



Uttaranchal Tourism - Branding A Tourist Destination

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ABSTRACT

Tourism has been one of the popular modes of recreation for almost everyone. People travel to places other than their hometown / state/country to take a break in their routine life. Countries like Paris, New Zealand, Malana, Las Vegas, Australia; Goa etc. have been some of the most popular destinations for International tourists due to their natural grandeur, pilgrimage or historical importance. They spent huge amount of money for their favourite destinations. Tourism and travel has now become one of the largest generators of wealth and employment. It could boost the country's economically sporadically. Time has come for India to think globally for developing Tourism and Travel. Although tourist arrival in the country has crossed 3 million mark by 2006 but it is merely a drop into the ocean if we compare it with Spain.

Since 2004, National Tourist officer (NTO) have started making use of LPG mantra, developed awareness among travel agents by providing USP's of the destination all in an attempt to brand a destination, we have witnessed how Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Andhra Pradesh has been able to , develop themselves as a "Brand Destination" for tourism, but the newly established Uttaranchal state, full of flora and fauna, is yet to raise a voice as a branded destination. In this paper an attempt has been done to highlight the strengths and weakness of this destination with an attempt to develop a strategy to brand Uttaranchal as a most sought-after tourism destination.

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DESTINATION BRANDING – A CASE OF UTTARANCHAL STATE

Introduction

Tourism and Hospitality are growing at phenomenal rate. Tourism industry is one among the largest and is the direct source of foreign exchange in our country.

This industry is expecting 1.6 billion international tourist arrivals annually by the year 2020 as per WTO (World Tourism Organization).

In 2006, tourists arrivals in the country crossed 3 million mark for the first time with total visitors of 3,65,480. The four southern states like 'Kerela, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Northern region like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, J&K and newly created Uttaraanchal are the prime destinations which have covered a bigger share of international flow of tourists into our country.

There is a new thrust towards Heritage tourism, Pilgrimage tourism, Adventure sports tourism, Medical/Yoga/Ayurvedic tourism, Beach and Resort tourism, which attracts domestic as well as foreign tourists. Some other attractions which has been a darling of million of tourist are Mystical temples, wildlife sanctuaries, Bird sanctuaries, Amusements parks, Monuments, Dance festivals, art villages, old famous churches, mosques, temples and above all the local markets and cuisines.

The Brand India has now become a lucrative market with a growing number of international tourists. The internationally famed camel and cattle fair of Pushkar had recorded max 30% increase of international tourists 25% rise in national tourists in the year 2003 (the data source of RTDC). India has a lots of tourism potential and is gaining grounds as a branded destination in the international tourism market, because of different historical places, beaches, adventure sports facilities, forts, tombs, handmade goods and accommodation facilities for all types of tourist i.e. 5 Star, 3 Star hotels, budget hotels, guest houses, lodges, camps.etc.

The most attractive thing that has been started in Kerela, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and at Pushkar is providing home stays accommodation with the govt. approved knowledgeable and friendly families. All the peace of mind and comfort of home, superb traditional cuisine and the opportunities to experience real local culture literally as “part of the family ” is the Key purpose.

Advantage Uttaranchal

The new state of Uttarnachal in Nov 2000 threw up several opportunities to increase the popularity of tourism destination. The importance of tourism in this state cannot be underestimated. Uttaranchal is comprises of two regions- Kumaon and Garhwal.

Kumaon is a land of green valleys, beautiful lakes, chirpy forests, meandering rivers, azure skies, cool climate nestled in the lap of the mighty Himalayas. Kumaon is derived from “Kurmanchal” which means the land of “Kurmavatar” the tortoise incarnation of lord Vishnu. Kumaon comprises of the districts- Nainital, Almora, Udham Singh Nagar, Champawat, Pithoragarh & Bageshwar.

Garhwal on the other hand comprises of scenic beauty, gushing rivers, snow capped peaks, fascinating valleys and have the six districts i.e. Dehradun, Tehri, Pauri, Uttarkashi, Chamoli and Rudraprayag. It is a mecca for the devout and a heaven for adventure sports. Haridwar is a newly included district making uttranchal a state of 13 districts.

The sacred places like Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri are located in Garhwal and the beauty of Garhwal hills are picture perfect. Brand Uttanchal has key attractions like adventure recreational and regional attraction. Adding to it the natural resources like scenery, trek routes, mountain meadows, glaciers, hot spring, spas, fountain, rivers, lakes, forests, parks, sanctuaries, and rural areas plays a vital role in international as well as in domestic market to present Uttaranchal (Garhwal and Kumaon) as a brand destination.

Number of Visits of Tourists At Uttranchal

	[Year 2000]		[Year 2001]		[Year 2002]		[Year 2003]		[Year 2004]	
	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign	Domestic	Foreign
Badrinath	695332	N.A.	430044	21	448517	80	170855	N.A.	193025	N.A.
Kedarnath	300000	N.A.	191465	2163	167520	1697	168536	1951	201275	2645
Gangotri	208407	N.A.	131311	188	118221	153	186344	148	189536	152
Yamunotri	88672	N.A.	54015	59	53976	47	98573	54	100185	58
Hemkund Sahib	327550	N.A.	210980	N.A.	340578	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Nainital	320322	4756	356941	5793	412440	4224	260092	2590	277442	3221
Ranikhet	62487	842	65747	663	63941	510	25898	263	25490	372
Kausani	67460	722	66577	733	65176	761	29912	147	25490	272
Jim Corbet Park	57877	3624	57113	3775	61712	3678	61131	2656	62557	3403
Mussorie	847191	3555	888870	3068	988481	2863	459795	1296	441990	1431
Rishikesh	230857	6414	224792	6536	268882	4573	120763	2758	185474	2892
Joshimath	406228	1143	214581	1060	337303	515	17596	137	13157	195
Auli	8323	407	6459	167	14148	221	5283	209	4582	100

Source: Director Tourism Uttaranchal, Dehradun

Table- I

Tourist Attractions With Features

Uttaranchal is fully endowed to offer the four major categories of tourism attraction i.e.

- Religious
- Leisure
- Adventure
- Nature

In the first category are the pilgrims, where basic requirements are cheap lodging, low priced food, and inexpensive means of transport.

In the second category are of Leisure tourist i.e. the motto **health to travel and travel to health**. There requirements are more sophisticated means, they pay a little extra for food and accommodation. The third category adventure tourism is the fastest growing sector, which has the greater potential.

Nature tourism also has great potential due to abundance of Flora and Fauna in the state

It covers wildlife attraction like Tiger, bears, leopards, brown bears, Himalayan Black bear, Blue sheep, musk deer etc.

Some of the attractive tourists destination with their features are :

Place / Brand	Popularity (Brand Identity)
Jim Corbett	- Famous for Tigers.
Rajaji National Park	- Famous for Elephants
Kedarnath Sanctuary	- Famous for Musk Deers
Binsar Sanctuary	- Famous for wild life.
Vasuki Tal	- 8 Km from Kedarnath awesome Environment
Tapovan and Nandanvan	- Great environmental impact trek start from Gaumuk
Pindari Glacier	- Trek 48 Km from saung village
Milam Glacier	- Track 64 Km from Munshyari
Nainital	- The green town with the attraction of Nanilake, Centralised parking, boating facilities, the mall road
Dehradun	- City in between the valley
Gopeshwar	- Shivas Temple
Pandukeshwar	- Vishnu's Temple
Joshi Math	- Narsing's Temple
Champwat	- Fort
Catarmal	- Sun Temple
Haridwar	- Kumbha Mela
Rishikesh	- Ashram, Mediation,
Bagheshwar	- Shiva Temple
Yamunotri	- 13 Km from Hanuman Chatti
Kedarnath	- 14 Km from Gauri Kund Temple
Hemkund Saheb	- 18 Km Track from Govind Ghat
Sahastradhara	- Hot spring
Mussoorie	- Kempty Fall
Dwarhat	- Monuments
Kalsi	- Ashok's Rock Edict.
Kankhal	- Abode of Shiva
Adibadri	- Remain of 16 Temples

Table- II

Problems

- Limited attraction at some of the tourist destinations eg; – Dhanolty, Munsiyari and Dayara Bugyal.
- Some specific area are not promoted and developed as tourist assets exp. – Mukteshwar (Almora), Champwat, Har-ke-Dun Sanctuary, Chandra Badni Temple (Tehri), Khirshu (Pauri), Chakarota and Environs (Dehradun), Dodital (Uttarkashi),
- Lack of accommodation and fooding facilities for tourists on yatra routes like Badrinath, Kedranath, Kailash Mansarovar.
- At places facing acute shortage of Hotel Accommodation especially – Mussoorie, Ranikhet, Kausani, Gangoli Ghat etc.
- Overload of taxes on rooms, meals and tourist vehicles (specially on foreign tourists).
- Dirty historic Ghats at Haridwar.
- It does not attracts the overseas visitors inspite of its unique attraction because of lack of tie ups with the tour operators/travel agencies.
- Lack of facilities i.e. transport, food, accommodation at
 - Bhimtal-Sat Tal- Naukuchiyatal
 - Ramgarh-Mukteshwar-Chakori
 - Ranikhet – Shitlakheth – Almora – Binsar – Kausani
 - Lansdown – Khirsu – New Tehri – Chamba –
- Only Air link available in one region at Jolly Grant Dehradun
- No initiatives has been taken for highlighting Uttaranchal Tourism at international level.
- Lack of liasioning with electronic and print media.

- Unavailability of local transport like Auto-rickshaws and Tempos at Pauri, Srinagar, Uttarkashi, kotdwar etc.(they are highly available only at Haridwar & Rishikesh.

Branding Uttaraanchal

Based on the models of Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and also some International models like France, Hongkong, Malaysia, We need to restructure the model of Uttaraanchal before we go for Branding of the state at National and International level.

The suggestive model for Uttaraanchal may be based on Marketing mix 4 P's i.e Place, Product, Price and Promotion.

Place- Uttaraanchal (Kumaon & Garhwal)

Uttaraanchal is a young state, barely six years old. It has however several good things like higher literacy level, hills, pollution free and peaceful environment, the large forest cover and the presence of several holy shrines offer a tremendous tourist potential. We have already discussed in the previous pages.

Product-

This has been divided into various categories like cuisine, culture, pilgrimages, adventure and village tourism.

Cuisine (food)- Uttaraanchal food and beverages are the next big thing waiting to happen in the branding and positioning domain. The tourists look around for the unfamiliar food for change and curiosity about the regional cuisines. Some famous dishes are Gaderi (big root vegetable), Limgouchu (dry veg made from stem of plant), Chew (mushroom found under chier tree), Boktya (meat of mountain goat), Kakad and Jadao (meat of mountain deer), Soul (meat of mountain bird) in sweet dishes Swala (pancake of flour), Lapsi (halwa of wheat grain), Sattu (special drink of grains also serve semi solid). The cuisine is full of masalas and chillis Curry and Bhatyondi (rasred black bhats in ghee) are very popular in tourists. The above dishes should be promoted as a brand cuisine of Uttaraanchal

Culture- Uttaraanchal occupies an important place on the culture Map of India. The role of culture lies not only in encouraging self expression & exploration on the part of individuals but also supporting arts and artists. The

different Fairs, Festivals, like Gauchar trade fair, Garhwal mahotsav, Dharma devi mela, Bissu mela, Mahasu mela are the core cultural products .

Pilgrimages: - Uttaranchal has been the land of Pilgrimage and payer of spiritual quest and meditation. The various pilgrimages destinations are Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri, Hemkund Saheb, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Gopeshwar, Bageshwar, Adibadri etc. are very famous and important places widely recognized as the land of god and goddesses. Attracts thousands of Domestic and International tourists.

Adventure Tourism- The Adventure sports facilities at Uttaranchal is the core product of Branding. The Adventure sports like Sky diving, Hang gliding, Para sailing, River rafting, Skiing, Trekking, Mountaineering and Angling are some of the famous Adventure sports to attract the National and International tourists.

Village Tourism- The village tourism destinations have attractions like shops of Handlooms, Handmade goods, Cuisines, Village Industries, Scenic beauties, Rural handicrafts centers, Gramin shilp kendras, are some of the special attractions for the tourists.

Price

Accommodation pricing- In general there are a preference for moderately priced accommodation. The most preferred are Budget / Economy Hotels. The pricing should be adopted less implication of taxes on Room, Food & Beverages. The Tariffs should be plan appropriately at different times i.e. season or off season. Different plans like European Plan, American Plan, Modified American Plan, should be offered to the tourists as per the demand .

Tour Pricing- It is important that What the cost is going to be?. The costing or pricing of Tour should be adequate and contain all soughts of facilities like transport, accommodation, meals etc. The following matters should also be consider while pricing;

- a) Interest of the Tourist
- b) Duration of visit
- c) Domestic or International Tourist
- d) Fairs & Festivals
- e) Special events
- f) Adventure or Sports tour The Pricing should not be high so that it go beyond the pocket of the budget travelers.

Promotion-For the promotion of the different tourists Destinations of Uttaranchal the following suggestions are here:

- a) Some of the lesser known places should be developed as a tourist destinations like Pauri, Auli, Dhanault, Uttarkashi etc.
- b) Provision with improvement in inter-state Bus terminals at Rishikesh, Srinagar, Pauri, Kotdwar etc.
- c) Existing hotels should be permitted to add more room at places facing acute shortage of accommodation
- d) Efforts can be made to invite Sterling, Mahindra, Dalmia resorts to setup time sharing units at Chakori, Binsar, New Tehri, Chamba etc.
- e) Inviting foreign film producers, tour operators, travel writers and photographers on FAM tours/trips to Uttaranchal.
- f) Collection of tourism stories from regions and feeding them to national and international news agencies.
- g) To develop satellite towns adjacent to over crowded tourists resorts so as to direct tourists to dispersed location.
- h) Facility ofairlink together with express train routes to different cities of Uttaranchal.

Branding is very essential. Through this paper an attempt has been made to unfold prespective impediments hindering the sustainable growth of Uttaranchal as a tourist destination and suggest strategic measures for it.

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