

Natural Calamity Affecting Tourist Inflow: A Descriptive Study of Uttarakhand

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Abstract:

Tourism is an industry which is very sensitive to nature. There are many variables which adversely affect its growth and sometimes they are not in the control of human beings. This paper tends to analyze the impact of natural calamities on the tourists arrival. The study is confined to Uttarakhand, one of a beautiful state of India. The study is based on a secondary data of Uttarakhand development board. It is a descriptive study and data of Domestic and Foreign tourist arrivals in Uttarakhand is collected from year 2000 to 2015. The finding of this paper states that there is a significant difference in the pattern of Foreign and Domestic tourist arrivals in Uttarakhand from year 2000 to 2015. Also, a natural calamity which took place during 16 and 17 June 2013 adversely affects the tourism of this state. The findings of this study may provide information to the concern stakeholders who want to know the impact of this natural disaster on tourist foot falls.

Keywords: Natural calamities, Uttarakhand, Foreign tourist arrival, Domestic tourist arrival, Kedarnath.

INTRODUCTION:

Increasing number of disaster and crises which affect tourism industry, ranging from natural to human influenced are not anymore hidden from researchers and scholars. Globalization of the tourism industry led to rapid expansion of tourism related businesses on an international scale in order to expand market share as well as profitability. However, this process has also opened businesses up to a wider set of “global risks” involved in running businesses at such a scale, as globalization is often seen as complex and chaotic (Jessop, 1999). Uttarakhand also known as “Land of the Gods” gained status because of religious and cultural importance. As it is divided into two major regions Garhwal and Kumaun, cater a wide variety of diversity in every form of culture religious heritage and environmental wealth. This region is seismically and ecologically highly delicate and sensitive. The environmentalists and geologists have already declared that even a minute of anthropogenic or natural changes can create major disaster. One such disaster occurred during 16 and 17 June 2013 in Kedarnath which completely wiped out the entire town leaving behind only debris and rubble. Hundreds of lives both local people and tourists, and live stocks were washed-out within

moments. Many parts of the only road leading to the last bus stop at Sonprayag were washed out. The livelihood of local community of the region highly dependent on the seasonal pilgrims and tourist. This was a severe setback for the complete nation as people who were affected were from all around the nation. Thus, the present study is conducted in order to know the impact of natural disaster on tourist inflow in this region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Uttarakhand is known as “Dev Bhoomi” and Himalaya here is known for its natural beauty. Pilgrims have been attracted here for years. The presence of pilgrimages as *Char-Dham* (Four major religious destination-Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri) are the major attractions for the pilgrims. Similarly, the hill resorts such as Mussoorie, Nainital, Almora, Ranikhet and many more are the major centers of tourist attraction. The scenic and panoramic view of the mainland of Uttarakhand accelerated the scope of tourism. Tourism in a broader sense has existed for a long time here in the state. Mountaineering, trekking, river rafting, rock climbing and skiing are being the major attraction for tourist in the region. These forms of mass tourism have a huge impact on the environment and on the local social structure. A major root cause identified for the unsustainable development that in turn cause occurrence of disaster are the climatic conditions (ICIMOD, 2007). The continuous degradation of the resources and the frequent natural disasters in the Himalayan region are causing challenges in the development of the community and the region (Hoermann&Kollmair, 2008). Ashley and Mitchell (2005) states that tourism contributes in developing countries and account for more than two times from rich to poor countries. According to the UNWTO report published in 2002, tourism is responsible to bring an important market potential for local entrepreneurs and an engine for local sustainable economic development (UNWTO, 2002). Tourism has increased the living standards in the mountain regions all across the globe (Jodha, 1992; Beniston, 2000; Jodha, 2002). Sustainable development of socio-economic and environmental use is an increasing topic of concern in Himalayan region. Thus, as with any kind of development, the issue of environmental and the Socio-economic sustainability of the said development activity comes to the forefront (Sharma, 2000). Kohli, (2004) made a point to empower the local population about their needs, rights and demands tourism put on their resources. One of the important tools for the tourism development is the positive effect of the infrastructure (Earth Summit, 2002). The driving factors for the growth of tourism are urbanization with primarily natural features, scenery, cultural heritage and natural attractions for a given region (Jacob, 2008). Disaster occurring naturally are difficult to be solved among all the limitations in tourism. Natural disasters from past has been a factor that is decelerating the fast growth of tourism across the world. It is a difficult force that reduces the influence of tourism. (Define by UNWTO). Floods that cause a severe loss usually arise due to heavy rainfall or glacier disintegration which causes rivers to overflow their banks and near areas (Abbott, 2004). Wind and water are the two primary forces to stimulate climatic disaster. Beyond the naturally occurred disaster other factors also contributed to the downfall of the famous religious/ tourist site. State’s huge opportunities in tourism led in tapping its potential towards becoming a major tourist and pilgrim destination, also played part in this

disaster. The unchecked tourist inflow into the state of Uttarakhand, took a toll on the ecology of the state. In addition, it is much easier to accessible Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and other shrines, all this led to the rise in the number of people traveling to Uttarakhand (Bisht, 2013). “The number of 'pilgrims' has been steadily increasing, with people from the plains interested in a quick guided tour of the hills in a vehicle...the local authorities have ignored the carrying capacity and cumulative impact of dams and illegal construction on the fragile Himalayas” stated by Jacob (2013) during a live interview on CNN-IBN. This gradual increase in tourist inflow resulted in other damaging issues such as heavy traffic and roadblocks. Tourists repeatedly complaining about the bad condition of roads and time it consumed, the government in turn promised widening of roads to accommodate the tourist's inflow. Fragility of these mountains are to be considered, Himalayas are the youngest mountain ranges in the world, soil stability for the roads is very poor that gets washed away during monsoons (Bisht, 2013). “Rampant illegal construction of buildings by locals had also contributed to the problems and made a bad situation worse. On top of it all, traffic in the hills has increased hugely, with the number of vehicles registered in the hills going up sharply. Remember the hills are delicate and unstable, so it takes little to set off landslides. More infrastructure has in fact worsened the situation since much of it is poorly made and constructed by people who have no idea of building in the hills” as addressed by Jacob (2013). This type of disasters cause huge amount of losses both individually or in combination and create a wrong image regarding safety, security of the destinations. Hence, challenges are faced by the authorities and local communities to examine the raw materials for disaster management strategies. The degrees to which emergency service is initiated to face crisis can always be critically examined when crisis overrules. Certainly, those factors do not represent the totality of issues which can impact negatively the destination image. However, the concern can extend to analyze how a destination and its tourism industry conduct a marketing campaign to restore its image and recover its market from the damage caused by these events (Varghese, 2012). Varghese in year 2009 and 2013 proposes various management steps to deal with tourist area which are affected by natural disasters. The National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), in its one of the first reports on the 2013 floods, has blamed the climatic conditions combining with the human interventions in the hills for the disaster (“Down To Earth”, 2013). Varma (2013) stated, that although the Geological Survey of India had identified 101 villages as 'vulnerable' in June 2008, the state government did not take any necessary action for their rehabilitation of these villages.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on secondary data of Uttarakhand development board. Data of Domestic and Foreign tourist arrivals in Uttarakhand is collected from year 2000 to 2015. It is a descriptive study and its approach is deductive. A null hypothesis is formulated i.e. *There is no significant difference in the pattern of Foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) and Domestic tourist arrivals in Uttarakhand from year 2000 to 2015.* Secondary data of Domestic and Foreign tourist arrivals from year 2000 to 2015 is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Domestic and Foreign tourist arrivals in Uttarakhand from year 2000 to 2015 (Source : Uttarakhand Development Board)

Sl.no	Year	Domestic Tourist Arrivals (In Lakh)	Foreign tourist Arrivals (In Lakh)	Total (In Lakh)
1	2000	110.79	0.57	111.36
2	2001	105.49	0.55	106.04
3	2002	116.52	0.56	117.08
4	2003	129.3	0.64	129.94
5	2004	138.3	0.75	139.05
6	2005	162.81	0.93	163.74
7	2006	193.58	0.96	194.54
8	2007	221.54	1.06	222.6
9	2008	230.64	1.12	231.76
10	2009	231.54	1.18	232.72
11	2010	309.72	1.36	311.08
12	2011	266.66	1.43	268.09
13	2012	282.92	1.41	284.33
14	2013	200.25	1.03	209.68
15	2014	225.25	1.1	226.35
16	2015	293.74	1.11	294.85

The result of Kolmogorov Smirnov (Sig value .200) and Shapiro – wiki test, (Sig value 1.0) (Shapiro Wilk, 1965; Razali & Wah, 2011) shows that our secondary data is normally distributed. Result of independent t test (Table 2) shows that P value is less than .05 which means we are fail to accept our null hypothesis and hence there is a *significant difference in the pattern of Foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) and Domestic tourist arrivals in Uttarakhand from year 2000 to 2015.*

Table 2 : Independent Sample t-test

	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Tourist arrivals equal variances assumed							
	-11.786	30	.000	-200.20563	16.98626	-234.89620	-165.51505
Tourist arrivals equal variances assumed							
	-11.786	15.001	.000	-200.20563	16.98626	-236.41086	-164.00039

Below bar graph of total number of total number of Foreign and domestic tourist arrivals in Uttarakhand shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 shows that there is almost continuous increase in Foreign and Domestic tourist arrivals from year 2000 to 2012. After 2012 we see sharp decline in tourist flow in year 2013 and 2014. This is because of Kederanath tragedy which took place during 16 and 17 June 2013 which adversely impact the tourism of this state.

Figure 1 : Bar graph showing total number of FTA in Uttarakhand from Year 2000 to 2015

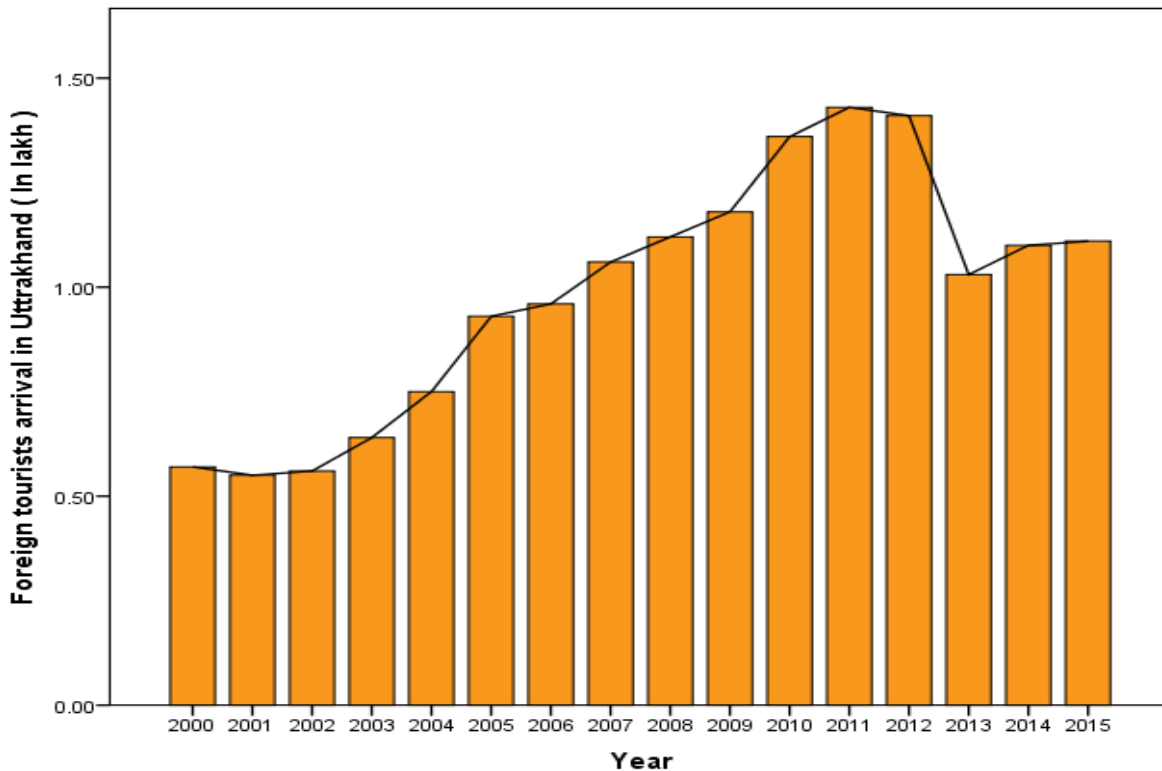
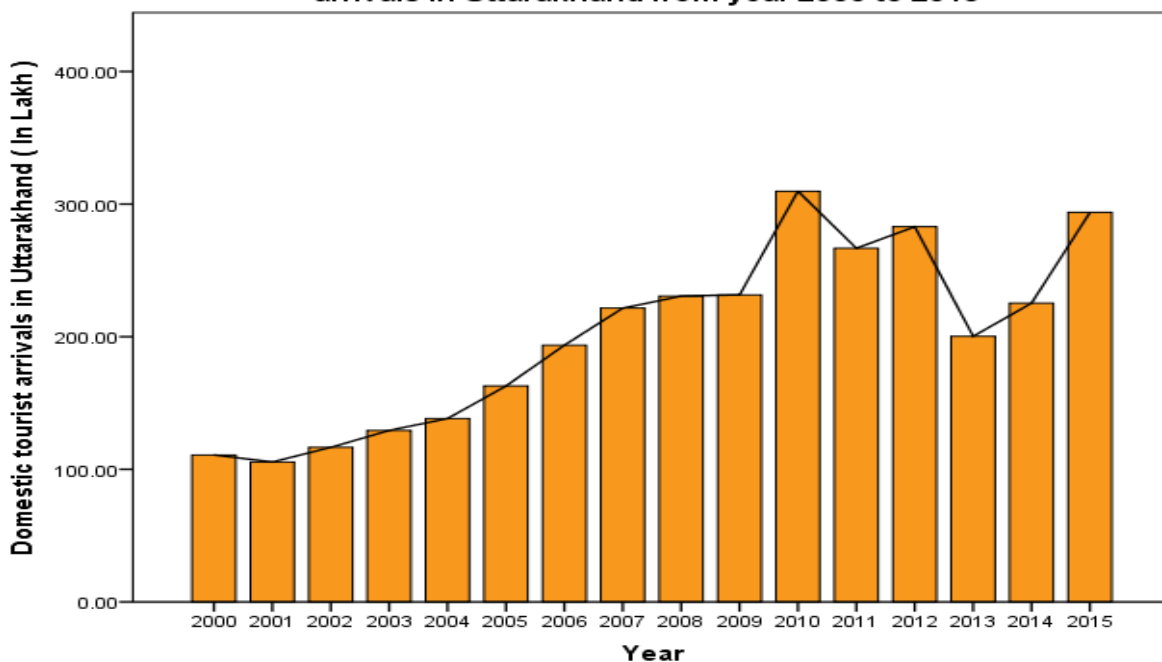


Figure 2: Bar graph showing total number of Domestic tourists arrivals in Uttarakhand from year 2000 to 2015



Conclusion:

Today any tourist destinations are evaluated by tourists according to its safety and risk factors. The present study concludes that there is a significant difference in the pattern of Foreign and Domestic tourist arrivals in Uttarakhand from year 2000 to 2015. Also from the review of literature and the impact of Kedarnath tragedy in Uttarakhand in the year 2013, shows that natural calamities negatively affects tourism industry of an area. After the Kedarnath disaster, tourism industry took time to revive, as the challenges related to accessibility, infrastructure development, climate were to be faced. This was clearly seen in the year 2014 when the tourist foot prints decreased sharply in the state. Therefore, sustainable development of any tourist area may reduce the impact of such calamities which are not in the control of human beings. This could reduce the damages and also give concern authorities enough space and time to cope up from the situation. However the study is conducted on secondary data of Uttarakhand development board, findings of this study may provide information to the concern stakeholders who want to know the impact of the natural disaster on tourist foot falls.

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