

**Sustainable Tourism Development Through Integrated Planning
in Kedarnath Area of Uttarakhand State**

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Abstract

In Uttarakhand, there is huge potentiality to expand the tourism industry. Tourists want to see new places which are close to nature and away from hustle and bustle of city. So the new concepts in tourism have emerged like ecotourism, new age tourism, rural tourism, health tourism, medical tourism etc. Present study deals with sustainable tourism development through integrated planning in Kedarnath area of Uttarakhand where three important tourist places namely Kedarnath, Madmaheshwar, and Tungnath are taken as study area. Study represents tourist flow in the valley between years 2001 to 2016. Study found that maximum tourists visiting these places are pilgrimages due to the majority of pilgrimage tourism sites in the study area. It is a theoretical paper discussing important tourist spots in the study area as well as how to encourage or increase the flow of tourism in the study area.

Key words: Sustainable tourism development, Integrating planning, Pilgrimage, Garhwal Himalaya

Introduction

Tourism has the potentialities of tourism to diversify and contribute in the process of economic development in the study area are being realized gradually, but tourists face a lot of troubles by which the tourism commerce is not developed at par with the other regions of India like Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, and Rajasthan. In Uttarakhand, there is huge potentiality to expand the tourism industry. Tourists want to see new places which are close to nature and away from hustle and bustle of city. So the new concepts in tourism have emerged like ecotourism, new age tourism, rural tourism, health tourism, medical tourism etc. In Uttarakhand nature is not polluted at par with other states in India, so that is why there is enough potential and have a future development of tourism in this hill region. To attain the height in the expansion of tourism in study area sustainable tourism development through integrated planning is needed. From the time the immemorial Himalayas have been viewed with the sense of veneration and wonder. Perhaps where in the world, have so many places of pilgrimages and spots of natural grandeur as they are clustered in Garhwal Himalayas. The Hindu Philosopher and the theologians linked all these places with rest of India through the effective instrument of pilgrimage (Thirtha Yatra). "Perhaps there are no mountain ranges anywhere in the world which have contributed so much to shape the life of a country like the Himalayas has in respect of India.

The study area Ukhimath block has high reputation in Garhwal Himalayas, for its tourist and pilgrimage resources. Three important tourist places like Kedarnath, Madmaheshwar, and the Tungnath, out of the famous panch kedars (Panch kedars are the Kedarnath, the Madmaheshwar, the Tungnath, the Rudarnath and the Kalpeshwar) are in the study area. The legend of the emergence of these Kedars is associated with Pandavas and their ascend to heaven. These Kedars attract many tourist/ pilgrim visiting the areas.

Flow of Tourist/ Pilgrims in Kedarnath Area

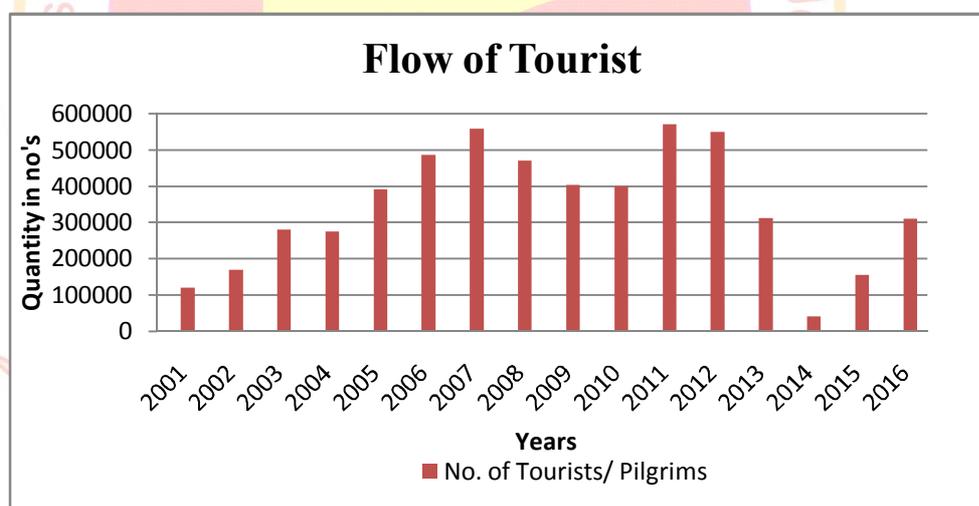
As per the records of badarikedar temple committee 309746 persons visited Kedarnath temple in 2016. The number of persons visiting Kedarnath temple varies every year because of the uncertainty of climate. This can be evidence in the following table 1

Table1: Flow of Tourists/ Pilgrims in Kedarnath Temple

Year	No. of Tourists/ Pilgrims	Increase/ Decrease	Percentage
2001	119980	-95290	-44.26
2002	169217	-49237	-41.03
2003	280243	+111026	+65.61
2004	274489	-5754	-2.05
2005	390156	+115667	+42.13
2006	485464	+95308	+24.42
2007	557923	+72459	+14.92
2008	470048	-87875	-15.75
2009	403636	-66412	-14.12
2010	400014	-3622	-0.89
2011	570000	+169986	+42.49
2012	548166	-21834	-3.83
2013	312201	-235965	-43.04
2014	40832	-271369	-86.92
2015	154430	+113598	278.2
2016	309746	+155316	100.5

Source: Office of the Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee

Figure 1. Flow of Tourist in the Study area



Tourists start coming in Kedarnath with the opening of shrines in the end of April or early May and last till the temple of Kedarnath is closed, at the end of October or early November, for winter. May to June is the busiest period of Kedarnath when pilgrim traffic reaches to peak and their after gradually declines with the onset of monsoon. After with drawl of monsoon, pilgrim traffic again gains momentum and then declines rapidly in September, when cold starts increasing. Tourism because of its multiplier effect, low capital requirement and beneficial social impact like cultural assimilation, is called as landscape (and the main source of tourism) industry. Planners and social scientists are of the view that perhaps there is no other alternative, but to give a heavy dose of tourism to the sluggish economy of Garhwal Himalaya. But simultaneously they are apprehensive that there is another side of the coin, i.e. "tourism integrates well with bad in such a subtle

fashion that unless it is taken up with planning preparedness, the evil manifests itself in resource degradation, spoliation of scenery, cultural shocks, and social conflicts" (*Singh T.V 1977*). Thus it the high time for forewarns, the planners and social scientists, about the future repercussions of the tourism development, so that a timely plan can be chalked out. The mechanized road system has considerably changed the travel and pilgrimage pattern in Garhwal Himalayas. It has tremendously increased the number of persons visiting the holy shrines and places of interest. The mechanized road system has given impetus to package and conduct tours. These tours directly benefit the big parties managing package tours. The petty shopkeepers, vehicle owners and others involved in the profession of tourism are left with poor pilgrims and shades practicing strict austere.

These organized tours, mechanized modes of travel institutionalized tourism in the context of present socio-economic setup rarely help to the defenseless natives. Contrary, it conspires against their old age profession. The institutionalized tourism has a bias towards influence. It has to be guarded otherwise it will accentuate the concentration of wealth in few hands. Eventually, the undesirable process creates patches of prosperity amidst the vast ocean of poverty.

Although the number of persons visiting the temple and other places of interest is increasing constantly, the infrastructural development is highly inadequate to cope with it. The shortage of accommodation and vehicles causes great panic among the tourists. Consequently, they cut short their period of stay. This problem becomes serious at the timer of favourable climatic conditions, especially in May, June, and September.

The efficiency of tourism is largely a function of other sectors. Therefore, at the time of transport difficulties, climatic conditions, the income of tourism sector declines sharply. In other words, the people and region largely depending upon tourism cannot expect steady and regular income. Tourism industry does not grow, create a process or manufacture anything but merely earn from the propensities of others to spend it, therefore encourages tendencies of consumerism on the one hand and demonstration effect on the other. These two phenomena adversely affect the attitude towards life and work.

Conclusion and Recommendations

At present only one main road links the block with rest of the whole region i.e. Rudraprayag to Gaurikund is providing transport facilities to local peoples as well as tourist. The heavy load is found in the peak yatra season. Therefore it is essential to construct an alternative yatra root from Guptkashi to Kedarnath and Chaumasi to Kedarnath. The internal network of roads is needed to be improved and strengthened. All weather roads Kedarnath-Guptkashi- Lamgondi- Jakholi- Tehri are also suggested. For integrating the pilgrimage of Gangotri- Yamunotri with Kedarnath and Badrinath, a road linking Tehri- Panwali- Trijuginarayan- Sonprayag should be constructed. The motorable road should be properly maintained throughout the year from Lamgondi- Tulanga- Salya- Karokhi- Phatta- Trijuginarayan. This road will pass through the dense forest. Therefore, it will connect the animal husbandry, sheep rearing, and forest resources to the market centers. The existing Guptkashi- Kalimath- Kotma- Jalmalla road should be improved and made easily motorable during monsoon season. One bridge on river Mandakini at Kabiltha should be urgently needed. This road will serve the orchardists and shepherds of Mandakini valley. The suggested road development programme will create linkage for nearly every central village with motorable road. Rope way is also being purposed. These proposals are on the basis of ecological sensitiveness of the area rope way from Gaurikund to Kedarnath, Gaundar to Madmaheshwar and Choapta to Tungnath.

The maximum tourist resources of the area are religious and are in the greater Himalayan ranges. Therefore, the planning for their development must preserve environment, landscape and sanctity of the site. With the mechanization of transportation the number of tourists has undoubtedly increased but their period of stay has been reduced. The present routes neglect many tourist/ pilgrim sites. If the route Gangotri- Tehri- Panwali- Triyuginarayan- Kedarnath is constructed, it will revitalize the tourist activities at Triyuginarayan.

Many places of tourism/ pilgrimage though are not less attractive but are visited by few. These places are less exposed to outer world. Instances are Kalimath, Madmaheshwar, Tungnath, Deoriatal, Vasuki Tal and Chaurabarital. Therefore, a well-integrated system of advertisement is urgently needed. There are many places which are not visited by ordinary tourists but are of much interest to the trekkers. For their convenience and attracting more tourists the trek to these places must be well marked. With the closing of doors of holy shrines, tourist activities automatically come to an end in the area. Thus the people engaged in tourist activities sit idle till summer. The area has many places ice- skiing programme can be launched in winter. The ideal site is Duggalbitta. Therefore the Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam must do something in this direction and should popularize the game in other parts of the region.

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