

THE ROLE OF PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF HARIDWAR.

Rajeev Kumar

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, Motherhood University,
Roorkee, Haridwar, Uttarakhand

Yasmin Ameer

Research Scholar, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, Motherhood University,
Roorkee, Haridwar, Uttarakhand

ABSTRACT

Tourism has seen a global rise over recent decades, with religious tourism standing out due to its historical significance. Haridwar, located at 29°58' N latitude and 78°10' E longitude, is a prominent religious destination for Hindus and attracts both domestic and international visitors due to its stunning geographical setting and rich cultural resources. Tourism undoubtedly contributes to regional economic development, and Haridwar is no exception. As a key religious site, it has unique characteristics, but the influx of tourists, especially during religious festivals, has led to significant environmental pollution. This paper aims to assess the tourism infrastructure, evaluate the economic impact of religious tourism, and address the environmental challenges associated with tourism development. Additionally, it offers recommendations for enhancing tourism in the region. This paper evaluates the sustainability of tourism in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, where tourism plays a crucial role in the local economy. However, the city's tourism environment is increasingly threatened by the ongoing degradation of natural resources. The aim of the study is to assess the sustainability of tourism with respect to both ecological impact and the local community in Haridwar. The research, conducted using data from various secondary sources and an extensive field survey from 2000 to 2022 employs scientific methods to analyse the situation. The paper highlights the conflicts between tourism activities and the conservation of natural resources, noting that unchecked tourism has negatively affected the quality of the Ganga River water and the city's infrastructure. The author provides a critical review of Haridwar's Master Plan and recommends scientific measures for promoting sustainable tourism, with a particular emphasis on ecotourism.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism involves the movement of individuals from one location to another and encompasses economic, social, and cultural dimensions. It refers to the temporary relocation of people to different destinations. Tourism can be categorized by purpose into special interest, leisure, business, and educational trips. Additionally, it can be classified into outbound, inbound, and domestic types. According to Page and Hall (2014), the development of Indian tourism policy began by studying global tourism trends. Tourism has substantial potential for creating employment opportunities, fostering national unity, and generating foreign exchange. Among the various tourism categories in India, pilgrimage tourism has become increasingly significant in recent years.

Haridwar, renowned as a major religious and spiritual pilgrimage site in Uttarakhand and India, is celebrated for its deep-rooted religious and cultural heritage. Tourism, a rapidly expanding sector globally, has diverse effects—both positive and negative—on local communities, cultures, economies, and the environment. Recent research has not

sufficiently addressed the sustainability of tourism in Haridwar. Current literature largely focuses on the potential and economic aspects of tourism, with limited discussion on the conflicts between tourism and the conservation of natural resources. Therefore, investigating the adverse effects of unchecked tourism in Haridwar is crucial for evaluating the ecological sustainability of tourism in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A pilgrimage is a ritual journey to sacred heritage sites aimed at achieving peace and spiritual liberation. Each step of the journey holds deep significance, marking a transformative experience. Dhar (2015) noted that pilgrimage tourism is deeply spiritual and falls under the category of religious tourism. In India, the socio-economic status and nationality of individuals significantly influence their motivations, with higher-income groups typically engaging in tourism and lower-income groups participating in pilgrimage. Sharpley and Telfer (2015) pointed out that India's tourism sector primarily emphasizes recreational and business travel, with less attention given to the development of pilgrimage tourism.

Nicolaides (2016) highlighted those deficiencies in marketing, infrastructure, and other areas could hinder the growth of pilgrimage and religious tourism, which represent a significant and specialized market. As Raj (2007) noted, changes in this sector are driven by the need to satisfy the evolving expectations of travellers to sacred sites.

Moreover, there is a pressing need for sustainable development in pilgrimage tourism. MacCannell (2013) emphasized that pilgrimage tourism holds substantial importance in India due to the country's strong religious and cultural values. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain and protect the infrastructure and sites associated with pilgrimage.

Existing literature emphasizes the importance of sustainable development in tourism broadly, but few studies focus specifically on pilgrimage tourism, with Nicolaides (2016) being a notable exception. Additionally, there is a lack of detailed analysis on the environmental issues related to pilgrimage tourism. This study aims to address these gaps by examining the challenges associated with pilgrimage tourism and proposing strategies for integrating sustainable development practices. Furthermore, past research has not thoroughly explored the connection between pilgrimage tourism and sustainable development in India, highlighting another significant gap in the literature that this study seeks to address.

STUDY AREA

The study area is located in the upper Ganga basin, with the northern part featuring the young, folded Tertiary Himalayan mountains and the southern part situated in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab. This region spans three tehsils: Haridwar, Roorkee, and Laksar, and includes six C.D. blocks: Bhagwanpur, Roorkee, Narsan, Bahadrad, Laksar, and Khanpur. It covers an area of 1,883 square kilometers, extending from 29°35'37" N to 30°13'29" N latitude and from 77°52'52" E to 78°21'57" E longitude, as shown in Fig-1. Tourism plays a crucial role in Haridwar's economy, with visitors drawn primarily by the Ganga river. Hindus believe that bathing in the sacred river purifies them of their sins, leading to approximately eight million tourists visiting annually. This influx creates significant pressure on local resources.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Tourism is one of the largest and rapidly expanding sectors in the global economy, with

notable environmental, cultural, social, and economic impacts, both positive and negative (Singh, 2008). Singh argues that there is a conflict between unmanaged tourism and the environmental quality of the area. Issues typically arise when tourism harms the environment and when there is insufficient integration between tourism and conservation efforts. In Haridwar, the environmental quality is declining, leading to increased ecological vulnerability. Therefore, assessing the sustainability of tourism and the conservation of natural resources is crucial. This research is vital for promoting the sustainable development of tourism in Haridwar.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to assess the sustainability of tourism in Haridwar and its surrounding areas, focusing on both ecological impacts and the local community. Additionally, the study aims to propose strategies for the sustainable development of the tourism industry, with an emphasis on promoting ecotourism in Haridwar, a globally renowned pilgrimage destination. To focus on environmental problems related to the tourism development.

1. To evaluate the impact and challenges associated with pilgrimage tourism in Haridwar
2. To analyse the effects of the tourism industry on the economy and environment of Haridwar
3. To identify the major challenges and issues faced by the tourism industry in Haridwar

DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this paper is comprised of two main approaches: a) descriptive and b) statistical. Both primary and secondary data were utilized. Primary data were gathered through field surveys, while secondary data were sourced from the Department of Tourism, Uttarakhand, various books, scholarly articles, and websites. The data have been presented using graphs.

TOURISM RESOURCES

Haridwar is rich in both natural and cultural tourism resources. Its appeal lies in the stunning natural beauty and the grandeur of the Ganges River. The town is surrounded by a variety of natural features, including rivers, hills, and forests, which contribute to its scenic charm. The Chila Wildlife Sanctuary, located about 10 kilometers away and part of the Rajaji National Park, spans approximately 240 square kilometers and is home to diverse flora and fauna, including elephants, tigers, leopards, and jungle cats.

The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has conducted a 'Cultural Resource Mapping of Haridwar District,' identifying 164 cultural sites in Haridwar, 78 in Kankhal, and 32 in Jwalapur. These resources are categorized into temples, ashrams, dharamshalas, havelis, ghats, water bodies, gurudwaras, trees, and other sites. Key pilgrimage sites include:

****Har ki Paudi**:** This ancient bathing ghat is one of the holiest places for Hindus. Most of the current ghats were constructed in the 1800s.

****Sati Kund**:** Located in Kankhal, this site is known for its mythological significance related to Sati's self-immolation.

****Daksheswara Mahadev Temple**:** Situated south of Kankhal, this ancient temple

honors the legends of Sati's self-immolation and King Daksha's death and subsequent transformation into a goat-headed figure.

****Maya Devi Temple****: This temple, dedicated to the Adhithatri deity of Haridwar, is one of the Siddhapeethas, believed to be the location where the heart and navel of Goddess Sati fell. It is among the few ancient temples still standing in Haridwar, alongside the Narayani Shila Temple and Bhairav Temple.

****Sapt Rishi Ashram and Sapt Rishi Sarovar****: According to legend, the Ganges River divided into seven currents at this site to avoid disturbing the seven great sages who meditated on its banks.

****Bhimgoda Tank****: Located about 1 kilometer from Har-ki-Pauri, this tank is said to be where Bhima extracted water from the rocks by striking the ground with his knee.

****Chandi Devi Temple****: Built in 1929 by the Dogra King of Kashmir, Suchat Singh, this temple commemorates the ancient legend of Chandi and can also be reached via a ropeway.

****Mansa Devi Temple****: Dedicated to Mansa Devi, a form of Shakti, this temple attracts numerous pilgrims. It can be reached either by trekking or via a ropeway.

****Piran Kaliyar****: This renowned shrine, dedicated to Hazrat Alauddin Sabir Kaliyari, a 13th-century Sufi saint of the Chishti Order, was established by Ibrahim Lodhi of the Delhi Sultanate. Located in

Kaliyar village, 7 kilometers from Roorkee, it exemplifies religious harmony and attracts devotees from around the world during the annual 'Urs' festival, which spans from the 1st to the 16th day of the Islamic month of Rabee-ul-awwal.

****Ram Mandir****: This large Ram temple is currently under construction in Bhupatwala and is set to become the largest of its kind in India.

****Religious Festivals and Fairs****: Haridwar, known for its profound religious significance, hosts numerous festivals throughout the year, including Kavar Mela, Somvati Amavasya Mela, Ganga Dashara, and Gughal Mela, attracting around 2-2.5 million participants. Additionally, the grand Kumbh Mela, which occurs every twelve years when Jupiter enters Aquarius, draws millions of pilgrims. The 2010 Maha Kumbh Mela, documented by Chinese traveler Xuanzang in 629 AD, saw over 80 million visitors bathing in the holy Ganges.

Tourist Inflow at Haridwar: Haridwar, the gateway to Uttarakhand, sees a high volume of visitors annually, but the rate of new arrivals has shown considerable fluctuation. In 2004, the growth rate for tourist arrivals was 13.79%. This increased to 19.79% in 2005 and reached 30.13% in 2006. However, there was a significant shift in 2010, when the growth rate surged to 56.32%, only to plummet to -28.54% in 2011. From 2014 to 2019, the district experienced a positive growth rate, though the number of visitors remained relatively low. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a dramatic decline in 2020, with a growth rate of -81.53%. Nevertheless, there was a remarkable rebound in 2021, with the growth rate soaring to 216.24%.

Graph

TABLE NO 4.7 RELIGIOUS TOURISM GROWTH YEAR WISE

Year	Total Arrival	Growth
2000	7914946	
2001	7238584	-8.55
2002	7546393	4.25
2003	8233371	9.10
2004	8758833	6.38
2005	11053274	26.20
2006	13880586	25.58
2007	15883700	14.21
2008	16316907	2.92
2009	16558175	1.48
2010	23586837	42.45
2011	18994508	-19.47
2012	20509130	7.97
2013	15141346	-26.17
2014	16245828	7.29
2015	20833009	28.24
2016	22878363	9.82
2017	24524738	7.20
2018	25467804	3.85
2019	26484160	3.99
2020	4681002	-82.33
2021	13580074	190.11
2022	40566291	198.72

Source: Compiled by Researcher

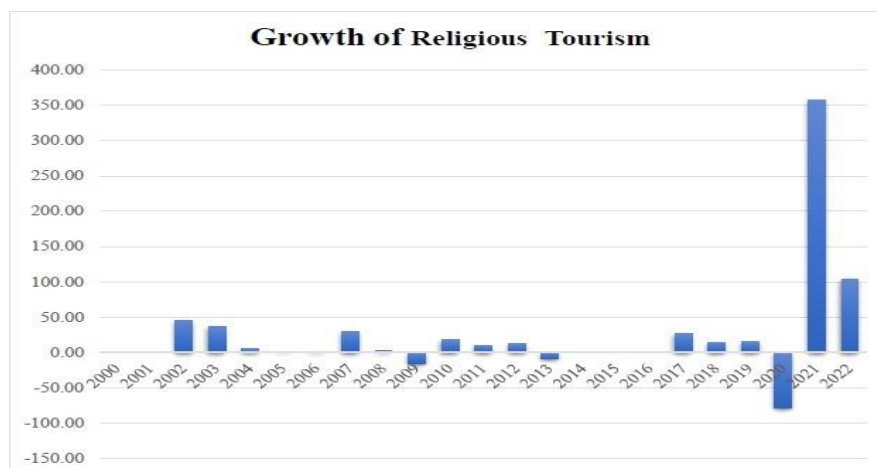


Table 1.1 illustrates that Haridwar, as the gateway to the divine, draws a significant number of tourists annually. Until 2010, the district experienced positive growth in visitor arrivals. However, there was a drop in growth rates starting in 2013, exacerbated by the Kedarnath disaster in Uttarakhand that year. Despite strong growth rates in 2014 and 2015, the numbers began to decline again but remained positive through 2019. The pandemic led to a negative growth rate in 2020, but there was a substantial recovery in the following year, with growth turning positive once more.

TOURISM AND LOCAL ECONOMY:

Tourism development undeniably contributes to the economic growth of a region, and Haridwar is no exception. The city offers accommodations through 180 dharamshalas, 400 hotels, and 220 ashrams, collectively hosting up to 89,000 tourists each night (Source: Tourism Department, Haridwar). During major festivals, these dharamshalas expand their facilities to accommodate additional visitors. However, current accommodation resources are insufficient, especially during peak festival periods. Approximately 90% of hotel and restaurant owners and their staff are local residents. According to the Uttarakhand Transport Corporation, Haridwar has 930 tempos/vikramas, 706 taxis, and 746 auto rickshaws, with most of the workers being locals. Horse-carts are also a popular means of local transport, with nearly all horse-cart drivers being Muslim residents from Jwalapur, near Haridwar.

Mass bathing events are common in India, with certain religious occasions emphasizing this practice, leading to large crowds bathing in rivers, lakes, tanks, and coastal areas within a short time frame. The 'Kumbh' and 'Ardh-Kumbh' are significant events where millions of people bathe at sacred sites. During the recent Kumbh Mela, which ran from January 14, 2010, to April 28, 2010, and included 11 key bathing dates, approximately 80 million people bathed in a 15-kilometer stretch of the Ganges River in Haridwar. On April 14, 2010, alone, around 14.5 million pilgrims took a dip in the river for Baisakhi. The large scale of mass bathing significantly impacts water quality, potentially harming the health of those participating and affecting downstream populations who rely on the river for drinking and bathing.

MAJOR FINDINGS

****Strengths and Opportunities:**

1. Haridwar boasts stunning natural landscapes, a rich cultural heritage, and historical significance.
2. The town's religious significance and the presence of the holy Ganges attract millions of pilgrims and tourists.
3. There is potential to utilize open spaces to host and promote cultural events.

****Weaknesses and Threats:****

1. The existing tourist infrastructure is inadequate to handle the sudden influx of pilgrims and tourists, leading to environmental degradation in the urban area.
2. Civic services available to tourists are insufficient.
3. There is a lack of long-term planning for heritage conservation and preservation, particularly because many structures are privately owned.
4. Vehicular traffic is often disrupted during religious festivals.
5. Poor sanitation facilities pose potential health risks.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, pilgrimage tourism in Haridwar plays a vital role in promoting sustainable development by fostering economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship. As one of India's most sacred cities, Haridwar attracts millions of devotees annually, offering significant opportunities for local businesses and employment. By integrating sustainable practices, such as eco-friendly accommodations, waste

management systems, and the promotion of local handicrafts, the tourism sector can mitigate its environmental impact while preserving the region's cultural heritage. Furthermore, responsible tourism can contribute to the conservation of the Ganges River, a lifeline for both religious and ecological reasons. To ensure long-term sustainability, it is essential for stakeholders, including government bodies, local communities, and tourists, to collaborate on implementing policies that balance economic benefits with environmental and cultural integrity. Haridwar's pilgrimage tourism, if managed responsibly, has the potential to serve as a model for sustainable tourism development in similar religious destinations.

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