

Tourist profile and their perception about Dehradun as ecotourism destination

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Abstract

People were having varied purposes, interest and motivations for traveling to various destinations of Dehradun district. Some found it a perfect place, safe and approachable, to spend a holiday. For others it is a religious spots were motivating factors along with natural setting. Education, health, friends and relative, business and official meetings were other motivating factors that brought many visitors to the region. Dehradun is a highly favored destination throughout the year and it fascinates with it lush environs. No wonder therefore, that Dehradun attracts tourists, pilgrims and enthusiast from various walks of life. The study area has always attracted tourists by its captivating-natural beauty, vivid Flora and Fauna, rivers and waterfalls. Due to this variety of places of tourists' interests, every visitor before visiting the area had his or her own perception about the place. However during the visit, the tourists form their perception based on their expectations and experience.

Keywords: Tourist profile, ecotourism destination, Dehradun

1. Introduction

Tourists like to spend their long holidays away from their usual residence, where they can enjoy nature and avoid urban agglomeration with least interference. General attractiveness of an area or its scenic quality is today a much sought after commodity. More often, the physical characteristics of natural features determine scenic quality of a landscape. Identification of the existing attractions is the first priority of tourism development. Later comes the infrastructure, market analysis and profit loss etc. while all the components of tourism are essential and important for its growth, attractions provide the energizing power. It can be called the stimulator, the motivator for the tourist. Attractions not only provide the things to see and do but also lure the tourist.

Himalaya and its fascinating scenery are the great assets of the region. Really so outstanding and unique are they that the entire tourist industry of the region can bank on them. Ecotourism is the form of tourism which is simply based on the natural and cultural characteristics of the area. The natural and scenic beauty, mountains, rivers, forests and wildlife all together attract the nature lovers and eco-tourists. People now-a-days are more interested in visiting new and un spoiled places of natural importance. Tourists prefer less crowded and attractive natural areas in comparison to the popular congested old tourist destinations.

2. Study Area

Dehradun is the most important and capital district of the newly formed State of Uttarakhand comprises two distinct tracts-the vally part called Doon Vally and the hilly tract of Chakarata tehsil in the north west also known as Jaunsar Baber. The valley itself is composed of two sub valleys, the pachhawa doon sloping down to the Yamuna towards the south west, and the other called Parva Doon towards the ganga in the south-east. The district is located between 29° 56' to 30° 57' north latitude and 77° 35' east to 78° 23' east longitudes. The total area of the district is 3088sq kilometers. It is bounded in the North and North East by Utterkashi district, in the east by the

district of Tehri Garhwal and in the South by the Saharanpur district of Utter Pradesh whereas Southern boundary surrounded by Haridwar District. Its western boundary adjoins the Sirmour District of Himachal Pradesh.

Garhwal Himalayas has been described as one the most beautiful land in the mountains of the Asian sub-continent. Being one of the seven districts of Garhwal 'Dehradun' is the most cherished destination for the nature lovers, peace seekers and all types of visitors. Its dense forest, scenic landscape, meandering rivers, majestic mountain ranges on either side of wide-long valley, chirping and chilling winds, numerous picnic spots, temples, historical monuments, comfortable climate, wilderness, cultural diversity and altitudinal variations have together created a vast potential to attract the tourists. Natural factors that play major role in creating potential for ecotourism have been studied on three basis – (i) scenic beauty (ii) flora and fauna and (iii) climate (Siddiqui S., 2000).The district of Dehradun is fortunate to have immense spots, showcasing scenic beauty of the area. It can also be called visitors' paradise. The magnificent view of the snow covered Himalayan peaks on the North, serrated Siwalik range on the south adds grandeur to the study area.

The district is endowed with vast variety of flora and fauna which are a tangible resource for recreation. Various species of plants, trees and flowers exist in the district along with wide range of wild animals that has the potential to attract tourists. The study area is well forested, mainly with Sal on the lower slopes and mixed deciduous forest and chir pine higher up. The higher hills (above 1500m) of the outer Himalayas around Mussoorie and beyond have three species of oak (ban, moru and kharshu), with blue pine, deodar, spruce and silver fir (Osmaston, B.B *et al.*, 1989). There are many species of birds that exist in the region which includes winter visitors and the resident birds providing great feast for bird watchers and nature lovers. The vast variety of animals found in the region is vital tourism resource. Rajaji National park of natural significance is a major attraction for wildlife enthusiasts and eco tourists.

The climate of Dehradun is excellently pleasurable. Some spots

of natural importance remain cool even in scorching steamy days of summer. Doon Valley with its semi-temperate climate attracts tourists from adjoining districts of warm plains. Winters are also not so severe resulting in an overall mild-comfortable climate throughout the year. Snowfall occurs on the hills of Mussoorie and Chakrata during the winter months. Fog less and clear skies during the cold weather attract people in their winter breaks from surrounding areas.

Dehradun has its own rich cultural and historical background. Its culture has its own characteristics and follows primarily the traditions of a Hindu society. Fairs and festival, folkdances ornaments, colorful traditional dresses etc. are the cultural assets of the study area. The fairs like Bissu mela, Jhanda mela, Bhadraj mela and Shivaratri mela are very popular among the local people. The places like Kalsi, Lakhamandal, Hanol, and Kalanga are of great historical and archaeological importance and have been considered national heritage. This attracts large number of people with historical interests along with students, research scholars and ordinary visitor. The presence of three tribal groups – the Jaunsaris, the Bhoksas and the Gujjars add colours to the cultural life of the study area. Their unique traditions, colorful fairs and festivals, vibrant dances, songs and traditional attires are all cultural attractions of the area..

3. Objective

Dehradun, is the well-known tourist destination and famous for its scenic beauty, charismatic climate and peaceful socio-cultural and political environment. But the unplanned and non-regulated tourism has posed some serious threats to the natural environment of the study area. The main objectives of the present study is to know the perception of tourist about Dehradun District as eco-tourism destination.

4. Methodology

The present study aims to analyze potential of eco-tourism in Dehradun District. First step of the research is to collect the

secondary data on different issues from various published and unpublished sources of different governmental and non-governmental agencies. Then the reconnaissance survey was made to the study area.

5. Tourist Profile

Tourist is a person who ventures out of his normal place of residence to visit an area or place primarily for non-business purposes. Though some people can also combine tourism with business travel therefore a visitor can be described as tourists if that person makes at least a single overnight stay in an area visited and the purpose of whose journey could be recreation, holiday, health, study, religion and sport etc. A person can also be categorized as tourist who being on business visit, family mission and meetings also chooses to spend time as tourist. In other words, tourist can be interpreted to mean any person traveling for a period of twenty four hours or more in a region other than in which he usually resides. The term tourist can generally be defined as a person involved in some kind of pleasure trip, makes movement, has some motives behind visiting places and is bounded by time and surely returns back to the native place.

Table 1: Tourists Status in Dehradun Districts (2005-2015)

Year	Indian	Foreigner	Total
2005	1013959	12012	1025971
2006	1016058	18051	1034109
2007	1369950	17766	1387716
2008	1422578	18483	1441061
2009	1558715	17051	1575766
2010	1966942	20699	1987641
2011	1978962	19864	1998826
2012	2175851	21884	2197735
2013	2383783	18202	2401985
2014	2397197	18549	2415746
2015	2374527	18722	2393249

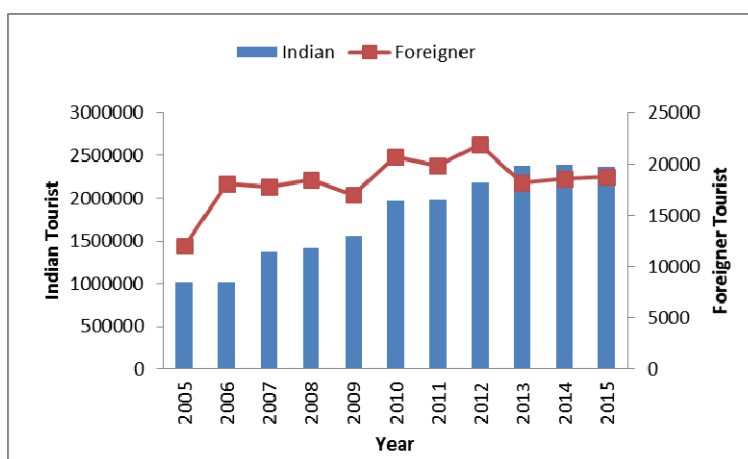


Fig 1: Tourists Status in Dehradun Districts (2005-2015)

Tourists are generally categorized in two categories-one, the international tourists and two, the domestic tourists. International tourist has been defined as a person holding a foreign passport, visiting another country and the main purpose of whose visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the country or establishment of

residence in the country.

The domestic tourist is any person residing in a country, who travels to a place within the country outside his/her usual environment, for a period not exceeding 12 months and whose main purpose of visit is other than the exercise of an remunerative activity from within the place visited (W.T.O.,

1993). The journey of a domestic tourist involve the following purposes:

- a) Leisure, recreation and holidaying
- b) Visiting friends and relatives
- c) Business and professionals
- d) Health, treatment
- e) Religion/ Pilgrimages, and others.

Dehradun district has immense potential and possibilities for tourism. It is a centre of various activities. The common tourists visiting Dehradun have religious interest but there are people particularly young, who come here for academic and recreational interest. Dehradun attracts people from all walks of life as it has something or the other for tourist of all ages and gender. Table 4.1 shows the number of domestic and foreign tourists visiting the Dehradun district according to three prominent locations namely Dehradun, Mussoorie and Rishikesh. It was seen from the data gathered from Department of Tourism the total tourist arrival in the study area in the year 2001 was 3067860 which rises to 52465420 in the year 2014.

Dehradun attracts tourists from all over India as well as from abroad. During the field survey of the study area, tourists from 20 different states of India were found at various destinations. From overseas, tourists from United Kingdom were larger in number followed by the other countries like Israel, China, France, Korea, etc. On the whole, Dehradun districts can be described as an area attracting people from different parts of the country as well as international tourists.

Dehradun is a beautiful district full of natural assets, virgin places, varied culture and a paradise for spiritual people. All these factors play a significant role in making the district a favoured destination of tourists. Tourists from various parts of the India and globe come here attracted by these attribute. Here an attempt has been made to present the profile of the tourists coming to the study area. This will help in understanding the liking, expectations, infrastructural needs and nature of the tourists.

Since the study was aimed at analyzing the potential and working out planning strategies for eco-tourism in Dehradun district, a field survey was conducted to get first-hand information of various destinations and to know about tourists visiting these destinations. The survey conducted in 2014-15 focused on understanding the kind of tourists visiting the study area, their interests and motivation, their preferences etc. In all 200 tourists, including 20 foreign nationals, were interviewed at the places like Sahastradhara, Tapkeshwar, Dakpathar, Malsi Deer Park, Lacchiwala, Laxman Sidh, Mussoorie, Rishikesh, Chakrata, Lakhamandal, Tiger Fall, Deoban, Mundali, Kanasar. To begin with, the survey questionnaire gathered information about the tourists. This section presents the summary of that information. The profile of the tourists has been studied under the following headings: Place of residence, Gender, Age, Marital Status, Educational Background, Occupation, Income, Companion for the Trip, Mode of Transportation, Frequency of Visit, Repeat Visit in Future, Recommendation of the District to Others.

6. Perception of Visitors

Perception is totally a psychological phenomena associated with the state of mind. It varies from person to person depending on their choices, their needs, and their preferences. People perceive and interpret the situation as they go along.

Thus different people can have different perception of the same things. During the course of fieldwork, attempt was made to enlist tourists' perceptions regarding various aspects of their visit to study area. Dehradun district is multi-dimensional in its tourists' attractions comprising of beautiful natural environment, moderate climate, best educational institutions, various institutes of national level, attractive picnic spots, religious places etc. Due to this variety of places of tourists' interests, every visitor before visiting the area had his or her own perception about the place. However during the visit, the tourists form their perception based on their expectations and experience. The field survey show that the perception varied widely among the tourists interviewed. It was revealed during field work that some tourists perceived the area as a developed region having all the infrastructural facilities and amenities suitable to all types of visitors, upgraded markets with international brands having big and fascinating showrooms, number of good places to eat, cinema halls, parks and all the hum drums of city life.

Some other perceived it as an educational paradise from where they will be able to achieve their goals of life will be able to have good education and opportunity for various job oriented courses. Yet some other perceived it as a place surrounded by number of picnic spots where they can fruitfully spend their vacations. For some it is a calm place filled with nature's blessings with healthy climate and magical world of wild life, vegetation, forests, rivers and much more. Large number of people perceived the place as religious and sacred because of the presence of several ancient temples and mythological stories of Rama and Laxman, Pandavas, Guru Dronacharya, Guru Ram Rai which are associated with the place. The presence of two rivers, Ganga and Yamuna in the district, increases holiness of the place. There were some respondents who perceived the place as crowded, noisy and polluted where unmanaged traffic, smoke and vehicle fumes causes pollution and problems for breathing system. They had perceived it as a haphazardly developed place with poorly developed infrastructural facilities.

However, most of the visitors experienced what they had perceived about the place. They were looking contented and happy with the place matching their perceptions along with having good experiences. They were happy with the facilities available to them. It is worthwhile to mention here that tourists who thought about it as only a noisy, unmanaged place, were stunned seeing the beauty of the place specially in the outskirts of the city areas and were amazed seeing the splendors of nature in the whole of the study area. They did not imagine the region to be so naturally rich and were amazed by the beauty of some spots but little unsatisfied with the facilities provided there.

In general, the tourists visiting the study area were happy with what they have seen and experienced. They said that their perception about the place was more or less the same as they saw it after coming to the region. However at some places the conditions were not very good and it had upset them. They were extremely unhappy with the filth and un-clean surroundings and the way some places were maintained. The norms for eco-tourism were generally ignored at majority of places said some of them. Some said that they never had perceived that they will see some famous spots in such a worst and unmanaged conditions.

An empirical study was carried out only of existing visitors of the study area regarding their perception on available products and services. The study carried out on the basis of random sampling of tourist traffic. The sample size of the survey is 100 and it includes 20 tourists below 26 yrs old, 30 tourists between 26-40 age group, 30 tourists between 41-60 age group and 20 tourists are above 60 yrs.

(A) Perception about Information

Perception about information includes the awareness of tourists about the destination where they were interviewed and about other destination in the region. It also includes the quality of guiding skills that was made available to them. On these parameters tourists scored above than satisfactory except on guiding skill.

(B) Perception about Accommodation

Perception about accommodation includes standard of accommodation, price and ambience. Tourists perceive that the standard of livings were satisfactory. They were delighted with the cheap accommodation as compare to the other places. The locations of the accommodations units at the viewpoints make the ambience pleasant for the tourists, as they scored higher than good quality level

(C) Perception about Facilities

Perception about facilities includes availability of food, accessibility customer's services, health services and cooperation from Government officials. Availability of food was satisfactory as it perceived by the tourists. The average score was 3.20 that was bit higher than satisfactory level. Customer services are good as it scored little bit higher than good quality level. But health services and accessibility are poor. Cooperation from, government official is satisfactory.

(D) Perception about Attraction

It includes religious faith, sights seeing, wildlife, dense forest, climate, adventure sports, local culture and traditions. Tourists were more delighted and fascinated with natural sceneries of the area. They were satisfied with wildlife, forests, climate and local culture and tradition of the area as they scored little bit higher that satisfactory level. Tourists were highly satisfied with the adventure activities. Overall the perception about attraction of tourists is good, which is very essential and good sign for ecotourism development in the study area.

(E) Perception about Destination Environment

It includes sanitary provision, safety and security, hygiene and environment quality. Despite of frequent landslide, heavy rain and cloudburst, visitors grouped this destination under safe category and it seems they were adventures by nature. The perception of tourists in case of sanitary vision was poor while in case of safety and security it was satisfactory.

7. Conclusion

Local community is the key factor for the development of tourism in the area. Discussions with local villagers indicate that community interest in tourism is very high but they lack the skills, knowledge and support to develop it. Local participation will be more effective than other media to promote tourism in the area. The people of Dehradun district

are simple, cooperative and hard working class and a close knit community. The system of the joint family is still prevalent, but slowly changing to a nuclear based family. Jaunsari, Garhwali and Hindi are the popular spoken dialect. It is a highly cast conscious society. The people of all the cultural groups are free to pursue there customs, conventions, beliefs and traditions. The village women of the district are an asset to the family, incharge of day to day domestic chores like collecting fuel and fodder, bringing water, cooking food, tending to cattle and assisting in the agricultural fields. They enjoy considerate freedom in the family and the spread of the education in the recent past is slowly changing their social position. The men's time is spent in rearing goat and sheep and working in the fields.

People with their sense of the picturesque, in their colourful customs and costumes, for their hunger for life and for their passion, for songs and dances are the biggest attraction. The genius of the valley lies in religion which expresses spontaneously on periodic festivals, the Lavi Fair being the most grandiose in colourful pageantry of the natives. Village melas (festivals) occur year-round. They are colourful, multiple day affairs where gods from different village are brought together.

The most important factors influencing the livelihood condition of the people in the district are variation in altitude, slope and climate. These variations help the district in tourism development as well as agricultural and horticultural development. Due to tourism development in the district, Dehradun (town) and some other nearby famous places like Sahastradhara, Guchchupani have now become starting points of medium and hard treks. Several dozen trekking agencies and the institute are engaged in this business which creates employment to the local people by way of porters, guides and cooks.

Long period of winter prohibits any outdoor activity of the people in the region. Thus, local people have to mainly depend upon the stored resources i.e. grain, fodder and fuel wood etc. and economy generated during the non- winter months. Out of that too heavy rains often take a toll of agricultural and horticulture crops. Due to these factors dependence on the livestock rearing for sustenance and also economy increases.

Benefit of people and they should be involved in the planning and development of tourism in their area. Through this involvement, tourism development will reflect a consensus of what the people want. Also, if local people are involved in planning and development decisions and if they understand the benefits the tourism can bring, they will more likely support it. Open public hearing provide the opportunity for anybody to learn about the plan and express their opinion. When the plan is completed, regional eco-tourism seminar should be organized. This meeting informs the participants and the local community about the importance of controlled eco-tourism development and the recommendations of the plan. There are at least five areas where local people can help to bring about eco-tourism activities i.e. information gathering, consultation, decision making, initiating action and evaluation. Local organization such As gram panchayat, mahila mandal, navyuvak mandal, devta committies may need strengthening and local people may need some training in skill areas.

About 65% of the villagers of the study area are willing to associated with ecotourism and related activities. They are of

the opinion that this may improve their economic status as they will get more opportunity to earn through tourism. About 25% people want to establish small shop, about 2.7% people want to become tourist guides, 5% are in favour of establishing hotels or restaurants, 7% are in favour of handicrafts and other show interests in porter, cook and in adventure sports. There is no outside advertising or co-ordination between them.

8. References

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