

PERCEPTION OF THE STATE UTTARAKHAND FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF TOURISM AMONG OTHER BRANDED TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Ramesh, Research Scholar, Dept of Management, Maharaja Agrasen Himalayan Garhwal University

Dr Vikas Kumar, Professor, Dept of Management, Maharaja Agrasen Himalayan Garhwal University

ABSTRACT

In addition to its economic effects, tourism promotes cross-cultural interaction worldwide. By experiencing various languages, traditions, and customs, travelers broaden their views and challenge their own viewpoints. Natural landscapes' beauty and adventure are attracting more and more tourists. Travel offers access to the planet's amazing diversity, from hiking through unspoiled woods to diving in colorful coral reefs. Through festivals, music, and food, local communities promote mutual understanding and respect of their past. However, there are drawbacks to cultural interaction as well. And there is a price for this greater visibility. Mass tourism has the potential to homogenize cultures, weaken customs, and endanger local identities. Delicate ecosystems are strained by overcrowding, natural wonders are threatened by pollution, and pure landscapes are marked by unsustainable practices. A sustainable future depends on finding a balance between tourism and environmental preservation, with eco-tourism and responsible travel developing as key trends. In order to guarantee that cultural exchanges turn into bridges rather than walls, responsible tourist practices that place a high value on sensitivity and respect are essential. The goal of this study is to determine and examine the elements that affect travelers' choices of any Uttarakhand or Himachal Pradesh destination. In order to help the state concentrate on those elements while promoting its well-known locations, this study examines the factors for both states and has developed a comparison viewpoint. Any travel destination selection is a complex process that is impacted by a number of elements, each of which is essential in determining the final decision made by the traveler. These elements can be roughly divided into three categories: destination-specific, external, and personal.

KEYWORD: *Tourism, Destination, Environmental, Specific, External, Personal*

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, tourism contributes trillions of dollars to worldwide economies, making it a major economic force. It promotes growth and development by generating jobs in the hospitality, dining, transportation, and entertainment industries. Particularly in developing countries, tourism is a major source of funding for infrastructure improvements, healthcare and education expenditures, and poverty alleviation.

In addition to supporting trade balances and contributing significantly to the GDP of the country, foreign exchange profits from foreign visitors also support national economies. Local handicrafts, cuisine, and cultural experiences are just a few of the businesses that the tourism industry promotes, whether they are small or medium-sized businesses, or SMEs. This leads to a cascade of economic advantages. However, there are some significant obstacles in addition to the financial advantages. Cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, the possibility of overtourism, and other issues are some of the possible difficulties associated with tourism. A balanced approach to tourism development is required due to concerns about the commodification of cultures, unequal economic distribution, and the exploitation of natural resources.

Tourism: Cultural Bridge or Culture Clash

In addition to its economic effects, tourism promotes cross-cultural interaction worldwide. By experiencing various languages, traditions, and customs, travelers broaden their views and challenge their own viewpoints. Natural landscapes' beauty and adventure are attracting more and more tourists. Travel offers access to the planet's amazing diversity, from hiking through unspoiled woods to diving in colorful coral reefs. Through festivals, music, and food, local communities promote mutual understanding and respect of their past. However, there are drawbacks to cultural interaction as well. And there is a price for this greater visibility. Mass tourism has the potential to homogenize cultures, weaken customs, and endanger local identities. Delicate ecosystems are strained by overcrowding, natural wonders are threatened by pollution, and pure landscapes are marked by unsustainable practices. A sustainable future depends on finding a balance between tourism and environmental preservation, with eco-tourism and responsible travel developing as key trends. In order to guarantee that cultural exchanges turn into bridges rather than walls, responsible tourist practices that place a high value on sensitivity and respect are essential.

Tourism: Motivations and Experiences

The individual traveler, who is motivated by a wide range of factors, is at the center of tourism. While some people yearn for the excitement of heart-pounding experiences, others seek rest and renewal on beaches bathed

in sunlight. While historical inquiry satisfies the curiosity of some, cultural immersion beckons others. Strong motivators might also include a sense of success, spiritual connection, and personal growth. In order to provide meaningful experiences and meet the needs of various visitor segments, tourism providers must have a thorough understanding of these varied motives. The tourism industry has seen a significant transformation due to technology. The internet age has democratized travel information, empowered travelers, and changed marketing methods through everything from social media influencers and virtual reality experiences to online booking platforms and travel blogs. However, a critical approach to technology in tourism is required due to worries about data privacy, the growing monetization of trip experiences, and the distortion of reality through social media filters.

The secret to realizing the full potential of tourism is to practice ethical and attentive travel in order to reach a digital but sustainable future. Tourists are looking for genuine experiences that support local communities and preserve natural resources as they grow more aware of their influence on the environment and culture. A future where tourism flourishes in balance with people and the environment is being paved by sustainable tourism practices, such as eco-friendly accommodations and community-based projects.

2. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Based on the typology of tourism, (adventure, spiritual, nature, wellness and wildlife etc.) the preferences, perception and needs of tourists need to be explored in the context of selection of the branded destination.

- Design better tourism product portfolio
- Design better branding and marketing strategies for the destination
- Help better positioning of Uttarakhand among other destinations for domestic tourists.
- Identify new segments based on preferences and psychographic and demographic profiles.
- Enhance tourism or customer experience by identifying the areas of improvement.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Lavinia Țală, M., & Pădurean, A. M. (2008), religious tourism has become increasingly popular worldwide as a new form of travel that satisfies spiritual needs. Religious tourism, which dates back thousands of years, is always regarded as the earliest type of tourism, with pilgrimage at its most important component. The study examined actual cases of religious tourism, the parties involved, and their participation in tourist-

related activities that generate income for the locals living in the religious location. The study is not limited to Romania; tourists also visit religious sites around the world, and the exposure of religious culture to other tourists benefits the local population in the context of religious tourism.

Even while the relationship between destination image and visitor behavior has been extensively studied, the precise ways in which perceived image affects visitor attitudes toward tourism destinations have also been studied independently. The goal of Phillips, W., & Jang, S. (2008)'s study is to examine how a tourist destination's cognitive and emotive images interact and influence attitudes. The results show that although affective image is influenced by cognitive image as expected, tourist attitude is not directly impacted by the components of cognitive image. Rather, the emotive image directly influences the attitude of tourists. As a result, it appears that cognitive image components only indirectly affect attitude. Therefore, through the mediation of affective image, safety and hospitality—especially for New York City—came to be the most significant cognitive image component influencing tourist attitude.

In recent years, there has been a notable increase in demand for adventure travel. An established marketing paradigm was used in the study by Williams, P., & Soutar, G. N. (2009) to empirically examine the relationships between value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in the context of adventure tourism. 402 comments in all were included, and they offered their opinions on the worth of travel tours in Australia, particularly those that focus on adventure. Three different value dimensions exerted significant influence and influenced both customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions in the adventure tourism domain, according to a multidimensional construct that was constructed and a customer value approach that was employed. Value for money was important, but novelty value and emotional value also showed up as important indicators of satisfaction and plans to return in the future. This study emphasizes how crucial it is for scholars to have a thorough and integrated approach to value in the context of travel.

The main goal of the study, according to Aksoy, R., & Kiyici, S. (2011), is to evaluate the need for gauging the present perception of important tourist locations in order to develop a marketing plan that is consistent with this perception. The study's goal is to determine the current perception of Amasra as a travel destination. The Amasra region was selected as the pilot area. Factor analysis was selected as the statistical method after data from 430 visitors was gathered and examined using the SPSS statistical software. According to the study, tourists' perceptions of the Amasra region are shaped by five elements. 57% of the explanatory power is accounted for by these elements, which include a clean and tranquil environment, history and cultural heritage, architecture

and infrastructure, and, finally, shopping and cuisine. The results of the study indicate that these factors have a special impact on tourists' perceptions of Amasra as a travel destination.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the position and perception of the state Uttarakhand for different types of tourism among other branded tourist destinations in the North.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology chapter outlines the systematic framework used to investigate the research topics and acts as the study's methodological blueprint. This chapter, which deals with study methodology, provides a thorough rundown of the selected approaches, including sampling plans, data collection methods, and analytical approaches. A research challenge can be solved methodically with the help of research methodology. There is a lot of potential for tourism in the states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, and both are always working hard to build their brands among travelers. Both Indian states have a long history of tourism and draw large numbers of visitors to various tourist attractions. High performance and a certain degree of happiness are not assured by the creation of a nice environment and infrastructure. To obtain a competitive edge and increase visitor happiness, a significant deal of research is required to examine the historical significance and other tourism-related concerns. Using a sample of tourists from a few carefully chosen destinations in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, the current study employed an analytical hierarchical method, a multicriteria decision-making tool, to analyze the motivational factors that influence tourists' desire to visit a place or destination. Both exploratory and descriptive research methodologies were used in this study. Answers to many of the questions addressed with prior knowledge of the situation or issues being studied can be found through descriptive research. A questionnaire and opinion survey techniques have been employed in exploratory research to conduct the study. A closed-ended, self-structured questionnaire has been created that covers a number of factors related to traveler decisions (variables found in the literature review) and how they relate to traveler preferences, satisfaction, destination loyalty, intention to return, and tourism enhancement. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used to transcribe the quantitative data in order to compute descriptive statistics and do analysis of variance. Analysis and interpretation of data have been done using SPSS (Version 26).

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 6.1- Monthly Income of the Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent
Below Rs.20,000	50	12.83
Rs.20,000 - Rs.50,000	150	38.46
Rs.50,000 - Rs.80,000	100	25.64
Rs.80,000 - Rs.1,00,000	70	17.94
Above than Rs.1,00,000	20	5.13
Total	390	100.0

Source: SPSS Output: Author’s Compilation

Interpretation

The "Monthly Income of Respondents" is shown in Table. "Below 20,000 Rs., 20,000-50,000 Rs., 50,000-80,000 Rs., 80,000-1,00,000 Rs., and Above 1,00,000 Rs." are the five monthly income groups used in the study.

The analysis showed that, of the 390 respondents, 150 (about 38.46%) fell into the "20,000-50,000 Rs." category, whereas 100 (approximately 25.64%) fell into the "50,000-80,000 Rs." category. This indicates that the majority of tourists—12.83, 17.94% of all respondents—are average earners, with high- or low-level earners being somewhere in the middle.

Table 6.2- Occupation of the Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent
Student	45	11.53
Private sector	170	43.59
Public sector	110	28.20
Business class	50	12.83
Other	15	3.85
Total	390	100.0

Interpretation

Table show the respondents' "occupation." For the occupation level, the study has chosen five categories: "Students, Private sector employees, Public sector employees, Business class, and others." According to the analysis, the largest percentage of the 390 respondents—170, or roughly 43.59 percent—belong to the group of "Private sector employees," while 110, or roughly 28.20 percent, belong to the category of "Public sector employees." The results for the "Students" and "Business Class" categories are comparable, with 11.53% and 12.83% of respondents falling into each category, respectively. Although they only make up 3.85% of all responses, some respondents also fall under the "Other" category, which includes "housewives or homemakers," "free lancers," "travel bloggers," etc.

Table The Most Visited State- Uttarakhand or Himachal Pradesh

Which is Your Most Visited State?		
State visited	Frequency	Percent
Himachal Pradesh Visited the most	190	48.71
Uttarakhand Visited the most	200	51.29
Total	390	100.0

Interpretation

The "Most Visited State-Himachal Pradesh or Uttarakhand" is shown in Table. "Visiting Himachal Pradesh most or visiting Uttarakhand most" are the two categories for the trip experience that the study has chosen. According to the analysis, of the 390 respondents, 200 (about 51.29%) most frequently visited the state of Uttarakhand, while 190 (approximately 48.71%) most frequently visited the state of Himachal Pradesh.

The most visited places in the state of Himachal Pradesh are Kullu-Manali, Shimla, Dharmsala, and Kangra-Chamba. While respondents identified a variety of locations in the state of Uttarakhand, including Haridwar-Rishkesh, Dehradun-Mussoorie, Badrinath-Kedarnath Dham, and Nainital, some respondents were unable to identify destinations specific to their location, such as Lahual, Chamba, Chamoli, etc. The majority of those surveyed could specifically name the state they were traveling to and the destination.

Using the "most visited state" study to compare the components, additional model analysis and hypothesis testing have been conducted. Responses from those who said they traveled to Himachal Pradesh the most and those who said they traveled to Uttarakhand the most have been compared.

Table 6.3

Levene's Test Results

Variable	Levene's F Statistics	Sig.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Brand Awareness	0.04	0.80	-0.03	0.22
Business Opportunities	3.70	0.37	-0.20	-0.50
Brand Commitment	2.76	0.07	-0.77	0.62
Social Bonding	0.46	0.52	-1.06	2.00

Since the analysis needed to determine the difference in mean scores between the two regions taken into consideration, the t-test was employed for the first hypothesis, HStk1. Additionally, a noteworthy distinction was noted in terms of brand awareness, with Nainital's tourism stakeholders (M=2.67, SE=0.18) showing less understanding of the promotions and the individuals or department responsible for them than did Dehradun's (M=3.65, SE= 0.27). Significant differences were found ($t(60) = 3.02, p < 0.05$). Thus, this validated HStk1 theory.

The statistical difference between the tourist stakeholders' assessments of business potential from the two districts of Almora (M=2.89, SE=0.19) and Haridwar (M=3.62, SE=0.12) was also examined using the t-test. Significant differences in mean ($t(57) = 3.44, p < 0.05$) were observed. In addition to confirming the hypothesis, the mean score highlighted the comparatively negative views held by stakeholders regarding Almora's business prospects.

It was also investigated using the t test whether stakeholders' opinions of brand commitment varied between the areas of Kumaon and Garhwal. The perceptions of destination stakeholders in Garhwal (M=3.78, SE=0.09) and Kumaon (M=3.44, SE=0.12) about brand commitment were found to differ significantly. It was determined that the difference was statistically significant ($t(119) = 2.16, p < 0.05$). Furthermore, compared to Garhwal, the mean differences showed lower brand commitment scores among stakeholders residing in Kumaon.

The fourth hypothesis involved identifying any noteworthy disparities in the way the stakeholders in issue perceive the social environment, specifically with regard to the presence of a friendly atmosphere and cultural variety. The analysis of four districts was required to provide context, hence ANOVA was utilized to ascertain the differences between the four groups. The hypothesis was not supported by the results, since there was no discernible variation in the level of social bonding among tourist stakeholders across the four districts under investigation ($F(3,117) = 0.925, p > .05$).

7. CONCLUSION

In the process of verifying the hypothesis and achieving the goals, a number of factors have been uncovered. Both states exhibit nearly identical influencing elements for traveler decisions, according to factor analysis. Even if the variables are comparable, the tourists' satisfaction levels in the two states differ greatly. The factors that the study procedure found for both states are as follows:

The goal of destination image, also known as destination attributes, is to help travelers form an impression of a particular location by highlighting its distinctive features. For instance, "Mall Road" is a distinctive picture that only hill stations have for the amusement or shopping of tourists. Tourists form a distinct impression of a destination based on factors like cleanliness, hygiene, the stability of the surroundings or the mindset of the locals, and less crowded areas. The perception of Uttarakhand as a destination differs greatly from that of Himachal Pradesh.

Value for Money: When tourists take into account the total cost of their vacation, including travel time, activity costs, time spent trying new foods, etc., affordability in terms of cost or spending and a sense of value for money emerged as critical criteria. For the rationale that a destination with higher political stability would have less congested areas and less disruption to the tourists' schedule, political stability was also included in this criterion. It was determined that both states offered their visitors comparable value for their money.

Infrastructure facilities: This category includes road administration, lodging and lodging options, and transportation to the location. The preference of visitors is to visit places with sufficient infrastructure; they will not be able to choose a site for their trip if it has inadequate transportation or accommodations. Convenient modes of transportation and well-developed tourism infrastructure, such as lodging and basic amenities, were highlighted by visitors. Both states have sufficient infrastructure to serve their visitors.

In terms of visual beauty, culture, and heritage—which includes the destination's religious component—both states were deemed to be very alluring because of their breathtaking scenery and variety of activities, which included white-water rafting, trekking, skiing, and camping. Both Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh's distinctive cultural experiences were important factors in the choices made by tourists. The traveler would choose a location with more sites of worship or that has religious significance in India, such Uttarakhand's Badrinath or Kedarnath. However, tourists also take into account the scenic splendor of places that are associated to culture or legacy, like Lahual and Spiti in Himachal Pradesh, which represent Buddhist culture through a variety of monasteries and cuisine.

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