
AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF TOURIST INTEREST IN KUMAON REGION OF UTTARAKHAND

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ABSTRACT

Tourism contributes to the local economy in a number of ways. It particularly contributes to poverty reduction by providing employment and various livelihood opportunities thereby raising an additional income that helps the poor by increasing the range of economic opportunities available to them. The tourism industry offers workable opportunities for the development of small and micro industries. A unique feature of the Kumaon Region is its people and their breathtaking skills and proficiency. Rural and semi-urban areas of Kumaon are packed with diversified local culture and tradition, arts and crafts, products and technologies. Information on socio-economic activities of this region is firstly scattered and secondly available by a hair's breadth. By highlighting the socio-economic activities, the Kumaon Region has the potential to attract a large number of domestic as well as foreign tourists thereby leading the region towards sustainable development. The Uttarakhand Tourism Industry needs to immediately highlight local communities and exploit new and specific areas of tourist interest thereby expanding its base and reach out to the millions of domestic and international tourists, waiting for the right kind of information.

Keywords: *Tourism, Socio-economic activities, Economic development, Kumaon Region*

Introduction

Tourism is the most coveted product of the Indian economy. The Tourism sector creates more jobs per million rupees of investment than any other sector of the economy and is capable of providing employment to a wide spectrum of job seekers from the unskilled to the specialized even in the remote parts of the country. The Tenth Plan documented the

vast employment generating potential of this sector and the role it can play in promoting the socio-economic objectives of the Plan. Tourism plays an important role in furthering the economic benefits at the local level besides environmental and social sustainability. Also it proffers tremendous opportunities for developing entrepreneurship, for staff training and development and for the development of transferable skills.

Tourism has materialized as a tool for employment generation, poverty alleviation and sustainable human development. During 2003-2004, direct employment in the tourism sector was estimated to be 21.54 million in India. This service sector contributes to the local economy in a number of ways. It particularly contributes to poverty reduction by providing employment and various livelihood opportunities thereby raising an additional income that helps the poor by increasing the range of economic opportunities available to them. Planning and decisions about development in the tourism industry directly or indirectly benefit the local communities. The increased interest in local tourism experience results in increased opportunities for the development of new locally owned enterprises. This helps in providing competitive and complementary goods and services. The tourism industry offers practical opportunities for the development of small and micro industries. Small and micro enterprises are very important in the provision of restaurants and bars, handicrafts, the supply of furnishings and other consumables to hotels, the provision of transport, local tour operating, guiding and attractions.

Objectives of the Research

The main objectives of this research are:

- To analyze the status of tourism in the Kumaon Region
- To identify the socio-economic activities of tourist interest in the region
- To provide a systematic record of the socio-economic activities practiced in the region

Methodology

This research is basically a descriptive research. Primary sources include departments and offices associated with the tourism industry and rural development, managers and officers working in various departments and secondary sources include literature survey, review of national and

international journals, magazines, and newspapers and most importantly the Internet.

Tourism in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand State was carved out of the state of Uttar Pradesh on November 9, 2000. Initially it was named Uttaranchal but due to political reasons it was renamed Uttarakhand in 2006. It is divided into two broad regions--Garhwal and Kumaon. The state is comprised of 13 districts, namely, Chamoli, Dehradun, Haridwar, Pauri, Rudraprayag, Tehri and Uttarkashi in the Garhwal region and Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, Nainital, Pithoragarh and Udham Singh Nagar in the Kumaon region. Of these 13 districts, four districts (Dehradun, Haridwar, Nainital and Udham Singh Nagar) have large areas in the plains, whereas the other nine districts comprise the hill region of the state.

Tourism in Uttarakhand is an umbrella industry containing a set of inter-related business participants. It is a complex integration of many industries spread over many sectors. There is wide and diversified demand for tourism in this state from both the domestic and international market in terms of content and standard of facilities and utilities. The state attracts tourists for pilgrimages, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, wildlife tourism, eco-tourism, and amusement and leisure tourism. Trends of tourist arrivals show that in Uttarakhand both foreign and domestic tourists have gradually increased. However, overall tourist arrivals in Uttarakhand are much lower than that in India.

The following table shows the trend of tourist flows in Uttarakhand from 2001 to 2006:

Table 1
Comparative table of tourist arrivals

(Unit: Million)

Year	Tourists to Uttarakhand			Tourists to India		
	Total	Domestic	Foreign	Total	Domestic	Foreign
2001	9.60	9.55	0.04	241.91	236.47	5.44
2002	10.65	10.61	0.05	274.76	269.60	5.16
2003	10.89	10.84	0.06	315.75	309.04	6.71
2004	11.78	11.72	0.06	374.52	366.23	8.36
2005	14.29	14.22	0.08	392.08	390.47	9.94
2006	19.45	19.36	0.10	472.56	461.16	11.40

Source: Central Statistical Organisation

Profile of the research area

This research is centered on the places of tourist interest identified by the Uttarakhand Tourism Board of the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. Some of the places include those that are specific to the socio-economic activities identified from this research. The Kumaon Region has a geographical area of 21035 sq. km. with a population of 3565383, out of which 49.49% are women, 77 % live in rural areas, 22.39% are SC/ST. It has 39 blocks in its 6 Districts. Total villages are 7364, which includes inhabited villages, un-inhabited villages, inhabited forest villages and un-inhabited forest villages. The target population covers the people who are directly or indirectly engaged in the tourism industry.

Status of tourism in the Kumaon Region

The Kumaon Region of Uttarakhand is one of the popular tourist sites of India. This region has sufficient tourist attractions like snow laden mountains, endless mountain ranges, the only lake district of India, adventure sports, country's unsurpassed Tiger reserve, several glaciers and places of pilgrimage. Although being a treasure trove of natural heritage, this region attracts few domestic tourists and even lesser is the number of international tourists, when compared with other popular tourist destination of India like the Golden Triangle (New Delhi – Jaipur – Agra), Rajasthan, Kerala and even Himachal Pradesh. At present times with the changing dimension of tourist interests, this region also attracts tourists with socio-economic objectives of travel. This directly or indirectly can contribute to the development of the region, given the right kind of information to the tourists as per their specific interest.

The following tables show the district-wise distribution of tourists visiting the Kumaon Region and the hotel accommodation.

Table 2
Number of tourist arrivals to Kumaon, 2005-06

District	Domestic tourist	Foreign tourist	Total
Almora	225333	5101	230434
Bageshwar	N/A	N/A	N/A
Champawat	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nainital	616594	12504	629098
Pithoragarh	193947	1136	195083
Udham Singh Nagar	67946	220	68166

Source: Compiled from district statistics from Monthly Review of Uttaranchal Economy by the Regional Monitoring Service of CMIE

Table 3
Hotel Accommodation by districts

District	No of establishments	No of rooms	No of beds	Rooms per establishments	Beds per establishments	Avg no of beds per room
Almora	76	815	2139	10.7	28.1	2.6
Bageshwar	27	399	1057	14.8	39.1	2.6
Cham-pawat	26	257	638	9.9	24.5	2.5
Nainital	126	2320	6094	18.4	48.4	2.6
Pithoragarh	70	679	1444	9.7	20.6	2.1
U S Nagar	47	753	1464	16.0	31.1	1.9

Note: Data includes hotels, guesthouses, ashrams, dormitories and KMVN facilities.

Source: Tourist Board.

Socio-economic activities of tourist interest identified in Kumaon Region

The Kumaon Region is affluent in natural beauty with an exclusive lake-mountain environment as well as rich historical and cultural assets. However a unique feature of this region is its people and their breathtaking skills and proficiency. Rural and semi-urban areas of Kumaon are packed with diversified local culture and tradition, arts and crafts, products and technologies, as much as necessary to attract a hoard of domestic and foreign tourists. There is tremendous scope for the development of the tourism industry in this region; the development of which would lead to an increase in direct and indirect employment generation for the socio-economic development of the Kumaon Region.

The socio-economic activities that are practiced in the Kumaon region may be classified as follows:

Handicraft: Hand-made products by the local people with a unique touch of local skills are no wonder worth appreciating. Local knick-knacks such as trinkets made from pinecones, cane and other handicrafts, woollen products, etc. are specific to this region. Local handicrafts also include typical fabrics, woodcrafts, wax craft, copperware, bamboo products and floor covering and furnishing. The Pahari Kalam (style of painting) was developed in Kumaon, when it was being practiced in some of the Himalyan regions. The Aipan (Alpana) is a popular art form of Kumaon, and

walls, papers and pieces of cloth are decorated by the drawing of various geometric and other figures belonging to gods, goddesses and objects of nature. Pichhauras or dupattas are also decorated in this manner.

The wood carving of Kumaon is famous for its simple and beautiful designs. In the past, houses were beautifully ornamented with carved wooden doors and it was considered to be a reflection of a man's status. The wealthier a person was, the bigger was the front wooden door and more complicated were the carved designs. Ornamental woodcarvings on front doors are known as Kholi in the local language. These beautifully ornamented doors and windows still attract art lovers. The facade of the upper storeys of the dwelling units are usually made of wood, and often artistically carved. The traditional small window-aperture resembles pigeonholes, cut in wooden panels. Designs of creepers and floral forms based on lotus, pomegranates and grapes, images of humans, birds, animals and other sacred signs and emblems find expression in the wood carving on door panels, windows and ceilings. The motifs, ordinarily of the Gods or Goddesses, add to the richness of the carvings. The crafts persons also used to do specific latticework to fill in the open space of the windows in order to give a screen like effect.

Food products and Cosmetics: The entire region has fruit laden orchards abundant with apple, plum, peach, apricot, pears, oranges, berries, and other alpine fruits. It is also rich in mushrooms, honey, rhododendron, and other plants, shrubs and herbs that have medicinal effects. Other local products include masala, pickle, squash, jam, chutney, murabba, juice, aamla, canned peach, apiary honey, etc. Tea garden is another attraction of the Kumaon Region. There are a number of tea gardens that yield high quality tea. This region produces organic orthodox tea and the tea produced here is of high flavour and export quality. Cosmetics include olive oil, eucalyptus oil, face scrubs, etc. Sandal wood plantation is also done in some places.

Cuisines: Kumaon is also famous for delicious, nutritious and mouth-watering dishes. Some of the famous recipes from Kumaon are offered by a large number of hotels and restaurants. This provides an opportunity for the local people to earn their living.

Local Culture: Kumaon is also home to a number of fairs and festivals that are held in different places throughout the year. Some of the fairs

are held for nearly forty days. These fairs and festivals depict the local culture, folk songs and dances. They are also a means of livelihood for the local people. Jhodha dance is the most famous folk dance of the Kumaon region. People belonging to different caste or creed; perform this dance, irrespective of any discrimination, in almost all festivals. Chanchi, another famous folk dance of this region takes place only in fairs. Mostly this dance is based on religious songs, something related to nature. Cholia is also a famous folk dance of Kumaon, which is as old as 1000 years. Dancers in this dance use swords.

Eco-tourism: Eco-tourism enhances the cultural integrity of local people and helps the creation of economic opportunities for the local communities. A large number of fascinating spots are there which are home to many rare animals, birds, butterflies and wild flowers (some of which have medicinal value). There are a wide variety of colourful and fragrant flowers; shrubs and trees- blue poppies, pink and purple primulas, asters, potentilas of many colour, varied alpine flowers, the heavily perfumed brahma kamal, rhododendrons with large ruby-red flowers, fragrant white syringa, cotoneaster with its red berries, sweet jasmine, lilies of different types, acacia, cypresses, pines, oaks, deodars, firs, spruces, and a large number of other rare varieties.

There are over 300 different varieties of birds. However bird sightings depend greatly on season, timing, and patience and cannot be guaranteed. Fishing can be enjoyed throughout the year except during monsoon, but only with permits from the State Government. Hot water springs are also found in this region. In some places the water gushes out at boiling point whilst at others it is just lukewarm. People take bath in the waters of these hot springs to cure rheumatism, arthritic pains, skin eruptions, etc. Controlled intake of the waters of these springs under expert advice can also be beneficial to health because of their mineral contents.

A list of the places identified as places of specific (with socio-economic motives of travel) tourist interest is given in the following table. A total of 57 places have been identified.

Involvement of local groups

A number of NGO's (Non- Governmental Organisations) and SHG (Self Help Groups) are involved in various socio-economic activities (including crafts, production of organic products like cereals, pulses,

millets, spices and organic honey). However SHG's are present in almost every household but approximately those groups that are important and active at present have been included.

Table 4
District-wise distribution of places of specific (socio-economic activities) tourist interest

Districts	Places of specific tourist interest	Total No
Almora	Almora, Binsar, Chaukhutiya, Jalna, Kosi, Majkhali, Manila, Ranikhet, Sitlakhhet, Dunagiri, Dwarahat, Jageshwar	12
Bageshwar	Bageshwar, Baijnath, Kausani,	3
Champawat	Abott Mount, Champawat, Lohaghat, Shyamla Tal, Devidhura, Mayawati Ashram, Pancheshwar, Punyagiri, Ritha Sahib, Tanki	10
Nainital	Bhatelia, Bhimtal, Bhowali, Jeolikot, Kaladungi, Khairna, Khurpatal, Mukteshwar, Nainital, Naukuchiatal, Ramgarh, Ramnagar (Corbett National Park), Sat-tal	13
Pithoragarh	Askot, Berinag, Birthi Falls, Chaukori, Chiplakot, Chota Kailash, Dharchula, Didihat, Gangolihat, Jauljibi, Madkot, Munsyari, Narayan Swami Ashram, Patal Bhubaneshwar, Pithoragarh, Rameshwar	16
Udham Singh Nagar	Banbasa, Nanakmatta, Udham Singh Nagar	3

Table 5
Major NGO's in Kumaon involved in socio-economic activities

S No	Name of NGO	District	Activities
1	Berinag Gram Swarajya Mandal (BGSM)	Pithoragarh	Nursery raising & livelihood education through forestry programmes
2	Bharwan Kali Grih Shilp Kendra	Pithoragarh	Promotion of small scale women enterprises
3	Central Himalaya Environmental Association (CHEA)	Nainital	Eco-development of Himalayan region through environment education for industrial workers, tourists, etc.

4	Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG)	Nainital	Rural development of Kumaon hills through environment education, afforestation, by people's participation.
5	Experiments in Rural Advancement	Champawat	Nursery raising and sustainability related issues.
6	Gramin Jan Seva Samiti	Pithoragarh	Integrated Rural development activities
7	Gramin Utthan Samiti, Kapkot	Almora	Rural development, sustainable natural resource consumption
8	Himalayan Study Circle for Environment, Child Education, Health and Research	Pithoragarh	Camps Training for biogas plants and smokeless stoves for income generation.
9	Institute of Himalayan Environmental Research & Education (INHERE)	Almora	Training & support for various composting & vermicomposting techniques
10	Kasturba Mahila Utthan Mandal	Almora	Training in spinning & weaving, establishment of tree nursery to show the livelihood potential in such activity
11	Koormanchal Seva Sansthan/Rural organization for social elevation (ROSE)	Bageshwar	Training on natural greeting card making, handmade recycled paper making, dehydrated flowers & foliage decoration craft making, promotion of small handicraft enterprises International exchange & development education
12	Lok Chetna Manch	Nainital	To develop and propagate appropriate rural technologies for employment generation
13	Parvatiya Paryavaran Sanrakshan Samiti (PPSS)	Pithoragarh	Cottage industries development

14	People's Association Of Hill Area Launchers (Pahal)	Almora	Application of science for Rural development & Promotion of appropriate technologies, provide trainings for better livelihood
15	Uttarakhand Environment Education Centre	Almora	Education and Awareness of Urban and Rural Small-scale commercial activities e.g. training for knitting, sewing, angora wool production & basket weaving. Establishment & management of pre-school centers (Balwadis), evening centers (Sandhaya Kendras), ensuring mothers/children timely vaccination
16	VADHU	Almora	Environment awareness campaigns, foot marches, discouraging use of polybags, distributing seedlings for plantation.

Table 6
No. of important SHG's in different districts

Category	Details	No. of SHG	Districts
Wax Craft	Candles (Fancy and decorative)	4	Nainital (3), U.S.Nagar (1)
Textile Craft	Shawls, Bedcover	1	U.S Nagar
Copper Craft	Gagari, Toly, Deep Panash, Filter, Jug, Kalash	4	Almora (1), Bageshwar (2), Pithoragarh (1)
Soft Toys	Soft Toys	1	U. S. Nagar
Floor Covering and Furnishings	Dari, Carpet, Ashan, Cushion, Sofa Cover, Katara Dari, Kaleen	78	Bageshwar (4), Pithoragarh (73), U.S. Nagar (1)
Wool Craft	Pankhi, Woolen Shawls, Chutke, Thulma	5	Bageshwar (4), Pithoragarh (1)
Wood Craft	Pine showpiece and wood craft	2	Nainital

Fiber Craft	Basket, File cover, door mats	10	Bageshwar (4), U. S. Nagar (6)
Bamboo Craft	Ringal basket, mat, takori, supa, dustbin, guldasta, daliya,	10	Almora (1), Bageshwar (8), Pithoragarh (1)
Organic products	Urad, Gahat, Kalla Bhatt, Rajma, Soya-bean, Lobiya Manduwa	16	Almora (2), Champawat (13), Pithoragarh (1)
Spices	Turmeric, chilli, dhaniya, mirch, haldi, ginger, tej patta	7	Bageshwar (1), Champawat (5), U.S. Nagar (1)
Honey	Honey	3	Pithoragarh (1), U.S. Nagar (2)

Source: Information bulletin on SHG Products, Forest and Rural Development, Govt. of Uttarakhand, Dehradun

Conclusion

Effective community participation in the tourism development process can augment socio-economic development of a region. This will further influence local communities in pronouncing ways to eliminate poverty. Unfortunately no serious efforts have been taken so far to develop the tourist spots with socio-economic objectives. It is through participation of the local people that the environmental, social and cultural integrity of the tourist destination can be maintained. For example, the hot water springs of this region holds great promises of developing into health resorts, popularly known as spas. This development will directly or indirectly attract income and foster the development of this region.

By highlighting the socio-economic activities, the Kumaon Region has the potential to attract a large number of domestic as well as foreign tourist thereby leading the region towards sustainable development. The Uttarakhand Tourism Industry needs to immediately highlight local communities and exploit new and specific areas of tourist interest thereby expanding its base and reach out to the millions of domestic and international tourists waiting for the right kind of information.

Tourism can be further developed and promoted through efforts made in technological advances. While the travel market is budding at 17% a year the number of online offerings is moving at a snails pace. Traditional tourism technology is a major factor for the slow growth of the

tourism industry in India, in general, and in Uttarakhand in particular. The Department of Tourism has several schemes to encourage quality and standard of the services rendered to tourists to promote tourism in this region but the results are not very encouraging. We do not have proper technology to offer a number of choices to the potential tourist tailor made according to his/her interest, time, and money available for this purpose. In other words no significant effort has been made so far in the advanced use of technology in the tourism industry. To meet this end it is essential to bridge the technology gaps that stand on the way of development of this unconventional industry.

The main strength of Indian tourism at present is its cultural attractions, particularly, its art and artifacts and colourful fairs and festivals, local products and technologies, cuisines, typical fabrics and other related socio-economic activities. The primary objectives of the twenty first century tourism industry are therefore to encourage understanding, create employment opportunities and bring about socio-economic benefits particularly to the local communities and strive towards balanced and sustainable development, and preserve, enrich and promote India's cultural heritage. As an initial step towards fulfilling these objectives a New Tourism Policy, which builds on the strength of the National Tourism Policy of 1982 has been instigated. This policy foresees new initiatives towards making tourism the channel in employment generation, environmental sustainability, development of remote areas and development of women and other disadvantaged groups in the country, besides promoting social integration.

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