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EFFECT OF SPIRITUAL TOURISM ON FINANCIAL HEALTH OF THE UTTARAKHAND STATE OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India has been maintaining its identity as a hub of spirituality in spite of inevitable changes in the society owing to phenomenal advancements in science and technology globally. Tourists' interest in India is attributed to the curiosity factor attached to the varied culture of India. Every year, tourists from all over the globe visit India for vacation as well as for spiritual purposes. The main focus of the study was to explore economic and socio-cultural impacts of tourism on the economic health of an Indian state known for its spiritual shrines at several picturesque and geographically challenging locations. The objective of the current paper was to analyse the impact of spiritual tourism on the economy of Uttarakhand state of India. The study was based on secondary data obtained from various sources. Analyses were carried out in the context of several attributes of spiritual tourism pertaining to the state. A causal-loop model showing the interrelationship of major factors was constructed. The study outlined few steps regarding the prospects of spiritual tourism in the state. It was concluded that there exists immense potential for the state to explore spiritual tourism towards strengthening its economy and socio-cultural enrichments.

KEYWORDS

causal-loop representation, economic impact, employment, infrastructure, Spiritual tourism, Uttarakhand economy.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been recognized as one of the major revenue earning industries worldwide. It is considered as a smokeless industry which has been continuously growing and flourishing. It is important to note that the concept and scope of tourism have been progressively changing. In an earlier work, Hunziker and Krapf, in the year 1941, defined tourism as "the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity" (Leiper, 1979). International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism later, broadened the concept of tourism and defined tourism in terms of particular activities selected by choice and undertaken outside the home environment (Wheeler, 1995). Today, tourism has attained the status of even the highest revenue earner industry for many countries. This service sector industry has become a real threat for the core manufacturing sector industries in the recent times. Consequently, research interest in the area has also been increasing considerably.

Tourism is considered as one of the largest economic activity in the world, and perhaps the largest in the services sector. It is also one of the fastest growing sectors of the world economy. Tourism is vital for many countries, due to the income generated by the consumption of goods and services by tourists, the taxes levied on businesses in the tourism industry, and the opportunity for employment in the service industries associated with tourism. Tourism has its own direct and indirect effect on society which is regarded as an effective instrument of country's economic development. Government of India also adopted different approaches for promotion of tourism, which include new mechanism for expediting implementation of tourism projects, development of integrated tourism circuits and rural destinations, special capacity building in the unorganized hospitality sector and new marketing strategies to promote India as a brand.

Uttarakhand, the 27th state of India, also known as the abode of Gods, is one of such states of India which offers variety of experiences to the tourists. It is primarily a hilly state with only about ten percent of its total geographical area in the plains. According to a report of Uttarakhand Tourism Board, 2008, Uttarakhand economy mainly relies on tourism industry. Uttarakhand, being situated on the foothills of Himalayas, comprises of numerous hill stations which attract tourists from all across the globe thereby bringing money to the state. Apart from the hill stations, the wildlife has also been a major attraction for tourism as tourists come to visit the wildlife sanctuaries such as Corbett National Park and the famous Tiger Reserve. The other major aspect of tourism in the state is the spiritual tourism. The state is considered to be the home of number of spiritual centers. Thus, the state witnesses a major share of tourists visiting different places for spiritual activities. The Uttarakhand economy is all poised to take advantage of this situation and expand its tourism sector. The two inputs that are considered necessary for the development of this sector, i.e., natural and human capital, are abundantly available in the state. Thus, it has the potential to match the rise in tourism demand with an increase in supply of tourism services. This paper presents an analysis of the possible impact of tourism, and spiritual tourism in particular, on the state's economy based on the data from different sources.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

The following are the main objectives of the present study:

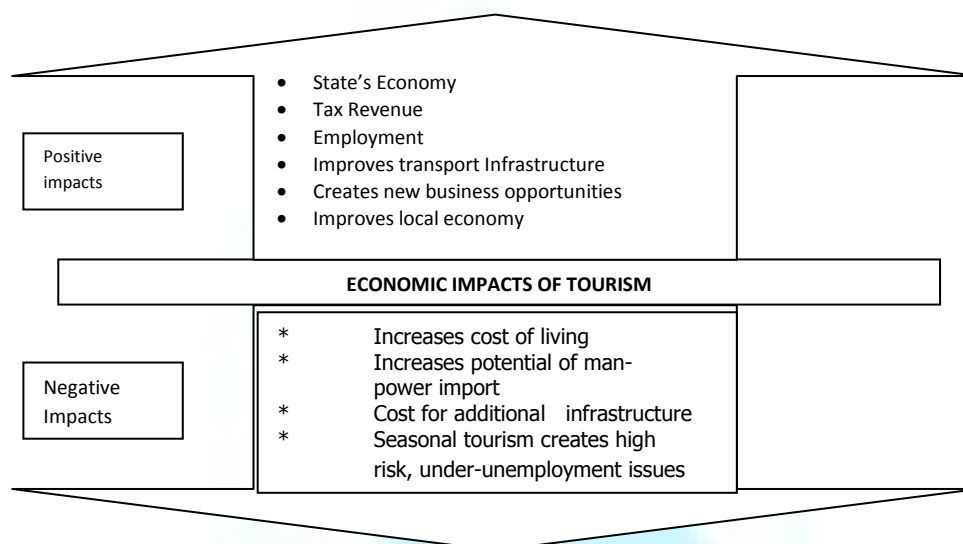
- 1) To analyse the impact of spiritual tourism on the economy of Uttarakhand state of India and
- 2) To explore economic and socio-cultural impacts of spiritual tourism in this state.

The methodology used in this study is of descriptive type that has been adopted for different economic estimations based on the data of various surveys conducted by different agencies, government organizations and Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Attempts have been made to analyse possible impacts of tourism, in general, and spiritual tourism, in particular, on the Uttarakhand state's economy based on the available secondary data.

IMPACT OF TOURISM IN INDIA

The tourism industry is one of the key players in the nation's changing face because of its unparalleled growth prospects and unlimited business potential. Furthermore, appropriate upgrading of the country's tourist information services, initiatives like massive investment in infrastructure of hotels, other infrastructure developments like airports, national highways, etc. will help tourism and hospitality sector bound to get a leap in its growth. Tourism, as a major service sector industry in world economy, has multi-dimensional impacts on the society. Glenn Kreag (2001) has identified the impacts of tourism into seven general categories. They are Economic, Social and Cultural, Environmental, Crowding and congestion, Community attitudes, Services and Taxes. Kreag further analyzed that each of these impacts has both positive and negative aspects. Some of the features that describe the impact of tourism on economy are illustrated in the Figure 1. Tourism brings capital to a state's economy, improves a state's infrastructure, and creates ample business opportunities in sectors like food, transport, and hospitality. However at the same time, it could adversely affect the state's economy by contributing to price rise, creating temporary scarcity of land, labour, and housing etc. Thus, it is necessary to adopt a scientific approach to analyse the possible impacts of tourism in the economy of a state that has significant tourism potential. Appropriate strategy to tap these potentials could yield handsomely for the state's economy.

FIGURE 1: IMPACT OF TOURISM IN UTTARAKHAND'S ECONOMY



The state of Uttarakhand, a tourist's paradise, is bounded by Nepal in the east, the Tibet Autonomous Region of China in the north, Himachal Pradesh in the west and Uttar Pradesh in the south. The total geographical area of the state is about 53,483 sq. km which is 1.63 percent of India's area. The state Uttarakhand was carved out of Uttar Pradesh and given an independent status as the tenth Himalayan state and the twenty-seventh state of the Indian Union on 9th November, 2000. There are 15,638 inhabited villages and 86 urban settlements in the state. Total forest reserve area in Uttarakhand accounts for 65% of the total land area of the state, which is 4.53% of India's forest area. Further, with more than three-fourths (78 percent) of its total population dependent on agriculture for livelihood, the economy of Uttarakhand is predominantly dependent on mountain agriculture. The major financial sectors in Uttarakhand have been identified as Agriculture, Natural Resources, Industry, Real Estate and the booming sector is Tourism. The tourism sector has become one of the major industrial sectors of the Indian Economy. Uttarakhand being situated in the foothills of the Himalayas comprises of numerous hill stations/wild life sanctuaries, which attract tourists from all across the globe. The next most important contribution to the economy of Uttarakhand state is the agricultural sector with approximate 5.7 million hectares of cultivated land. Cereals, pulses, oil seeds, sugarcane and onion are the major crops grown here. As 78% of the population depends on agriculture, it also contributes considerable revenue to the state's economy. Another important components on which the economy of Uttarakhand depends is its mineral resources. The state consists of large resources of minerals such as limestone, rock phosphate, dolomite, magnesite, copper, graphite, soap stone, gypsum and many others. Many of these minerals are exported out of India that fetches good revenue. Uttarakhand economy also depends upon its small scale industries. The state has all total 28249 small scale units and 397 cottage (*gramodhyog*) units. This state also has 191 heavy industries that are earning a profit of ₹ 26946.6 million. Another component that is spreading its wings in Uttarakhand is the real estate. With more and more real estate agents flowing into this state, it will be one of the major forces in determining the flow of economy of Uttarakhand.

TOURISM IN UTTARAKHAND

Foreign tourism is an integral part of the Uttarakhand economy. In the last decade the tourism industry experienced strong growth, with large increases in arrivals of foreign tourists, tourist spending and investment. Apart from economic consideration, Tourism is not limited to industry alone. It has manifold impacts on the state as well as on the society. This is a state where tourists are welcome like *Devtas* (meaning the GOD). Naturally, the *atithis* (tourists) respond overwhelmingly to the state's welcome. Thus, as high as 0.5 million International Tourists are expected by the year 2020 (Government of India, 2008). This state is also known as adventure and spiritual capital of India, which are the other causes of attraction for the tourists. Although the state is a remarkably new state, its GDP rate is 9.31% which is significantly higher than the Indian's national average GDP of 8.45%.

Tourism has been playing a major role in building and sustaining the economy of Uttarakhand. Tourism has been a major driver of economic growth and livelihood promotion in most of the remote areas of Uttarakhand. The income earned from tourists by providing various services including transportation, food and beverage, pony and porter services, etc. sustain the livelihood of several villages in the remote hilly regions of Uttarakhand.

An interesting fact about tourism in Uttarakhand is that the number of tourists to the state, both inbound and outbound, has been increasing. However, the rate of growth is marginal. A comparative profile of tourists visiting India and Uttarakhand in the first six years of the present decade has been presented in Table 1. Further, only a very small percentage (~3 – 4 %) of the total tourists coming to India is visiting the state. According to a report of the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Master Plan 2007–2022 (Government of India, 2008), in the case of foreign tourist visit, the share of Uttarakhand has been declining over the years since 2002 except for a marginal increase in the year 2005. The annual growth rate of domestic tourist visits in Uttarakhand during the period 2001 – 2006 was 12.9% as against 14% growth at the national level. Further, the international tourist growth rate achieved by Uttarakhand was 12.0% as against 16.0% growth at the national level. The facts call for adopting appropriate strategies to attract to tourists to the state.

In the current decade there has been a continuous growth in the flow of both domestic and international tourist to the state which is a very healthy sign for the state's economy. Analyses of data from different sources show that the trend is not very encouraging for the Uttarakhand state tourism. Although the percentage of tourists visiting the state is remaining more or less same but the fact is that only 3 – 4% of the total tourists coming to India are visiting Uttarakhand as shown in Table 1. Maybe, this kind of study will make the concerned authorities more proactive about how this percentage can be improved which will have a significant impact on the socio-economic and socio-cultural activities of the state.

According to the data available from the Ministry of tourism, Government of India for the year 2010, it was found out that FTAs (Foreign Tourist Arrivals) in India during 2010 were 5.58 million with a growth rate of 9.3% as compared to the FTAs of 5.11 million and growth rate of (-)3.3% during 2009. The number of domestic tourist visits increased from 650.00 million in 2009 as compared to 562.98 million in 2008 showing a growth of 15.5%. The FEE (Foreign Exchange Earnings) from tourism during 2010 was US \$ 14193 million as compared to US \$ 11394 million during 2009 and US \$ 11747 million during 2008 (Ministry of Tourism, 2011). Uttarakhand featured in the eighth position in the top ten states in India in terms of number of domestic tourist visits (in millions) during 2009, a list topped by the state Andhra Pradesh, which incidentally hosts a number of famous spiritual places. The Table 2 shows the rank of Uttarakhand state in terms of number of domestic and foreign tourists respectively in the year 2009, according to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The Table 2 indicates that the domestic tourists have better interests toward this state. The state, on the other hand, closely follows the national annual growth rate, it is clearly revealed.

TABLE 1: TOURIST PROFILE IN UTTARAKHAND DURING 2001 – 2006

Year	Number of tourists (in millions)		
	Domestic	International	Total
2001	9.55	0.04	9.60
2002	10.61	0.05	10.65
2003	10.84	0.06	10.89
2004	11.72	0.06	11.78
2005	14.22	0.08	14.29
2006	19.36	0.10	19.45

Source: Mittal et al. 2008

TABLE 2: DOMESTIC (D) AND FOREIGN (F) TOURISTS IN UTTARAKHAND STATE DURING 2007-2009

2007 (million)		2008 (million)		2009 (million)		Annual Growth Rate 2008/2007		Annual Growth Rate 2009/2008		% share in 2009		Rank in 2009	
D	F	D	F	D	F	D	F	D	F	D	F	D	F
19.803	0.096	20.546	0.1	21.935	0.106	0.38	0.41	0.68	0.66	0.34	0.8	8	15

Source: Tourism Statistics at a glance (2009)

FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS OF UTTARAKHAND

India's foreign exchange earnings for the last three years are shown in the Table 3. The growth rate in FEE has shown a decline, which, in rupee terms during the year 2009 was 8.3% as compared to 2008, and 14.4% during 2008 as compared to 2007. In spite of the negative growth rate of 3.3% in FTAs due to economic recession and other adverse factors for tourism, FEE in rupee terms observed a significant growth of about 8% during the year 2009.

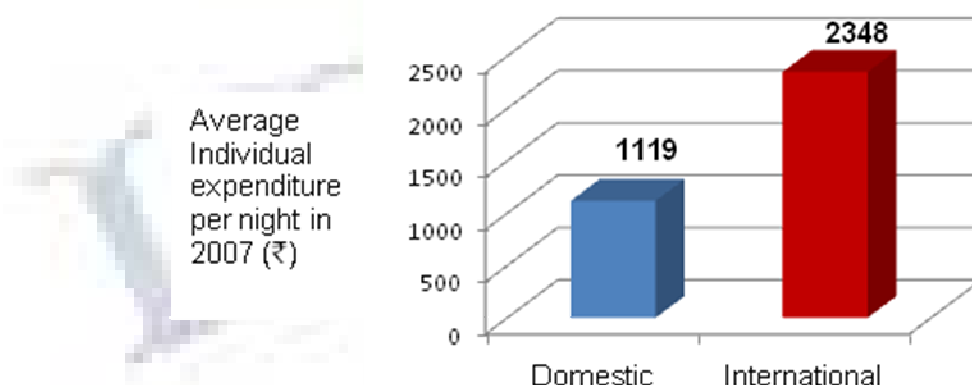
Thus with tourism as an earning source, the state's treasury is also getting inflated handsomely. If one considers the average individual expenditure of a tourist as suggested in the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Master Plan 2007–2022 (Govt of India, 2008), domestic tourists spends approximately one thousand rupees per night while international tourists spends approximately double the amount. Again, if we consider an average of four days stay of an international tourist in the state, the state earns an foreign exchange of approximately one thousand million rupees, and the corresponding tax revenue fetched by the tourism is ` 141.4 million as illustrated in the Figure 2.

TABLE 3: FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS

Month Jan-Dec	Foreign Exchange Earnings (million)			Percentage Change	
	2007	2008#	2009#	2008/2007	2009/2008
Total	443600	507300	549600	14.4%	8.3%

Source: Tourism Statistics at a glance (2009)

FIGURE 2: FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNING OF THE STATE



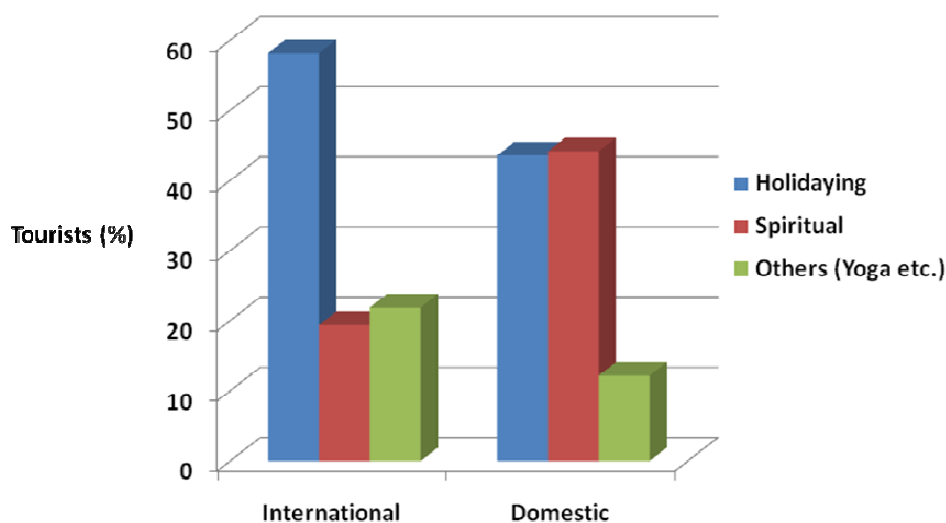
Source: Government of India, 2008

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SPIRITUAL TOURISM IN UTTARAKHAND

Interesting information available with Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) is that about 58.2% of the international tourists visits were for holiday/sightseeing, 21.9% for health/yoga, and about 19.4% for pilgrimage/religious functions as shown in Figure 3. For domestic tourists, on the other hand, the main purpose of 44.2% of the tourist visit was pilgrimage/religious while that of 43.6% was holiday / sightseeing. Spiritual beliefs of common Indian people contribute to this observed higher ratio of domestic spiritual tourists. However, if the number of spiritual tourist can be enhanced through various motivational/promotional programmes, the revenue earned by the state can be significant.

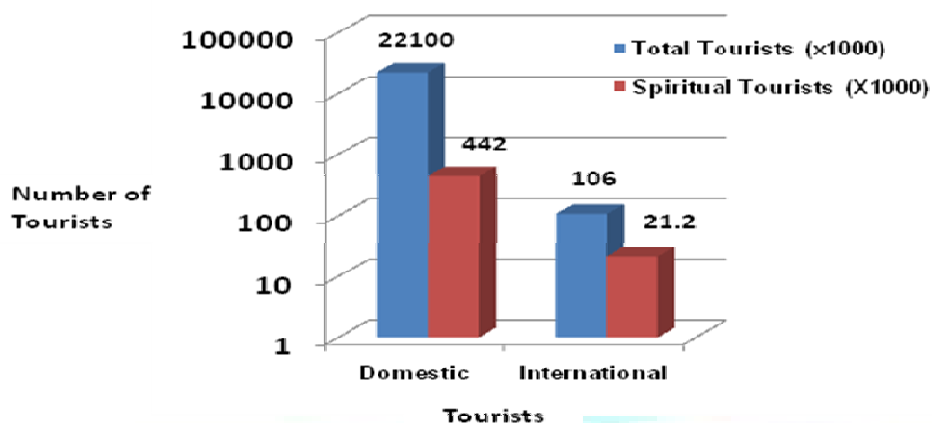
The forecast presented in the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Master Plan 2007–2022 (Government of India, 2008) can be graphically illustrated in the Figures 4–5. The domestic tourist visits in Uttarakhand by 2012, 2017 and 2022 are projected to be 42.24 million, 77.82 million and 143.38 million, respectively, while the projected foreign tourist visits are estimated at 0.227 million, 0.399 million and 0.703 million respectively. Thus, in case of these targets get realized, the corresponding income generation at 2004-05 prices are likely to be as presented in Figure 5. The projected income has been arrived at by considering individual spending of international and domestic tourists at ` 2348.00 and ` 1119.00 per day for a stay of four and two days, respectively.

FIGURE 3: SEGMENTATION OF TOURISTS ACCORDING TO THE MOTIVATION OF VISIT



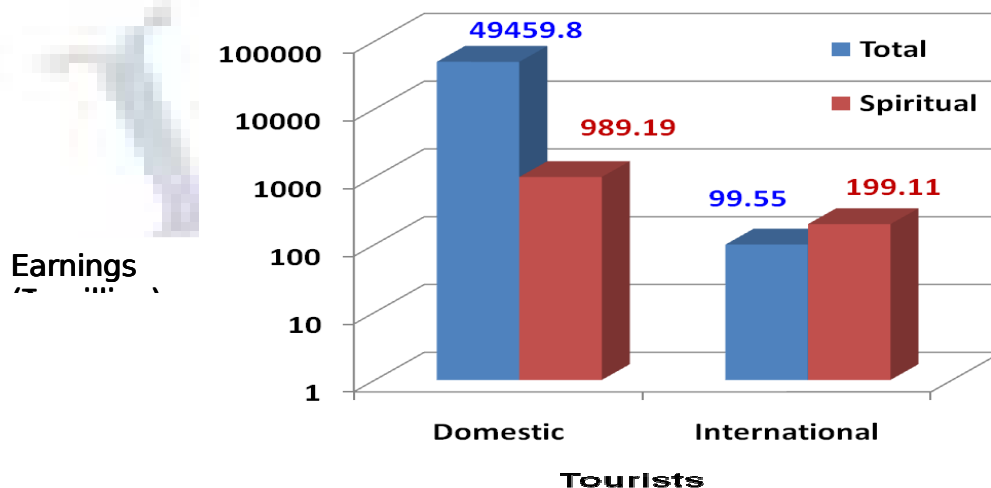
Source: Government of India, 2008

FIGURE 4: SHARE OF SPIRITUAL TOURISTS IN UTTARAKHAND IN THE YEAR 2007



Source: Government of India, 2008

FIGURE 5: STATE'S EARNINGS FROM SPIRITUAL TOURISTS IN THE YEAR 2007

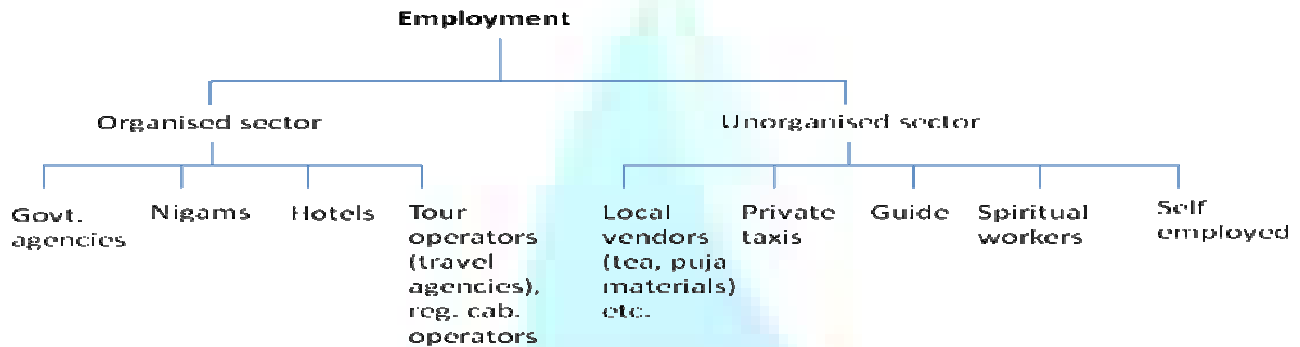


Source: Government of India, 2008

DIRECT AND INDIRECT EMPLOYMENT THROUGH TOURISM

One of the major benefits of growth of tourism is the generation of direct and indirect employment. Employment generation in a state, which has very little to boast about regarding the growth of small and heavy industries, has certainly a decisive impact on its economy. The type of employment generated owing to the spiritual tourism can broadly be categorized into organised and unorganised sectors depending on their mode of functioning. The categorization is schematically presented in the Figure 6. The state has a number of state supported tourism agencies apart from a separate Government Department for formulation and implementation of policies. Hospitality in all the important spiritual places is also provided by many hotels and guest houses run by Government, Non Government Organisations (NGOs) and private entrepreneurs. Many big chain hotels have their existence in the spiritually strategic locations. All such establishments basically employ the local people contributing towards minimizing the state's unemployment problem. Number of tourist operators chain-linking the various spiritual places as well as providing a large pool of man power is working in an unorganised manner in almost all the spiritual places of the state. These include – local conveyances providers through autorickshaw, rickshaw, horses, donkeys, persons engaged in various spiritual activities, persons who run very small tea/refreshment shops (*Chaiwallas*), vendors who sell various materials for spiritual activities, tourist guides and in other indirect services like laundries, hair styling etc. Thus, there are number of employment opportunities growing in and around the spiritual activity centers whose earnings solely depend on the spiritual tourists.

FIGURE 6: DIRECT AND INDIRECT EMPLOYMENT THROUGH SPIRITUAL TOURISM

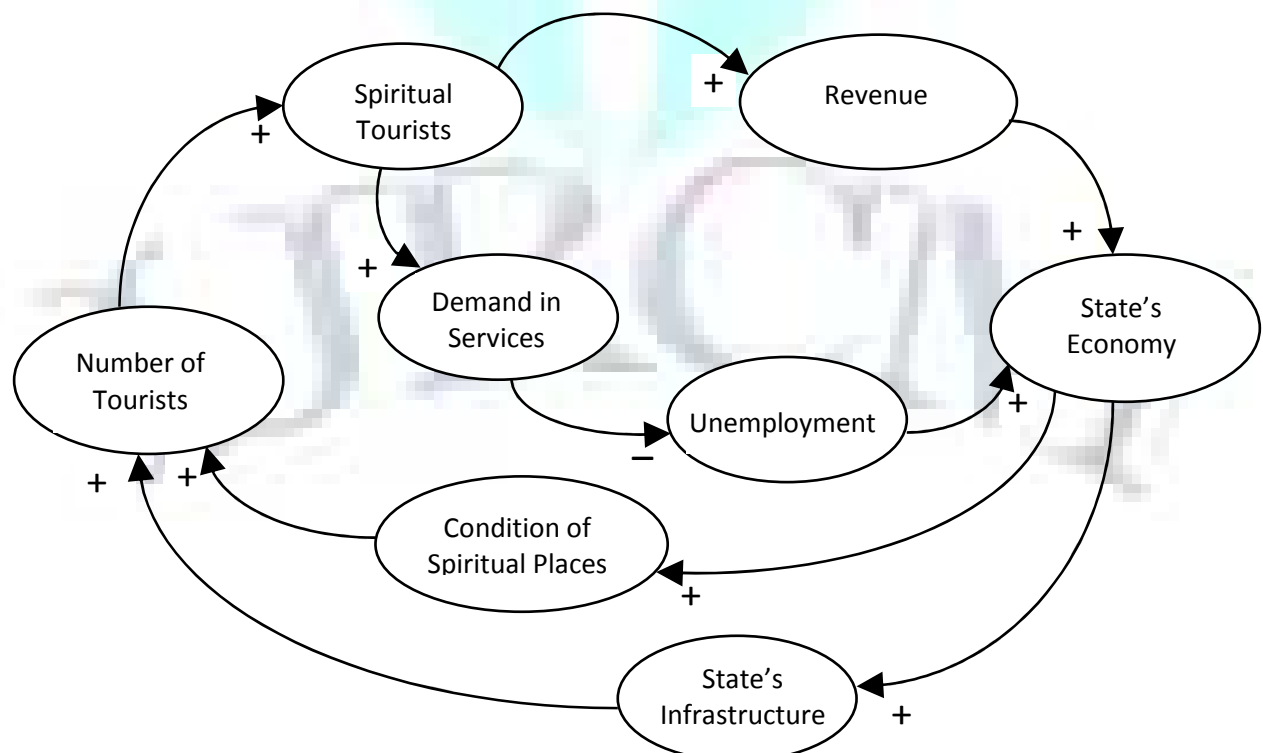


TOURIST-ECONOMY-INFRASTRUCTURE MODEL

The importance of tourism for an economy is independent of its status of development. Tourism played a major role in shaping the economies of many advanced countries including the United States of America and Spain. Tourism generated five million jobs in the USA in the year 1989. It is not only state's income that makes tourism sectors important. The sectors like foreign investment, subsidies, employment and taxation also get highly affected. Infrastructure and resources are considered the most important features for any country. In developing and advanced countries, tourism is viewed as an important means to enhance income and employment. There have been considerable researches on tourism and relationships with economic development.

A generalized causal-loop relationship of the features like number of tourists, state's economy, infrastructure and employment has been illustrated in the Figure 7. The number of spiritual tourists in the state increases with an increase in total number of tourists in the state through whom the state earns revenue. On the other hand, as the state's economy flourishes, the state would be tempted to improve upon the sources of their revenue earning spiritual places. Better economy would also provide the state with the opportunity to develop its infrastructure. Improved condition of the spiritual centers and the state-of-the-art infrastructure naturally attract more tourists to the state making it a positive loop. As a consequence of the increase in the number of tourists to a state, a higher degree demand in the services sector is automatically generated. This includes hospitality, communication, health care, and specialized services in the spiritual centers. The type of specialized services shall vary according to the nature/characteristics of the center including need for local guides, spiritual activist, barbers, local conveyances etc. A rising demand in small services segments, on the other hand, creates employment opportunities basically for the local residents, which in turn, contributes positively to the state's economy.

FIGURE 7: A CAUSAL-LOOP PRESENTATION OF THE TOURIST-ECONOMY-INFRASTRUCTURE



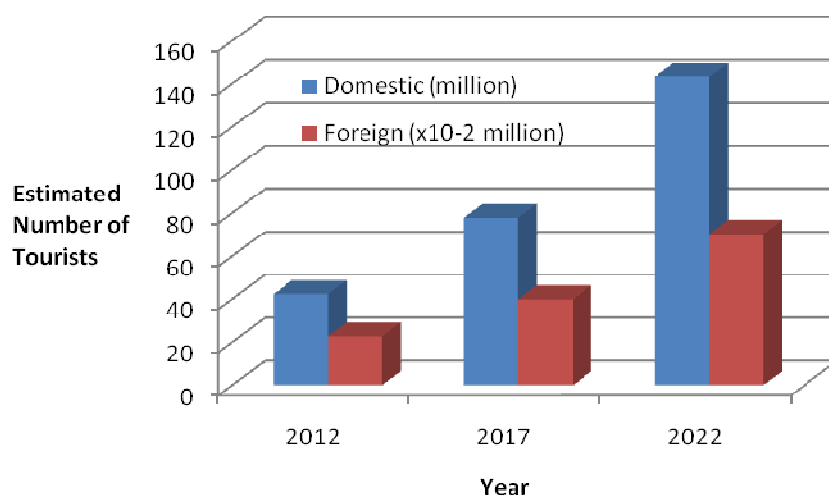
FUTURE PROSPECTS OF SPIRITUAL TOURISM IN UTTARAKHAND

As mentioned already, Uttarakhand, one of the hilly states of India that takes the pride having the 'Queen of Hills', is also considered as the 'base of spiritual places'. Thus, ideally there should not be a reduction in the size of tourists visiting the state given the improving infrastructure of the state. The future prospects of spiritual tourism in the state have also been partially studied. The forecast presented in the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Master Plan 2007–2022 (Government of India, 2008) can be graphically illustrated in the Figures 8–9. The domestic tourist visits in Uttarakhand in the years 2012, 2017 and 2022 are estimated to be 42.24 million, 77.82 million and 143.38 million respectively. The foreign tourist visits, on the other hand, are projected at 0.227 million, 0.399 million and 0.703 million respectively by the same years. Consequently, the states revenue should grow healthy. However, the increase in number will largely depend on the attitude the state would exhibit towards welcoming the tourists by improving the infrastructure.

Optimizing the possible benefits of tourism and tourism related activities is critical to Uttarakhand's economy, and hence the state's development. The enhancement of economic benefits of tourism, particularly income generation and employment creation depends on strengthening of infrastructure facilities, effective marketing, adequate human resource development and strengthening of institutional structure for the promotion of tourism in the State. A number of specific recommendations in respect of these aspects are reported in various reports (Mittal et al., 2008; Government of India, 2008). A summary of these recommendations may be presented as follows:

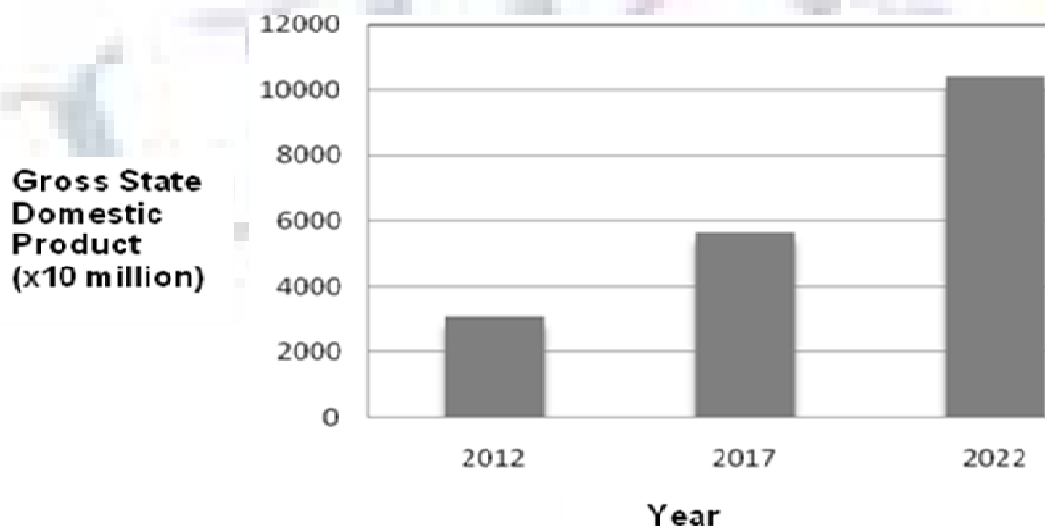
- Branding of Uttarakhand as a tourist destination and image creation.
- Branding Uttarakhand as a destination for spiritual tourists, as well as for leisure and recreation, adventure, trekking, etc.
- Adopting appropriate marketing strategy to attract both national and international tourists.
- Issues like infrastructure development pertain to transportation, electricity and drinking water supply, telecommunications, emergency services, restaurants and hotels, and waste disposal are to be addressed realistically.
- Periodical surveys of both domestic and foreign tourists may be undertaken for assessing the profiles, motivational factors, expenditure patterns and satisfaction levels.
- The Tourist Information Centers at the district headquarters should create and maintain a data base of accommodation, travel agencies, tour operators, guides, etc. operating in the respective districts and update the same regularly by using the computer facilities already available.
- Human resource development including promoting community tourism initiative so that tourists can have a real experience of villages.
- The establishment of effective linkages of tourism activities with other sectors like art and crafts, entertainment industry, trade, etc.
- Establishment of some decent souvenir shops and shopping arcades in different parts of the state which could attract the tourists to make purchases.

FIGURE 8: ESTIMATED TOURISTS TO VISIT THE STATE UTTARAKHAND



Source: Government of India, 2008

FIGURE 9: PROJECTED GROWTH IN UTTARAKHAND



Source: Government of India, 2008

CONCLUSION

The status of tourism and, spiritual tourism, in particular, in the Indian state of Uttarakhand have been analysed in the present paper with the help of data from various sources. The possibility of the revenue to be earned by the state from spiritual tourists has been explored. A causal-loop representation of the effect of spiritual tourists on the state's economy has been developed. The following conclusions can be made from the present study:

1. Tourism is one the highest revenue earning industries in Uttarakhand.
2. Most tourists are primarily attracted either by its natural beauty (holidaying) or by its centers of spiritual activities.
3. There has been an increase in the rate of tourist inflow to the state, particularly in the current decade.
4. Spiritual tourism plays an important role in determining state's economic health.
5. Earning through tourists and employment (both direct and indirect) are two important indicators which influence the state's economy significantly.
6. International spiritual tourists contribute more towards the state's revenue than the domestic tourists.
7. The percentage of domestic spiritual tourists is more than the international tourists.
8. In order to enhance the inflow of spiritual tourists to the state, the conditions of the spiritual places, and the state's infrastructure should be improved.

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