

Rural tourism in Uttarakhand, Importance, Scope and Challenges

Rakesh Sajwan
Assistant Professor
Pal College of Technology and Management
Haldwani, Nainital
Uttarakhand, 263139
INDIA

ABSTRACT: Due to being a permanent resident of Uttarakhand, I have chosen the title for the research as - Rural Tourism for Uttarakhand, its importance, scope and challenges. Uttarakhand is an Indian state located in the Northern region of India. Uttarakhand State is established on 9-Nov- 2000. Total area of Uttarakhand is 53,483 Km² including 52,581.08 km² rural area and 901.92 km² urban area with the population of 69.77 residing in rural areas and only 30.23% population residing in urban area. Considering the above figures, it is easy to assess that if the state has to develop and deal with acute problems like migration, unemployment, then its action plan is of utmost importance, considering it very seriously about rural tourism. Nature has summed up this state with its beauty, it is necessary to develop and propagate new tourist sites similar to the already famous tourist sites. There is a possibility of tourism in the every corner of this state. This is not so simple due to the odd geographical conditions of the State of Uttarakhand and due to natural calamities from time to time. But this task is completely possible by the strong political will and honest functioning. For this, we can learn from other states like Himachal and Kerala and foreign technology can also be used for infrastructure development. Thus, untreated and unprecedented results can be achieved by keeping the soul of the village of Uttarakhand, its culture and delicious dishes, by propagating the air march and by entertaining the guest with sense of hospitality.

Keywords - Uttarakhand, rural, tourism, importance, scope, challenges

INTRODUCTION

Gandhi ji had said that, "The real India is in the villages". This utterance currently proves reality. The World Travel and Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated Rs. 15.24 lakh crore (US \$ 230 billion) or 9.4% of the nation's GDP in 2017 and supported 41.62 million jobs, 8% of its total employment, but it was mainly the cities and the metropolis visited.

In India, where almost 68.84% population reside in 6,38,000 villages where most of the villagers are mainly dependent in agricultural activities and are eagerly looking for alternative job scope. So, if we try to stretch the tourism to a far-flung village, by not keeping the tourism limited to the main cities and places, then we can create new record of employment creation and foreign exchange earnings. Therefore, the importance of rural tourism is immensely enhanced and with greater focus on this. Many schemes have been applied by the government for the development of rural tourism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology - This research paper has been written on the basis of available data from the study of magazines, newspapers, internet and various similar research papers. For some information, data has been collected through local tourism office and direct interaction with tourists.

1. Importance of rural tourism in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand is an Indian state located in the Northern region of India. Uttarakhand State is established on 9-Nov- 2000. Total area of Uttarakhand is 53,483 Km² including 52,581.08 km² rural area and 901.92 km²

urban area with the population of 69.77% residing in rural areas and only 30.23% population residing in urban area.

Like most of India, agriculture is one of the most significant sectors of the economy of Uttarakhand. Basmati rice, wheat, soybeans, groundnuts, coarse cereals, pulses, and oil seeds are the most widely grown crops. Fruits like apples, oranges, pears, peaches, litchis, and plums are widely grown and important to the large food processing industry. Agricultural export zones have been set up in the state for leechi, horticulture, herbs, medicinal plants, and basmati rice.

As 86% of the state consists of hills, the yield per hectare is not very high. 86% of all croplands are in the plains while the remaining is from the hills. Apart from this, agriculture depends primarily on natural irrigation, which is full of uncertainty due to the changing environment. Therefore, we are unable to generate the expected revenue even after continuous improvement in the field of agriculture.

Other key industries include tourism and hydropower, and there is prospective development in IT, ITES, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and automobile industries.

1.1 Can become a major source of state income

Tourism is a thrust area of Uttarakhand; the Chardham Yatra, an annual pilgrimage, reportedly attracts around 2 crore of visitors to the state. According to a report of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASSOCHAM), 2.25 crore domestic and 1.1 lakh foreign tourists visited the state in 2015 when the state was recovering from the 2013 deluge that devastated the Kedarnath valley.

The presence of several hill stations, wildlife parks, pilgrimage places and trekking routes make Uttarakhand an attractive tourist destination. Flow of tourist arrivals in the state reached 29.84 million in 2016.

1.2 To deal with the problem of migration

At present, migration is a major problem in Uttarakhand. And the main reason for the migration is the absence of infrastructure in the mountainous areas, such as electricity, water, roads, education and health facilities. The situation is so horrific due to the escape that some villages have been opened in such a way that they have been given the word "Bhootahaa Gaon".



A glimpse of a deserted village of Uttarakhand, "Bhootahaa gaon" (Source: Uttarakhand news 24)

It is worth mentioning here that there is a lack of physical facilities in these villages but it is full of natural beauty and natural wealth. Over 700 villages in Uttarakhand have been deserted and more than 3.83 lakh

people have left their villages in the last 10 years with half of them going out in search of livelihood, according to a report.

Sharing the data with the media in the presence of Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, Uttarakhand Rural Development and Migration Commission Chairman S S Negi said however 70 per cent of the migrating population had moved only from one part of the state to another and not outside it.

The data forms part of the commission's report on the status of migration in the state over the last ten years which was released by the Chief Minister at his official residence here. According to the data, a total of 3,83,726 people have migrated from their homes in Uttarakhand villages over the last 10 years with 50 per cent of them going out in search of livelihood and the rest due to poor education and health facilities.

Creating opportunities and connecting villages with rural tourism will definitely help resolving the problem of migration. In several parts of the world and closer home Himachal Pradesh, the mountain regions have greatly benefited from the rise of tourism. With increasing demand or increasing potential demand for tourism, such regions acquire modern connectivity and new technologies. Tourism being highly labour intensive with a range of career options helps in increasing the income of the local people. There are plenty of tourism options for Uttarakhand and all of them should be encouraged including and more emphasis on rural tourism.

1.3 To avoid congestion on main tourism spots

In tourist season in Uttarakhand, main and famous tourist spots bear a tremendous pressure of tourism activities, because of which many times the tourists face problems of rooms, food, parking etc. And many times tourists go back with the negative image of the state due to these inconveniences, which is a very unsatisfactory state in context of tourism and tourism development. The popular tourist destinations of Uttarakhand have become all too popular in recent times. Let us take an example of Famous tourist spot Nainital. This year, traffic police claim that there is not enough space of parking for everybody who wants to visit Nainital. Therefore, they diverted the traffic to other places. Meanwhile, hoteliers of Nainital claim that they have 30 percent of their room vacant because of the tourist diversion by traffic police. For the hospitality industry to return or divert back is inhospitable and there is no doubt that this cause a very bad stroke to the Uttarakhand reputation as a tourist-friendly destination.

1.4 To generate livelihood and eliminating unemployment

If various new villages and tourist sites are expanded under rural tourism, the pressure on the prevailing tourist sites will be reduced and more new tourist spots will develop. This development will result in new employment or business opportunity for the residence of particular village and society. The Uttarakhand government has initiated a good scheme like "Home Stay" in the direction of some meaningful efforts to develop rural tourism. With this effort of the government, many people associated with this scheme have got the means of livelihood and employment.

2. SCOPE

Uttarakhand has tremendous potential for rural tourism. Every corner of the state of Uttarakhand is not only promulgated with natural beauty, but it is a state full of cultural diversity. Almost every district has its own cultural heritage here. In which the prosperity of the folk dance, such as Jhoda, Chanchari, Chapeli etc., delicious delicacies and local festivals like Nanda Raj jaat Yatra, Nanda Devi mahotsav, Ancient Bagwal, Harela and many more. With the proper publicity and more emphasis and efforts, Uttarakhand rural tourism can make not only national but also internationally renowned, and can become a major and famous ruraltourism destination for the nation and international tourists.

The potential of rural tourism can also be viewed by, that after declaring the scheme of home stay to promote the rural tourism by government of Uttarakhand; government is receiving offers from various multinational companies to invest in sector of rural tourism, eco tourism. Those who want to develop far-flung rural areas of the state as tourist destinations.

As a rough concept, there are approximately around 15000 villages in Uttarakhand if, only 5000 villages are developed for 200 tourists under rural tourism, then the possibility of tourists can be created in the number of lakh.

3. CHALLENGES

In this way we see that there are many possible opportunities for rural tourism in Uttarakhand. But it is not easy to finish it on the surface, as much as thinking or discussing. This is a challenging milestone, which will have to face the following challenges to reach the expected result:

- a. First of all, a strong and honest political will.
- b. The infrastructure facilities to develop the destinations.
- c. Better connectivity to Uttarakhand from other places and connectivity within intra state.
- d. Vast and aggressive marketing and publicity to promote the other destinations of Uttarakhand through the media.
- e. Coping strategies with natural calamities and developing infrastructure by keeping in mind.
- f. Publicity of the advantage of rural tourism to locals and incorporating them by getting them benefited.
- g. Executing plans with honest practices and for long term prospects or futuristic approach.

4. RESULT

Let us now take a look at the facts and figures related to the tourism business in Uttarakhand.

Fig1 : Tourists arrival in Uttarakhand (in lakhs)

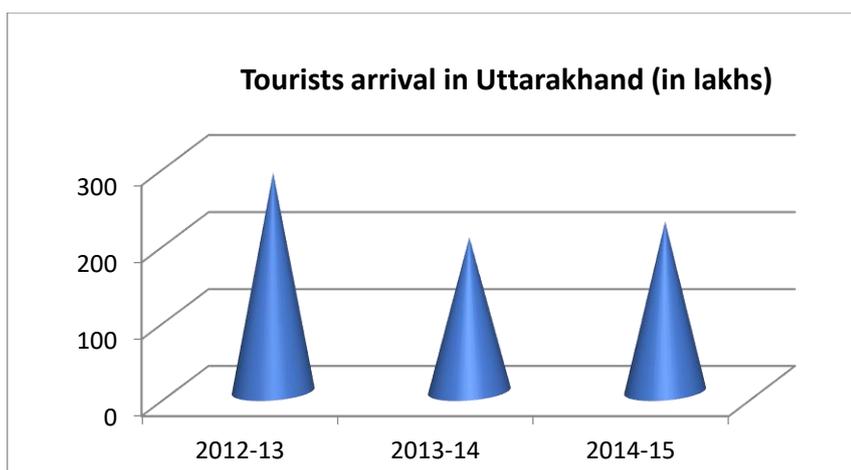


Table 1: Tourists arrival in Uttarakhand (in lakhs)

YEAR	NO. OF TOURIST
2013-14	284.34
2014-15	200.39
2015-16	220.93

Table 2: Main tourist centre in Uttarakhand
Source: Uttarakhand tourism development board

National park sanctuaries	wildlife	Religious spots	tourist	Other tourist spot
Askot sanctuary		Yamunotri		Bhimtal
Kedarnath sanctuary		Gangotri		Ranikhet
Valley of flower		Kedarnath		Binsar
Nanda Devi National Park		Badrinath		Mukteshwar
Rajaji National park		Haridwar		Almora
Corbett National park		Hemkund sahib		Ranikhet
Govind wildlife sanctuary				Kausani
				Pauri
				Mussorie
				Chopta
				Lansdowne
				Chmaba
				Auli

By assessing the above facts and figures, it can be concluded that approx 7 lakh of visitors, visited the above mentioned main tourist center in Uttarakhand, It is worth noting in this conclusion that the above 7 lakh tourists came mainly to roam around 26 tourist spots written above. That is, the above 26 tourism sites are the center of major tourism activities in entire Uttarakhand.

In reality, Uttarakhand is a state where every corner, every village is full of natural beauty.

But unfortunately, all those areas have not been able to replace tourist sites in the map of Uttarakhand.

Uttarakhand has tourism potential but there is nothing to suggest that this sector is driving the economy. Tourism is now viewed as one of the key sectors of economic growth and development in the state both from the point of view of income and employment generation as well as a source of revenue for the state. The state government must strive hard to make tourism an instrument of economic growth, poverty eradication and prosperity in Uttarakhand by developing strategies and focusing on vast level of rural tourism in the state.

5. References

- I. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322508925>,
- II. Indian village directory (2018) UK rural data <https://villageinfo.in/uttarakhand.html>,
- III. <http://www.dailypioneer.com>,
- IV. <http://www.hindustantimes.com>,
- V. <https://www.slideshare.net/IBEFIndia/uttarakhand-state-report-december-2016>
- VI. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/>
- VII. Kumaon mandal vikas nigam, Nainital
- VIII. Singh, Kuldeep & Gantait, Arnab & Puri, Goldi & Anjaneya Swamy, G. (2016). Rural Tourism: Need, Scope and Challenges in Indian Context. 32-47. 10.5281/zenodo.1164011.