



ISSN Print: 2394-7500  
ISSN Online: 2394-5869  
Impact Factor: 5.2  
IJAR 2019; 5(10): 372-375  
[www.allresearchjournal.com](http://www.allresearchjournal.com)  
Received: 16-08-2019  
Accepted: 25-09-2019

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## **Eco-tourism in Mussoorie (Uttarakhand): A geographical analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Tourism is a travel for pleasure, entertainment, religion or spiritual, educational, business purposes for a specific period of time. Indeed, the tourism industry has emerged as one of the fastest growing economic sectors. Eco-tourism is defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” (TIES, 2015). Ecotourism is not only a theoretical concept but a practical aspect; it gives a completely different view of the world and challenges us to open our minds to different ways of thinking. Mussoorie also known as “Queen of Hills” is one of the major tourist attractions of Uttarakhand. With the increasing tourism there is a regularly increasing impact on the physical settings and local resources which need to be tackled by taking certain actions in order to promote sustainable tourism in Mussoorie. This paper is an attempt to show how we can promote ecotourism in Mussoorie. Prominent steps that are taken and/or could be taken are enlisted in the paper. The study is conducted by the collection of secondary data from various sources i.e. journals, govt. publications and several other published reports.

**Keywords:** Eco-tourism, environment, conservation, promote and industry

### **Introduction**

The concept of eco-tourism in India is a niche industry that has mainly developed in the past few years. Sustained tourism and eco-friendly tourism has made the inspiration base for the promotion of Ecotourism. There is no denial in the fact that the growing importance of tourism and ecotourism with increasing number of tourists are having positive impacts on the economy and development of the region but at the same time it is likely to place some negative impacts on the ecology and natural environment of the region. Haphazard development, unregulated constructions, use and excessive exploitation of resources can damage the ecosystem and can also harm the economy of that particular area. Thus, planned approach for tourism development is needed so that the necessary infrastructure required can be developed without disturbing the natural and social environment. (Pal, A. and Pal, B., 2016) [8].

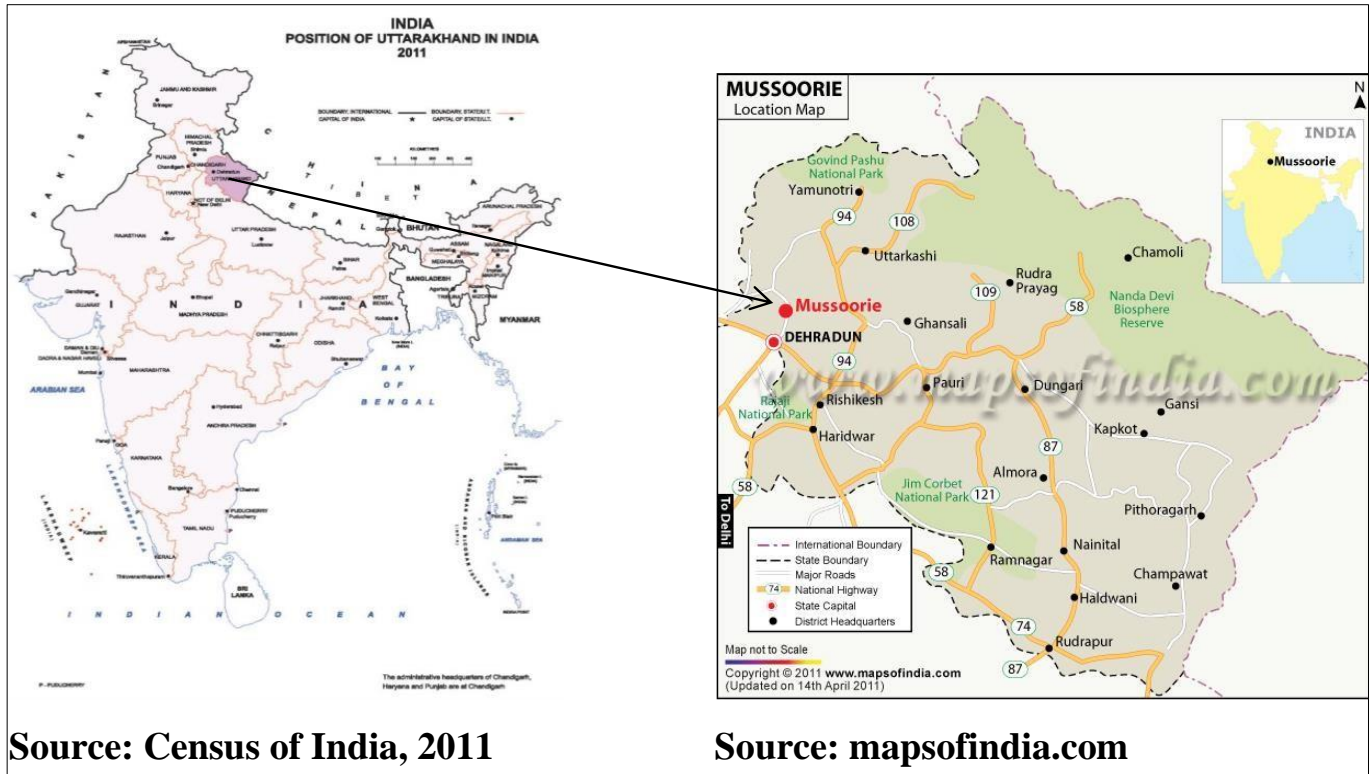
### **Database**

The study entails the collection of secondary data from different sources i.e. journals, govt. publications and several other published reports and collected information and literature was accessed by the web surfing.

### **Study Area**

Mussoorie is a hill station and a municipal board in the Dehradun District of the Indian state of Uttarakhand. The hill station is in the foothills of the Garhwal Himalayan range. Mussoorie is at an average altitude of 1,880 meters (6,170 ft.). Mussoorie is well-known as The Queen of the Hills. Mussoorie has a remarkable heterogeneity in all the natural and cultural features. The stunning Himalayan scenery, charismatic valleys, wilderness of Shivalik's and pristine rivers flowing are the magnificent physical attributes present in the study area. Unplanned and non-regulated tourism has posed some serious threats to the natural environment of the study area.

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Source: Census of India, 2011

Source: mapsofindia.com

### Climate

Mussoorie has a fairly typical subtropical highland climate (Köppen Cwb) for the midaltitude Himalaya. Summers are warm and very wet, with July and August averaging approximately 25.98 inches of rain per month due to orographic lift of the extremely moist monsoonal air. In winter, rainfall is a little more frequent than in the pre- and post-monsoon seasons, and the general weather is cool and partly cloudy. Mussoorie usually receives few snowfalls in December, January and February.

### Literature Review

In India plenty of the research are taking keen interest in various aspects of ecotourism. A creditable and comprehensive work has already been done in the field of ecotourism by a number of scholars like Kandari, 1986<sup>[9]</sup>; Kala, 1987<sup>[10]</sup>; Bisht, 1992<sup>[11]</sup>; Bagri, 1994<sup>[12]</sup>; Singh, 1993<sup>[13]</sup>; Kant, 1983<sup>[14]</sup>. With increasing pressure of visitors on mountains researchers have also started studies on mountain tourism (Sinhuber, 1982<sup>[15]</sup>; Brugger, *et al.*, 1984<sup>[16]</sup>; Singh, *et al.*, 1992<sup>[17]</sup>; Sharma, 1989<sup>[18]</sup>; Bagri and Bhatt, 1997<sup>[6]</sup>; and Singh, 1989)<sup>[19]</sup>.

Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) has launched the interactive website, CD Rom; published various literature including books and brochures depicting tourist places, advertised the tourism product nationally as well as internationally and so on. The Ecotourism Wing of the Uttarakhand Forest Department had joined hands with Arch i Trust to produce a series of innovative and attractive ecotourism maps for promotion of ecotourism at different scales – heritage village level, Protected Area level, State level and landscape level. The publication of the "Uttarakhand Nature Hand book—a guide for naturalists, Eco tourists and students" in 2012 by Forest Department is also a good effort to improve the quality of nature guiding. Later reprinted in 2013. There is a network of Forest Rest Houses that is maintained by the Forest Department and is open for visitors. The state government plans to promote these rest

houses through eco-tourism initiatives. Organization of Bird watching camps and Annual Bird Festivals are appreciable attempts for sustainable tourism. Ecotourism development is in infancy stage and a far exertion is required to induce success in the industry.

### Major Tourist Attractions

Tourism is the major contributor to Mussoorie economy. It has a road popularly known as "Camel's Back Road", it is called so due to the morphology and rock structure which are similar to the shape of camel's hump. Hotels and motels, and a cemetery are constructed along the mid-way of the walk in the loop. "Gun Hill" is another major attraction of the place where cannons were used to sound out midday for many years in the past. Gun Hill is easily accessible by the cable car on the Mall road. Cable cars itself play a role of attraction here. The oldest Christian church in the Himalayas, St Mary's, is above Mall Road and is undergoing restoration. For aesthetic pleasure, Company Garden is another tourist attraction that includes a large collection of beautiful flowers and plants. The very famous Kempt Falls, Mossy Falls and Jharipani Falls are the most visited tourist spot in Mussoorie. In Happy Valley there's a small Tibetan temple, which was constructed in 1960 by the Tibetan refugees, is also a site that attract tourists. Lal Tibia is another scenic attraction with views of the Himalayas, and is situated above Mussoorie in the cantonment area of Landor.

### Hindrances in the way of Eco Tourism

Proper planning and strategies are required for development of ecotourism in the Mussoorie, which can be accomplished by accessing the available and potential resources for ecotourism development. This assassination should undertake the impact on sociocultural and physical environment, local needs, employment opportunities, proper water management techniques, carrying capacity of the area, promoting activities that cause minimum disturbances to the natural surroundings, etc. Eco tourism should be practiced

and preached in a way that it creates more and more employment opportunities for the local communities. Ecotourism is beneficial yet difficult in the following sense:

- No proper transport regularity services at various destinations.
- Insufficient in satisfying the needs of all categories of tourists in terms of accommodation and catering facilities.
- Absence of midway facilities especially in the remote/hilly areas.
- Tourists' information centers and management committees are not available.
- There's no major involvement of local population in tourism related activities.
- Lack of awareness among the local people and tourists about eco-tourism.
- No proper training programmed for local youth and women to be a part of tourism industry.
- Littering at touristic attractions.
- No sync between government official, private entrepreneur, NGOs and local people.



### Dhanolti Eco Park

Ecotourism has the capacity to empower local communities to compete against poverty and successfully achieve sustainable development by increasing capacity building opportunities. It has twin benefits i.e. stimulates conservation of environment and well-being of local people. Uttarakhand Government has taken some unique and innovative steps to support planned ecotourism activities such as short treks, nature trails, home stays and display village culture.

- The idea of village trek is exclusive as it provides an insight into the lifestyle and daily routines of Himalayan villagers.
- Home stay in hill villages provides a chance to experience their warm hospitality with a thriving ancient culture along with enjoying simple pleasures of village life; at the same time it involve the locals in service sector and provide an opportunity for employment.
- Besides, rafting on the Ganga River provides thrilling adventure to white water enthusiasts.

### How Eco Tourism can be promoted

The Mussoorie forest division consider the degradation of forests and its surroundings seriously and came up with the idea of a community-based ecotourism project which has two major objectives of promoting community participation in conservation of biodiversity and augmenting livelihood opportunities for villagers. This is one of its kind eco-parks developed by the Uttarakhand Forest Department and managed with the help of encroachers-turned protectors of forests. The idea of setting up an eco-park in the area was not promoted and favored initially by the local people. The tussle to win over encroachers and loggers for nature conservation has been challenging. Given time and a lot of effort from persons such as AK Banerjee, the then DFO, Mussoorie, who initiated the idea of setting up of a viable ecotourism destination with the participation of locals, the eco-parks slowly began to take roots. Today, it has become one of the best eco-tourism destinations in north India. (The Tribune).

There are numerous places in both Garhwal and Kumauni where ecotourism can be promoted in a big way. This will also help in shifting from pressure on popular tourist places in the hills. The government can do much good to public if it takes planned steps to promote ecotourism that will help in checking migration and generating employment opportunities in hill villages. Besides agriculture, this can be the core source of livelihood for hill villagers.

Midway facilities or roadside amenities play an important role in tourism development. They are needed to be developed in the remote areas and branch roads with the help of local people. The places where there is an urgent need of developing these amenities are – Bhogpur-Thano-Dehradun road, Doiwala Dudhli-Dehradun road, Mussoorie-Hathi Paon road and almost at every place in north-western Doon and Chakrata region.

The need is for establishing more information centers at almost all tourist destination with the help of local people, Gram Panchayat or Nyay Panchayat, so that the tourists can get complete information about that particular place and can also know about the places worth visiting and activities

worth doing at that particular place. This will also help in enhancing and popularizing the scope of ecotourism in the entire area.

The sights of garbage scattered all over the place kill the charm of the place along with creating serious hazards for health and environment. It also harms the precious flora and fauna of the region. Thus proper collection, disposal and recycling of the garbage are necessary. For this, awareness creation amongst the stakeholders of tourism like tourists, shopkeepers, tourism department, local bodies and local communities is necessary.

- All the stakeholders can join hand to keep their area clean.
- Dustbins can be provided at various places at the tourist spots.
- Hoardings, posters and sign boards displaying need of cleanliness can be placed at appropriate places to remind the tourists to maintain the cleanliness.
- Fine can be imposed on tourists and service provider who throw litter in the open, spits on walls; building on the roots of trees and plants etc. and those who smoke in open and throw butts on the ground.
- Those who help in keeping destination clean should be rewarded by the related authorities and tourism NGOs.
- Most of the local community people as well as the tourists don't have any idea of the ecotourism concept.
- So, there is immediate need of organizing special programs, seminars, meetings and road shows etc. to familiarize with the concept of ecotourism.
- State government with the help of tourism department and NGOs should organize program for spreading ecotourism awareness among local people, tourists and related bodies.
- Ecotourism awareness campaigns should also explain the concept of ecotourism along with clarifying duties and responsibilities of every person involved.
- It should also help in spreading awareness about benefits of ecotourism.

Mussoorie presents tremendous scope for ecotourism activities which need trained and qualified persons. Trained persons are needed for conducting activities like river rafting, trekking, rock climbing, Paragliding, parasailing and skiing etc. In the same way, cooks efficient in serving multi-cuisine food, managers, nature guides, attendant and caretakers are required for various eco-tourism activities. So training institutes should be opened in the study area where interested and eligible persons can be trained in various skills. These institutes will help in providing trained persons for various activities along with minimizing risk in adventure activities. These institutes will help in improving the quality of services provided to the tourists and will also help in generating employment for more and more local people.

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