

# Issues, Challenges and Scope for Tourism Development in Kumaun Region of Uttarakhand

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**Abstract:** Tourism industry in the modern era is emerging one of the largest service-sector industry which is contributing in many ways towards economies through generating national income as well as by creating job opportunities especially for local population and thus become an avenue of socio-economic development and cultural exchange. Travel and Tourism is not only an activity for leisure and entertainment but it is also enriching and energizing activity. Uttarakhand one of the most beautiful state in the northern belt known as “Devbhoomi” or ‘Abode of Gods’ is a site of temples and pilgrimage, endowed with salubrious climate, exotic greenery, rich flora besides its rich culture. “Kumaon” one of the two region of the state Uttarakhand attracts large numbers of tourists and is becoming as one of the preferred choice of visit among travellers. Beside all this the tourism industry in the Kumaun region is facing some issues and challenges which need to be considered to capitalize the potential of tourism in the Kumaun region. The present study tries to examine the Challenges and scope of tourism development in the Kumaun region of the Uttarakhand state, the nature of the research is qualitative and employs the secondary sources of data. The results of the study reveals that there are challenges for tourism development, but with certain improvements and proper planning the region can be developed as one of the best tourist destination because there is vast scope in new forms of tourism and which can be capitalized with proper and efficient planning and execution.

**KEYWORDS:** Challenges and Scope, Kumaun Region, Tourism Industry, Uttarakhand.



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## INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial travel is a part of human life. Travel and tourism existed in different ways in different times. Early people travel to fulfil their different needs and motives, the first being those who travelled for the search of food. Food gatherers were considered to be the first travelers. This was followed by those who travelled with the motive of doing trade. Many kingdoms were evolved and battles were fought to extend the reign of the emperors of that time. Tourism has not evolved overnight and is not a new phenomenon, rather it took decades to evolve travel and tourism industry which we see today. Tourism is a diverse phenomenon, which has its social, economic, natural, political impacts that are positive as well as negative. Tourism being one of the fastest growing service sector industry if promoted by many countries as most of the economies are trying their best to capture major share in the tourism industry as a means of getting competitive edge over other countries of the world. Tourism has its testimonies in the earliest records of history and has undergone phenomenal rate of growth during the present century. Yet there is no universally accepted definition of tourism even now. Huniker and Krapf gave the first definition of tourism by defining it as "The sum of phenomenon and relationship arising from the travel and stay of non-resident in so far as it does not lead to permanent residence and is not connected to any earning activity", (Dileep, 2019). In general tourism can be defined as a process involving a visit performed by a person from his place of residence to some far destination for more than one day and which does not anyhow related to motive of earning. With the advancement in accommodation and transportation facilities which are the two major elements of travel industry, it is very easy to go anywhere anytime to explore destination and to spend leisure time. This development took years and decades to transform the tourism industry, one of the major transformation that took place in the travel and tourism industry is after the world wars and especially the world war 2. Tourism sector holds strategic importance in the Indian economy providing several socio economic benefits. Provision of employment, income and foreign exchange, development or expansion of other industries such as agriculture, construction, handicrafts etc. are some of the important economic benefits provided by the

tourism sector. In addition, investments in infrastructural facilities such as transportation, accommodation and other tourism related services lead to an overall development of infrastructure in the economy.

The state of Uttarakhand which is also known as "Abode of Gods", is one of the preferred tourist destination across the globe. The state was formed as the 27<sup>th</sup> state on 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2000. Uttarakhand, in spite of being a small state, has certain key features that make it distinct from other states of the country and highlights its potential for development. However, development has predominantly been in the plains, and the hill districts have been left behind. 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 distances between the markets and resources. Because of these constraints, traditional agriculture cannot be the lead sector for development. Thus the state faces the challenge of promoting livelihoods to minimize migration through local employment and income generation, and to enhance the quality of life of people living in villages. The positive features of these hill districts are that they have enormous potential for tourism, a suitable climate for high-value agriculture, and a pleasant environment due to 60 percent forest cover. The tourism sector has been a major constituent of the service sector that already contributes almost half (49.6 percent) of the Gross State Domestic Product. Given the factor endowments, there is huge potential for growth in the tourism sector considering the demand from both the domestic and international markets in terms of content and standard of facilities and utilities. The State attracts tourists for pilgrimages, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, wildlife tourism, eco-tourism, and amusement and leisure tourism. The approach to tourism development in Uttarakhand has to be based on the strengths of this State. Since Uttarakhand is rich in natural beauty with a unique mountain environment as well as rich historical and cultural assets, diverse products have to be designed for various categories of people who travel to this State for different motives.

There are two divisions of the state namely the Kumaun and the Garhwal region. The present study is concerned

with the Kumaun region of Uttarakhand and hence main focus will be on the tourism development in the region only. The name "Kumaun" is derived from "Kurmanchal". The word Kurmanchal is combination of two words "Kurm" which means tortoise and "Aanchal" which means mountain. The name is after Kurmanchal mountain which got corrupted with the passage of time and in local dialect called as Kumaun or Kumaon. According to mythological belief the mountain is associated with Kurma incarnation of lord Vishnu. There are many other legends which are associated with the Kumaun region. In "SkandPurana" the region lies in "Manaskhand". The tortoise reincarnation took place near Kali river. The area on the right side of Kali river is known as "Kumaun" in local dialect. There are six districts in the Kumaun region namely Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, Nainital, Pithoragarh and U.S. Nagar. Initially there were only two districts in the Kumaun region. Under the British rule Kumaun was divided into Kumaun and British Garhwal. Blessed with flora and fauna the Kumaun region is visited by tourists in large numbers throughout the year. The tourism industry is emerging as a major sector for the growth and development of the region and locals residing in the region. There are many tourist destinations in the region that are world famous one of them is "Nainital" which is known as the lake district of India. In the Kumaun region tourism of various forms have been developed and promoted like adventure tourism, leisure tourism, trekking, wildlife tourism. Being surrounded by majestic Himalayas the region offers splendid view of mesmerizing snow covered mountain peaks like Trishul, Panchachuli, Nanda Devi, the region attracts nature lovers. Nature lovers and wildlife lovers are majorly attracted by the Jim Corbett National Park and Askot Wildlife Sanctuary. Many beautiful hill stations such as Kausani, Nainital, Musyari, Ranikhet are located in the Kumaun region which are the best destinations for leisure and holiday tourists. Tourists can enjoy paragliding at Naukuchiyataland can explore trekking also. The Kumaun region attracts large number of pilgrimage tourists through its historic Hindu temples such as Garjiya temple, Haidakhan temple, Kainchidhammandir, Nainadevi temple, Gairargoludevata temple and many more. Nanakmatta Sahib Gurudwara is a famous Sikh pilgrimage centre

situated in Udham Singh Nagar district of the region. Many fairs and festivals held every year like the Kainchimela, Purnagirimela, Jauljebi fair, all these attract large number of tourists to the region.

### **Factors Influencing Tourist Inflow & Tourism Development**

**1. Strategic location-** Tourism primarily depends on strategic location as well as its natural and historical attractiveness. A place that can easily be accessed by tourists becomes a prime destination to explore by the tourists across the globe. Geographical location includes its climate, landscape and terrain. Kumaun region being blessed with flora and fauna, snow capped Himalayas, scenic view of mountains and many more attracts tourists in large numbers towards it.

**2. Economic status indicator-** Economic status is also a major factor that helps it for sustaining balanced growth through tourism. The per capita income tells about the standard of living of the people living there. Tourists looking for business purposes consider this as a major element as their main motive while visiting as a tourist is trade, which is possible only if their vision matches with the potential of the destination they are looking to visit. In all these ways economic status indicator clearly defines whether it is a promising place for visit or not. The government of Uttarakhand has considered this factor and has granted budgets for development of tourist destinations and tourism promotional schemes so that it would help in generation of employment opportunities and will help to raise the standard of living of people in Kumaun region.

**3. Attractiveness as a tourist destination-** The historical and natural attractiveness attracts large numbers of tourists to visit. Whether it may be ancient man made archaeological sites which attract large numbers of tourists from across the globe who visit these places to see the beauty of nature. A region having rich cultural heritage and historical background also forms a key factor to make it to be a favored tourist destination. In 2019 leisure tourism accounted for 78.6% of the total share as compared to 21.4% from business spending. There are many famous and well known tourist destinations that are famous not only in India but across the globe. Nainital is one of them which is famous as lake district of India.

**4. Accommodation-** Availability of quality accommodation facilities influence and affect the tourist

inflow in the tourist destinations. Accommodation in hotels, lodges, homestays are available in most of the tourist destinations in the Kumaun region. KMVN has established its own tourist rest houses to provide quality accommodation service at reasonable cost which act as a major tool in attracting tourists in large numbers. Whereas in some of the tourist destinations which are far from cities there is still need for development of quality accommodation services.

**5. Accessibility-** accessibility of a particular destination influence the tourist inflow towards it. A destination which is easily accessible is preferred by majority of tourists. Road, rail and air connectivity are the three ways through which visitors can reach particular destination. The associated stakeholders should consider this factor in mind and frame policies as per considering this factor. Kumaon Region is well connected with motorable roads but during monsoon it become difficult to reach many destinations. Railway connectivity is not that much developed in the region and same is the scenario of air connectivity.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Bansal and Amit (2010)** examined the perception of tourists visits in Uttarakhand. The study revealed that the prime purpose of visit is adventure, leisure. Most of the visitors were of young age for whom infrastructure and associated facilities are more essential. The study revealed that better infrastructure facilities should be provided to boost domestic tourists. Low cost airlines, railways should also be promoted to create new tourist destination.

**Joshi (2016)** examined in his study the role of tourism industry in the economic development and the challenges faced. Tourism is growing gradually in the state of Uttarakhand and the tourism industry has great potential for employment generation for the local community residing nearby the tourist destinations. Ecotourism has potential for development of the region. Both the government and the private organizations have to work in cooperation to be actively engaged in the development of the tourism industry.

**Rana and Anna (2016)** examine the potential of tourism industry in the economy of Uttarakhand taking into consideration employment and revenue generation using secondary data. The results of the study revealed that there is untapped potential avenue in the state in

respect of tourism sector for economic development and welfare of people. More attention needed to be paid by the policy makers in expenditure on travel and tourism to utilize the resources to their full capacity.

**Jaiswal and Bisht (2017)** assessed the growth of tourism in the state of Uttarakhand. The results of their study revealed that tourism has a great potential in the development of the state and tourism infrastructure should be focused by the government. There are new forms of tourism that are needed to be exploited such as rural tourism, eco tourism, water sports should also be developed to attract large number of tourists in the state.

**Maheshwari and Sharma (2017)** in their study analyzed the role of community based tourism as a tool for developing the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand state. The results so obtained revealed that to attract more visitors to the tourist destinations there should be an appropriate arrangement of tourist facilities, service guide and accommodation is essential enhancement of tourism facilities is not easy task without participation of local community the locals should be trained so that they can play their role in the development of tourism industry..

**Kala and Bagri (2018)** In their study examined the barriers for community participation which has direct impact on tourism development. The results of the study emphasized the need for both greater advocacy of community participation and the need to design particular strategies that can encourage local participation and are customized to emerging destination context.

**Imran and Nguyen (2018)** examined in their study the possibilities of home-stay programs and the willingness of the residents in Uttarakhand on such programs. The results show that the tourism industry has not brought economic benefits for the households involved in the industry; however, this could be owing to the community not being involved in tourism development. In addition, most of the villagers considered that the home-stay program could create opportunities for jobs and improve the income of the local community, but the home-stay program has not yet been developed.

**Kumar and Rana (2018)** in their study examined factors that impact tourism in Himalayan region of Uttarakhand. The results of the study revealed that tourism has both social and economic impact. They

recommended that if information technology in various aspects of tourism industry is used to attract more tourists foreign exchange earnings will rise which will help in regional development.

### Research Methodology

The present study employs qualitative approach to analyze the issues and challenges of tourism industry in the Kumaun region and to suggest policy measures to capitalize the new forms of tourism in the region. The study uses secondary source of data for which Books, research papers, and government reports are used. The area of the present study is the Kumaun region of Uttarakhand.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand and examine the factors affecting tourism development in a particular region.
2. To examine the issues and challenges affecting tourism development in the Kumaun Region.
3. To identify the scope for tourism development in the Kumaun Region.
4. To suggest policy measures to overcome the issues and to capitalize the new forms of tourism for the development of tourism industry in the Kumaun Region.

### Issues and Challenges Relating to Tourism Development in Kumaun Region

**1. Unstructured Development**-In the Kumaun region of the Uttarakhand state the major issue for the development of tourism industry is the unstructured development which has negatively impacted upon its growth and is necessary to be considered as a challenge by the associated stakeholders. The result of this unstructured development of tourist destination lead to the carrying capacity of these destination which has been exploited which is a major threat in front of the tourism industry and its associated stakeholders. Due to lack of proper administrative planning some destinations which has potential to be developed as a tourist destination these destinations have not been developed and exploited to their full potential.

**2. Inefficient public transportation system**-Transportation system plays an important role in development of tourism industry and that's why it is considered as one of the important element in the tourism industry. Due to inefficient public transport system in the Kumaun region the tourist destinations

have not been explored to their full potential. It is often seen that tourists tends to prefer visit a destination by hiring private taxis as the public transport is somehow uncomfortable to them and in some cases there is no other means of transport than private taxis and cars.

**3. Lack of coordination among government agencies**-The lack of coordination among various government agencies is yet another issue that put problems in front of the development of tourism industry in the Kumaun region. In most of the cases government agencies work in isolation and plan their activities as per the benefit they presume from tourism. This results in creation of challenge in front of the tourism industry and it suffers from loss and face competition from other regions. The Garhwalmandal or the Garhwal region of the state shows a well coordination among the government agencies. For infrastructural development of destinations proper fund allocation is essential which can be possible if coordination among these agencies exists, but due to limited coordination among government agencies these infrastructural plans are not completed on time.

**4. Limited level of community participation**-It is essential to involve the local community in the tourism planning process in modern era of tourism as they get in close connection with the tourists and know about the destinations well. tourism developmental activities can be well planned with proper community participation. Due to less focus and importance on this phenomenon in the Kumaun region challenge in front of tourism industry arises. Community based tourism and village tourism can only be promoted when the local community will be aware about these forms of tourism.

**5. Traditional mode of providing information**-Due to change taking place in the environment it is necessary to adopt the modern technology. Use of internet, modern advertising and promotion strategies play major role in the development of tourism industry around the globe. In the Kumaun region either these modern amenities are less known to many of the associated stakeholders of tourism industry or their use is limited. Websites which have been developed to provide information to the tourists are not updated on regular basis. All this create a challenge for the development of tourism industry in the Kumaun region.

## Scope for Development of Tourism in Kumaun Region of Uttarakhand

**1.Eco-Tourism-**The Kumaun Region is showing great potential in Ecotourism which is a new form of tourism that is not much explored in the region. Ecotourism refers to the form of tourism where the environment, local community and visitor all benefit. Ecotourism involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. One of the goals of promoting ecotourism is to offer tourists insight into the impact of human beings on the environment, and to foster a greater appreciation of our natural habitats. Being rich in flora, fauna and cultural heritage the Kumaun region has great potential in this form of tourism.

**2.Village Tourism-**Village Tourism, being a new concept in the Kumaun region, introduced from the West is gaining popularity owing to the fact that a huge bulk of our population still resides in the villages and to know 'India' in totality you have to know the Indian Villages first. The reason being promotion of tourism by the tourism department is to give tourists the experience of way of living of the people residing there. Some major destinations in the Kumaun region are Jeolikot, Martola, Kalimat Village, Sitalkhet which have the potential in village tourism with their serene beauty.

**3.Community Based Tourism-**Community based tourism is a form of tourism in which local residents invite the tourists to visit their communities with the provision of overnight accommodation. This form of enables the tourists to discover local habitats and wildlife, and celebrates and respects traditional cultures, rituals and wisdom. In the Kumaun region there is a need to promote community based tourism as the structural development of tourism industry is possible in the best manner through this. The community will be aware of the commercial and social value placed on their natural and cultural heritage through tourism, and this will foster community based conservation of these resources.

**4.Home-stay Tourism-** Homestay tourism has a great potential in the Kumaun region of Uttarakhand. It is the best way of experiencing the famed Himalayan hospitality of Uttarakhand. As the name suggest Homestay is staying in someone's home as a paying guest for short time period where the guests are

provided with budget friendly accommodation and services by individual family and the local community. There are many registered Homestays available in this heavenly state of India where one explore rural locality full of splendid natural surroundings, enjoy local culture and cuisine, explore hidden spots; all this with the help of native people. People of Uttarakhand are simple and warm and follow the ancient Vedic tradition of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' or 'Guests are God' and they welcome their guests with open arms and offer personalized care and services.

## SUGGESTIONS

- 1.Planned development of tourist destination should be done in the Kumaun region to promote inflow of tourists to the region which will enhance the revenue earning of the region and also to develop the destinations that have potential for development.
- 2.Efficient public transportation system should be developed which link tourist destinations with major cities, railway stations and airports.
- 3.Wellcoordinated system among the various governmental agencies should be developed and regularly monitored so that their coordination enable scope for tourism development.
- 4.Local community should be encouraged to take participation in the tourism planning for structural development of tourist destinations.
- 5.The use of modern amenities should be encouraged by the government among the associated stakeholders which will contribute in reducing the miscommunication and will provide useful information to the tourists on updated manner.

## CONCLUSION

The tourism industry has evolved as one of the fastest growing sector all across the globe and is playing huge role in development of economies with its immense potential by creating employment and revenue generation. Being blessed with rich flora and fauna, the Kumaun region of Uttarakhand is visited by tourists throughout the year. The mesmerizing view of snow capped peaks, wildlife conservation parks, pilgrimage centers, fairs and festivals are some of the reasons that attracts tourists to the destinations in the region. The tourism industry in the region is facing issues which are needed to be solved and the government should consider the suggestive measures

provided in this study. The region has vast potential in variety of form of tourism such as eco-tourism, village tourism, home stay tourism and community based tourism. The associated stakeholders should take necessary steps and should promote these forms of tourism in cooperation with government so that the tourism can be developed as a tool of economic development in the Kumaun region.

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