The Journal of Asia Entrepreneurship and Sustainability RESEARCH ARTICLE

Economic Impact of Religious Tourism In Uttarakhand

Dr. Sukhpal Singh Routela[1], Dr. Mamta Bhatt[2], Dr. Vishnu Kumar Sharma[3]

[1]Assi. Prof.-Commerce, A.P.B. Govt. P.G. College Agstyamuni, Rudraprayag
[2]Assi. Prof.-Commerce, Rajkiya Snatkoter Mahavidhyalay Maldevta, Raipur, Deheradun
[3]Assi. Prof.-Economics Govt. P.G. College Lakshar, Haridwar

Abstract

Tourism has been globally recognized as one of the important economic and employment generating activities. Some countries enjoy the good fortune of being a hub of spiritual activities that attract tourism from all over the world apart from the domestic tourism. The Vatican City, the United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, India, Maldives etc. are some such countries whose economics are greatly dependent on the spiritual heritage. Uttarakhand is also known for its spiritual establishments. Thus, it is reasonable to analyses the impact of religious tourism in the context of the state's economy of Uttarakhand is a state in North Indian region of Himalayas. The state is popularly known as Devbhumi (land of Gods) due to the presence of numerous Hindu pilgrimage sites. As a result, religious tourism forms a major portion of the tourists in the state.

Spiritual Tourism in general, has recently become an important subject of research in social and business areas. Pilgrim tourism is the most revenue generated field for Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand has outstanding tourism Products and has potential to become a major tourism destination. The state has a greater value for domestic tourism because of its religious sites and it also provides economic and livelihood means to the people of uttarakhand. The current study presents a brief review of present status of religions tourism in Uttarakhand State.

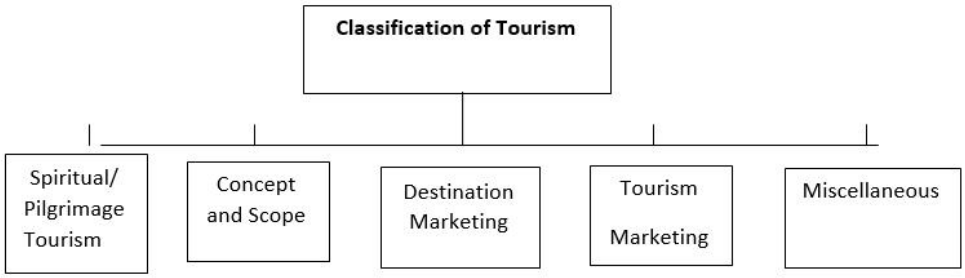
Keywords: Spirituality, Tourism, Hindu pilgrimage

Introduction

The Indian state of Uttarakhand is renowned for its sacred land, uniqueness, and sentiments. India being a culturally diverse country has been well connected to all major beliefs and religions of the world and all the religions groups of the country has constructed various niche forms of religious tourism in India, which eventually molded various religious centers like Temples, Gurudwaras, Mosques, Churches, and other major art, traditions, culture and architecture. Places and shrines in various states of India, such as Varanasi, Mathura and Vrindavan in Uttar Pradesh, Somanth in Gujarat; Dargah Khwaja Saheb in Ajmer; Rishikesh, Haridwar, char Dham in Uttrakhand, Pushkar in Rajasthan; Jagannath Puri in Orissa); Golden Temple and Anandpur Sahib in Amritsar; Tirupati Balajee in Andhra Pradesh) and Bodh Gaya (Bihar) are some of famous religious and spiritual destinations of India.

The state of Uttarakhand state in India rich in the religious form of tourism primarily includes Pilgrimage, cultural visits, retreat, conventions and rallies etc. The number of religious tourist are increasing year by year.

Spirituality, in general, has recently become an important subject of research in social and business areas. This has added a new dimension to the tourism industry, called 'spiritual tourism'. Consequently, there has been an increase in the awareness in the thematic field of spiritual tourism. The tourism industry has been witnessing remarkable changes with the changes in the social system. This has been reflected in the types of tourism from time to time. The industry has evolved into such a broad sector that, today, even health-care related travels, religious travels etc. are recognized as some of the most promising tourism sectors. Thus, it is indeed a difficult task to classify the types of tourism.



Objects of Study:
The main objects of the study are as follows:
1- Finding mental peace through Meditation and Yoga in various sector in Uttarakhand.
2- To create new employment opportunities for the local people of Uttarakhand.
3- To spread of the culture and tradition of Uttarakhand.
4- To developed of infrastructure and basic need of people of Uttarakhand.

Significance of Tourism:
In recent years various categories and forms of tourism activity are evolved in Uttarakhand such as.

- Pilgrim & Religious tourism
- Village tourism
- Eco-tourism
- Historical tourism
- Rural tourism
- Medical & Health tourism
- Spiritual tourism
- Adventure tourism
- Sustainable tourism
- Agro-tourism
- Wedding tourism
- Yoga tourism
- Wildlife tourism etc.

Collectively, all emerging niche areas of tourism in Uttarakhand are spiritual tourism in nature. And all the forms are shaped by the preferences and requirements of the visitors except religious tourism.

Spiritual Tourism:
Spiritual tourism has a wider concept of a desire for a change, relief from the dull daily life and enthusiasm and divine nature for a common man. Accordingly, academic interests in analysing different aspects of spiritual tourism as a new segment have been gaining momentum. Spirituality has become an increasingly significant area in social, health and business research (Heq. et. Al., 2008) Travels to spiritual places have recorded a phenomenal increase in the recent years. Believe in spirituality has caused people to travel since long even with poor travelling and communication infrastructures. However, scientific study on marketing aspects of spiritual tourism in very limited. Most of the studies are case-based or demographic. A brief review of literatures appeared in five leading international journals (Annals of Tourism Research, Applied Geography. International Journal of Tourism Research, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, and Journal Management, Spirituality and Management) and few International Conference Proceeding since the year 1992 have been presented in the following subsection.

Spiritual Tourism in Uttarakhand:
Uttarakhand the hill state of India was established on November 09, 2000 as 27th state from erstwhile hill and foothill parts of Uttar Pradesh. Since ages this regions is regarded as “Adobe of Gods” due to presence of divine places. Spiritual journeys are one type of cultural tourism that is on the rise, as people are increasingly looking to develop their own spirituality and to discover that of others. In 2007, spiritual tourism was judged by the UNWTO as the most rapidly growing segment although it cannot be easily framed in fact, spiritual tourism is based on a variety of motivations ranging from traditional religious tourism to alternative medicine to forms of deep immersion in nature. Home to a myriad holy shrines, the name Uttarakhand is aptly associated with Devbhumi i.e. Land of Gods, Pilgrims from far and wide visit this Himalayan state, seeking salvation and self-purgation. Two of the most revered rivers of the country, namely Ganga and Yamuna originate from Gaumukh (Gangotri) and Yamunotri. The most esteemed pilgrimage circuit of the country incorporates Shri Badrinath and Shri Kedarnath, the holy seats of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva respectively. Another prominent pilgrimdestination in Uttarakhand is the holy town of Haridwar, where the prestigious Kumbh Mela is held every twelve years, attracting millions of devout people from all over the world. Situated close to Haridwar, on the banks of the divine Ganga is Rishikesh a major centre for Yoga and Meditation-people from several parts of the world have been visiting this town for decades.
There are counties other temples and shrines in the state homes to local deities and various manifestations of Lord Shiva and Durga. It is not as though Uttarakhad is a pilgrimage destination exclusively for Hindus-there are several important

shrines related to other religions too, keeping in line with the secular traditions of our country. These include Hemkund Sahib, Nanak Matta Sahib, Ritha

Metha Sahib, Piran Kaliyar Sharif near Roorkee. the mind Rolling Monastery and its Buddha Stupa in Dehradun.

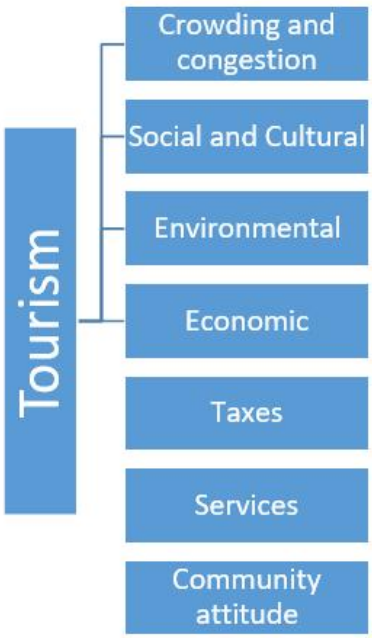
Uttarakhand embodies some of the world famous peaks, enchanting glaciers, and alpine pastures such as the Valley of flowers. Four revered pilgrimage destinations. Regarded as 'Chardham' namely Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedagnath and Badrinath are located in highland region of Uttarakhand. In addition of these, nearly 40 other destinations in the Uttarakhand are known and regarded as preferred destination of finding peace and sensing spirituality.

Economic concept of Spiritual Tourism in Uttarakhand:

Tourism in considered as one of the largest economic activities in the world, and perhaps the largest in the services sector. It is also one of the fastest growing sectors of the world economy. Tourism is vital for many countries, due to the income generated by the consumption of goods and services by tourists, the taxes levied on businesses in the tourism industry, and the opportunity for employment in the service industries associated with tourism. Tourism has its own direct and indirect effect on society which is regarded as an effective instrument of country's economic development.

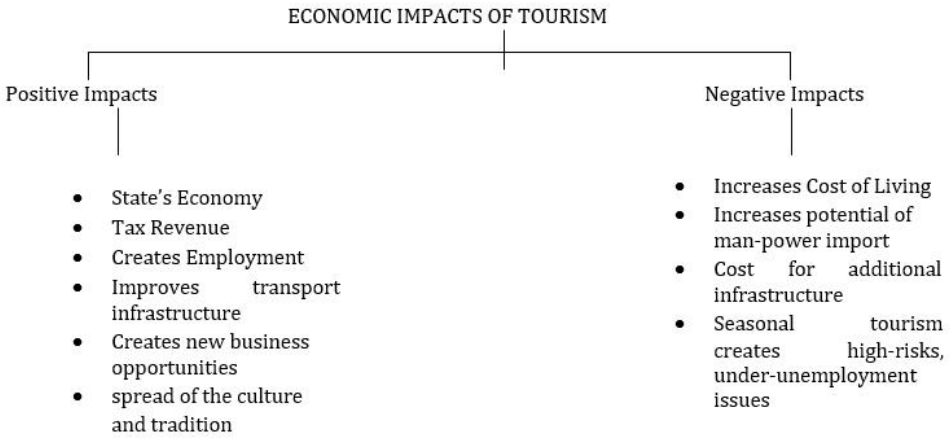
Tourism, as a major service sector industry in world economy, has multidimensional impacts on the society. Glenn Kreag of University of Minnesota, in a report submitted in 2001, has identified the impacts of tourism into seven general categories (Kreag, 2001). These impacts are Economic, Social and Cultural, Environmental, Crowding and congestion, Community attitudes, Services and Taxes. India is a developed economy therefore Theas have a significant impact on the Indian economy and culture and lifestyle of the country. Uttarakhand is a mountainous Himalayan state in India. Its beautiful and picturesque valleys, along with its religious tourism place, attract tourist. Pilgrims visit the 'Char Dham' (Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath) and other religious sites every year, which has a positive impact on the state's economy.

Following are the economic concept of tourism:



Concept of tourism (Adapted from Kreag, 2001)

Kreag further analysed that each of these impacts has both positive and negative aspects. Some of the features that describe the impact of tourism on economy are illustrated in the Figure 4. Tourism brings capital to a state's economy, improves a state's infrastructure, and creates sample business opportunities in sectors like food, transport and hospitality. However at the same time, it could adversely affect the state's economy by contributing to price rise, creating temporary scarcity of land, labour, and housing etc. Thus, it is necessary to adopt a scientific approach to analyses the possible impacts of tourism in the economy of a state that has significant tourism potential. Appropriate strategy to tap these potentials could yield effectively for the state's economy.



Economic Impact of Religious Tourism:

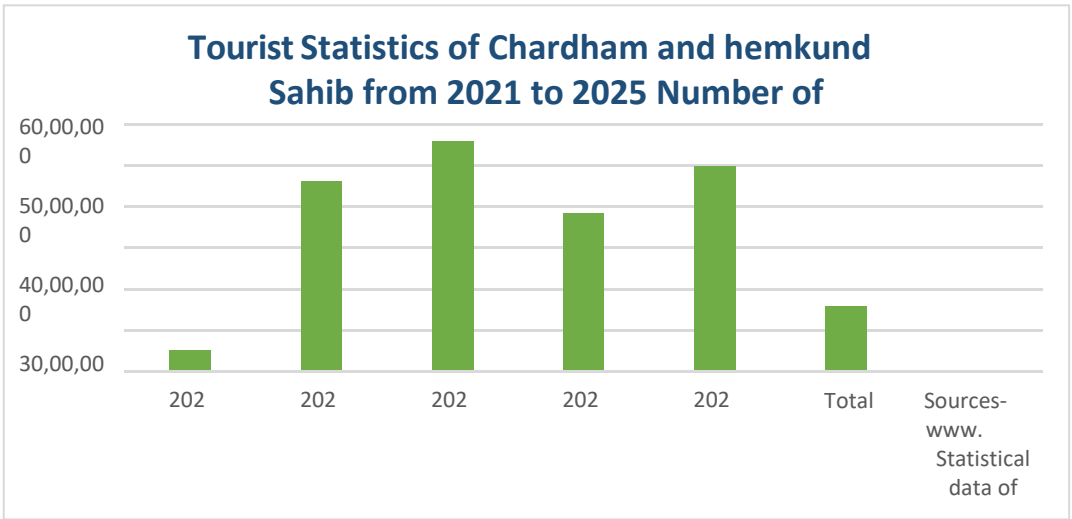
Nearly 40 percent of Uttarakhand's total gross state domestic product comes from tourism. While tourism revenue in 2025 was estimated at nearly Rs. 7500 crore. Forward booking trends by travel companies show that trips planned to Uttarakhand in may 2025 are 30 percent more than in may last year, when the impact of the tragedy was most severely felt. Around 60 percent of the total tourism prospects of the state have been severely damaged due to excessive rains, a study by business chamber PHDCCI has said. The reconstruction of damaged tourist destinations is expected to burden the state government with huge amounts in the wake of rising input costs such as mounting prices of cement and iron labour costs, etc, it has stated.

"Though the number of trips has been reduced, average trip budgets have increased, primarily because travelers are investing in hotels with better infrastructure," said Hari Nair, founder of Holiday IQ.com. One the other land Uttarakhand states also providing financial assistance on interest payments on loans to rebuild the hotel infrastructure. The cloudburst that caused the devastating floods and landslides in every year to hit the state economy. Destruction of bridges and roads left pilgrims and tourism trapped and more than 5,000 people were estimated to have lost their lives. But despite all the impact of the natural disaster to hit the tourism in utarakhand, the number of tourist increase every year. Understood from the following tables –

Tourist Statistics of Chardham and hemkund Sahib from 2021 to 2025

Year	Number of Religious Tourist
2021	5,09,000
2022	46,27,000
2023	56,13,000
2024	38,50,000
2025	50,00000
Total	1,59,9000

Sources- www. Statistical data of spiritual tourism in uttarakhand



The above table and chart shows that ther has been a continues increase in the number of religious tourist in uttarakhand from the year

Conclusion

Growth of tourism industry has been a major contributor to the increased economic activities throughout the world. It has earned revenue for the country, created jobs, improved infrastructural facilities in places which otherwise has no potential for rapid development, and enhanced socio- cultural interactions by many fold. As mentioned already, Uttarakhand, one of the hilly states of India that takes the pride being termed as the 'Abode of Gods'. The state is also considered as the 'base of religious places'. It is found that tourism is one the highest revenue earning industries in Uttarakhand. There has been an increase in the rate of tourist inflow to the state, particularly in the current years and a considerable part of these tourists are religious tourists who play an important role in the state's economic health. In order to enhance the inflow of religious tourists to the state, the conditions of the spiritual places, and the state's infrastructure should be improved. Since pilgrimages to the Char dham constitute a strong and dependable motivation for domestic tourists, upscale pilgrim tourism to these sites should be given a fillip. Helicopter flights to these sites in the future should be planned and allowed to furnish revenue to the state. Facilities for promoting upscale, low-impact rural tourism in the vicinity should be encouraged so that high spenders linger on in the region. A tourist circuit can be developed to include detours on route to these sites. Pilgrimages to less-known religiou

Reference

1. Dr. Sukhpal Singh Routela,Dr. N.P. Maheshswari, Mr. Naveen Dwivedi "Uttarakhand as a Emerging Sprittual Destination".
2. Himadri Phukan, Z. Rahman, and P. Devdutt, "Emergence of Spirituality of tourism in India" IJMT, Volume 2, Issue 4, Issn: 2249-1058, April 2012.
3. Ben Bowler(2013) in his blog How Spritiual tourism might change the world.
4. Tribe, J.(2008), The art of Tourism, Annals of Tourism Research, 35(4), 924-944.
5. Sin, H.L. (2009), Volunteer tourism- "involve Me and I will learn", Annals of Tourism Research, 36 (3), 480-501.
6. Dr. Vinay Sharma, Dr. Rajat Aggarwal, Mr. Pramod Chandra, "Religious to Spritual Tourism Transformation Journey of Uttarakhand- Hill State in India," Proceedings of the International Conferance on Tourism, Hospitality and Marketing, ISBN-978-1-943579-19-8, Ebene- Mauritius, 21-23 January, 2016. Paper ID: MC612."
7. Uttarakhand Tourisam Development Board.
8. GmvLtd Yatra Office Rishikesh, Uttarakhand
9. http://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in
10. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/religious_tourism