

Community Based Tourism: A Tool for Sustainable Development in Garhwal Region, Uttarakhand



Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability has always been a major concern for any development initiative and tourism is no exception. The concept of community based tourism paves the way for involvement of locals in tourism related activities and generates employment for them while they provide services to the tourists visiting in the area. But this has to be planned in a way to be sustainable in long term. This narrative paper attempts to understand the issues related to sustainable development and share the observations and recommendations as well as suggest the strategies to utilize the concept of CBT for sustainable tourism development in Garhwal region in Uttarakhand taking the case study of Har Ki Dun.

Background

Tourism industry has spread around the globe as fast growing and dynamic industry but it has got its own impact on the world. The tourist services are perishable product and if not planned properly then sustainability of this sector will be in question. The long term sustainability of tourism industry depends upon the responsibilities and duties are taken up by the community leaders and tourism professionals who must plan to optimize the utilization of natural resources and maximizing the benefits while protecting the destination from any harm due to tourist's visits.

The concept of Community Based Tourism has been at the forefront of the promotion of rural development. At the global level the focus on Community Based Tourism as a means of enhancing community development, poverty alleviation, cultural heritage and conservation is increasing (Equations 2008). The concept is being more relevant in developing countries where it is being used to benefit the local community and environment.

Cessford 1997 suggested three main headings which occur due to tourism: visitor effects on the environment; identifying key visitor impacts; and research and information needs.

Conservation values are the specific elements of natural and historic assets that underlie the high priority assigned to them by conservation management agencies. These are the objects, species or environmental associations attributed with greatest importance for conservation purposes.

Visitor effects are the physical processes associated with the presence of visitors in natural settings, and may or may not be adverse. Any visitor use will have effects on the sites used. Not all of these effects will result in negative impacts.

Visitor impacts arise when specific visitor effects present tangible threats to the key conservation values underlying the conservation management of a site. Other natural processes or external human influences may have greater impacts on site conservation values than any direct visitor effects. This working distinction between visitor effects and impacts is essential, and allows significant problems to be more clearly identified.

The analysis of all the negative and positive impact is extremely important as it lays the foundation and provides a framework for the discussions which can be conducted on this topic to pay attention and address the issues officially to help the communities to establish sustainable tourism practices.

In the past many decades the growth and advancement in the tourism industry has given a major contribution and played an outstanding role in the increased economic activities throughout the world. IT has created jobs in both small and large communities and it

has become a major industry in the world. Though the industry is so spread on the globe but the impact of tourism is not widely understood even when the industry in the specific region is growing drastically and should be of the great concerns. Usually when we discuss and talk we look at economic impacts of the industry while it has got a range of impacts and influence is extremely broad and can be widely categorized as below:

- Economic impact
- Environmental impacts
- Socio-cultural impacts
- Crowding and congestion impact
- Services & Taxes
- Community attitude
- Political impact

These impacts are applicable to every community and our destination Garhwal area in Uttarakhand is no different and ought to face the similar problems. The community leaders and officials must work out a tradeoff between the impacts and the benefits in a way to improve the community based tourism practices.

Objectives

- To understand Community Based Tourism as a tool for sustainable development.
- Scope and prospects of Community Based Tourism in the region.
- Understanding suitable Community Based Tourism models which can be implemented in the study region.
- Demographic details pertaining to employment generation.

Methodology

In order to accomplish the objectives of this study, a visit to Har ki dun area is made to interact with locals, tourists and the stake holders. Thorough literature review is done to understand different community based tourism models. The secondary data is collected from various resources like the journals, books, government plans and research over internet. The demographic details of the villages on the trek route have been taken to assess the potential livelihoods.

Introduction

The concept of Community-based Tourism (CBT) can be found in the work of Murphy (1985), where aspects concerning tourism and developing local communities are analysed, and in a further study by the same author in 2004 (Murphy and Murphy, 2004). Along with these two studies, there are several other research papers analyzing the relationship between tourism and local communities. Nyaupane et al. (2006), states that the main limitations local communities have to face when implementing tourism projects are: lack of financial resources, infrastructure or know-how; limitations of a cultural kind; and potential conflicts between the different public administrations.

Community Based Tourism is defined as economically, environmentally, socially, and culturally responsible visitation to

local/indigenous communities to enjoy and appreciate their cultural and natural heritage, whose tourism resources, products and services are developed and managed with their active participation, and whose benefits from tourism, tangible or otherwise, are collectively enjoyed by the communities. (Boonratana, 2010, p. 286)

In defining CBT, culture also plays an essential role with "host communities retaining a traditional way of life and culture that is of interest to tourists" (Boonratana, 2010, p. 284). It is thus a community asset used for the tourist product, which creates the assumption that cultural authenticity is awaiting the tourist throughout the stay in the community.

Concerning the home stay, it can generally be defined as room or space within the private homes of community members, offered to guests for a nominal fee, who expects to experience simple rural living or traditional lifestyles, and to interact and have cultural exchanges with the host family, therefore providing a meaningful learning experience for both host and visitors. (Boonratana, 2010, p. 288)

Communities have limited understanding and control of tourism, often lack skills and resources to link to tourism. Capacity development and local institution strengthening would be important if benefits from tourism had to flow to the community most in need. Infrastructural developed was supplemented and complemented by building and strengthening capacities of the communities to link themselves to tourism.

Canvas of community based activities



Figure 1. Source: Author

Advantages of CBT

- Generation of employment Economic growth of the area
- Strengthening the community feeling in the region
- Empowerment of the locals and up gradation in their lifestyle due the cultural exchange
- Infrastructural development and creation of associated facilities like health and education etc. in the area.

CBT as a tool for sustainable development

Sustainable tourism is an alternate form of tourism which propagates the development of an area in such a way that the attractions, services and facilities sustains for future generations. It gives the decision power in the hand of locals and they work together for the development of the region. Community participation brings about a paradigm shift in the region

Destinations require careful planning and implementation for the development of tourism. Each and every place having an attraction requires development of facilities and services for the tourists but for it to sustain the development should be done with consideration of long term perspective. We need the following steps for making a destination as a sustainable tourist place:

- Creating awareness of the tourist destination amongst local officials and highlight the need of proper roads for accessibility and suitable mode of transport or developing trekking routes where required.
- Creating awareness of the destination among the locals as well as

the government officials of the area.

- Conduct a survey of the existing infrastructure to analyze the carrying capacity of the area.
- Educating the locals about tourist importance of the place and making them aware of the business opportunities from tourist visits.
- Training the locals for associated professions required for tourists e.g. Tourist escorts, tourist guides, home stays and food services.
- Making a strategy for local officials to monitor and maintain the destination to make it a sustainable tourist spot in long term.

In this way CBT can act as a tool for sustainable development of the tourist destination.

Study Area-Garhwal region in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand was formed on 9th November 2000 as the 27th State of India, when it was carved out of northern Uttar Pradesh. Located at the foothills of the Himalayan mountain ranges, it is largely a hilly State, having international boundaries with China (Tibet) in the north and Nepal in the east. On its north-west lies Himachal Pradesh, while on the south is Uttar Pradesh. It is rich in natural resources especially water and forests with many glaciers, rivers, dense forests and snow-clad mountain peaks. Char-dhams, the four most sacred and revered Hindu temples of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri are nestled in the mighty mountains. It's truly God's Land (Dev Bhoomi). Dehradun is the Capital of Uttarakhand. It is one of the most beautiful resort in the sub mountain tracts of India, known for its scenic surroundings. The town lies in the Dun Valley, on the watershed of the Ganga and Yamuna rivers.



Figure 2. Source: <http://garhwal.uk.gov.in>

Garhwal is one of the two divisions of Uttarakhand state. Its headquarter is located at Pauri. Garhwal Division consists of seven districts. It includes the districts of Chamoli, Dehradun, Haridwar, Pauri Garhwal, Rudraprayag, Tehri Garhwal, and Uttarkashi..

Our study area Har-ki-Dun, in Uttarkashi district of Garhwal, situated at an elevation of 3566 meters is surrounded by glittering peaks and dense forests. The forests are rich in wild life and are a veritable paradise for bird-watchers and nature lovers.

This is a holy place (as the name suggests) Hari – meaning God and Dun meaning Valley and according to the local folklore, where fairies congregate! In our religious scriptures (Granth), it is mentioned that Pandavas went to heaven (Swarg) through this mountain. Duryodhan is worshipped as a God by a few communities here, and one can get to see the Duryodhan Temple. Within the valley one can find Trees of Bhojpatra, the rare Bramhakamal, and many varieties of fauna.

This trek provides enjoyment for all age groups as the trek is not too tough, and valley is full of flora and fauna. One can spend time identifying herbs & shrubs used for Ayurveda. Photography is an activity that will leave an indelible mark on the visitor's memory, as there are a large variety of birds & mountains to be clicked.



Figure 3 Source: <http://www.trekkinggarhwal.com/har-ki-dun-valley-trek>

Har - Ki - Doon trek one of the most famous trek in Garhwal Himalayas, Har-ki-Doon Valley is located at the base of Fateh Parvat, at an elevation of 3556 mts. This is a moderate trek of medium difficulty; one has to physically fit for this trek.

The trek starts from Netwar to Osla is through dense forests of chestnuts, walnuts, willows and chinars. The trek from Osla to Har-ki-doan is through terraced mountain fields, lush green grassy land and conifer forests.

Har-Ki-Doon (The hanging valley of gods) is a paradise for trekkers. This moderate trek takes you to one of the least explored regions of Garhwal. As Har-KI-Doon falls within the Govind Pashu vihar, chances of seeing wildlife here are very bright.

Demographic Data as per Census of India 2011-UTTARAKHAND- SERIES-06 PART XII-B- DISTRICT CENSUS HANDBOOK-UTTARKASHI

S.N.	Name of Village	Area in Hectares	No. of house holds	Total Population			Literate			Illiterate		
				Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
1	Sankri	40.01	77	270	153	117	156	106	50	114	47	76
2	Saur	210.84	85	494	242	252	273	159	114	221	83	138
3	Gangar	440.95	108	535	273	262	217	139	78	318	134	184
4	Osala	378.56	151	725	371	354	252	172	80	473	199	274

S.N.	Name of Village	No. of house holds	Total Population	Profession-Cultivators			Profession-other works			Profession-non-workers		
				Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
1	Sankri	77	270	36	33	1	35	33		176	68	108
2	Saur	85	494	97	90	7	10			376	136	240
3	Gangar	108	535	236	136	98	14	12	2	285	123	162
4	Osala	151	725	404	199	205	3	2	1	310	166	144

Figure 4. Source: Census of India 2011

Need of Community Based Tourism for Garhwal Area in Uttarakhand

Garhwal has a tremendous tourism potential enriched with diverse tourism products. The region attracts pilgrims, nature lovers, wildlife enthusiast, photographers, and adventure seekers. Rich in natural beauty, history, culture, customs and traditions, it has a unique mountain environment. Community based tourism is essential for this region as it is necessary to conserve the present environment asset for the future generations. The pristine areas in the region lack basic infrastructure and are far from development. The life of the locals can only be improved by involving them in tourism activities and generating income for them.

The development of ecotourism so far has so far benefitted only a few and big stakeholders. The orientation, education and training of semi-literate villagers can generate not only livelihood and capacity building for communities, but contribute a lot towards sustainability of ecotourism as they have the in-depth knowledge of flora and fauna, local culture and heritage. Communities in Uttarakhand are simple, neither too greedy nor very enterprising, therefore they need canvassing and support from the government and public sector banks, for establishing more destinations for ecotourism in the state. (Kamboj & Sharma, 2015)

Community Based Tourism (CBT) Models

Community Cooperative Model helps in curbing potential manipulation and increase the accountability and transparency. Strong stakeholder participation nurtures community empowerment at three levels i.e. individual community and institution. It also aims to:

- Create opportunity for employment
- Income generation
- Increase the availability of goods and services
- Contribute to economic growth

Community Cooperative Model has been deemed as appropriate

business model and has been used in Batu Puteh Kinabatangan. The local youth in 1997 initiated a project MESCOT (Models of Economically Sustainable Community Tourism). This model had evolved as a research project; Batu Puteh was selected as a study site for the study of capacity building of Community based tourism as a vehicle for Poverty reduction. The Asia Pacific Economic Corporation and Ministry of Tourism commissioned the study. The following model was used by MESCOT:

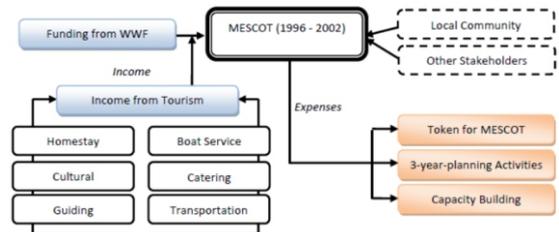


Figure 5. Source: Business Model of MESCOT (non-cooperative financial structure)

MESCOT faced issues like internal conflict between members, lack of management transparency and decided to form a cooperative. Subsequently under the guidance of a steering committee the following model was implemented.

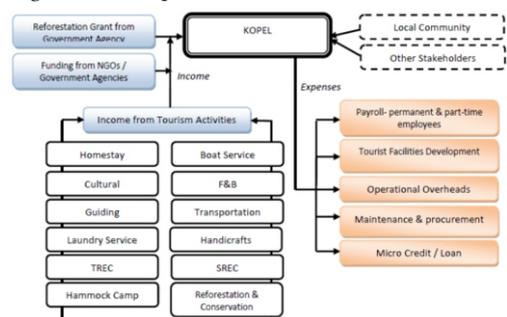


Figure 6: Business Model of KOPEL (cooperative financial structure)

structure)

This model has been functioning efficiently and has resulted in significant increase in revenue on the basis of this model a CBT model can be replicated in Har-ki-dun as given below:

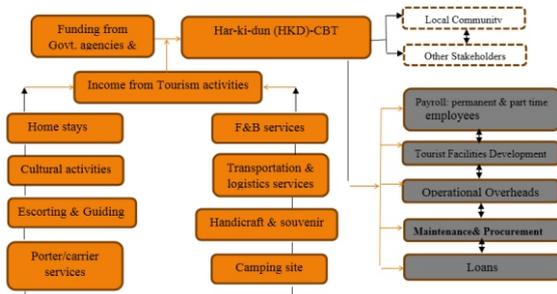


Figure-7. Cooperative model of Har-ki-dun Community Based Tourism, Source Author

HKD CBT would coordinate all the activities; each bureau should handle its own operation and cash flows. For inception the locals can form a community organization and then can apply for funds from government agencies and NGOs. The local youth can call themselves as members of HKD CBT to represent their CBT initiatives. They can create community based eco-tourism activities which would provide alternative source of income and create benefit for the local people from the protected area established. Success is dependent on participation of local people; cooperative is a tool that can help in effective management of local's interest in gaining profitable economic return. It would lead to fair transparent income distribution system.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Har ki dun valley is a cradle shaped valley which lies in the eco fragile zone of the Garhwal region .The base of this trek is Sankri village, other villages being Saur, Taluka, Gangad, Seema and Osla. The locals of these quaint villages are simple people living in their own world far away from civilization. Our country has progressed by leaps and bounds but when you travel to this part is seems to be far away from reality .The region has to be developed and Community based tourism is the best tool. The people survive on agriculture and rearing animals.

As we see from the study that thousands of tourists visit the Har ki dun every year, there should be appropriate arrangements for tourist facilities and services like tour escorts, tourist guide, food, accommodation, and support in case of medical emergencies, etc. All these services and facilities cannot be provided and maintained without the involvement of local communities. In order to accelerate development we should train the locals so that they can play a significant role in the upliftment of tourism in the region. This industry can help in generating employment and at the same time change the life of the locals. Therefore local communities have to be made aware about needs of the tourist, trained in the requisite profession to support the tourist arrivals and generate the revenue for themselves and socio economic development of the destination. Empower local communities to manage ecotourism and generate incentives for conservation through alternate and additional livelihood options since adequate industry does not exist in the state, except at few places in the planes and masses in the hills are deprived of any employment opportunities or other means of livelihood. (Rana, Ram & Sharma, 2011)

The CBT model suggested above is the proposed solution to imply involvement of the locals. This would lead to active participation of the community as per the require roles. CBT is the best tool for sustainable development of this area.

Recommendations

- Local authorities should do the assessment of the present

situation of Har ki dun and the approaching trekking route.

- Make suitable plan involving local communities and implement the required step to promote Community Based Tourism.
- Make the trek safe and organize medical facilities and rescue team to handle emergency.
- Repair and re-open the school at Osla which is the only school for the last village before Har ki dun where our future generation can be educated.
- Train the local people to become skilled professionals to work as tour escorts, tourist guides, home stay provider and provide food.
- Implement the proposed CBT model, monitor and track the project till it is established and functions smoothly

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