



## Emerging Adventure Tourism Destination: A Case Study of Dharamshala

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### ABSTRACT

*The adventure sports reflect to great range and diversity of the modern adventure travel vacation. It includes everything from ballooning to ski diving and the entire world in between. Some trip may specialize in rafting, trekking, cycling and the like. Many over landing trips feature to hiking to scenic vistas or historic sites.*

*Kullu-Manali is already a paradise in Himachal Pradesh for adventure lovers. Being its strategic location in Dhuladhar and Pir Panjal mountain ranges and also gateway to Leh-Ladakh it has potential for many adventure sports. Whereas Dharamshala is a year-round magnet for tourists and becoming a popular choice destination for adventure lovers.*

**KEYWORDS :** Adventure, Attraction, Activity

### Introduction

Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. In 2011, there were over 983 million international tourist arrivals worldwide; representing a growth of 4.6% when compared to 940 million in 2010. In 2011, international travel demand continued to recover from the losses resulting from the late-2000s recession, where tourism suffered a strong slowdown from the second half of 2008 through the end of 2009. After a 5% increase in the first half of 2008, growth in international tourist arrivals moved into negative territory in the second half of 2008, and ended up only 2% for the year, compared to a 7% increase in 2007. The negative trend intensified during 2009, exacerbated in some countries due to the outbreak of the H1N1 influenza virus, resulting in a worldwide decline of 4.2% in 2009 to 880 million international tourists' arrivals, and a 5.7% decline in international tourism receipts. (Source: www.unwto.org)

### Adventure Tourism

Adventure travel is a type of tourism, involving exploration or travel to remote, exotic and possibly hostile areas. Adventure tourism is rapidly growing in popularity, as tourists seek different kinds of vacations. Adventure tourism has been defined by Weiler and Hall (1992, p. 91) as being:

"A broad spectrum of outdoor tourist activities, often commercialised and involving interaction with the natural environment away from the participant's home range and containing elements of risk; in which the outcome is influenced by the participant, setting, and careful management of the experience."

Sung, Morrison and O'Leary (1996), suggest that six major components: activity, motivation, risk, performance, experience and environment are the key variables in defining adventure tourism. In today's tourism literature, a very large number of studies use different descriptors and discriminating variables to segment a market, including attributes for vacation (Crask, 1981), benefits sought by travellers (Gitelson & Kerstetter, 1990; Loker-Murphy & Perdue, 1992), motivations (Cha et al., 1995; Madrigal & Kahle, 1994), behavioural characteristics (Formica & Uysal, 1998), and product bundles (Oh et al., 1995). Adventure tourism gains much of its excitement by allowing its participants to step outside of their comfort zone. This may be from experiencing culture shock or through the performance of acts that require significant effort and involve some degree of risk (real or perceived) and/or physical danger. This may include activities such as mountaineering, trekking, bungee jumping, mountain biking, rafting, paragliding, and rock climbing. Some obscure forms of adventure travel include disaster and ghetto tourism. Other rising forms of adventure travel include social and jungle tourism.

### Dharamshala: A Little of England and Tibet Mixed With Himachal Culture

The term Dharamshala means 'The Holy Refuge' and this scenic town is rooted in the Kangra valley and belongs to the group of the 80 hills that were developed by the British to help them fight the dust and swelter-

ing sun. Centre for Tibetan art and culture, 5000 Meter peaks, 14 Passes, and the home of the Gaddis, an indigenous tribe of Himachal Pradesh makes the Dharamshala region in Kangra, a unique destination. The area around Dharamshala has lush green forests, has snow filled passes, receives more than its fair share of monsoons and is home to a large selection of flora and fauna. From half day nature walks to many days expeditions, there is potential for a wide variety of outdoor thrills not easily found in one place (Source: www.himachaltourism.gov.in).

### Results and Interpretation

The survey was conducted by getting the responses of 50 respondents on pre structured questionnaire. 32 respondents were from 15 different countries (Germany, France, Australia, Russia, Israel, Italy, Spain, India etc) and rests of 18 were Indian tourists from various states (kanyakumari, Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh etc). Respondents were provided with a list of their purpose of visit and various adventure activities at the destination they participated. This list was designed as per the adventure activities available in Dharamshala and surrounding region.

The data was analysed with the help of mathematical and graphical tools. For the analysis of data statistical packages like SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used. Source of the data analysed below is the primary survey.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Male	29	58.0
Female	21	42.0
Total	50	100.0

From the collected data, it was found that 29 of the respondents were male i.e. 58% of total tourists, while a good number i.e. 42% were female travellers (see table 1).

Table 2: Age of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Under 30 years	35	70.0
30 to 45 years	11	22.0
45 to 60 years	2	4.0
more than 60	2	4.0
Total	50	100.0

While asking about the age of tourists, it was found that most of the respondents were relatively young and about 70% of the tourists were less than 30 years. In more elaborate way from the table 4.2 we can say that 22% of total tourists, which were between 30 to 45 years, and remaining 8% tourists were more than 45 years of age group (see table 2).

Table 3: Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent
Married	10	20.0
Single	40	80.0
Total	50	100.0

From the table 3 it is evident that 80% of the tourists were single and 20% were the married ones. So we can say that maximum numbers of participants in adventure activities were single. Whereas educational profile of tourists surveyed revealed that 4% of the tourists were least educated i.e. below matriculation, 14% of the tourists were matriculate i.e. educated up to tenth standard, 54% of the tourists were graduate and remaining 28% were having higher education degree i.e. they were post graduate and above.

Table 4: Occupation

	Frequency	Percent
Public sector employee / government	3	6.0
Private sector employee	12	24.0
Businessman	8	16.0
Student	18	36.0
Other	9	18.0
Total	50	100.0

As far as occupational profile of tourists is concerned only 6% tourist work in public sector, 24% of tourist work in private sector, 16% of the total sample of tourist were businessmen and relatively the highest 36% of the adventure tourists were students and remaining 18% were opting some other occupation like artists, musicians etc. (see table 4).

Table 5: Primary Purpose of Visit

Purpose of Visit	Frequency	Percent
Adventure and sports	34	68
Education / study	2	4
Visiting friends and relatives	3	6
Holiday / relaxation	8	16
Religious	1	2
Community work	1	2
Any other	1	2
Total	50	100

While asking the primary purpose of visit, it was found that 34 respondents i.e. 68% visited for adventure and sports, then 16% visited for holiday and relaxation 6% visited for visiting friends and relatives and remaining 10% visited for other purposes like community work, religious, education and study (see table 5).

TABLE 6: Are you a Package Tourist

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	13	26.0
No	37	74.0
Total	50	100.0

From Table 6 it was found that only 13 tourists i.e. 26% were packaged tourists and remaining 74% were not a packaged tourist. This indicates that most of the tourists purchase the adventure services in the destination and they travel at their own.

### Pin Pointed Findings of the Study

More generalised findings can be concluded as;

Dharamshala is the destination which is visited by majority of young population of tourists and most of them came here for adventure and recreation purpose.

The gap between male-female ratio among the tourist in Dharamshala is negligible, hence infrastructure supporting adventure tourism and basic amenities need to develop keeping in view of the fact.

Present survey concludes that most of tourist population visiting Dharamshala is single and their preference from the married one may be slight different eg: night life, adventure etc. Thus planners and marketer should take a note of specific needs of particular age group tourist while developing tourism in the area.

Analysis also took us to the fact that most of the tourists about 80% are students. This further can be generalized as they are low budget adventure loving people. Thus the developers of the destination must undertake further research to initiate the activities meeting the needs and demands of this category of tourists.

One of the main objectives of the study was to know about the percentage of adventure tourists in Dharamshala. Surprisingly the researcher found that about 68% of the total tourist surveyed took part in one or the other adventure activity, while another 16% visited for holiday and relaxation. If we consider some relevance between adventure and nature then it can easily be generalized that more than 80% of the tourist visiting Dharamshala has adventure interest. Hence it is worthwhile to say that Dharamshala is more adventure tourism destination than any other form of tourism destination.

### Summary

Adventure tourism is becoming quite a rage with the younger generation, who wants to venture into and experience the unknown adventure world and this fact also came out of the findings of the present study. Tourism professionals to design and develop adventure products/services to suit the need of the market and in some cases even create markets for the product that they have developed. Dharamshala is becoming popular adventure destination and its geographical beauty, religion and culture are the added attractions.

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