughutia are some of the major festivals of Uttarakhand. The daily lives of Uttarakhandi women are crowded with a never-ending succession of festivals, most of them involving fasts and the preparation of special foods.

Major Folk dance and Music

The Culture of Uttarakhand has its roots in past. It is one of the diverse cultures and traditions of India and is one of the unique culture which can be seen prominently in its various forms of art. Uttarakhand folk dance is not as complex as the classical dance forms but is something which is beautiful to witness. It's a reflection of the deep sited beliefs and traditions of the local people which is performed to express joy and celebrate the arrival of new season.

Barada Nati, Bhotiya Dance, Chancheri, Chhapeli, Choliya Dance, Jagars, Jhora, Langvir Dance, Langvir Nritya, Pandav Nritya, Ramola, Shotiya Tribal Folk Dances, Thali-Jadda and Jhainta are some of the folk dances performed in various occasions in Uttarakhand.

Uttarakhandi folk music had its root in the lap of nature. The pure and blessed music have the feel and the touch of nature and subjects related to nature. The folk music primarily is related to the various festivals, religious traditions, folk stories and simple life of the people of Uttarakhand. Thus the songs of Uttarakhand are a true reflection of the Cultural Heritage and the way people lives their lives in the Himalayas.

There are many kinds of folk songs from the area, including ceremonial mandals, martial panwaras and melancholy khuded, thadya and jhoda.

Musical instruments used in Uttarakhand music include the dhol, damoun, turri, ransingha, dholki, daur, thali, bhankora and masakbhaja. Tabla and harmonium are also used, but to a lesser extent.

The Music and its development have seen various phases of growth and have undergone lots of transformation during the course of time.

Tourist Plant Facilities in the area

The potential for development of tourism at a given destination depends as much on the availability of a *strong tourism resource* base, as on the *tourist plant facilities* in terms of accessibility, internal transportation, accommodation, recreation and entertainment provisions, travel agency and tour operations services, shopping opportunities and so on. However, *the state of basic infrastructure*, related to water and power supply, communication and currency exchange facilities, health-hygiene and security-safety services etc seemingly more relevant from resident viewpoint, essentially acts as a decisive factor in the ultimate growth and development of tourism industry. Obviously, tourist may not feel impelled to visit a destination, which lacks in the basic infrastructure.

Coming back to tourism, the infrastructural requirements are too diverse and at times too specific, depending in the type touristic appeal and the range of tourist activities possible/or to be developed at a given destination. For example, trekking does not involve much of the infrastructure or tourist plant facilities, except a definitive trek and a guide, as also availability of suitable camping site (s) enroute. Likewise, river running, aero-sports and ice-skiing activities have their own set of requirement in term of basic infrastructure vis-à-vis tourist plant facilities. Interestingly, same tourist visiting different destination or traveling under different motive may have different set of demands guided by his/her purpose of visit vis-à-vis expectations with regard to the given destination.

Transportation

Road connectivity to these treks can be considered to be quite up to the mark, while the condition of the treks too is modestly satisfactory keeping in view the prevailing topographic conditions vis-à-vis nature of the respective trek (*i.e., hard/soft/eco trek*). Fact remains that greater parts of the area fall in the rather remoter ecosystems of the Lesser Himalayas, neither one should expect for quality accessibility provisions nor the ecological conditions allow for the same. Of course, such an observation does not take into consideration the social cost-benefits of the situation with regard to the resident population, which has the right to kind of accessibility provisions.

Accommodation

Accommodation is one of the most vitally component responsible for growth and development of tourism. Availability of appropriate accommodation facilities for various categories of travelers has great impact on the type and volume of tourist traffic to a given destination/destination region. The type of touristic appeal and tourist use patterns vis-à-vis motivation and socio-economic and cultural perspectives of the effective and potential tourists, on the other hand, closely guide the type of accommodation facilities. Provision of requisite accommodation is also vitally important enroute as much at the destination.

Incidentally, luxury accommodation is not the priority while traveling in relatively remoter Himalayan environment. Therefore, depending from place to place vis-à-vis travel motivation, moderately furnished *hotel/motel, travelers' lodge/tourist rest house, paying guest accommodation and dormitory to camping site or even a rock cave may come under the expectation/desire of a tourist at different places while traveling within the study area.*

Observations and Recommendations

Based on the information collected through primary and secondary sources and critical analysis of the tourism resources, along with the tourist facilities available in the study area, vis-à-vis the existing and predicted market trends and the level of commitment and involvement of the local community, the authors have reached to the following observations and recommendations with the objective of maximizing the benefits from the tourism in Kumaon region of Uttarakhand:

- Maximum benefit of tourism can be ensured to the resident population by creating tourism awareness.
- Specialized training programmes with regard to guiding, adventure skills, hospitality operations, culinary functions, tourist information's, travel trade business and tourist transportations etc need to be taken on priority basis.
- Effective marketing systematic and authentic information on the touristic appeal is pivotal, not only in terms of availability but also with respect to distances meteorology, seasonality, socio cultural values, prices etc.
- An institution on the lines of tourism finance cooperation of India should be established in order to overcome economic backwardness of the region and also local entrepreneurs should be motivated to add to the economy
- State tourism need to set-up tourist information counter at important transit place, also outside the state and the country. In this context, close cooperation with allied institutions can be forged at both national and international levels.
- Since the prevailing environment in the Himalayan region is extremely sensitive and fragile, all forms of tourism must be strictly promoted within the concept of eco-tourism or responsible tourism

- The area has rich tradition of craftsmanship, which if supported, can not only revive there otherwise dying heritage but open-up fresh opportunities for the craftsman, which may ultimately contribute in enhancing the overall touristic appeal of the area.
- Likewise support to local fairs and festivals may also contribute in creating an ideal tourismagnetic environment in the area.
- In order to inculcate keen interest among local youth, it is also recommended to organize the competitive events based on the various adventure activities. Such a step may obviously help in promoting the various sites for tourism purposes.
- One of the most effective ways to promote new destinations is to organize familiarization tours for the various tourism enterprises from within the country and abroad.
- Provision of appropriate signages not only help the tourists but essentially act as an effective tourism promotion strategy; therefore it should be planned in an effective manner.
- Guides are the ambassadors to the tourism destinations. Incidentally, so far there is no guide training facilities in the area, rather in whole of the state. Therefore due attention needs to be paid to this effect.
- The state tourism policy and planning concept need to be urgently revamped. Time has one to deal with planning or development in a generic way without specifically taking into consideration the viability perspectives.
- In view of the experience of the various successful destinations in the world it seems decisive now to promote right kind of tourism at right place trying to invite or satisfy wide interest groups of tourists at a given destination which may ultimately lead to non-satisfaction of none and that too at the cost of the destination environment.
- Tourism need to be essentially promoted in the study area strictly within the concept of bio-physical, socio-cultural and facility carrying capacity, especially in view of the prevailing environmental conditions of any high Himalayan region. Surpassing the carrying capacity not only means loss of the market but also irreparable injury to the environment. Active and vigilant conservation act and programs need to be also simultaneously implemented so that the resource/environmental quality, for which the tourists visit, are effectively maintained.

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