

Religious Tourism Planning and Promotion in the Higher Reaches of Uttarakhand Himalayas: A Case Study of Kedarnath Post 2013 Disaster

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Abstract

Pilgrimage tourism is one of the most cultural and socio-economic activities in mountain regions and has been practicing since time immemorial. It is the major source of income as about 26 percent of Uttarakhand's GDP is earned from tourism. In Garhwal Himalaya, most of the pilgrimage places are located in the higher reaches of Himalaya and Kedarnath, one of the abodes of Lord Shiva, is located at the height of 3583 meters above sea level near the source of Mandakini River. The 'Himalayan Tsunami' caused by torrential rain, clouds bursts and flash floods on 16 and 17 June, 2013 caused severe damage to the tourist amenities and facilities which badly affected the livelihood of the local people. The intensity of torrential rain in Mandakini valley washed away Kedarnath, Rambara and Gaurikund to a large extent. This flood not only devastated the local infrastructure and connectivity like highways, hotels, communication network and local inhabitants but also put halt on tourist arrival for almost 2 years. The present paper evaluates post 2013 planning and promotion of pilgrimage tourism in Kedarnath and the research methodology adopted to know the planning and promotion is based on the secondary data taken from various sources.

Keywords: Pilgrimage tourism, Garhwal Himalaya, Kedarnath, planning & promotion, Himalayan tsunami
