

Outdoor Recreation and Parks/Heritage Areas: Planning and Management

Les loisirs de plein air et les parcs ou sites d'héritage: planification et gestion

Cultural and Natural Recreational Resources in Garhwal Himalaya: An Approach for Integrated Development Planning

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INTRODUCTION

Garhwal Himalaya is famous for its panoramic scenic views, massive ranges, magnificent peaks, nectarial rivers, and kaleidoscopic flowers and is a celestial abode, famous as the valley of Gods. Different types of tourists and pilgrims visit the area during the summer season every year from different parts of India and abroad. Unfortunately, no serious and pragmatic programmes have been launched even after 42 years of independence.

Unplanned tourism has taken a big leap into some of the most fragile and sensitive Himalayan ecosystems, threatening biological and social environments. Tourism in the trends of impulsive decision makers break the barriers for spoliation of scenery in the area. The planners and decision makers responsible for resource development neither framed comprehensive planning parameters on the basis of real tourists statistics nor were interested in the preparation of resource and pilgrims inventory (cultural-historical, environmental, recreational attributes, entertainments, shopping and dining, architecture, climate and government attitude), which has led to pollution and mishandling of resource attractions. The worst examples of such planning can be seen at Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Bhuyandar valley of flowers.

OBJECTIVES

- i. to propose suitable methods for the measurements of tourists and pilgrims statistics
- ii. to devise methods for the proposed infrastructural and superstructural facilities and different types of recreational amenities in accordance with resource inventory and ecology
- iii. to know the exact length of stay both of pilgrims and tourists separately
- iv. to minimize erosion of resources on which tourist attraction is based and to protect and conserve those that are vanishing
- v. to coordinate resource planning with the overall economic and physical development plans of the region
- vi. to determine the physical and biological carrying capacity of resources

METHOD

The research methods adopted were basically based upon Ferrario's methodology involving four stages:

1. compilation of recreational resources inventory;
2. assessment of the degree of availability of resources;
3. assessment of tourist preferences; and
4. determination of resource demand and supply aspects were applied after some modifications due to lack of appropriate tourists and pilgrims data.

A number of discussions and interviews were conducted with visitors on different occasions. The problem of carrying capacity was examined on the basis of average daily flow of pilgrims and tourist arrivals, their average length of stay, and the provision of available tourist facilities. The method of knowing the length of stay was applied by:

1. multiplying the number of tourists and pilgrims sample for each time interval by the duration of their visits;
2. summing the figures; and
3. dividing the resultant amount by the total number of visitors in the sample.

However, to adjust the length of stay correct, tourists and pilgrims were interviewed at the time of their departure from the study region. Surveys were carried out on pilgrims' and tourists' socio-economic characteristics, their nature of frequentation, and facilities suggested.

RESULTS

The following are the findings from this work:

1. *Nature of visitors* - out of total number of visitors to the region, 60% were pilgrims and 40% were tourists, recreationists, and explorers. The visitors came in groups and families.
2. *The length of stay* - Pilgrims average stay is for five days duration whereas 7 days stay is an average of tourists.
3. *Accommodation* - Wooden and tin sheds are appropriate for pilgrims whereas budget hotels, Youth hostels, Lodges, Camping sites, and Tourist Bungalows should be constructed for tourists and travellers.
4. *Catering* - Self-service catering for pilgrims while modern style restaurants are proposed for tourists.
5. *Leisure activities* - hobby centres (gardening, painting, ceramics) and libraries are proposed for summer hill stations - Mussoorie, Pauri, and New Tehri town.

6. *Recreational amenities* - horseback riding, fishing, pony trekking, rope-ways, hiking, parks and fountains, wildlife zoo, and picnic areas are to be opened in and around the Scenic resorts for recreationists and tourists.
7. *Shopping and other centres* - Souvenir emporiums, laundry, dry cleaners, pharmacy, photo-studios, foreign exchange clearance agencies are essential at different places of tourists and pilgrims stay.
8. *Water based amenities* - swimming, boating, river rafting, angling, small rowing, pedal boats and power boats activities should be created for adventure seekers, river rafters and recreation lovers.
9. *General infrastructure* - Post and telegraph offices, hospitals with well equipped operation theatres, security measures, sanitary workers, porters, local transporters, drainage and sewage disposal, underground electricity and telephone lines, cooking gas pipe provision, fire stations and television towers provision are to be made available at all visiting destinations of tourists and pilgrims.
10. Tourists and pilgrims are to be diverted to lesser known scenic and religious resources of this area. Control measures must also be applied to determine the carrying capacity of a particular destination.

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