



Development and assessment of tourism in valley of flower national park (Uttarakhand) India

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Abstract

This paper examines the tourism practices and evaluates the possible enhancements towards a sustainable tourism in the Valley of Flower National Park. The modes of tourism are discussed broadly and suggestions are given appropriately for sustainable development of tourism. It reveals that the pilgrimage tourism has been practicing here for centuries. Presently, mass tourism as mountaineering, trekking, skiing and river rafting is being common. The practices of tourism have a significant impact on the economy as many of the small towns emerged as the major service provider centers and the economy of the region grew tremendously. But, at the same time, its impact fell badly on the environment and the tourist places and pilgrimages have received severe environmental implications. Data were taken from the secondary sources and references cited in text were well taken from the published materials.

Keywords: tourism; pilgrimage; sustainable development; revenue generation

Introduction

Tourism is the world's largest industry and it represents the fastest growing segment of this market. The concept of tourism is new with tremendous potentiality for sustainable developments of nature-based tourist resources include beautiful forest and wild life and landscapes. But, before going to explore the prospects for economic development in the uttarakhand in terms of tourism industry.

Valley of flower is located in Chamoli district in the state of Uttarakhand, its latitude 30⁰41' - 30⁰48 E and Longitude 79⁰33' - 79⁰46'E. Its altitude range from 3,200m asl to 6,675 asl. If words could describe the Valley of Flower National Park in Uttarakhand, then enchanting scintillating and magical would come pretty close to doing justice to its outstanding natural beauty. Spread over 87.5 sqkm; the biodiversity hot-spot is known for its scenic beauty comprising alpine shrubs and meadows, milky white, Streams, snow-clad beaks and pristine air, Located in the upper reaches of Bhyunder valley near Josimath, in Chamoli district of Gorkhwal region, the rolling landscape of the National Park- Stand in stark contrast to the rugged mountain.

The valley of Flower is also believed to be the place from where Hanuman brought the magical herb to resuscitate, Lakshman in the Hindu Epic Ramayan. The Legend still holds value as many people continue to believe that sanjeevani, the magical herb, continues to grow in the park. Still pristine and enchanting there are other legends associated with the park, Local believe it is the playground of fairies and that the descent to the valley in the absence of Hanuman. The sight of a whole valley covered with flowers of every hue and colour does indeed give it a magical quality. More than 650 species of flowers including Brahmkamal, Blue poppy and cobra lily can be found in the park. The valley of flowers presents a different look each day when it becomes accessible from May to September. There are no human settlements inside the national

park and grazing has been completely banned.

Tourism as an activity and industry

Chamoli in spite of being small district has certain key features that it district from other district of the state and highlights its potential for development. All the hill districts have subsistence farming as their main economic activity. Due to subsistence Livelihood, migration and a remittance economy operate in the hill districts. They are land locked with huge distance between the markets and resources. Because of these constraints, traditional agriculture cannot be the lead sector for development. Thus the district faces the challenge of promoting livelihoods to minimize migrations through local employment and income generation. The positive features of these hill districts are that they have enormous potential for tourism, a suitable climate for high-value agriculture; this has to be harnessed for a development strategy. This can be achieved by working towards this common goal through infrastructure development.

Tourism has emerged as smog free industry and biggest source of revenue generation world wide. Similarly. It is estimated that Mountains account for roughly 15-20% of the global tourism market, generating between 70-90 billion us dollars per year. River rafting during the winter and summer seasons every year has posed severe threats to the socio-culture and environment of the local people, particularly of women. The Bank of river Lakshman Ganga, has been used as bathing spots by the women of nearby villages but now, they are unable because of the presence of numerous river side camps.

Objectives of the study

- Tourism is preferred by both domestic and foreign tourists that would help to earn total revenue generation.
- Tourism ventures in potential areas can make the local people aware of the objective of conservation and

economic gain through job opportunities.

- Tourism can help for improving tourism infrastructure in the areas of transport, communication, power, water supply, etc.
- Tourism can also help to increase higher rate of utilization of natural resources including national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

Methodology

This research paper is the form of an explanatory study in analyzing the potentiality from valley of Flower National Park, Chamoli which will maintain a bright prospect of economic development in terms of tourism industry. The present study is based on secondary data collection. The secondary data was collected by various published sources like books, journal, magazine, reports, publications, etc. The findings were discussed in the light of published literature.

Tourism in Himalayas and Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand is a state in North Indian region of Himalayas. The State is popularly known as 'Devdhumii' (Land of Gods) due to presence at numerous Hindu pilgrimage sites. As a result religious tourism forms a major portion of the tourism in the state. The tourism business in Uttarakhand generated 23,000 crores during 2013-14.

Uttarakhand is famous for chardham yatra, which literally meaning journey of four centres. These four religious centres in Uttarakhand are represented by Badrinath (dedicated Lord Vishnu), Kedarnath (dedicated to Lord Shiva), Gangotri (the holy origin of river Ganga) and Yamunotri (the holy origin of river Yamuna). The chardham yatra begins around the first to second week of May every year. These dates are announced in the national media.

1. Chardham

▪ Badrinath

Badrinath is the abode of Lord Vishnu, who is called 'Badri Vishal'. The priests of Badrinath are from the southernmost part of India i.e. Kerala. This is according to the rules laid down by Adi Sankara. Badrinath remains out of bounds for pilgrims for 6 months a year, from October to May.

▪ Kedarnath

Kedarnath is the abode of Lord Shiva. Kedarnath is one of the 12 Jaotirlingams of India and the only one in Uttarakhand, while there is a motorable road to Badrinath. Kedarnath could only be reached by foot. The 14 km. trek begins from Gaurikund.

▪ Gangotri

Gangotri is the origin of the only river Ganga. River Ganga is revered as a mother throughout India. According to Hindu Philosophy a place considered extremely holy is a river running through it flows in the northern direction. Gangotri is a place which is not only the origin of Ganga but also where Ganga flows in a northerly direction, hence the name 'Gangotri'.

▪ Yamunotri

Yamunotri is the origin of the holy river Yamuna. A temple dedicated to the holy river Yamuna is situated at the place. The actual origin of the river is the Yamunotri glacier further up in

to the Himalayas where very few pilgrims go due to the difficulty it entails.

2. Panch Kedar

Panch Kedar refers to Hindu Temple or holy place other than the sect dedicated to God Shiva. They are located in the Garhwal Himalaya regions in Uttarakhand, India. They are the subject of many legends that directly link their creation to the Pandavas, the heroes of the Hindu epic Mahabharat.

The five temples designated in the strict pecking order to be followed for pilgrimage for worship are the Kedarnath at an altitude of 3,583, the Tungnath, Rudranath, Madhmaheswar and Kalpeswar. The Kedarnath is the main temple, which is the part of the four famous 'Chardhams'.

3. Panch Prayag

Panch Prayag is an expression in Hindu religious ethos, specifically used to connote the five sacred river confluences in the Garhwal Himalayas, in the state of Uttarakhand, India. The five Prayag - Prayag meaning 'Confluence'. In Sanskrit also termed as 'Prayag Pentad'. are Vishnu Prayag, Nand Prayag, Karn Prayag, Rudra Prayag and Dev Prayag, in the descending flow sequence of their occurrence.

4. Other Attractions

- **Rishikesh:** Known as the yoga Capital of the World because of the large number of ashram teaching meditation and Yoga.
- **Haridwar:** Haridwar is an important city in the religious architecture of the country. There are a number of Hindu Temples, ashrams and Dharmshalas.

Three Main places to visit in Valley of Flowers National Park is-

- **Govindghat:** Govindghat is the beginning point for trek to Hemkund Sahib and valley of flowers.
- **Hemkund Sahib:** The Sikh pilgrimage, is one of the significant attractions close to the valley of flowers Gurudwara, there is the Hemkund Lake. The hilly backdrop provides scintillating scenery for the visitors. Moreover, Laxman temple is also one of the major attractions, located near the Gurudwara.
- **Joshimath:** Joshimath is among the sacred temples for Hindus and the abode of Lord Badrinath.

Concern relating to tourism

Uncontrolled conventional tourism poses potential threats to many natural areas around the world. It can put enormous pressure on an area around the world. It can put enormous pressure on an area and lead to impact such as soil erosion, increased pollution, natural habitat loss, etc. some other problems are.

Depletion of natural resources

Tourism development can put pressure on natural resources when it increases consumption in one as where resources are already scarce.

Depletion of water resources

The tourism industry generally overuses water resources for

hotels, swimming pools golf courses and personal use of water by tourists. This can result in water supplies, as well as generating a greater volume of waste water. Treatment facilities are not available and clear Water reservoirs for storage are available only at Bhyunder and Pulna. Formal water supply system at Jal Sansthan is not yet complete/operational and its the temporary system connected to Lakhsman Ganga.

Depletion of Local Resources

Tourism can create great pressure on local resources like energy flood and other raw materials that may already be in short supply. Greater extraction and transport of these resources exacerbates the physical impact associated with their exploitation.

Land Degradation

Direct Impact on natural resources both renewable and nonrenewable just like Important land resources include minerals, fossil fuel, fertile soil forests wetland and wildlife. Increased construction of tourism and recreational facilities has increased the pressure and these resources and on scenic landscape. Forest after suffer negative impacts of tourism in the form of deforestation.

Pollution

Tourism can cause the same forms of pollution as any other industry just like- air emission, noise, solid waste and littering, releases of sewage oil and chemicals even visual pollution.

Solid Waste and Littering

Tourist activities and appealing natural attraction, waste disposal is a serious problem and improper disposal can be a major despoiler of the Natural environmental. Nearly 75-80% of all collected residential and commercial solid waste are sent to open dumps less 10% is buried in sanitary landfills a small amount is dumped into the river lakshman Ganga and remaining is converted to obtain energy.

Sewage Pollution

Construction of hotels, recreation and other facilities often leads to increased sewage pollution. Wastewater has polluted seas and Lakes surrounding tourist attractions, damaging the flora and fauna.

Aesthetic Pollution

After tourism fails to integrate its structures with the natural features and indigenous architectural at the destination. A lack at land use planning and Building regulation in many destinations has facilitated sprawling developments along valley and scenic routes.

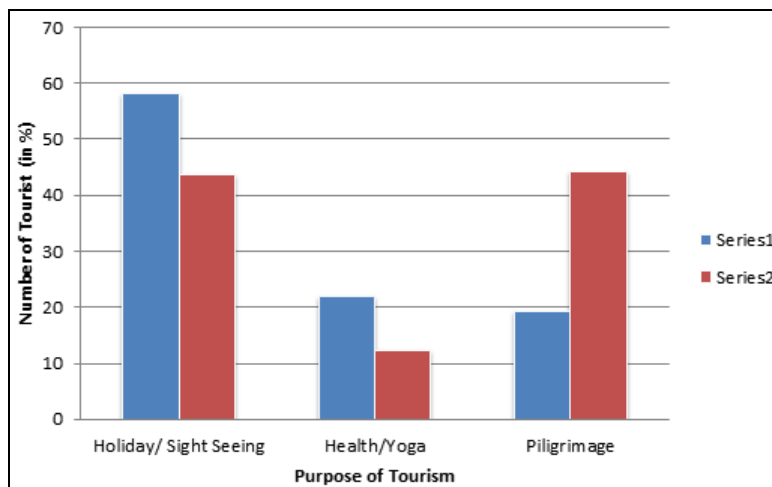
Failure of early warning system

The warnings given by the meteorology department went unheeded. Green Development must include specific action to reduce the impact of disasters in the Himalayan states. Better early warning system have to be set up.

Tourist Flux in Valley of Flower National Park

The Study area offers the modern tourism in a widespread range of possibilities. The activities range from visiting the unique cultural attractions, hiking, skiing, to the more adventurous types of tourism. Electronic Goods, Bakery, Wool Industries, Oil Extraction, Spice Industries, Tyre Retreating, Dairy, Ringal Industries, Wooden Furniture, Agriculture Equipments, Mini Flour Mills, Namkeen, Optical Assembling, Photo Framing, Beauty Parlor, Sweets Boxes thats work can be do in this region.

This region has an important spiritual meaning for Hindus as a “sacral space” (Grotzbach 1994). This leads to a different Hindu point of view of the Himalaya, not only a collection of natural features or a beautiful landscape, but also a representation of the divine. 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.



Source: Eco Development Committee

Fig 1: Tourist’s Pourpose in valley of flower national park, Uttarakhand

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, Madhamaheshwar, Triyugarayan, Rookmd, Gomukh, Purnagiri, seven lakes of Nainital district, national parks, wild life sanctuaries and mountaineering in many of the snow-clad peaks.

Recommendations

- Chamoli must be able to provide hotels to cater to all segments of the society. It must market its camping facilities more and ensure that they are safe to use. Packaged tours also have to be marketed.
- It must open avenues for business opportunities, could be tourism related itself, and cash on its vast religious backdrop.
- Railways must be given a boost so that long distance travel becomes easy. Low cost airlines and helicopter services also can be used to reach the inaccessible regions depending on the climatic conditions.
- Entertainment facilities must be provided in order to ensure a longer stay by the tourists. They must have a unique thing to take back with them.
- Newer sources of communication like the internet must be used effectively to influence and advertise.
- Family entertainment facilities must be developed. More playgrounds and parks must be made. Schools can also be targeted for excursions.
- Create new planned tourist destinations spots from the unexplored regions Which must be opened up atleast in the peak months.
- Basic infrastructural facilities have to be developed further. Roads need to be improved. Parking space must be provided.

The future strength of cleaning staff could be 40 to 60 persons instead of the current employment of 20 persons. The commission paid to the waste collection team members per bag may be increased substantially from Rs 5 per bag paid presently to Rs 15 per bag for non-biodegradable waste & compressed waste and little higher for mule excreta waste. If waste is to be successfully prepared and is to be used for recycling, it must be uniformly sorted and cleaned, and free from unwanted material like bottle-caps, metal, plastic, etc. Compactors and compression equipment units should be set up to reduce waste volume at Ghangharia, Hemkund Sahib, Pulna, and Govind Ghat. In the valley of Flowers national Park it is observed that on an average a trekker consumes about 2 liters of water a day, and if this is packaged mineral water then it means 2 bottles of plastic waste generated every day and if he/she stays 3 days in this region it means 6 plastic bottles are discarded by one trekker. To prevent such use and throw system of consuming water it was observed that wherever, electricity was available, the local establishments should install water-purifying arrangements like Aquaguard, etc., if centrally treated water supply system is not available.

Conservation management plan

Each historic place just like Valley of Flower National Park needs a 'Conservation Management Plan' to be prepared before embarking on the tourism project and its copies must

be placed in public and government department libraries. Its availability to the public and departments would ensure enabling them to refer to the recommended procedures and guidelines that uphold the significance of historic places in course of any future work proposed. The conservation management plan is prepared on the basis of the principles outlined, The conservation management plan broadly consists of:

- Gathering information
- Analysis of information
- Assessment of significance
- Developing policies/ guidelines for conservation and revitalization
- Planning a strategy for implementing policies/ guidelines

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 has identified how the tourism industry can contribute to overall sustainable development and continue to provide high quality, low impact experiences. 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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