

Tourism in Uttarakhand

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ABSTRACT

Located in the Himalayan belt the State of Uttarakhand with snow capped mountains, lakes and rivers, flora and fauna, easy and challenging trekking routes, pilgrimage and religious places, wild life sanctuaries and national parks, fairs, events and festive, and a safe and secured tranquil environment with friendly hosts is a perfect tourist destination. The present study is focused on understanding the image that the tourists hold about Uttarakhand, and to know the current status of tourism in the state. A questionnaire is prepared to know about the perceptions of visitors. Primary data is collected from a sample of 150 visitors. The collected data is tabulated, frequency tables are prepared and charts are drawn and presented. Demographic profiles of the tourists are presented. Religious and rest and relaxation are the main reasons for visit. About 50% of the visitors are repeat visitors. The physical attributes are liked by the respondents, and they have a positive feeling towards the destination. SWOT analysis reveals that the state could be a strong contender as a favorable tourist destination. The current status of the tourism revealed that Uttarakhand is poised to become a top tourist destination by measures undertaken such as sponsoring travel bloggers, developing new destinations, organizing new events, ensuring ecological balance and giving the status of industry to tourism sector.

Keywords: Uttarakhand, destination image, SWOT analysis and current status.

INTRODUCTION:

Tourism is one of the biggest enterprises on the planet. As indicated by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism and travel have turned into a worldwide industry; India is home to 36 world heritage sites and a wonder of the world. As per the (WTTC) over 8.03 million foreign tourists visited India in 2015, and the number rose to 8.80 million in 2016 (Government of India, 2017). According to a report by World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017), the tourism industry in India generated 220 billion USD in 2016, which amounted to 9.6 percent of the nation's GDP. The industry provides jobs to over 40.43 million, which is 10 percent of the total employment of the country. India is captivating with its ancient culture, stunning differences and amazing characteristic magnificence. With the considerable potential accessible and the improvement activities taken by the administration, Indian inbound tourism has demonstrated a generous development in the most recent decade which has been the best ever. India has considered main traveler visitor goals in the aspect of promoting activities including effective incredible India battle. In this setting, the state is an incredible vacationer goal with fabulous natural environment, most profound sense of being, enterprise, and relaxation and give a feel to come back for a traveler. It advances spiritual tourism from the religion differing qualities and legacy.

The State of Uttarakhand has natural locations, pleasant climatic conditions, lakes, snow capped mountain peaks, age old pilgrimage and religious places, glaciers and origins of rivers and rivers, national parks and wild life sanctuaries and many historic places with traditional fairs and festivals. All these are a boon to the tourism industry. The four dhams get their sacred waters as four streams - Yamuna (in Yamunotri), Bhagirathi(in

Gangotri), Mandakini (in Kedarnath) and Alaknanda (in Badrinath). Traditionally, the Char Dharm yatra (or excursion) is done from the west to the east - beginning from Yamunotri, then continuing to Gangotri lastly to Kedarnath and Badrinath. In spite of the fact that the Char (four) Dhams are open through a system of motorable streets, burdensome trails remain in the antiquated havens of confidence for a satisfying experience. The other favored goals are Haridwar, Nanakmatta, Meetha-Reetha Sahib, Piran Kaliyar and Punyagiri. Among the different hypnotizing religious customs, the night Aarti by the banks of the Ganga at Haridwar is in itself an awesome ordeal. The Yatras to explorer goals, for example, Nanda Devi and Kailash Manasarover offer a chance to relish some of the most stunning sceneries. Holy conjunctions, beautiful environment, and an atmosphere of profound tranquility make a perfect residence the divine beings and is an invigorating prize for the travelers and sightseers who visit Uttarakhand.

Understanding tourism and destination image is a key to success for the marketers. A destination image is a multi-dimensional concept comprising cognitive, affective and conative component. The cognitive component refers to physical attributes, affective component refers to feelings towards the destination and conative is the intent or action component.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to the literature available a description of the different tourism destination image studies is presented as under:

Destination Image Components and Factors:

Crompton(1979) identified nine motives of pleasure vacationers which influenced the selection of a destination-escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, facilitation of social interaction, novelty and education.

Gunn (1985) professed that destination images fall on a continuum beginning with the organic image, followed by the induced image and ending in the complex image.

The conceptual theory of Gunn (1985) was validated by (PC Fakeye, JL Crompton, 1991) when consistent significant differences in images were found between the non-visitors, first-timers and repeaters.

Mowen, J.C. & Minor, M. (1998) in their book suggested that image is not a single element, but rather, a mental structure, built by multiple nodes and associations. A schema was considered to be a hypothetical cognitive structure that integrates lower level units of information into higher level cohesive and meaningful units called nodes, which, as the fundamental building blocks, form a mental network.

Hawkins, Del I., Roger J. Best, and Kenneth A. Coney(2001) defined images as mental schemata that had a profound effect on buyer behaviour, since they reflected "a complex web of associations" constructs generalizations, objects, events, and feelings.

Destination images are shaped through a complex process of learning and information exchange. The process involves past, current and future visitors, marketing organizations, tourism businesses, popular media, and less tangible sources associated with the destination's positioning in World history and portrayal in film, theatre and music (Jenkins, 1999) ; (Wenger, 2008). Kokosalaksis C, Bagnall G, Sellby M, Burns S (2006) argued that the projected image of a destination is formed by a complex and dynamic network of agents acting as information sources, example, visitors or residents, and marketing organizations.

According to Ahmed (1991) length of stay and place of residence significantly affected the image held by tourists'.

Buhalis (2000) observed that most destinations comprised a core of the following components: : attractions (natural, man-made, artificial, purpose built, heritage, special events), accessibility (entire transportation system comprising of routes, terminals and vehicles), amenities (accommodation and catering facilities, retailing, other tourists service), activities (all activities available at the destination and what consumers will do during their visits), ancillary services (services used by tourists such as banks, telecommunication, post, newsagent, hospital, etc.) and available packages (pre-arranged packages by intermediaries and principals).

Hector San Martin, Ignacio A. Rodriguez del Bosque (2008) in their study highlighted two points about destination image. First was about the nature of destination image which is formed on the basis of individuals' beliefs about the place (cognitive image), as well as their feelings toward it (affective image). Second observation was with regard to destination image formation, that the perception of a tourist destination was significantly affected by the individual's motivations and cultural values, i.e. psychological factors. Individuals had a more favourable affective image of the tourist destination when the emotions related to the place (through their personal experiences or the commercial communications) coincided with their motivations or benefits

sought. On the other hand, cultural distance was a factor that influenced at least partially the perceived image of a tourist destination before visiting it. In particular, individuals might have more confidence in those tourist destinations with cultures similar to their own cultural values.

Enrique Bigné Alcañiz, Isabel Sánchez García, Silvia Sanz Blas (2009) in their study analyzed the cognitive component of the image of a destination from a dual perspective. Firstly, they studied its composition by positing three positions on a continuum: functional, mixed and psychological, which were analyzed using confirmatory factor analyses. Secondly, they studied the influence of these components on tourists' overall image of the destination and on their future behaviour intentions, using structural equation analysis. The results showed that the psychological and functional components exercised the greatest influence on the overall image of the destination. Overall image was found to influence future behaviour intentions consistently, while the functional component was relevant for revisit intention and the psychological component for the intention to recommend.

Dolores M. Frias, Miguel A. Rodriguez, J. Alberto Castaneda, Carmen M. Sabote and Dimitrios Buhalis (2011) study showed that the formation of a destination's pre-visit image amongst tourists, based on the information sources they used, was moderated by the level of uncertainty-avoidance of their national cultures i.e. tourists from high uncertainty avoidance cultures such as France, Belgium or Italy held more favourable destination images after having only used the travel agency than after having used both the travel agency and the Internet. On the other hand tourists coming from low uncertainty avoidance cultures, such as British, failed to be affected by the use of the Internet in addition to the travel agency. The image held by those tourists was not affected by the information source.

Mahadzirah Mohamad, Ahmad Rusdi Abdullah & Safiek Mokhlis (2012) findings suggested that if foreign tourists perceived favourable destination image, they were more willing to spread positive recommendations as well as to undertake repeat visitations in future.

Guy Assaker, Vincenzo Esposito Vinzi, Peter O'Connor (2011) in their study confirmed that satisfaction had a significant, positive, and direct impact on immediate revisit intention. The findings emphasized the role of customer satisfaction on repeat travel behaviour. The study, however, also highlighted the less efficient impact of satisfaction in attracting return travelers over time. The paper demonstrated that novelty seeking negatively affected immediate revisits. Nevertheless, immediate intent to revisit was found to be negatively correlated with future revisits; thus, a lower level of immediate intent to revisit was associated with a greater increase in intent to return over time.

Ching-Fu Chen, Sambath Phou (2013) study indicated that tourists form emotional relationships with destinations. The results of the study supported the cognitive-affective-behaviour sequence of attitude theory.

Hall (1989) suggested that hallmark and mega events can act as image builders for modern tourism as their primary function is to provide the host community with an opportunity to secure high prominence in the tourism marketplace. (Jago, L., Chalip, L., Brown, G., & Mules, T., 2003); (Kim N. and Chalip L., 2004)

A study by Reza, Samiei, Dini, & Yaghoubi (2012) studied the interrelationships among eWOM (electronic word of mouth) which is defined as all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers (Stephen W. Litvin, Ronald E. Goldsmith, Bing Pan, 2005), destination image, tourists' attitude and travel intention. The empirical results from the structural model used in the study suggested that (1) eWOM positively influenced the destination image, tourist attitude and travel intention (2) destination image and tourist attitude had a significant relationship with intention to travel (3) destination image positively affected tourist attitude, and (4) the socio-demographic characteristics influenced using eWOM, destination image, tourist attitude, and travel intention.

Potential tourists use various destination attributes to aid in destination image formation. Destination environmental attributes related to the actual product or site have been shown to influence destination image. These environmental attributes can be grouped into two subcategories—destination atmospherics and destination service. (Bonn M A, Joseph SM, Dai M, 2005)

Destination image was worse when tourists used a travel agency and Internet together, than when they used a travel agency alone. This effect was moderated by the degree of the tourist's message involvement and Internet experience (Dolores M. Frias, Miguel A. Rodríguez, J. Alberto Castañeda, 2008)

Heather J. Gibson, Christine Xueqing Qi, and James J. Zhang (2008) studied that to know the impact Mega Events on Destination three sources of information were required—the destination's image, the event's image, and the image that the destination wants to project. To achieve a positive change in destination image that in turn causes visitation to increase, the image change must be positive and occur along the destination image dimensions (e.g., developed environment, natural environment, value, sightseeing opportunities, safety, novelty,

climate, convenience, and family environment) that are important to travelers from a particular market. Moreover, the event messages become important only after the images of the event transfer to the image of a destination. Event organizers cannot assume that hosting an event will automatically bring benefits; conversely these benefits had to be actively strategized and managed.

Tourist Perceptions:

Zafar U.Ahmed (1992) recommended seven steps for increasing tourism to India: (1) improving the image, (2) identifying target markets; (3) strategically locating tourist offices; (4) developing promotional themes; (5) correcting attitudinal problems; (6) improving product strategy; and (7) promoting India as a convention destination.

Chaudhary (2000) conducted a study to know the perspective of foreign tourists about India. The analysis indicated that India could develop its image as a cultural destination - an image which was fairly well established. It lacked a positive image mainly on the infrastructure and safety fronts. A well planned image promotion campaign with the necessary improvements in those areas could be helpful.

Tyagi A. (2016) examined the quality of service provided by police officials at tourist sites in the Uttarakhand region, India and its impact on the level of tourists' confidence in the police and the role that police culture plays in determining quality of service and the effect of leader behavior in moderating the relationship between them. Results showed that police organizational culture had a direct influence on tourists' confidence in the police and police service quality partially mediates the relationship between the two; also leader behavior positively moderates between police culture and service quality. The study also contributed to police culture, leader behavior, and police service quality vis a vis visitors.

Mishra A K (2015) conducted a study to assess the state of Uttarakhand, which is covered with 64.76% of its area under Himalayan forest providing the exquisite biodiversity and differences in climate with a miscellany of flora and fauna, as an organic farming place using remote sensing and GIS. A methodology was proposed to identify the suitable zones in the state for the development of the organic farming using Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) and Geospatial techniques to boost rural economies and promote rural tourism to make self-sustainable villages.

DS Kumar (2015) conducted a study to know the socio economic impact and effect of Himalayan Tsunami on the tourism industry in the state of Uttarakhand. There is a positive socio economic impact and negative effect of Himalayan Tsunami on tourism industry in India as well as in the state of Uttarakhand. The Himalayan Tsunami (2013) negatively affected the growth rate of foreign tourist arrival in India. The total tourist arrival showed a growth of 7-9% during the years of such negative events and during the normal years the growth rate of total tourist arrival hovered around 13 to 17%. The Uttarakhand tourism statistics showed a decrease in number of tourists' arrival in the years (2008-2013) because many negative incidents occurred like continuous landslides and cloud outburst in rainy season. Due to Himalayan Tsunami the tourism trend in Uttarakhand was badly affected by a negative growth rate of 28.07%.

Bansal and Gangotia (2010) studied tourism in Uttarakhand, which had acquired the name of 'Devbhoomi'. They concluded that about 60 percent of the foreign tourists' purpose of visit was holiday/leisure and about 20 percent of them visiting for yoga and health reasons. In case of domestic tourists' religious tourists' were the main travelers. The Uttarakhand government draft policy also mentions that among the foreign tourists nearly 58 percent of the visits were for holiday/sightseeing, 21.9 percent for health /yoga and about 19.4 percent for pilgrimage/religious functions whereas in case of domestic tourists the main reason of visiting the place is pilgrimage or religious tourism.

METHODOLOGY:

Research objective:

The first objective of the research is to know the perspective of tourists about Uttarakhand as a tourist destination, and secondly to know the current status of tourism in the State.

Design of questionnaire:

A questionnaire is designed in English language. The initial part of the questionnaire comprises questions regarding the demography of the respondent; the middle part has ordinal and dichotomous questions while the last part of the questionnaire is designed as a likert scale. The last portion contains the questions for cognitive and affective evaluation of the destination.

Sampling frame:

The sampling frame comprised of tourists visiting Uttarakhand. Tourist is a person who travels outside of his

normal environment for a period of more than 24 hours and less than 12 months for reasons other than employment.

Sample:

Convenience method of sampling is used. A sample of 150 was collected from the tourists in two cities- Hairdwar and Nainital.

Data Collection:

Both primary and secondary data is collected. For the fulfillment of first objective primary data is collected from visitors, while for the second objective various secondary sources of information like books, newspaper, tourism journals and websites are used. Primary data is collected by personally contacting the tourists and handing the self administered questionnaire, which was subsequently returned.

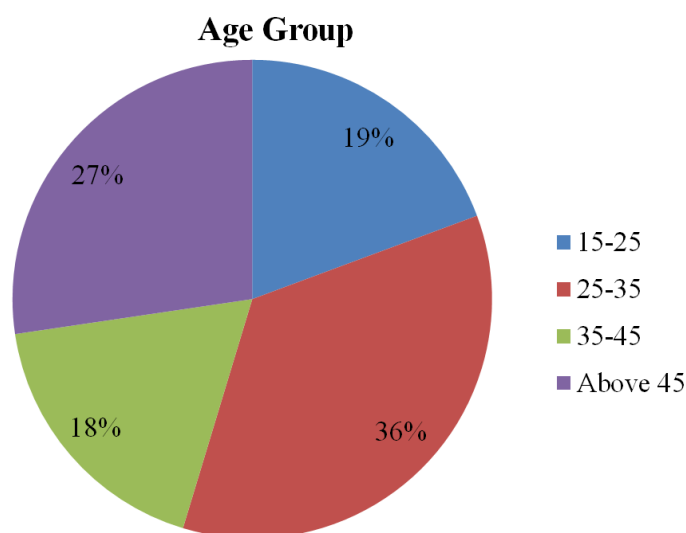
Limitations:

The sample size is small and convenience method of sampling is used.

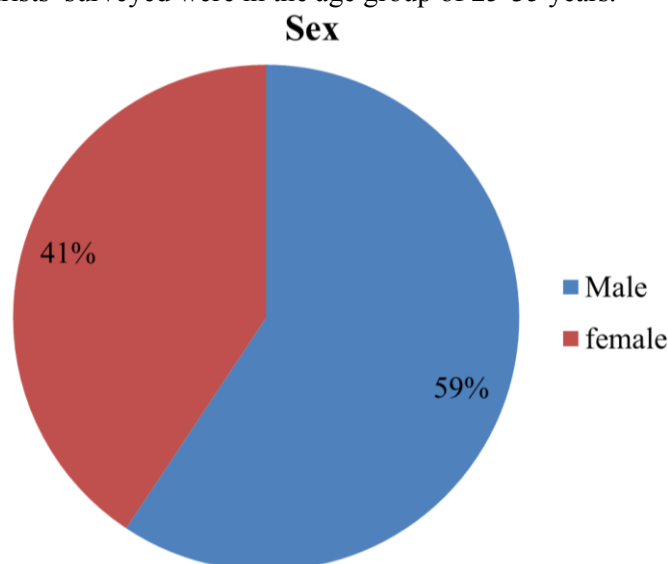
DATA ANALYSIS:

The collected data are tabulated and graphs are prepared from frequency tables.

Profile of the sample: Age, gender, occupation, income of the sample are presented in chart form.



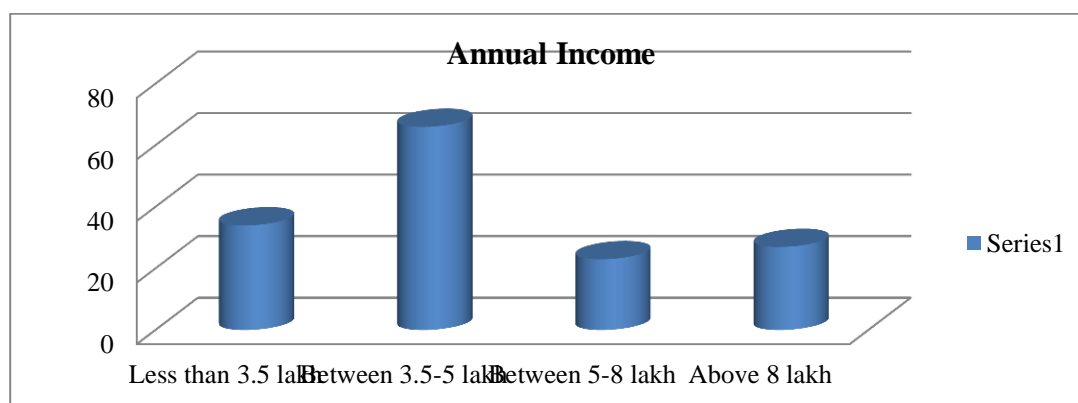
About 36 percent of the tourists' surveyed were in the age group of 25-35 years.



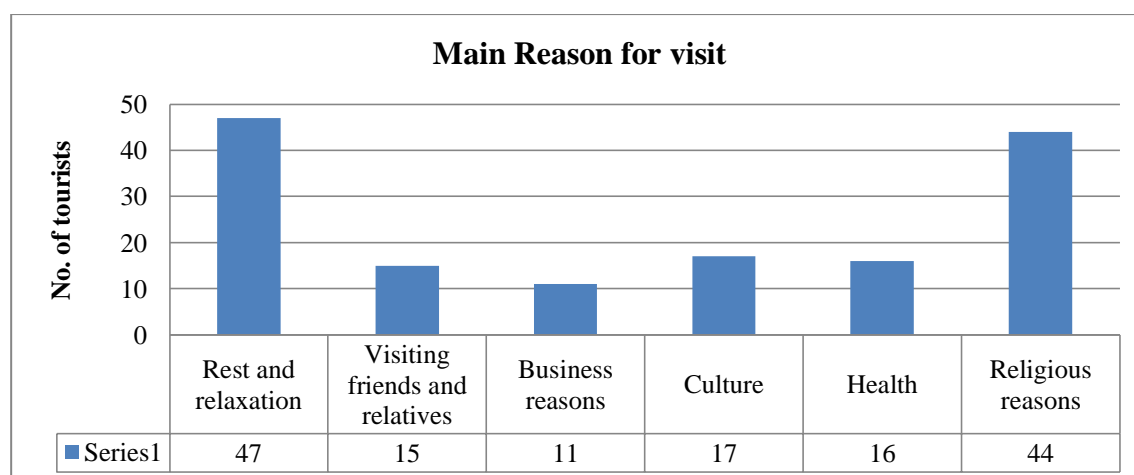
About 59% of the respondents were male and 41% were females



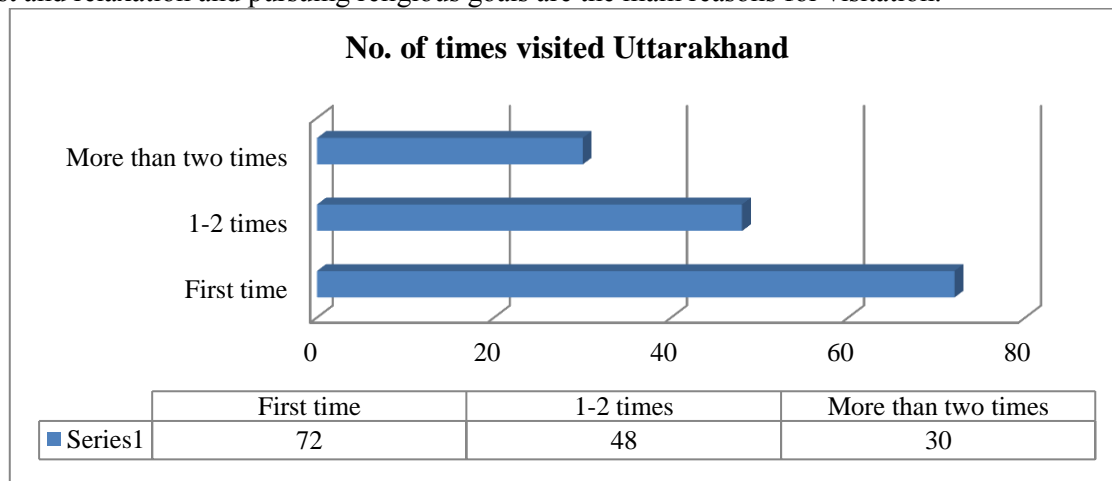
In case of occupation, 63 were private employees, 29 were from the government sector, another 34 were self employed and the rest 24 were from rest of miscellaneous sectors.



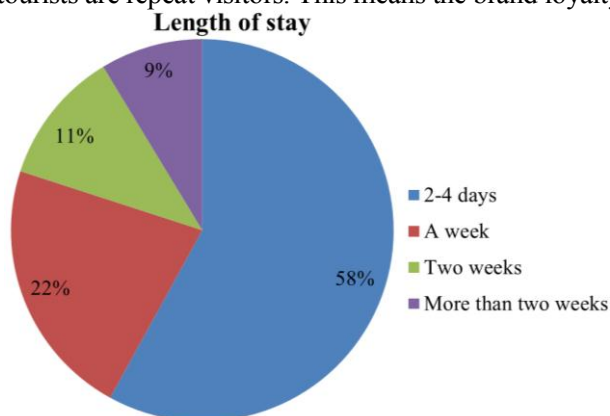
The highest numbers of visitors' were in the income bracket of 0.35 million - 0.50 million



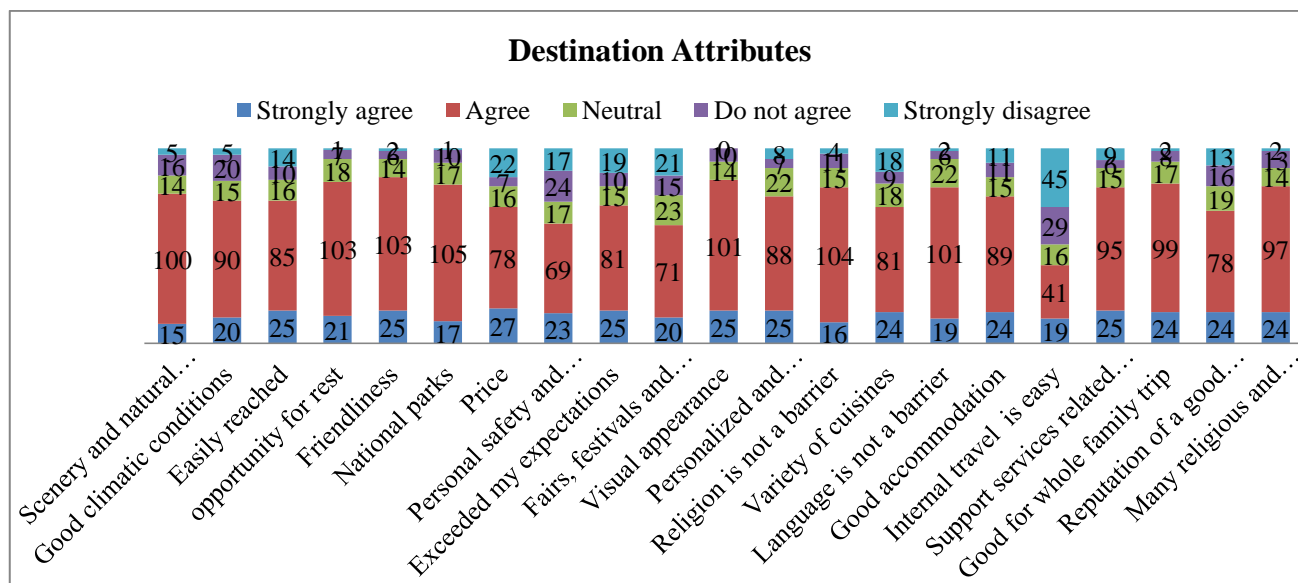
Both rest and relaxation and pursuing religious goals are the main reasons for visitation.



(48+30=78) About 50% of the tourists are repeat visitors. This means the brand loyalty of the destination is high.



2-4 days was the duration or length of stay of the 58% of the visitors.



A destination image is mainly composed of cognitive and affective components. The questionnaire contained questions on both the components of the image. A number of characteristics were evaluated. The chart clearly shows the respondents agreed with most of the attributes of the destination. The visitors disagreed with the internal travel facility within the city. The congestion in the road and in most of the cities the rental taxis do not have a uniform pricing policy, due to which at times rates are exorbitantly high for internal travel. Regarding personal safety and security 69 respondents agreed while 41 either disagreed or strongly disagreed. During the

rainy season landslides disrupts the traffic in roads, this could be the reason for visitors' concern for personal safety and security. Overall, based on the available data, it can be said that the tourists coming to Uttarakhand hold a favorable image about the destination.

STATUS OF TOURISM IN UTTARAKHAND:

SWOT Analysis:

A SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity and threat) analysis is a technique used to assess the internal capabilities and apprise the environment. This technique is used by organizations for strategic planning. Here a SWOT analysis of Uttarakhand as a tourist destination is presented:



Fairs, Events and Yatras:

Local festivals enrich the culture whereas fairs are a source of attraction for tourists.

1. **Kumbh at Haridwar:** Kumbha Mela, Ardh Kumbh Mela, and Maha Kumbh Mela every 3, 6 and 12 years respectively. Apart from Haridwar, Kumbh Mela is held in Nasik, Allahabad and Ujjain.
2. **Nanda Rajjat Yatra:** Three week long Nanda Devi Raj Jat is the most celebrated and popular religious festival of Uttarakhand held once in every twelve years.
3. Uttaraini mela mainly held at Bageshwar, held in second week of January every year marks the moving of sun from Southern to Northern Hemisphere
4. Nanda devi mela is held every year at Almora, Nainital, Bageshwar, Bhowali, in the month of September.
5. **Purnagiri Mela:**
The Purnagiri Temple is one of the 108 Siddha Peethas and a sacred place to visit for pilgrims throughout the year. The fair is organized in the month of March/April every year.
6. **International Yoga Day and International Yoga festival, 21 June:** Every year International Yoga Day is celebrated throughout the world and Yoga festival is organized in Rishikesh.

7. **Apple Day:** Like in United Kingdom, Apple day is being celebrated in Uttarakhand over the past few years so as to link the apple belt (Apple growing areas) with tourism to draw the attention of visitors from various parts of the country and abroad.

8. **Kainchi Mela (15 June):**

This fair is organized at Kainchi Dham every year on 15 June. Kainchi Dham was established by Saint Neem Karoli Baba also known as Maharajji.

These fairs and yatras (Nanda Raj Jaat) attract both inbound and outbound tourists.

Trekking:

Nearly two-thirds of Uttarakhand is covered with oak and pine forests and more than a dozen rivers and tributaries flow through it. Trekking is another activity which one experience in Uttarakhand. The popular trekking routes that have been identified by the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board are:-

	Popular trekking routes	Altitude(mts)	Gradient	Best time to go
1	Kuari Pass Trek	4265mts	Moderate	April- June; Sept-15 Nov
2	Gangotri-Gaumukh–Tapovan Trek	4463	Moderate	May, June and August
3	Valley of Flower Hemkund Sahib Trek	3858	Easy	June, September
4	Kalindi Khal Trek (high altitude trek)	5946	Challenging, Tough	May, June/July, August
5	Roopkund Trek	4463	Moderate	April, November
6	Milam Glacier Trek	3915	Moderate	April-June, September-November
7	Kafni Glacier Trek	4000	Difficult	June, September, November
8	Sunder Dunga Trek	3700	Moderate	May, June, September
9	Khatling Trek	3900	Tough	April, May September
10	Ghuttu Panwali Kantha Trek	3500	Moderate	Whole year except rainy season
11	Bagni Glacier Trek	4484	Moderate	Whole year except rainy season
12	Chopta-Tungnath Trek	3683	Easy to Moderate	April to November
13	Dodital–Yamunotri Trek	4150	Moderate	Mid March and November
14	Dayara–Dodital Trek	3786	Moderate	March, September
15	Nanda Devi outer base camp Trek	4250	Moderate to Challenging	April and October
16	Sankri-Ruinsara-Balipass-Yamunotri Trek	4950	Moderate	May, June, September, October
17	Har Ki Dun Trek	3566	Easy to moderate	May, June, September and Mid November
18	Kedarnath Trek	3584	Easy to moderate	May and October

New destinations:

In an attempt to strengthen the image of Uttarakhand as the preferred tourist destination in the country and to attract visitors to places beyond prominent ones like Nainital and Mussoorie, 13 theme-based tourist spots, i.e. one in each district, have been identified by the State:

Distirct	Tourist site	Tourism theme
Pithoragarh	Munsiyari	Laser tourism
Bageshwar	Kausani	Tea tourism
Almora	Katarmal	Meditation
Nainital	Mukteshwar	Laser tourism
Champawat	Lohaghat	Hill station
Udham Singh Nagar	Parag Farm	Amusement Park

Distirct	Tourist site	Tourism theme
Rudraprayag	Chopta	Eco tourism
Tehri	Tehri lake	Water sports
Pauri	Khirsu	Hill station and wildlife
Uttarkashi	Chinyalisaur	Multi purpose theme
Chamoli	Gairsain-Auli	Winter sport and Knowledge town
Dehradun	Chakrata	Heritage tourism
Haridwar	Piran Kaliyar and Shaktipeeth	Religious tourism

Other measures to promote tourism :

- Travel bloggers are roped in. These bloggers are sent to various destinations in the state. Their boarding and lodging is borne by the State.
- The Government has decided to develop two new national parks in the state - Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary and Surai Range of Terai East. That would make the State rich in terms of tiger reserves raising the total tally to four including the Corbett Tiger Reserve and the Rajaji Tiger Reserve. The State is already rich in terms of national parks and wild life sanctuaries having fifteen of them.
- Film production in the state is boosted by measures like tax exemption.
- Tourism is given the status of industry by the State.

Ecological Concerns:

The influxes of tourists in the state have lead to construction adjacent to the holly river Ganga and at hill stations. Some of the hill stations like Nainital become so much burdened with the visitors that it disrupts the traffic. This year during the peak season (June), the administration had to place a “houseful” banner at check posts leading to the lake city. The honorable Nainital High Court has also issued directions to the state government regarding environmental issues. The government is keenly looking after the environmental issues, and the banning of polythene bags is one such measure in that direction.

CONCLUSION:

A primary study is done to understand the perception of the visitors’ in Uttarakhand, and in the second part secondary data is analyzed to know the current status of tourism in the state. The features - natural locations, climate, accessibility, quietness, hospitality, national parks, price, fair and festivals, cuisines, reputation and religious and spiritual sites are liked by the tourists’, and are concerned regarding the safety and security and internal travel. Data collected from 150 respondents revealed that in case of occupation, 63 were private employees, 29 were from the government sector, another 34 were self employed and the rest 24 were from rest of miscellaneous sectors. Destination loyalty is good as repeat visitors are more than 50%. The highest numbers of visitors’ were in the income bracket of 0.35 million - 0.5 million, and 2-4 days was the duration or length of stay of the 58% of the visitors. Talking about the status of the tourism in the state, it can be said that the government is all set to tap the huge tourism market, and is well poised to further the growth of tourism in the state. A large number of the respondents told Uttarakhand is the best place to visit. Millions of tourists, both domestic as well as international, visit the state yearly not only for spiritual reasons but for rest and relaxation, as a family trip, water sports, snow sports and trekking. This year (2018) the numbers of tourists are expected to reach around 30 million and by 2026 it is expected to reach 60 million per year. The state earns significant revenue from these tourists and the tourism-related activities. Religious and spiritual is the most important attraction for both nationwide and universal tourists in the country. Uttarakand tourism board has plans to develop the region into a favorable tourist destination. The development should be attuned keeping in mind the sustenance of the region because in the past natural calamities have affected the tourism and the locals badly.

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