

Tourism Potential in Har-Ki-Doon Valley as Protected Area: A SWOT Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Protected areas are becoming increasingly important in modern societies since they preserve natural and cultural resources and enhance the quality of life by providing opportunities for recreation to an expanding population. There is obviously a widespread appreciation of the National Parks, and considerable support for the development of park systems (Pigram and Jenkins 1999). This leads to the emerging dimension in research in tourism and partnership in protected area. This paper highlights the major issues faced in the conceptual development of tourism in the Har ki Dun Valley which is a part of Govind National Pashu Vihar, a protected area in Uttarakhand. SWOT analysis, a widely used method of evaluation in tourism planning is applied here. This paper examines the current status and the potential of Sustainable tourism in Har ki Doon Valley in Uttarakhand state.

Keywords: Protected area, research, appreciation, SWOT, sustainable tourism, Har ki Doon.

INTRODUCTION:

Tourism is an ongoing process and one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world, which has expanded dramatically over the last 50 years and has become a global industry. 'Although it has been underestimated until quite recently, tourism has long been a central component of the economic, social and cultural shift that has left its imprint on the world system of cities in the past two decades' (Dumont 2005). According to World Trade Organization (WTO) statistics, there were a total of 1.235 billion tourist arrivals across the globe in the 2016.

Tourism can be seen as an economic activity that produces a range of positive and negative impacts but sustainable tourism seeks to achieve the best balance between economic benefits and social and environmental costs. In order to plan and develop tourism successfully, economic, environmental and social aspects of tourism must be well understood .It is interesting to see how the WTO, the Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Earth Council define sustainable tourism:

'Sustainable Tourism Development meets the needs of present tourists, host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity and life support systems. Sustainable tourism products are products which are operated in harmony with the local environment, community and cultures so that these become the beneficiaries and not the victims of tourism development.'

According to this definition, sustainable tourism has three interrelated aspects: environmental, socio-cultural, and economic. Since sustainability implies permanence, sustainable tourism should include optimum use of resources, minimization of ecological, cultural and social impacts, and maximization of benefits for conservation and local communities (Creaco, Querini 2003).

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Protected areas are becoming increasingly important in modern societies since they preserve natural and cultural resources and enhance the quality of life by providing opportunities for recreation to an expanding population. There is obviously a widespread appreciation of the National Parks, and considerable support for the development of park systems (Pigram and Jenkins 1999). Agency data typically show the increasing popularity of parks over time and changes are observable in the USA, Canada, Kenya, and Costa Rica (Eagles and McCool 2002). Total visits to U.S. National Parks have reached nearly 300 million annually (Manning 2009). Thus there is urgent need to boost this industry, which is often regarded as 'a passport to development' for countries with few resources apart from sun and sand, has now become a major concern for us. World tourism is evolving as well as growing. As incomes rise and transportation systems improve, international or national tourism is bound to increase in quantitative terms. An increasing number of tourists now prefer to visit attractive natural environments or protected areas set aside for conservation instead of visiting traditional cities or taking beach based holidays. This is an alternative form of tourism, known as nature tourism or ecotourism. Nature tourism consists of travel to a particular natural site largely for amenity and recreational purposes While the Ecotourism Society defines eco tourism 'as responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people' (Lindberg and Hawking, 1993). Eco tourism is the largest-growing sector with an estimated annual growth rate of 10-15%, amongst all international visitors, nature tourists comprise 40-60%, and of that 20-40% is wildlife related tourists.

As of 1998, India has more than 521 protected areas including sanctuaries, national parks and biosphere reserves. These protected areas are spread over 1.48 lakh km², 12% of the forest land, and 4.5% of the total land in the country. However, the protected area network in the Himalayan region comprises three biosphere reserves, 18 national parks and 71 wildlife sanctuaries occupying 9.2% of Indian Himalaya. Legal notification of protected area status follows enforcements which, by and large, curtail resource use and tourism and also affect the socio-cultural value system of the local communities leading to people-reserve conflicts. (RK Maikhuri, U Rana, KS Rao, S Nautiyal and KG Saxena, 2000)

These conflicts are major threats to biodiversity conservation in developing countries and call for changes in conventional strategies for conservation planning and management (Ghimire and Pimbert, 1997) The Himalayan range, and especially the Garhwal Himalaya, is a repository for nature lovers, trekkers, mountaineers, saints, etc. since time immemorial.

The Govind National Pashu Vihar is an excellent representative of the Himalayan Eco-system. It is one of the oldest Protected Area in the state. This tract is estimated to be over 20 to 25 million years old. It represents Snow-leopard and a host of endemic herbivores. It is the eastern most limit of western tragopan. In recent years the Protected Area has come into lime light because of various interface problems with people such as resettlement of the four villages i.e. Dhatmir, Gangar, Pawani and Osla outside Protected Area and cattle grazing by Gujjars in prime alpine meadows during summer.

Prior to 1987 the Govind National Pashu Vihar was a part of erstwhile Tons Forest Division. Afterwards it continued to be managed under the Working Plan of the Tons Forest Division till 1994, though the territory of the Protected Area was brought under the control of wildlife preservation organization U.P in 1988. After the creation of new state Uttarakhand in 2000, the Protected Area was brought under control of Chief Wildlife Warden Uttarakhand. (As per the report compiled by Mr. G.N. Yadav, Deputy Director, Govind Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park, Purola, Uttarkashi)

Har-Ki-dun valley lies in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand, situated on the base of Fateh Parvat at 3,556 meters above sea level, at latitude and longitude of 31.14 and 78.42 respectively. Har-ki-doon valley is widely loved by nature lovers and is growing as a popular spot for bird watching & trekking. Har-ki-doon valley (Uttarakhand) the area of study, tourism can be made and important vehicle for economic and social development of the local region and habitat. The tourism in this region has a lot of potential to generate income, create employment, help in development and strengthen linkage of the local people to the main stream of the society. (Maheshwari and Sharma 2016)

This paper deals with the major issues faced in the conceptual development of tourism in the Har ki Dun Valley which is a part of Govind National Pashu Vihar a protected area in Uttarakhand.

- To study the tourism potential in Har-ki-dun Valley of Uttarakhand state
- To analyze the present scenario of tourism in Har-ki-dun Valley.

METHODOLOGY:

The research methodology incorporated was a quantitative research technique so as to gain the data from the different perspective and also to get a varied data. For this purpose there were more than three hundred questionnaire filled by the locals in the period of more than one year i.e. from June 2016 to August 2017.

Secondary data related to the research was also collected from the office of Govind Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park, Purohita, Uttarkashi and Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, Dehradun. It was carefully examined and analyzed to get in depth knowledge of the valley and its prevailing tourist patterns. Government bodies have a major role to play in the development of the destination thus their inputs were also considered and analyzed carefully. Data regarding tourist arrivals of last three years in the region was collected with the revenue generated. (Ref. Table No. 1 to 3): Tourist Arrivals and Revenue Generated.

In order to assess the tourism potential of Har-ki-dun Valley and to analyze the present scenario of tourism there; it was suggested to collect the opinion of the locals and experience of tourists who had visited the destination. Hence a structured questionnaire was formulated to collect the relevant data from the local population of the region.

The questionnaire was carefully designed to find out the interest of the local population in the tourism related activities in the region. The questions were well defined to find out the demographic and the interest of the locals. The collected data could help in planning strategies for tourism development in the region.

FINDINGS&DISCUSSION:

The results in table 4 shows that 68.7% of the respondents were married and 31.3% were single.

Table 5 shows the age details of the respondents. As per the data 50% of the population is between the age group of 20 to 40 years which can be of significant help in tourism development in the region as the region has potential for trekking and nature based tourism

Table 6 shows the results of the respondent locals regarding their employment details depict that majority of the population is involved in agriculture. Therefore there can be a large number trained for tourism as agriculture is not a full time activity throughout the year. Tourism can be a source of great help to generate employment opportunity for the locals.

Table 7 depicts the locals view regarding tourism related activities. Majority of the population believes that tourism can be developed in the region and the area has tremendous potential.

The results of the locals view on the benefits of tourism related activities is present in Table 8, which shows that more than 80% respondents believe that tourism can benefit the locals and improve their living standard. Tourism development can lead to economic upliftment of the area

Table 9 shows the results of the question related to being engaged in offering tourist related services depict that only 40% of the locals are involved in providing tourist related services. Others can be trained to provide the same for the tourist which would result in extra income for them.

Table 10 shows that majority of the locals population strongly agree to provide facilities to the tourist which depicts they are pro tourism and are aware about its positive impacts. Tourism development would lead to better facilities and infrastructure in the region

SWOT is an acronym of strength, weakness, opportunities and threats. The first two factors (strengths and weaknesses) are related to internal organizational factors, while opportunities and threats cover a wider context or environment in which the entity operates (Collins-Kreiner, N., Wall, G., 2007). The first are likely to be under control of the organization but the latter one, although they are no less important when looking at the impact on the enterprise, are not. SWOT is one of the most widespread methods of management and is an instrument used by managers in creating strategies (Kurttila, M., Pesonen, M., Kangas, M., Kajanus, M., 2000). The data from questionnaire and literature collected for research helped in conducting a SWOT analysis of the region. The interaction with the locals, government officials, forest personnel and other stakeholders highlighted the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats of the region.

In reference to our research SWOT analysis is done on the study area i.e. Har-ki-dun valley depicted in Table 11.

Interpretation of the tables in accordance with the objectives: The present scenario of tourism in Har ki Dun Valley can be interpreted from tables 1, 2 and 3. On analyzing the information it is evident that number of tourist is on the rise in the region. The revenue collected from the tourism related activities is increasing over a period of years.

The tourism potential of the region can be gauged through tables 4-10 which show the demographic details of the locals. The collected data showcases the positive prospects of tourism in the region. Besides the data collected through structured questionnaire; meeting with the government officials, forest personnel help in establishing the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of the region.

CONCLUSION:

In the course of data collection it was found that there is shortage of staff members in forest department as per the sanctioned strength which hampers the services at the Govind National Pashu Vihar. An urgent need to provide alternative livelihood to the local community was felt to improve their quality of life. Hence it is suggested that the Forest Department supplements its effort in eco-tourism through collaboration with external agencies to meet its objectives for eco-tourism and Eco development. The following strategies are outlined for the forest department to meet the objectives:-

- i. To support setting up a separate NGO (non-profit organization) or external agencies to promote Eco-tourism and Eco-development with community participation in the protected area.
- ii. To promote sustainable and eco-tourism in the area.
- iii. To attract trekkers and nature watchers.
- iv. To ensure the benefits of the local community.
- v. To establish regulations to practice sustainable tourism.
- vi. To make the area self-sufficient to survive in the long run.

In order to meet our goals the following practices need to be encouraged:

- o Homestay in the local community.
- o Use the Forest Rest House when free and provide tent accommodation for adventure seekers.
- o Involvement of the local community in tourism activities. Train people and employ them.
- o Creation of website & information brochure.
- o Take help from local resource to manage the eco-tourism during startup phase. Arrange funding for salary, etc.

Har-ki-dun valley is a very beautiful attraction with adventure of trekking so it has got lot of potential for development of tourist related activities. Considering the natural beauty of this destination there are a number of tourist operators are offering the trekking packages to this place.

But the present scenario is not in favor of tourists as there is no proper guidance and appropriate facilities on the way and at the destination. Following major issues have been observed:

(i) Lack of Awareness: Literacy among the local people is poor. They do not appreciate the efforts being made for conservation of endangered species. They also hold the view that wildlife conservation is being given more importance than the welfare of the local people at large. They suspect that declaration of sanctuary and national park is to check their all-around development. Attention is needed to be focused on these awareness issues to clarify the doubts and apprehension. Efforts are also required towards highlighting biological and morphological importance of the area in the context of human existence. The visitors also throw garbage & non-biodegradable material here and there during their stay in the Protected Area. This practice needs to be checked by making them aware about ill-effects of this on wild life.

(ii) Lack of Personnel: The staff posted in Govind National Pashu Vihar is short of the required and sanctioned strength. As a result control over influx of visitors becomes difficult especially when they enter from points where there is no staff. These routes are from Yamunotri to Ruinsara & Majhiban to Harikidoo. In addition, tourists during their field visits feel pinch by lack of trained personnel who could brief them about place, floral & faunal spp. as and when so desired.

(iii) Budgetary Constraints: Budgetary allocation often falls short of prescribed expenditure. Agencies e.g. tourism department may be approached for objective of the tourism department.

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Table No. 1: Tourist Arrivals and Revenue Generated (2014-15)

Month	Adult	Student	Foreigner	Total	Revenue (in Rs)
January	34	-	-	34	6000
February	55	-	-	55	8700
March	115	20	25	160	39625
April	207	53	10	270	5,708,600
May	503	132	34	669	13,558,700
June	58	-	03	61	14,000
July	58	-	03	61	14,000
August	50	-	02	52	10,700
September	309	130	15	454	78,372
October	512	93	13	618	156,124
November	150	-	1	151	30200
December	627	14	9	650	1,760,000

Source: Authorities at Govind National Pashu Vihar

Table No. 2: Tourist Arrivals and Revenue Generated (2015-2016)

Month	Adult	Student	Foreigner	Total	Revenue in Rs.
January	165	01	2	168	36,788
February	73	18	3	94	16,200
March	220	14	16	250	57,725
April	544	6	49	599	195,575
May	2135	251	66	2451	727,249
June	481	23	43	547	121,162
July	35	-	3	38	9,100
August	74	-	-	74	15,950
September	419	75	26	520	131,099
October	484	36	15	535	113,300

Month	Adult	Student	Foreigner	Total	Revenue in Rs.
November	228	52	5	285	58,200
December	1642	-	17	1659	456,950

Source: Authorities at Govind National Pashu Vihar

Table No. 3: Tourist Arrivals and Revenue Generated (2016-2017)

Month	Adult	Student	Foreigner	Total	Revenue in Rs.
January	590	-	-	590	152,300
February	99	-	7	106	25,100
March	655	127	17	799	205,561
April	751	50	21	822	204,177
May	1148	243	23	1414	289,336
June	894	148	19	1061	219,936
July	45	0	12	57	24,050
August	71	0	1	78	13,550
September	418	234	14	666	149,205
October	532	258	32	822	211256
November	261	-	6	267	67700

Source: Authorities at Govind National Pashu Vihar

Table 4: Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Married	226	68.7	68.7	68.7
	Single	103	31.3	31.3	100.0
	Total	329	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-20	89	27.1	27.1	27.1
	21-30	101	30.7	30.7	57.8
	31-40	66	20.1	20.1	77.8
	41-50	45	13.7	13.7	91.5
	51-60	21	6.4	6.4	97.9
	61-above	7	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	329	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: There are prospects of tourism related activities in your region/area

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	297	90.3	90.3	90.3
	Agree	32	9.7	9.7	100.0
	Total	329	100.0	100.0	

Table 8: Tourism related activities benefit the host population

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	275	83.6	83.6	83.6
	Agree	48	14.6	14.6	98.2
	Neutral	4	1.2	1.2	99.4
	Disagree	2	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	329	100.0	100.0	

Table 9: You engage yourself in offering tourist related services

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	142	43.2	43.2	43.2
	Agree	30	9.1	9.1	52.3
	Neutral	16	4.9	4.9	57.1
	Disagree	65	19.8	19.8	76.9
	Strongly Disagree	76	23.1	23.1	100.0
Total		329	100.0	100.0	

Table 10: You can provide various facilities to tourists in your region/area

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	218	66.3	66.3	66.3
	Agree	91	27.7	27.7	93.9
	Neutral	6	1.8	1.8	95.7
	Disagree	12	3.6	3.6	99.4
	Strongly Disagree	2	.6	.6	100.0
Total		329	100.0	100.0	

Table 11: SWOT Analysis of the region

<p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unique Landscape ➤ Natural Scenic Beauty ➤ Sense of thrill &adventure ➤ Rich flora and fauna ➤ Availability of medicinal plants ➤ Historical Significance &relevance 	<p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ HabitatDegradation and its impact on the regions hydrology ➤ Inadequate resources ➤ Poor communication network and road connectivity ➤ Inaccessibility due to weather conditions ➤ Lack of cooperation by villagers ➤ Lack of medical facilities ➤ Lack of potable water ➤ Lack of electricity ➤ Unregulated tourism ➤ Harsh terrain ➤ Grazing
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Diversification of tourism-Bird Watching, Nature Tourism. Eco Tourism ➤ Rich flora and Fauna ➤ Nature Interpretation Centre ➤ Employment generation for locals ➤ Economic development of the area ➤ Rescue Operation team ➤ Training Centre for locals,forest personnel 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regions biodiversity ➤ Impact of Climate Change ➤ Forest Fires ➤ Smuggling of Medicinal Plants
