Intention to Visit Uttarakhand among Potential Young Indian Travelers: Travel Motivations, Perceived Risks and Constraints

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Abstract

Background: *Uttarakhand, often called the "Land of Gods," is renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, spiritual heritage, and adventure opportunities. Despite its potential, young Indian travellers aged 18–25 face diverse motivations and deterrents that shape their travel decisions. Understanding these factors is vital for enhancing Uttarakhand's appeal among this demographic.* **Objectives:** *The primary objective of this study is to investigate the travel intentions of young Indian travelers by examining the factors that motivate them to visit Uttarakhand, alongside the perceived risks and constraints that deter them.* **Methodology:** *A survey-based descriptive research design was adopted, collecting data from 100 respondents at a hospitality institute in Delhi through structured questionnaires using Google Forms via one-on-one interactions. Statistical tools, including frequency distribution and Chi-Square analysis, were employed to examine relationships between variables.* **Results:** *The findings indicate that natural beauty (38%) and adventure experiences (25%) are the top motivators for travel, while religious motivations are less influential. The relationship between variables: such as gender, travel motivations ($\chi^2 = 3.84$, $p = 0.43$), seasonal preferences ($\chi^2 = 12.51$, $p = 0.70$), and perceived risks ($\chi^2 = 12.15$, $p = 0.016$). There is no significant relationship between gender and primary travel motivations ($p > 0.05$), nor between travel motivations and preferred seasons ($p > 0.05$). However, natural disasters emerged as a significant perceived risk ($p < 0.05$), deterring travel and increasing the preference for sustainable tourism. Time and budget constraints significantly shape transportation preferences, favoring buses and personal vehicles. Short stays (<10 days) and proximity to attractions dominate traveler choices.* **Conclusion:** *Uttarakhand is highly appealing to young travelers but requires improved safety measures, infrastructure, and eco-friendly tourism strategies. Addressing these concerns is crucial for enhancing the state's appeal and ensuring sustainable tourism development.*

Keywords: Uttarakhand, young travellers, travel motivation, perceived travel risks, travel constraints, tourism, responsible tourism

Introduction

Uttarakhand, popularly known as Dev Bhoomi or Land of Gods, is fast emerging (Kala, 2021) as one of the finest vacation spots with breathtaking landscapes: snow-capped peaks, verdant valleys, and a variety of natural attractions with major pilgrimage points, adventure sports, and wellness centres etc. However, increased tourism brings with itself many serious concerns regarding environmental sustainability and community welfare issues and efforts need to be made to ensure that this huge need for tourism is met through sustainable means (Ahmed & Rajouri, 2013). Uttarakhand urgently needs to strike a balance in tourism promotion with the preservation of its ecological and cultural heritage. Studies underscore managing impacts on natural sites for the benefit of local communities without

| 10 |

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them incurring any negative consequences (Kala & Bagri, 2018).

Uttarakhand's potential for tourism is generally conceded to by everybody, including its natural beauty and rich cultural and religious history. The region is endowed with various tourism resources, such as hillside summer retreats in regions with beautiful lakeside scenery and views of year-round snow of the Himalayan Mountains, as well as Hindu pilgrimage sites (Akihito, 2017). In recent years, tourists from all over India have visited Uttarakhand, and that number is increasing rapidly. There is also an enormous potential for foreign tourists visiting Uttarakhand for purposes like Health, Yoga, etc. (Bansal & Gangotia, 2010). However, tourism also has risks like natural disasters and environmental degradation, which need careful management. These perceived travel risks also affect the revisit intentions of tourists to the state (Kaushik et al., 2016).

While Uttarakhand is popular among tourists, particularly in well-known destinations like Mussoorie, Nainital, and Rishikesh, much of the state's tourism sector remains underdeveloped. Numerous promising sites have yet to be fully tapped, and the existing infrastructure is inadequate to support the growing number of visitors. Despite the state's potential to attract a diverse range of tourists, the lack of sufficient infrastructure and the absence of a well-coordinated tourism development strategy has further hampered the state's ability to fully leverage its tourism potential. Without a comprehensive plan, Uttarakhand has struggled to expand beyond its already popular destinations. The limited government planning and insufficient investment in tourism infrastructure have been significant barriers to growth. Addressing these challenges with strategic planning and investment is crucial to realizing the full benefits of tourism across the entire state (Jaiswal & Bisht, 2017).

Moreover, while natural beauty and adventure sports continue to attract tourists, these activities can be risky, especially in disaster-prone areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the need for adaptive and responsible tourism practices, with a strong emphasis on local tourism and collective spiritual efforts to ensure the industry's survival (Kumar et al., 2020). Recognizing the need for adaptive practices, we must also consider the abundant eco-tourism opportunities and resources available in Uttarakhand. The region boasts six national parks, seven wildlife sanctuaries,

and four conservation reserves, offering a rich diversity of fauna, flora, and avifauna. These resources present significant opportunities for eco-friendly tourism, which can align with the growing demand for responsible travel and contribute to the preservation of the region's natural heritage (Sati, 2021).

Uttarakhand's substantial tourism potential is also driven by its diverse landscapes, high biodiversity, religious significance, and rich cultural heritage (Rana & Kumar, 2016). It emphasizes the need for sustainable tourism practices that engage local communities and offers insights into tourist perceptions, motivations. Moreover, the inhibiting factors identified in community participation in tourism development reiterate the need for inclusive and participatory planning (Kala & Bagri, 2018).

Understanding travel intentions is crucial for effectively managing and developing tourism in Uttarakhand. Key factors influencing these intentions include travel motivations such as religious significance and relaxation, as well as perceived risks and constraints (Durgapal & Singhal, 2018). Building on the understanding of travel intentions, it is essential to consider the specific role of religious motivations, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Insights from existing literature suggest that religious motivations and emotional well-being play significant roles in travel decisions. It suggests that in a Post- Covid Scenario, people are ready to visit religious destinations, particularly to thank God, preserve emotional wellbeing, and pray for a better future (Kala, 2021).

This study aims to explore these constructs in depth and provide actionable recommendations for stakeholders. By addressing these factors, the study seeks to offer strategies that align with current trends and challenges, ensuring that Uttarakhand continues to thrive as a preferred destination.

Objectives

- To investigate the reasons for travel motivation among potential Indian travelers to Uttarakhand.
- To identify and analyze the perceived travel risks and constraints that influence the decision-making process of potential Indian travelers.
- To generate actionable recommendations for tourism stakeholders in Uttarakhand, based on the analysis of travel motivations, perceived risks and constraints.

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| 11 |

Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted a survey-based descriptive research design to explore travel motivations, perceived risks and constraints among young Indian travellers.

Locale: Data was collected from students at a hospitality institute in Delhi, ensuring diverse socio-economic and cultural perspectives to enhance the study's generalizability.

Sampling Design: Responses were gathered from 100 individuals aged 18 to 25 using convenience sampling through Google Forms and one-on-one interactions, facilitating efficient and inclusive data collection. Convenience sampling was used to collect data.

Tools and Technique: Data collection was conducted using a comprehensive questionnaire designed to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. The questionnaire predominantly featured closed-ended questions, including binary scale (Yes/No) and ordinal scale (e.g., Poor, Average, Good) responses, ensuring streamlined analysis. Responses were collected through Google Forms and one-on-one interactions. The collected data were analysed using statistical tools such as frequency distribution and Likert scale analysis, uncovering patterns, relationships, and insights related to travel motivations, perceived risks, and constraints among potential Indian travellers to Uttarakhand.

Data Analysis and Statistical Analysis: The collected data was analyzed using following statistical tools: Frequency distribution to identify prevalent trends and Likert scale analysis to assess attitudes and perceptions. Additionally, statistical tests like Chi-Square analysis were employed to uncover patterns, relationships, and insights into travel motivations, perceived risks, and constraints among potential travellers to Uttarakhand.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Respondents: The survey revealed a gender distribution of 80% male and 20% female respondents. This reflects broader societal trends where men typically have higher participation in travel-related decision-making, particularly within the 18-25 age group. It was found out that 73% of the respondents had visited Uttarakhand before. This aligns with Durgapal and Singhal (2018) where 50% of the visitors were found to be repeat visitors. It also

adds to the fact that Uttarakhand is a booming tourist hub and that repeat rate of tourists is high.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Gender	Percentage
Male	80%
Female	20%
Intersex	0
Visited Before	
Yes	73%
No	27%
Previous travel experience	
Very Good	44%
Good	24%
Average	05%
Poor	0
Reason for travel	*1*
Adventure sports	18%
Religious tourism	15%
Nature and wildlife	38%
Cultural heritage	9%
Other	20%

Investigating the Reasons for Travel Motivation: To understand what drives young Indian travelers to Uttarakhand, we analyzed the influence of gender on travel motivations and the relationship between motivations and seasonal preferences.

Gender and Primary Reasons for Visiting Uttarakhand
Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between gender and primary reasons for visiting Uttarakhand.
H1: There is a significant relationship between gender and primary reasons for visiting Uttarakhand.

Table 2: Gender Wise Split of Travellers based on Primary Reasons for Visiting Uttarakhand

Primary Reason	Female	Male
Adventure Sports	2	16
Religious Tourism	1	14
Nature and Wildlife	10	28
Cultural Heritage	2	7
Other	5	15

Chi-Square Value: 3.84; Degrees of Freedom: 4; P-value: 0.43. Since p > 0.05, we fail to reject H0. There

| 12 |

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NAAS Score: 3.49

is no significant relationship between gender and primary reasons for visiting. Nature and wildlife emerge as the most popular motivators for both genders. This supports findings that Uttarakhand's biodiversity and eco-tourism appeal universally (Ahmed & Rajouri, 2013).

Travel Motivation and Preferred Season
Hypothesis
H0: There is no significant relationship between travel motivations and preferred seasons.
H1: There is a significant relationship between travel motivations and preferred seasons.

Table 3: Travel Motivation based on Preferred Season

Motivation	Summer	Monsoon	Winter	Spring	Undecided
New Experiences and Adventure	7	2	7	4	5
Natural Beauty	13	6	10	5	5
New Cultures	4	2	3	2	0
Religious Purposes	3	0	0	3	0
Other	1	4	8	2	4

Chi-Square Value: 12.51; Degrees of Freedom: 16; P-value: 0.70. Since $p > 0.05$, we fail to reject H0. There is no significant relationship between travel motivations and preferred seasons. Travelers motivated by natural beauty or adventure visit across all seasons, reflecting Uttarakhand's year-round appeal (Sati, 2021). Seasonal peaks for religious tourism during festivals or pilgrimage seasons may still occur (Kala, 2021).

Analyzing Perceived Risks and Constraints: To assess how perceived risks and travel constraints influence decisions, we examined their impact on willingness for responsible tourism and transportation preferences. These analyses provide insights into addressing travelers' concerns.

Perceived Risks and Willingness for Responsible Tourism
Hypothesis
H0: There is no significant relationship between perceived travel risks and willingness for responsible tourism.
H1: There is a significant relationship between perceived travel risks and willingness for responsible tourism.

Table 4: *Perceived Risks and Willingness for Responsible Tourism*

Risk	Willing (Yes)	Not Willing (No)
Natural Disasters	61	9
Security Threats	6	0
Health Risks	2	5
Poor Infrastructure	3	2
Other	6	6

Chi-Square Value: 12.15; Degrees of Freedom: 4; P-value: 0.016. Since $p < 0.05$, we reject H0. There is a significant relationship between perceived travel risks and willingness for responsible tourism. This shows that travelers concerned about risks like natural disasters are more inclined toward responsible practices. These risks have a substantial impact on revisit intentions (Kaushik et al., 2016). The emphasis on safety and sustainability has increased post-COVID (Kumar et al., 2020). Addressing these concerns through improved infrastructure and community participation is essential (Kala & Bagri, 2018).

Travel Constraints and Mode of Transportation
Hypothesis
H0: There is no significant relationship between travel constraints and preferred modes of transportation.
H1: There is a significant relationship between travel constraints and preferred modes of transportation.

Table 5: *Travel Constraints and Mode of Transportation*

Travel Constraint	Air	Train	Bus	Personal Vehicle
Budget Constraints	8	6	9	5
Time Constraints	5	3	7	11
Lack of Information	2	5	6	9
Distance from Home	6	8	10	0

Chi-Square Value: 16.37; Degrees of Freedom: 9; P-value: 0.06. Since $p > 0.05$, we fail to reject H0. There is no significant relationship between travel constraints and preferred modes of transportation. However, descriptive trends indicate that budget constraints favor buses, while

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NAAS Score: 3.49

| 13 |

time constraints lean toward personal vehicles. Economic and infrastructural challenges heavily influence transportation choices. Poor public transport infrastructure remains a significant barrier for budget-conscious travelers (Rana & Kumar, 2016).

Enhancements to Tourism based on Travel Motivations and Reasons: We analyzed how travel reasons impact length of stay and how motivations affect accommodation preferences. These insights can help tailor tourism offerings to better meet traveler needs.

Travel Reasons and Length of Stay
Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between travel reasons and length of stay.
H1: There is a significant relationship between travel reasons and length of stay.

Table 6: *Travel Reasons and Length of Stay*

Reason	<1 Week	1-10 Days	>1 Month	Undecided
Adventure Sports	13	4	0	1
Religious Tourism	5	8	0	2
Nature and Wildlife	10	20	2	6
Cultural Heritage	2	3	2	2
Other	9	5	0	6

Chi-Square Value: 10.24; Degrees of Freedom: 12; P-value: 0.59. Since p > 0.05, we fail to reject H0. There is no significant relationship between travel reasons and length of stay. However, short stays (<10 days) are most common, aligning with the preferences of younger travelers seeking flexibility. Longer stays may occur for nature-focused trips in eco-tourism hubs (Sati, 2021).

Travel Motivation and Accommodation Choice
Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant relationship between travel motivations and accommodation preferences.
H1: There is a significant relationship between travel motivations and accommodation preferences.

Table 7: *Travel Motivation and Accommodation Choice*

Motivation	Location	Price	Quality	Amenities
Seeking Adventure	13	7	3	2
Exploring Natural Beauty	27	6	6	0
Experiencing New Cultures	5	2	4	0
Religious Purposes	5	1	0	0
Other	12	1	6	0

Chi-Square Value: 11.84; Degrees of Freedom: 12; P-value: 0.46. Since p > 0.05, we fail to reject H0. Location remains the most critical factor across motivations. This shows that proximity to key attractions is essential for accommodation preferences (Akihito, 2017). Promoting eco-friendly accommodations could enhance Uttarakhand's appeal for nature-focused and responsible travelers (Sati, 2021).

Conclusion

Uttarakhand, with its unparalleled natural beauty, spiritual significance, and adventure opportunities, offers immense tourism potential. This study provides actionable insights into the motivations, perceived risks, and constraints shaping travel decisions among young Indian travelers, while highlighting opportunities for growth and addressing critical barriers.

1. **Travel Motivations**

   a. Nature and Wildlife emerged as the primary reason for visiting Uttarakhand, with no significant gender differences, reflecting its universal appeal.

   b. Adventure and New Experiences were key motivators, indicating a growing interest in experiential tourism. Seasonal preferences were inconclusive, suggesting Uttarakhand's year-round draw.

   c. Religious Tourism, while less influential among young travelers, remains significant for older and repeat visitors.

2. **Perceived Risks and Constraints**

   a. Natural Disasters were a significant deterrent, influencing travelers' willingness to engage in sustainable practices.

   b. Budget and Time Constraints shaped transportation preferences, with buses preferred by budget-

conscious travelers and personal vehicles by those constrained by time, though the relationship was not statistically significant.

3. **Travel Patterns and Preferences**

    a. Most travelers preferred shorter stays with no significant relationship between travel reasons and length of stay.

    b. Proximity to attractions drove accommodation choices across motivations underscoring the importance of strategically located accommodations.

To unlock Uttarakhand's full tourism potential, it is critical to align offerings with traveler needs while addressing barriers. Key strategies include:

1. Enhancing Accessibility and Infrastructure: Improving Road networks, offering affordable public transport, and diversifying travel options can mitigate budget and time constraints.

2. Promoting Sustainable Tourism: Developing eco-friendly accommodations and implementing disaster preparedness plans will attract environmentally conscious travelers. Engaging local communities in tourism planning will strengthen sustainable practices.

3. Mitigating Traveler Concerns: Strengthening disaster management systems, healthcare facilities, and emergency communication will build traveler confidence, particularly for those wary of natural disasters.

By prioritizing these measures, Uttarakhand can position itself as a leading sustainable tourism destination, ensuring ecological preservation, boosting tourism revenues, and fostering socio-economic development for local communities. These strategies will transform traveler experiences while ensuring long-term growth and sustainability.

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| 15 |