

# Challenges And Opportunities of Tourism Industry Faced by Kumaon Region, Uttarakhand

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## ABSTRACT

The tourist business has developed as one of the most significant service-sector industries in the modern world. It is responsible for the generation of national income as well as job opportunities, particularly for the local population. Additionally, tourism has become a channel for economic and social development as well as cultural interchange. Tourism is not just an activity that can be done for the sake of relaxation and enjoyment; it is also an activity that can be uplifting and revitalizing. The state of Uttarakhand, also known as Devbhoomi or the "Abode of Gods," is a place of pilgrimage and temples. It is blessed with a healthy climate, unique vegetation, and a diverse range of flora, in addition to its rich cultural heritage. Kumaon, which is located in the state of Uttarakhand, is growing increasingly popular among tourists and is quickly becoming one of the most popular places to visit. In addition to all of this, the tourism industry in the region is experiencing a few challenges that need to be taken into consideration in order to make the most of the potential that tourism contains in the Kumaon region. The current study makes an attempt to examine the problem as well as the prospects of tourism growth in the Kumaon region of the state of Uttarakhand. The research presented here is descriptive in nature and is based on secondary sources of data. Despite the fact that there are a great number of obstacles and problems associated with tourist development, the findings of the study indicate that it is possible to capitalize on the opportunities for tourism development if certain improvements are made and thorough planning is carried out.

**Keywords:** Kumaon region, tourism industry, tourism prospects, challenges.

## Introduction

Since the beginning of time, people have travelled. In the past, people travelled for a variety of reasons, the primary one being to find food. The first travellers are thought to be food seekers. Those who travelled for commercial purposes came next. In order to prolong the rule of the emperors of that era, numerous kingdoms were established and conflicts were fought. It took decades for travel and tourism to develop into what it is today; it is not a recent phenomenon that happened overnight. In different eras, travel and tourism took diverse forms. In addition to having both beneficial and negative effects on society, the economy, the environment, and politics, tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon that has a variety of negative and positive effects. Since tourism is one of the service sectors with the quickest rate of growth, most economies are working hard to gain a significant portion of the market in order to gain a competitive advantage over other nations. Evidence of tourism may be found in the oldest historical documents, and it has grown at an extraordinary rate in the last century. However, there is currently no agreed-upon definition of tourism. "The sum of phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-resident insofar as it does not lead to permanent residence and is not connected to any earning activity" is how Huniker and Krapf defined tourism in their original definition (Dileep, 2019). [3]. A person's visit from his place of residence to a distant location for several days that has nothing to do with his desire to make money is generally referred to as tourism. It is now quite simple to travel anywhere at any time to discover destinations and spend free time thanks to advancements in lodging and transportation, the two main components of the travel business. The travel and tourist sector saw significant changes following World Wars I and II, particularly World War II. This development took years and decades to revolutionize the industry.

One of the most popular travel destinations worldwide is the state of Uttarakhand, sometimes referred to as the "Abode of Gods." On November 9, 2000, the state became the 27th state. The state is divided into two regions: the Garhwal area and the Kumaon region.

Since the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand is the subject of this study, the development of tourism in this area will be the primary focus. "Kurmanchal" is where the name "Kumaon" originates. The words "Kurm," which means tortoise, and "Aanchal," which denotes mountain, are combined to form the word "Kurmanchal." The name is derived from the Kurmanchal mountain, which became tainted over time and is known locally as Kumaon or Kumaon. The mountain is thought to be connected to Lord Vishnu's Kurma incarnation in mythology. There are numerous additional legends connected to the Kumaon area. The area is located in "Manaskhand" according to the "Skand Purana." The rebirth of the tortoise happened close to the Kali River. The local dialect refers to the region on the right bank of the Kali River as "Kumaon." The Kumaon region consists of six districts: U.S. Nagar, Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat, Nainital, and Pithoragarh.

At first, the Kumaon region consisted of just two districts. Kumaon was split into Kumaon and British Garhwal during British administration. Due to its abundance of vegetation and animals, the Kumaon region receives a lot of tourists all year round. One of the most important sectors for the region's and its residents' growth and development is the tourism sector. One of the numerous internationally renowned tourist spots in the area is "Nainital," also referred to as India's lake district. Numerous types of tourism, including adventure, leisure, trekking, and wildlife tourism, have been created and promoted in the Kumaon region. The area, which is encircled by the mighty Himalayas, draws nature enthusiasts with its breathtaking views of snow-capped mountain peaks including Trishul, Panchachuli, and Nanda Devi. The Jim Corbett Natural Park and Askot animals Sanctuary are the main destinations for those who enjoy the outdoors and animals. The Kumaon region is home to several stunning hill stations, including Kausani, Nainital, Munsyari, and Ranikhet, which are the top vacation and leisure travel destinations.

In addition to trekking, tourists can enjoy paragliding at Naukuchiyatal. With its historic Hindu landmarks including the Garjiya temple, Haidakhan temple, Kainchi Dham mandir, Naina devi temple, Gairar golu devata temple, and many more, the Kumaon region draws a lot of pilgrimage tourists. A well-known Sikh pilgrimage site, Nanakmatta Sahib Gurudwara is located in the area's Udham Singh Nagar district. Numerous annual fairs and festivals, such as the Purnagiri Mela, the Jauljebi Fair, and the Kainchi Mela, draw a lot of tourists to the area.

### Review literature

In their study, Jaiswal and Bisht (2017) [6] evaluated Uttarakhand's tourist growth. The findings showed that tourism has a lot of potential to help the state develop, but the government and related industries should concentrate on building out the infrastructure for tourism. The results showed that in order to draw a lot of people to the state, new tourism goods including ecotourism, water sports, and rural tourism should be created.

Pathak et al. (2017) [8] looked at Uttarakhand's tourist situation in another study. The findings showed that the main draws for tourists are historical, archaeological, and scenic locations. While the Garhwal region draws pilgrimage and adventure tourists, the Kumaon region caters to leisure and recreational travellers. In their study "Hill Tourism and Sustainable Development of the Destinations,"

Saraswati and Ram (2017) [12] looked at the potential of tourism in the Kumaon region in the context of hill tourism and identified factors that influence destination selection. The findings showed that although there is a lot of potential for tourism in the area, very little of it has been investigated. In order to determine the steps made by the government to assess Uttarakhand's competitiveness,

Wani and Khan (2017) [13] looked at the developmental competence mapping of the state as a travel destination. According to the study's findings, the government ought to take aggressive steps to advertise tourist destinations by increasing the availability of public transportation. In their study, Kala and Bagri (2018) [1] employed qualitative research to identify the obstacles to community involvement, which directly affects the growth of the tourism industry. The study highlights the need for increased community involvement advocacy as well as the development of specific tactics that can promote local involvement and are tailored to the changing destination situation. In their study,

Imran and Nguyen (2018) [4] looked at the potential of home-stay programs and the residents of Uttarakhand's willingness to participate in them. The findings indicate that households engaged in the tourism industry have not benefited financially from the sector; however, this may be because the community has not been actively involved in the growth of the tourism industry. Furthermore, the majority of the villagers believed that the home-stay program may boost local income and open up work chances, but it hasn't been developed yet. The significance of rural tourism in the state of Uttarakhand was investigated by Sajwan (2019).

According to the study's findings, 30.23% of people live in cities and 69.77% live in rural areas. The results also showed that if tourism is to be promoted, new businesses should be established in order to prevent congestion in mass tourism. Visitors are drawn to the location by its natural beauty and new landscapes.

## Research Methodology

The current study uses a descriptive methodology to examine the issues and future potential of the tourist sector in Uttarakhand's Kumaon region. Books, academic papers, websites, and government publications are some of the secondary sources of data used in this study. The Kumaon region of Uttarakhand is the study's focus.

### Objectives

1. To comprehend the Kumaon Region's current tourism situation and state.
2. To investigate the issues and difficulties influencing the growth of tourism in the Kumaon Region.
3. To determine the Kumaon Region's tourism development prospects.
4. To make recommendations for actions that can be implemented to address the issues and take use of the Kumaon Region's potential for tourism growth.

### Issues with the Kumaon region's tourism development

1. **Unplanned Development:** Unplanned development is posing a problem for the Kumaon region's tourism sector. A significant concern to the tourism industry and its related stakeholders is the overdevelopment of numerous tourist sites, which has led to the exploitation of these destinations' carrying capacity. However, there are also some places that have the potential to become popular tourist attractions but haven't been fully developed and utilized because of inadequate administrative planning.
2. **Inadequate public transit:** The development of the tourism sector is greatly influenced by the transportation system. The Kumaon region's ineffective public transportation system has prevented the tourism spots from being fully explored. Due to inconvenient public transportation systems and, in certain situations, the lack of other transportation options, travelers must hire private taxis in the majority of destinations.
3. **Limited cooperation among government agencies:** Another factor impeding the growth of the tourism sector is the lack of coordination among different government departments. These government organizations typically operate independently and schedule their operations based on the potential benefits they believe tourism will bring. As a result, the tourism sector has difficulties as it experiences losses and competes with other states and regions. The growth of tourism depends on the appropriate distribution of funding for infrastructure development. However, many infrastructure initiatives are not finished on schedule because government departments do not coordinate well.
4. **Low degree of community participation:** Since the local population has a close relationship with tourists and is familiar with the destinations, it is crucial to include them in the planning stages of tourism in the current era. Developmental tourism operations can be effectively planned and carried out with the right community involvement. This phenomenon is less concentrated in the Kumaon region, which poses difficulties for the travel and tourism sector. Only when the local population is aware of community-based and village tourism can these types of travel be encouraged.
5. **Limited usage of contemporary amenities:** As the environment changes, technological adoption is required. The development of the tourist sector worldwide is greatly influenced by the use of the internet and contemporary advertising and promotion techniques. Many of the related tourism business stakeholders in the Kumaon region are unaware of these contemporary conveniences. The websites that were created to give travelers information are not updated frequently. All of this presents a problem for the travel and tourist sector.

### Opportunities for the Kumaon region's tourism industry to grow

1. **Eco-Tourism:** This kind of travel is one in which the environment, the local people, and the tourists all gain something from it. Traveling to places where the main draws are the flora, animals, and cultural legacy is known as ecotourism. Giving visitors an understanding of how humans affect the environment and encouraging a deeper respect for our natural environments are two objectives of ecotourism.
2. **Village Tourism:** Although a relatively new idea in the Kumaon region, village tourism was brought from the West and is quickly gaining traction because the vast majority of our population still lives in villages and because understanding Indian villages is essential to understanding "India" as a whole. For this reason, the government's tourist agency is working hard to promote village tourism across the nation. Due to their tranquil beauty, a few places in the Kumaon region with promise for village tourism are Jeolikot, Martola, Kalimat Village, and Sitalkhet.
3. **Community Based Tourism:** In this type of tourism, locals extend an invitation to visitors by offering them lodging for the night. In addition to celebrating and honoring traditional cultures, customs, and wisdom, community-based tourism allows visitors to learn about local species and environments. By making the community aware of the economic and social importance that tourism places on their natural and cultural heritage, community-based protection of these resources will be encouraged.

4. **Homestay Tourism:** The greatest way to enjoy Uttarakhand's renowned Himalayan hospitality is through homestay. A homestay is when a paying visitor stays in someone's house for a brief length of time and is given reasonably priced lodging and amenities by the host family and the neighborhood. The people of Uttarakhand are straightforward, kind, and adhere to the age-old Vedic doctrine that "Atithi Devo Bhava," or "Guests are God." They extend a warm welcome to visitors and provide them with individualized attention and services. In this idyllic state of India, there are numerous registered homestays where visitors may discover rural areas with breathtaking natural settings, take in the local way of life and food, and discover hidden locations—all with the assistance of locals.

### Suggestions

1. It is important to properly plan the development of tourist attractions in order to maximize the potential of those that have development potential.
2. It is necessary to enable an efficient and effective public transportation infrastructure that connects popular tourist locations with major cities, train stations, and airports.
3. To allow for the growth of tourism, an efficient system of collaboration between governmental entities should be established and routinely reviewed.
4. It is important to encourage community-based tourism so that the local population may successfully participate in tourism development planning.
5. The government should promote the use of contemporary tourism amenities by the involved parties, as this will help to minimize misunderstandings and give visitors relevant information in an up-to-date way.

### Conclusion

Due to its abundance of flora and fauna, the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand is a popular destination for tourists all year long. The captivating vista of snow-capped peaks, wildlife conservation parks, pilgrimage sites, fairs, and festivals are just a few of the numerous factors that draw tourists.

There are issues facing the region's tourism sector that need to be resolved, and the government ought to take into account the recommendations made in this report. Numerous types of tourism, including eco-tourism, village tourism, homestay tourism, and community-based tourism, have enormous potential in the area. To make the tourism industry a significant contributor to the Kumaon region's economic growth, the government and related stakeholders should take the required actions and encourage these types of travel. In order to protect the environment for future generations, it is equally important to promote sustainable tourism practices.

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