CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tourism has been one of the important economic activities irrespective of geographic locations of the countries. Many countries enjoy the privilege of being a hub of spiritual activities that attract tourists from all over the world. The Vatican City, the United Arab Emirates are some such countries whose economies are greatly dependant on the spiritual heritage. In India, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) is one such spiritual place which attracts more than one lac pilgrims/tourists every day. The Uttarakhand state of India is also known for its spiritual establishments. However, scientific studies on the marketing aspects of these spiritual destinations are very limited. Thus, it is logical to analyse the impact of spiritual tourism in the context of the state’s infrastructure and economy with corresponding aspects of marketing strategies. A detailed study about spiritual tourism in the Uttarakhand state with emphasis on two most important spiritual places – Haridwar and Rishikesh were carried out. The marketing practices, marketing strategies, infrastructure and economy within the academic limits have been analysed. A ‘descriptive research’ with ‘conclusive research design’ was carried out with primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected by administering a questionnaire instrument, while secondary data were collected from various Government and non government sources in order to test the hypotheses based on the research questions. Effect of infrastructure on the state’s tourism and vis-à-vis its economy have been analysed. A tourism-infrastructure-economy model has been developed. The following sections present the major conclusions of the study, its limitations and also the scopes for future research works. Major contributions of the present study have been outlined; a few recommendations based on the present investigation have been proposed.
7.1 CONCLUSIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present investigation is concerned with the status of spiritual tourism, marketing strategies, infrastructure and its impact on the economy of Uttarakhand state. This state is situated at the northern part of India is basically the foothills of the giant Himalays and which boasts of housing many famous spiritual destinations. The state is also termed as Devbhumi owing to being the home of several famous deities of Hindu mythology. Millions of tourists, both domestic as well as international, visit the state annually not only for spiritual reasons, but for holidaying, water sports, snow sports, trekking, and other reasons. The state earns significant revenue from these tourists and the tourism related activities. The state’s infrastructure and economy is hence closely related to the tourists visiting the state. Spirituality is found to be one major attraction for the both domestic and international tourists in the state. Thus, it was logical to undertake some scientific studies in order to investigate different aspects related to spiritual tourism, for example – marketing strategy, infrastructure and economy. The most popular spiritual destinations in the state – Haridwar and Rishikesh were chosen as the target sites for collection of data. Detailed analyses of the primary as well as secondary data have been carried out, hypotheses have been tested, and inferences have been drawn. Economic analyses have also been carried out and models have been proposed on the basis of the investigation. The investigation has yielded several conclusions which are presented in the following sections.

7.1.1 General Conclusions

- There has been a significant increase in spiritual travelers, both domestic and international, in the recent years owing to generic changes in the people’s attitude towards spirituality.
• Male and female tourists are equally interested for the spiritual activities, although the number of married domestic spiritual tourists is significantly higher than the international married tourists.

• Higher number of divorcee among the international spiritual tourists indicates relatively relaxed social bindings in the families outside India.

• Tourists visiting the spiritual places with the lone purpose of spirituality are unexpectedly low (13% and 25% in case of domestic and international tourists respectively) contrary to the reputation of this spiritual state in India.

• The facts also revealed that, the spiritual tourists are not very specific about the infrastructures of the destinations; they are more concerned with their spiritual goal.

• Number of tourists visiting a spiritual place depends on its perceived degree of spirituality.

• Only 10% domestic tourists travel individually, against 43% international tourists.

• Most of the domestic tourists are either self motivated (~40%) or motivated by the family members or relatives (~41%); while, the majority (~78%) of the international tourists decide based on the media reports/information.

• Most of the spiritual tourists are satisfied (100%) with their visits, and wish to revisit the destinations (domestic – 100%, international – 71%). Distance and associated costs are the possible reasons for lower interest for revisit among the international tourists.

• Package tours were found no longer attractive for the tourists, both domestic as well as international owing to (i) inadequate information, (ii) improper (unprofessional) tour management, and (iii) increased security concerns.
• Taxi is the most preferred mode of transport among the spiritual tourists, both domestic and international.

• While most of the domestic tourists come for a short visit (1-2 days), most of the international tourists generally stay for more than three days as generally they come for certain directed programmes (for example, meditation camp, Yoga festival etc.).

• Most of the tourist guides are young men in the age bracket of 26 – 35 years and most of them earn an average income of ten thousand rupees.

• Approximately 28% tourist guides know more than two languages; however, language is not a major bar in communication at the spiritual places.

7.1.2 On Spiritual Tourism and Marketing Strategy

• In general, it was difficult to ascertain the status of marketing practices in place with respect to specific to the spiritual tourism. There is hardly any directed marketing of the state’s tourism.

• Publicity and marketing of the tourism attractions of Uttarakhand at the national and international level has been inadequate.

• The annual Yoga Festival held at Rishikesh becomes the main driver to bring many international tourists to the place again and again. The festival, thus, has the potential to contribute in branding Rishikesh as one of the spiritual destinations in the state.

• Government is the main stake holder in deciding, formulating and executing marketing strategies for the places of spiritual importance.
• Media plays a valuable role in attracting the spiritual tourists.

• Some hotels offer/organize their own promotional programmes for the tourists.

7.1.3 On Spiritual Tourism and Infrastructure

• The vital infrastructural conditions influence the number of tourists visiting a spiritual place.

• The non government agencies along with the government must take the initiatives for betterment of the facilities/conditions at the spiritual destinations.

• Tour planning of an informed tourist is primarily based on three key factors – Time, Taste and Technology. Accordingly, a Time-Taste-Technology (T–T–T) model has been developed.

• A Tourist-Infrastructure-Economy model has been constructed.

• The IT and non-IT infrastructures have been identified. It was concluded that the IT revolution can be exploited to attract spiritual tourists to the state.

• The information-oriented tourism websites of the state can help the tourist in making their journey a fruitful one.

• Information technology has a great role to play. Tourist Information Centers (TICs) can provide the tourist with in-depth information about the importance of the different sites, route information, weather condition, accommodation, availability of food, health care, adventure, wildlife, environment, yoga and meditation etc.

• Communication is a vital infrastructure which directly affects the tourists.
• Mobile phone is the dominating mode of communication for the spiritual tourists, followed by the internet.

• Availability of packaged drinking water was a welcome factor as 100% international tourists were found satisfied with drinking water. However, cost and habit prevented the domestic tourists in using the packaged drinking water and were found not happy with the facility.

• Most of the international tourists prefer hotels for accommodation (~76%), while dharamsalas are preferred by the domestic tourists (~54%) as they are cheap.

• There is a need to promote and encourage private sector participation in the development of modern tourist facilities and infrastructure and management practices in Uttarakhand.

7.1.4 On Spiritual Tourism and Economy

• Tourism is one the highest revenue earning industries in Uttarakhand. There has been an increase in the rate of tourist inflow to the state, particularly in the current decade and a considerable part of these tourists are spiritual tourists who play an important role in the state’s economic health.

• Earning through tourists and employment (both direct and indirect) are two important indicators which influence the state’s economy significantly.

• Further, the international spiritual tourists contribute more towards the state’s revenue than the domestic tourists.

• In order to enhance the inflow of spiritual tourists to the state, the conditions of the spiritual places, and the state’s infrastructure should be improved.
• The possibility of the revenue to be earned by the state from spiritual tourists has been explored. A causal-loop representation of the effect of spiritual tourists on the state’s economy has been developed.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

• Tourist information centers should not only be located at important tourist destinations of the region but also at national and international gateways; so that, the tourist, particularly foreigners, will get the right information about the places of interest.

• In order to make correct as well as speedy information, all the information centers should be connected with each other through computerization. All these information centers should be provided with related literature and brochures, booking services for package tours and so on.

• Uttarakhand has outstanding tourism products and has potential to become a major tourism destination. The state has a greater value for domestic tourist because of its spiritual sites. However, the image of Uttarakhand in the international market is weak and hence proper marketing strategies are to be adopted to place Uttarakhand on the tourism map of the world.

• Publication of few ‘Information Brochure’ in major foreign languages would be widely appreciated.

• Attractive fact sheets, guide maps etc. containing crisp information and facts about the tourism attractions in the state of Uttarakhand should be widely circulated.

• There exists huge scope for an organized marketing to play in motivating the domestic tourists.
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- Selection of qualified and trained guides at the places of interest who can provide professional service.

- Travelling time by air, road and rail to Uttarakhand from other parts of India and abroad need to be reduced; travelling comforts need to be enhanced to attract tourists. Reducing air travel cost, in the form of something like ‘special spiritual tourist fare’ would increase domestic tourist inflow to the state.

- Other infrastructure facilities— accommodation, food and beverages, sanitation, telecom services, entertainment and general service level of outlets be improved.

- Information Technology infrastructure and tourist information database be made functioning well with up-to-date information.

7.3 MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study has focused on a relatively broad issue of spiritual tourism in Uttarakhand state emphasizing on the marketing aspects. The study has contributed to various issues; however, the major contributions of the study can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Necessity of an effective marketing strategy with respect to spiritual tourism, which is a major stake in the state’s (Uttarakhand) tourism, has been established through data and scientific analyses.

2. Necessity of improved infrastructure for enhancement of spiritual tourism related revenue has been established.

3. Indicators for economic health of the state’s economy vis-à-vis spiritual tourism in Uttarakhand have been identified.

4. A Time-Taste-Technology (T–T–T) model has been developed.
5. A Tourist-Infrastructure-Economy model correlating major contributing components has been developed.

7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study was carried out as part of an academic programme which has certain inherent constraints. Time and physical resources are always critical factors in accomplishing such a huge study. Thus, there are few natural limitations of the present study which can be listed as follows:

1. The study was carried out based on the primary data of two major spiritual destinations of the state.

2. The study was conducted only in the two places in the plain; whereas, there are number of other popular spiritual places in the state which are located on the higher ridges.

3. Only four hundred authentic samples could be drawn for collection of tourist data.

4. The administered instrument appeared too long for many tourists who considered responding to such a questionnaire was waste of time.

5. Many hoteliers, agents and other responsible persons were hesitant to share their views fearing to be on records.

6. No proper electronic or manual data base could be exploited properly.

7.5 FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present investigation was carried out on an important issue concerned with Uttarakhand state. A scientific approach was followed throughout the study to arrive at the logical conclusions. However, the sociological factors associated with the problem
provided a larger dimension to the problem and the vastness opened up many new issues which can be taken up in the future for further investigations. The following are some of the major issues that appear as scopes for future works:

1. As mentioned already, the present study was basically carried out based on the primary data of two spiritual districts in the plain regions only. The study can be extended to other spiritual destinations like Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri etc. The travel, accommodation and other infrastructural facilities in these high altitude spiritual places shall be significantly different from those available in the plains, for example – Haridwar and Rishikesh.

2. A study on formulating marketing strategies for these high altitude four destinations, popularly known as *char dhams* can be carried out that will help the state in economic analysis as well.

3. A comprehensive model for forecasting spiritual tourists to different destinations and the corresponding market behavior in the next 15/20 years using system dynamics can be developed.

4. A comprehensive study only on the hospitality sector vis-à-vis the spiritual tourism in the state can be carried out.

5. Studies on formation and management of information and travel network connecting all the major spiritual destinations can be carried out.

6. A study on the possible extension of the services of financial institutions, including foreign exchange facilities, at all the major spiritual destinations of the state can be carried out.
7. A study to identify the unemployment scenario in the state and its partial solution through spiritual tourism can be carried out.

8. A study regarding development and management of database to track the status information of the spiritual tourists once he enters the state can be carried out.