



ECONOMIC PROSPECTS OF HILL TOURISM IN INDIA

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Abstract

This paper explores the prospects and challenges of hill tourism in India. India is a land of vivacity and plurality of culture. Indian geography has been blessed with wonderful and myriad landscapes across all Indian states. Each landed region is evidence to appealing greener landscapes, captivating hills, cheerful river basins, archaeological ensembles, historical artefacts, forts etc. Hill tourism can play a pivotal and positive role in socio economic development of hill areas and hill towns of Himalayas and sub Himalayan terrains. The regional economy, bio diversity, natural attractions, scenic beauty, religious and socio cultural dimensions of hill tourism are to be studied intricately. Majority of them are overcrowded, several of them lack basic infrastructure while the issues of poor security and poor precautionary measures point to unplanned growth. There is a need to review the development strategy as Hill tourism needs meticulous planning and far-sighted resource management. Hill tourism Planners always follow American or European model in developing hill stations in India, but not all hill tourism development initiative followed in European countries are ideal in Indian context. Understanding that Hill station tourism provides perfect conditions for outdoor location activities, it needs to be projected as the agent of economic development of hilly regions. But all types of prohibitive activities have to be monitored and proper guidelines have to be framed.

Keywords: - Hill tourism in India, Prospects, Challenges

Introduction

Hill station tourism is one of the emerging segments of Indian tourism sector. Youth are attracted to tourism and the foreign tourists also love to visit Indian hill stations for their leisure and recreation. These hill stations are centre of attraction because they are natural divine and surrounded by greener landscapes. They have enchanting beauty and healthy pollution free atmosphere. Hill stations in north India differ from south India. They are above sea level and hence they are readily adjustable to foreigners. As majority of the hills stations are in high altitude, they easily attract youth who always love adventure and exploration.

Famous hill stations of India - The following are the famous hill stations of India

1	Chail Giri dhaam
2	Chambaa Giri dhaam
3	Dalhousie Giri dhaam
4	Dharmashaala Giri dhaam
5	Hamirpura Giri dhaam

6	Kalpa Giri dhaam
7	Kangra Giri dhaam
8	Kasauli Giri dhaam
9	Kinaur Giri dhaam
10	Kufrii Giri dhaam
11	Lahoul Giri dhaam
12	Manali Giri dhaam
13	Naaldhera Giri dhaam
14	Nahan Giri dhaam
15	Palampur Giri dhaam
16	Parawano Giri dhaam
17	Sangala Giri dhaam
18	Shimla Giri dhaam
19	Sholan Giri dhaam
20	Spiti Giri dhaam
21	Voona Giri dhaam

Number of foreign tourist arrivals		
sl no	year	foreign tourists
1	2000	5.89 million
2	2005	9.95 million
3	2010	17.91 million
4	2015	23.33 million
5	2018	28.87 million

Source – *India tourism at a glance, Ministry of tourism, Government of India New Delhi 2019*

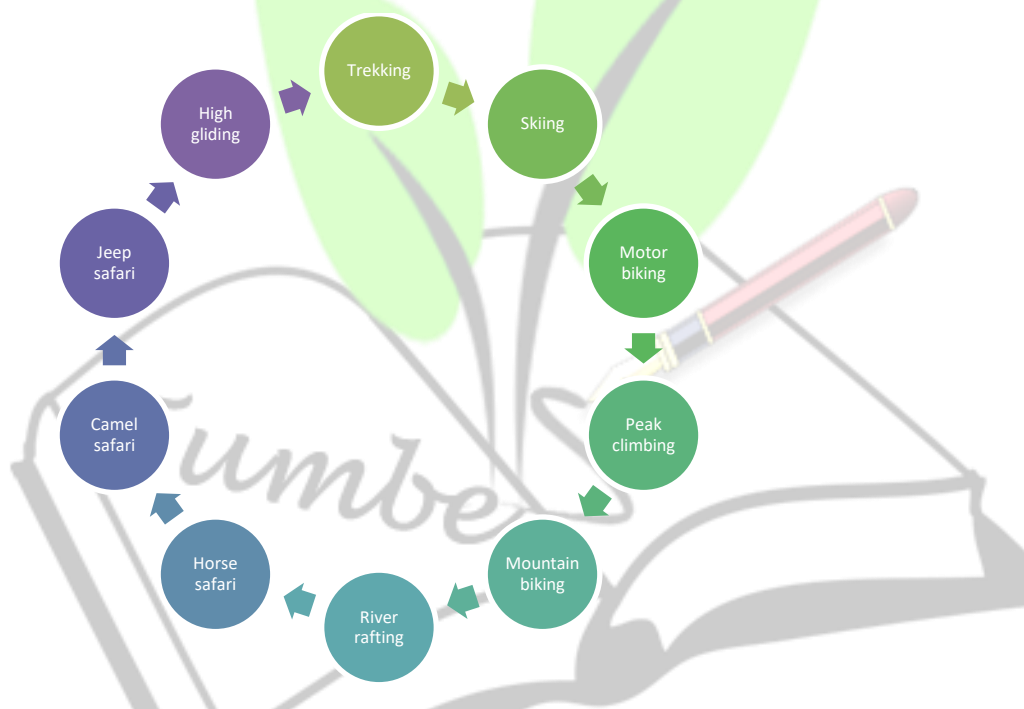
Hill tourism as a supportive segment of Indian tourism sector has become popular because Hill region of northern India reflect ethnic diversity . As shown below the following communities live cordially to make the hilly regions more diversified in Traditions, customs, language , culture , cuisine and lifestyle. These groups are hard working , adventurous and risk bearing .

1	Buddhists
2	Muslims
3	Gaddis
4	Kinnars
5	Jadau
6	Tanolis
7	Gujjars
8	Pangawalas
9	Lahoilis

Supportive destination attractions- Tourists who visit hilly regions are also attracted to visit the nearby places and lakes form one of the finest attractions.

1	Names of the lakes visited by tourists
2	Chandratal lake
3	Dal lake
4	Gobind sagar lake
5	Khajjar lake
6	Nako lake
7	Parashar lake
8	Renuka lake

Hill tourism related tourist activities- The hill tourism is a growing concept which includes several activity which are adventurous , exploratory and recreational. As shown in this diagram the activities are varied and differ with individual preferences.



Sl no	Hill tourism related activities
1	Trekking
2	Skiing
3	Motor biking
4	Peak climbing
5	Mountain biking
6	River rafting
7	Horse safari
8	Camel safari

9	Jeep safari
10	High gliding

Source – India tourism at a glance, Ministry of tourism, Government of India New Delhi 2019

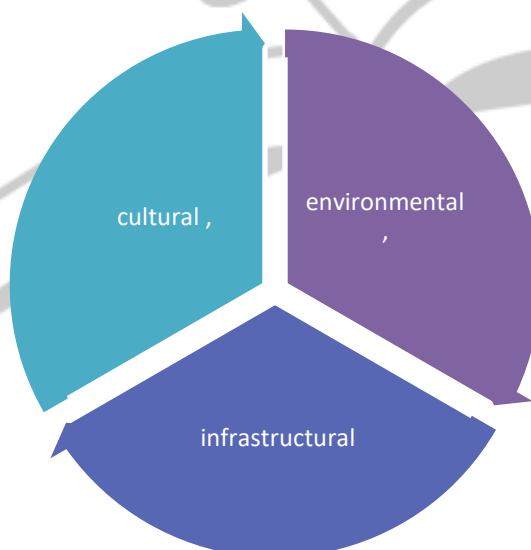
Pilgrimage centres covered in hill tourism-

Sl no	Pilgrimage centres covered in hill tourism
1	Bias kund
2	Chandratal
3	Indrahar
4	Kailash kund
5	Mani mahesh
6	Shiva sukhi
7	Shankha mukhi

Hill tourism can play a pivotal and positive role in socio economic development of hill areas and hill towns of Himalayas and sub Himalayan terrains. The regional economy, bio diversity, natural attractions, scenic beauty, religious and socio cultural dimensions of hill tourism are to be studied intricately.

1.	Tribal life,
2.	Ethnic life,
3.	Folk traditions,
4.	Folk lore attractions including food, cuisine, dress ,health tips, spas
5.	Religious shrines ,
6.	Sanctified spots

Challenges to hill tourism - All these factors support to extend an organic whole. Hence, tourists flock to hill stations. As shown below , the challenges are broadly listed as environmental , infrastructural , cultural .



Besides there are following Secondary challenges as well.

1.	Irrational exploitation of natural resources
2.	Over tourism
3.	Environmental degradation
4.	Pressure on infrastructure
5.	Heavy pressure on Land use pattern
6.	Disturbing demand supply equilibrium
7.	Invasion on local culture and traditions
8.	Leads to environmental pollution
9.	Losing socio- cultural identity
10.	Pressure on local transport
11.	Demand for Hospitality Services
12.	Immensity of accommodation & lodging facility demands

Government role – priority areas- The government has to look into prospects of investment and priority planning process

1. Government always endeavour to initiate tourism policies along with western country models. These western accepted models sometimes impose alien, cosmopolitan , massive looking, designs which are not ideal for Indian Cultural continuity.
2. **Development of tourist village concept** - Development of tourist village concept with utilization of local wisdom potential as well as resource development is essential. But tourism villages so far developed by Tourism sector often lack vision and planning.
3. **limited rail road connectivity** – it is noted that out of 60 hill stations in India only seven are connected by rail-
4. **tour signage road indication signals out station accommodation** - to be notified air connectivity disturbs bio diversity of the region.

Besides there are issues of difficulty in terrain, restriction of mobility, limited movement of auto mobiles , need for heavy investment on road communication, providing for parking facility etc. But the challenge of hill tourism development strategy suffers from several issues. Majority of them are overcrowded, several of them lack basic infrastructure while the issues of poor security and poor precautionary measures point to unplanned growth. There is a need to re view the development strategy as Hill tourism needs meticulous planning and far-sighted resource management . Hill tourism Planners always follow American or European model in developing hill stations in India , but not all hill tourism development initiative followed in European countries are ideal in Indian context. Understanding that Hill station tourism provides perfect conditions for outdoor location activities, it needs to be projected as the agent of economic development of hilly regions. But all types of prohibitive activities have to be monitored and proper guidelines have to be framed.

Sl.no	Prospective expenditure priorities before government
1	Infrastructure development – prioritizing rail / road / air travel communication
2	Provision for Overseas promotion with appointment of brand ambassadress
3	Periodical Reviewing of Publicity and media coverage policies and considering their impact factor for future rectification

4	Monitoring Domestic tourism promotion policies with eye on developing parallel tourist destinations to avoid heavy influx.
5	Framing policies for Capacity building of tourist personnel in order to match global standards.
6	Allocating for world class accommodation infrastructure
7	Conducting Market research and understanding the priority areas
8	Construction of Bharath Paryatan bhavan

Conclusion

Hence, there is a need to identify unique challenges facing hill tourism segment and frame policies to make it more sustainable. The government has to identify the size of economic contribution of hill tourism sector to GDP. As hill tourism combines physical activity in natural environment along with cultural fascination, there is a need to classify different sub sectors of recreation in hilly region and make them more supportive to all stake holders.

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