Potential and Planning for Ecotourism Development in Dehradun District (Uttarakhand)

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Abstract
Capacity of the area, promoting activities that cause minimum disturbances to the urge of mankind to explore and discover new places, solves mysteries of nature, seek relaxation, peace in wilderness, adore wildlife and cherish freshness of remote unspoiled virgin areas, have given birth to the phenomenon of tourism which presently has become the vital component of economy and an excellent revenue generator of any country. Garhwal Himalaya has a remarkable heterogeneity in all the natural and cultural features. The beautiful Himalayas landscape, charming valleys, wilderness of Shivaliks and pristine rivers flowing are the magnificent physical attributes present in the study area. Unplanned and non regulated tourism has posed some serious threats to the natural environment of the study area.

Keywords: Ecotourism | Development | Tourist | Planning | Facilities

Proper planning and strategies are needed for overall ecotourism development in the study area after accessing the available and potential resources for ecotourism development. On the basis of assessment an individual developed plan could be made for every area and tourist spot. This should take care of issues like availability of resources, development of needed infrastructure, its impact on socio-cultural and physical environment, local needs, employment opportunities, proper water management techniques, carrying natural surroundings, etc. should be kept in mind while promoting a destination.

Introduction
The concept of eco-tourism in India is a niche industry that has mainly developed in the past few years. Ecotourism is largely based on the concept of sustained tourism or eco-friendly tourism. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in the year 2004 about 60% of total tourism, was ecotourism and India received approximately 20 lakhs eco-tourist in the year 2004. These figures show the growing importance of ecotourism and also the need for its proper Management and Planning so that...
maximum benefits can be extracted from ecotourism and related activities. The growing importance of tourism and ecotourism with increasing number of tourists are likely to put negative impacts on the ecology and natural environment of the region. Haphazard development, unregulated constructions, use and excessive exploitation of resources can damage the ecosystem and can also harm the economy of that particular area. Thus, planned approach for tourism development is needed so that the necessary infrastructure required can be developed without disturbing the natural and social environment. Whenever any kind of tourism and related activities take place, it put some pressure on the socio-cultural and natural environment of that place. The need is to make ecological sustainable plans and strategies so that tourism is developed in a way that it helps in minimizing the negative impacts but contribute in keeping the place natural and un-spoilt.

**Review of Literature**

In India many of the researches have come up in recent years in various aspects of ecotourism. A commendable and comprehensive work has already been done in the field of ecotourism by a number of scholars like Kandari, 1986; Kala, 1987; Bisht, 1992; Bagri, 1994; Bagri and Gupta 2000; Kaur, 1985; Fonia, 1997; Kandari and Gussain, 2001; Singh, 1993; Kant, 1983. However with the expansion of urbanization, the Himalaya has started to receive increased number of visitors. Increased pressure of visitors on mountain tourism has also been identified by some mountain tourism scholars (Sinhuber, 1982, Messerli, 1983, Groetzbatch, 1984, Brugger, et al., 1984, Kaur, 1985, Kandari, 1986, Litchenberger, 1988, Singh, et al., 1992, Sharma, 1989, Bagri and Bhatt, 1997, and Singh, 1989). But now to promote regional tourism with special reference to Dehradun District has hardly been studied so far.

**Study Area**

The study area lies in the western part of the mountainous state of Uttarakhand in the central Himalaya. The arrival of tourists in the region is directly related to the facility of the roads transport. Pre-motor days were devoid of tourism in the region. British travelers and their clan were served by begar (bonded laborers). Begar was supplied to the travelers at rates payable by the then written scale. The environmental and geographic suitability of region for tourism has undoubtedly provided endless opportunities to the development of this sector in the region. But the biophysical and socio-economic resources base is undergoing disastrous impoverishment due to human action. The tourism industry has succeeded in adding on impetus to the immense deforestation activities. Increasing pressure of tourism in Garhwal Himalaya takes up the problems of over construction of hotels, deforestation, air pollution and water pollution. The tourist generally desire peace, quietness and peace of nature for the refreshment of their body and mind. They require a lot of outdoor activities-hunting, fishing, pony trekking, canoeing, sailing, skiing, gliding, climbing, potholing etc. There are many tourists who are interested in the scenery of civilization-
monuments, medieval castles, monastictics and old temples. There is other who wants to enjoy wildlife, bird watching etc.

The main problems associated with eco-tourism development are accessibility, volume of visitors and frequency of visits. Most of the tourist’s places are located in the urban areas. These areas feel the weight of the tourist exodus. The vast tourist spaces will reduce the pressure of the most known places. An environment can absorb a small number of visitors but not a huge influx. Damages in terms of wear and tear of roads, natural beauties etc. are very substantial cars and taxies make for congestion on the roads and at the site of a particular attraction.

The major interaction difficulties in the tourist-host contact due to cultural differences were found in interpersonal communication e.g. polite language usage, expressing feelings and emotions; Non-verbal signals e.g. physical contact such as touching, spatial behavior, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and eye contact. These differences make the interaction very difficult. The same verbal or non-verbal signals and patterns of interaction have different meanings in various cultures and are likely to be misunderstood.

The reasons for interaction difficulties are that when tourists and hosts interact socially in their own culture they know which behaviour is proper and which is wrong. They behave in a way accepted by their respective cultures. They accept proper and reject wrong behavior. But when tourist and hosts interact with someone from another culture, they do not know what behavior is proper and what is wrong. The behavior which is seen as proper in one culture is not always seen the same way in another culture. Since tourists and hosts are confronted with a culture different from their own, many situations are unfamiliar to them.

Trekking is the latest craze with trendy youth. Trekking for them means just climbing up and down over treacherous terrain and not following the basic rules of civic and hygiene that go with this sport. Trekking enthusiasts thus leave in their wake mounds of garbage and ecological destruction. As a result even holy places Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri and Yamunotri have become victims of destruction. The sanctity of these pilgrimages is being increasingly destroyed. Increasing pressure of tourism to sensitive natural areas in the absence of appropriate planning and management is becoming a threat to the integrity of both ecosystems and local cultures. Increasing numbers of visitors to ecologically sensitive areas can lead to significant environmental degradation. Likewise local communities and indigenous cultures can be harmed in numerous ways by an influx of foreign visitors and wealth. Excessive cutting, browsing and grazing of the forest especially near hill villages and on migrant grazier routs can render large areas of forests virtually uninhabitable by the larger ground living wild life species. Tourism and local environment have strange relationships. The nature provides unparalleled tourists spots and areas. But the human greed and carelessness often spoils that nature. It is therefore the balance between enjoyment and care of the nature that can be blended in tourism.
In the present study an attempt has been made to study the relationship of tourists and natural environment as well as planning and strategies for the type of tourism to be developed in fragile natural areas, so that the local population could earn their livelihood and the resource are also conserved.

Objective

Dehradun, is the well known tourist destination and famous for its scenic beauty, charismatic climate and peaceful socio-cultural and political environment. But the unplanned and non regulated tourism has posed some serious threats to the natural environment of the study area. The present research work is aimed to study the area from eco tourism perspective. The main objectives of the present study are:

1. To study the potential of Dehradun district as eco-tourism destination.
2. Reducing the threats posed by uncontrolled tourism development at the fragile sites.
3. To promote guidelines for facilitating greater community participation in the planning and management of eco-tourism.

Methodology

The present study aims to analyze potential of eco-tourism in Dehradun District. First step of the research is to collect the secondary data on different issues from various published and unpublished sources of different governmental and non governmental agencies. Then the reconnaissance survey was made to the study area.

Tourist Attractions

The numerous attractions lying in the study area like natural attractions, climatic attractions, water based attractions cultural attractions and wildlife attractions has some or the other thing for every tourist

Problems of Ecotourism:

Proper planning and strategies are needed for overall ecotourism development in the study area after accessing the available and potential resources for ecotourism development. On the basis of this assessment an individual developed plan could be made for every area and tourist spot. This should take care of issues like availability of resources, development of needed infrastructure, its impact on socio-cultural and physical environment, local needs, employment opportunities, proper water management techniques, carrying capacity of the area, promoting activities that cause minimum disturbances to the natural surroundings, etc. should be kept in mind while promoting a destination. Measures should be taken to prevent the destination been used above its carrying capacity. Popularity of destination can be increased by taking appropriate measures like better roads connectivity, better accommodation facilities, good food, fuel stations and tourist information centers etc. Eco tourism should be conducted in such a way that it generates more and more employment for the local people. As study area presents wide scopes for ecotourism activities like nature camping, rural tourism, adventure tourism and cultural tourism. These activities should be promoted by the government and related agencies and much needed help can be
extended to the local communities for developing required infrastructure for commencing these activities. NGO’s, government department, private sectors and local communities should work in co-ordination and make plans and strategies for developing ecotourism in the study area.

On the basis of the present study it can be pointed out that there are some problems which are hindrance for eco-tourism development in the study area. These are:

- Inadequacy of regular transport services for various destinations.
- Lack of accommodation facilities and catering services to satisfy the needs of all categories of tourists.
- Lack of midway facilities especially in the remote/hilly areas.
- Lack of tourists’ information centre’s.
- Lack of proper involvement of local communities in tourism related activities.
- Absence of tourism management committees.
- Lack of awareness about eco-tourism among the local people and tourists.
- Lack of training programmes for local youth and women.
- Improper disposal of waste and garbage in many places.
- Lack of coordination between government official, private entrepreneur, NGOs and local people.

It can be concluded from the present study that the study area is rich in natural, socio-cultural resources which can be tapped and wisely developed for promotion and development of ecotourism in the entire study area. The need is to develop and manage these resources in a planned manner so that they give benefits to the present generation and are also preserved for future use. In this context it would be proper to remember that we have not inherited this earth from our forefathers but we have borrowed it from our children.

Planning for Ecotourism

On the basis of the present study the following recommendations are being proposed for the overall development of the area. It will help in promotion and development of ecotourism in the study area.

Developing regular transport facilities

As seen in the study area there is lack of regular public transport for majority of the tourist places. The need is to develop regular transport services to these destinations so that more and more tourists visit these places. Some special buses can be used for this purpose which can run on a route covering destinations which fall on the route.

Developing more accommodation facilities

All categories of accommodation facilities are present in the city area, but as one moves away to the remote areas the standard of accommodation facilities starts falling and is completely absent in hilly and remote areas. More accommodation facilities can be developed at various places catering to the needs of high budget as well as medium and low budget tourists. In the rural areas village people can be encouraged to provide home stays to the
tourists by maintaining certain standards and giving priority to cleanliness and sanitation.

**Developing midway facilities**

Midway facilities or road side amenities play an important role in tourism development. They are needed to be developed in the remote areas and branch roads with the help of local people. The places where there is an urgent need of developing these amenities are – Bhogpur-Thano-Dehradun road, Doiwala-Dudhli-Dehradun road, Mussoorie-Hathipaon road and almost at every place in north-western Doon and Chakrata region.

**Tourist information centers**

There are only few tourist information centres present in the district. The need is for establishing more information centres at almost all tourist destination and potential sites with the help of local people, Gram panchayat or Nyay panchayat, so that the tourists can get complete information about that particular place and can also know about the places worth visiting and activities worth doing at that particular place. This will also help in enhancing and popularizing the scope of eco-tourism in the entire study area.

**Proper Disposal of Waste and Garbage**

The awesome sights of garbage scattered all over the place kill the charm of the place along with creating serious hazards for health and environment. It also harms the precious flora and fauna of the region. Thus proper collection, disposal and recycling of the garbage are necessary. For this, awareness creation amongst the stakeholders of tourism like tourists, shopkeepers, tourism department, local bodies and local communities is necessary. All the stakeholders can join hand to keep their area clean. Dustbins can be provided at various places at the tourist spots, Hoardings, posters and sign boards displaying need of cleanliness can be placed at appropriate places to remind the tourists to maintain the cleanliness. Fine can be imposed on tourists and service provider who throw litter in the open, spits on walls, building on the roots of trees and plants etc and those who smoke in open and throw butts on the ground. Those who help in keeping destination clean should be rewarded by the related authorities and tourism NGOs.

**Formation of Tourism Management Committees**

These committees should be formed at every existing or potential tourism sites for ensuring participation of local communities in various tourism related activities. The main role of these committees will be to involve people in the decision making process and evaluation for the development of their area, which have direct impact on their lives. The committee will also help in increasing participation and support of local people in developmental works. Their knowledge of the place and the traditional ways of using and preserving the environment can be used for the management of the place.

**Ecotourism Awareness Campaigns**

During the study it was found that half of the tourists coming to the study area do not have any idea of the ecotourism concept. In the same way local community people are also not aware of this concept. So, there is immediate
need of organizing special programs, seminars, meetings and road shows etc to familiarize with the concept of ecotourism. State government with the help of tourism department and NGOs should organize program for spreading ecotourism awareness among local people, tourists and related bodies. Ecotourism awareness campaigns should also explain the concept of ecotourism along with clarifying duties and responsibilities of every person involved. It should also help in spreading awareness about benefits of ecotourism.

**Designating specific Camping sites**

As study area provides ample opportunities for camping. Specific sites can be developed and maintained for this purpose at various potential places. The designated site will provide facilities like drinking water, eco-friendly toilets and kitchen area for the people staying there. The local community can charge some prefixed amount from these people for using the place. This will help in controlling the number of people camping in natural, untouched areas, which may cause damage to the fragile and delicate ecosystem of the area.

**Training Institutes**

Study area presents tremendous scope for eco-tourism activities which need trained and qualified persons. Trained persons are needed for conducting activities like river rafting, trekking, rock climbing, para-gliding, parasailing and skiing etc. In the same way, cooks efficient in serving multi-cuisine food, managers, nature guides, attendant and caretakers are required for various eco-tourism activities. So training institutes should be opened in the study area where interested and eligible persons can be trained in various skills. These institutes will help in providing trained persons for various activities along with minimizing risk in adventure activities. These institutes will help in improving the quality of services provided to the tourists coming to the study area and will also help in generating employment for more and more local people.

**Conclusion**

The importance of tourism and ecotourism with increasing number of tourists are likely to put negative impacts on the ecology and natural environment of the region. Planned approach for tourism development is needed to developed infrastructure without disturbing the natural and social environment. All kind of tourism and related activities put pressure on the socio-cultural and natural environment of that place which needs to make ecological sustainable plans and strategies to minimizing the negative impacts on socio economic and natural environment The present study was aimed at analyzing the potential and working out planning strategies for eco-tourism in Garhwal Himalaya, a field survey was conducted to get first hand information of various destinations and to know about tourists visiting these destinations. The survey conducted in 2014-15 focused on understanding the kind of tourists visiting the study area, their interests and motivation, their preferences etc. In all 200 tourists, including 20 foreign nationals, were interviewed at the different place of the study area.

It can be concluded from the present study that the study area is rich in natural, socio-cultural
resources which can be tapped and wisely developed for promotion and development of ecotourism in the entire study area. The need is to develop and manage these resources in a planned manner so that they give benefits to the present generation and are also preserved for future use. In this context it would be proper to remember that we have not inherited this earth from our forefathers but we have borrowed it from our children.

References


