

# TO EXAMINE THE DIFFERENCES IN PREFERENCES AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS BRANDED DESTINATION

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## ABSTRACT

Every tourist's tastes, interests, and motives are intricately linked to personal characteristics. Personal interests and hobbies are often the most important factors for many tourists. Adventurers may favor locations that offer hiking, trekking, or skiing, like Auli, while those who enjoy historical events go to places with great cultural heritage value, such Lahual Spiti. Similar to how food entices people to visit places known for their gastronomic delights, some tourists seek out places like Haridwar and Rishikesh that are associated with spiritual fulfillment. Therefore, as it is the first stage in selecting a holiday destination, it is essential to comprehend the interests and desires of tourists. The goal of this study is to determine and examine the elements that affect travelers' choices of any Uttarakhand or Himachal Pradesh destination. In order to help the state concentrate on those elements while promoting its well-known locations, this study examines the factors for both states and has developed a comparison viewpoint. Any travel destination selection is a complex process that is impacted by a number of elements, each of which is essential in determining the final decision made by the traveler. These elements can be roughly divided into three categories: destination-specific, external, and personal.

**KEYWORD:** *Haridwar, Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Auli, Travelers*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant sectors of the Indian economy's service sector is tourism. It is one of the industries with the greatest rate of growth in the world, and it is now widely understood that it significantly accelerates a nation's economic development. In addition to fostering national integration and international peace and understanding—which are critically needed in a world ripped apart by conflict and strife—it has produced a multitude of social and economic advantages. It is also a way to generate foreign exchange and, to a considerable extent, creates employment prospects. In addition, tourism has a significant role in promoting local handicrafts and presenting the culture of the destination, all of which foster tolerance and understanding among the many

cultures that make up the multiethnic and multicultural world, especially in light of the rising intolerance. Conditions that are favorable for the rise of tourism have been produced by a number of reasons, including population growth, shorter workdays, more paid holidays, increased awareness of the benefits of travel, and the need to decompress from the stresses of contemporary life. In India, the tourism sector—whose name itself suggests how important it is—was ranked as the second most important source of income for the nation. India's tourism industry has grown over the years to become a significant driver of the nation's economic expansion, generating foreign exchange revenues and opening up job possibilities. Peace, however, is a fundamental requirement for the development of this most lucrative sector. The first and most important prerequisite is peace at the destination.

### **Tourism: A Concept**

Tourism is a complicated, multidimensional phenomena that creates a complex tapestry of economies, cultures, and individual journeys; it is more than just a vacation or leisure activity. Fundamentally, tourism is the short-term movement of people for official or private reasons to locations other than their usual surroundings. Despite appearing to be a straightforward description, there are numerous ways to understand it.

Is it a devoted believer's journey in search of spiritual comfort? Or is it the daring hiker who ventures into uncharted jungles? Or is it the five-star resort's opulence for the luxury traveler? Captivatingly, the answer is all mentioned above and more. The tourism industry encompasses a wide range of influences, experiences, and motives. People that travel for leisure do so in order to unwind, explore new locations, and partake in a variety of activities. Traveling for business purposes, such as conferences, meetings, and trade shows, is the focus of business tourism. While eco-tourism stresses ethical and sustainable travel methods to protect natural areas, adventure tourism caters to thrill-seekers. Discovering new places, exchanging cultures, and fostering understanding between people are the core components of tourism.

### **Tourism: A Historical Tapestry**

Both the term and the idea of tourism are not new. Examining tourism's history is essential to comprehending it. The history of tourism can be traced back to the time when traders set out on difficult voyages over well-traveled routes or pilgrims journeyed for religious reasons. Although leisure and exploratory travel dates back to ancient civilizations, the idea of contemporary tourism as we know it today first appeared in the 18th century. European elites' Grand Tours established the framework for organized travel, opening the door for the development of

steamships, railroads, and travel companies. Travelers were drawn to pilgrimage routes like the Camino de Santiago during the Middle Ages, which aided in the growth of lodging facilities and hospitality services. Travel became more accessible in the 20th century as a result of shorter workweeks and increased wages. The explosion of mass tourism changed the cultural and economic landscapes of many nations and turned tranquil towns into popular travel destinations.

## 2. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Given the multi-dimensional aspects of branded tourism destination, (adventure, spiritual, wellness & yoga and wildlife and natural), it becomes pertinent to examine the tourist's perception and perceptions towards branded destination, more specifically wrt to the state of Uttarakhand. The generic perception was explored, and the Uttarakhand position was not examined.

## 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The goal of the research by Beerli, A., & Martin, J. D. (2004) is to develop and validate a model that describes the different components that go into creating a destination image after a travel experience. The study examined the relationships between the different elements that the traveler perceives and the elements that help the traveler form those mental representations. These aspects include information from primary and secondary sources, stimuli that affect perceptions and assessments of locations before and after a visit, motivation, sociodemographic traits, and cumulative tourism experiences.

By evaluating the perceived significance of value-added services provided by websites for tour operators and travel agencies during the customer's search and purchase process, Lexhagen, M. (2004), investigates a potential reason influencing the comparatively sluggish growth of the online tourism business. The study, which was carried out via an online survey and used an adapted consumer choice process model, identifies the crucial phase for obtaining value-added services during the seeking or destination selection phases. However, following the actual journey to the destination or the post-travel period, all of these services lose their significance. The results indicated that in order to build deeper client relationships and encourage loyalty—which may have an impact on long-term purchasing behavior—travel websites should improve their post-consumption value-added services.

In the context of guided tour packages, Bowie, D., & Chang, J. C. (2005) seek to discover factors associated with consumer satisfaction by defining the leader's role and the services offered by suppliers, such as auxiliary

assistance, itinerary planning, and service delivery. Using the observation approach with respondents of various nationalities, data was gathered from Scandinavian destinations. Travelers' experience and happiness during the service receiving time are influenced by a number of elements, including expectations, equity, and consumer attitudes and behaviors while on tour. Customer satisfaction was also greatly impacted by the traveler's experience, especially their delight and pleasure-seeking (to be regarded as excitement aspects) during the tour. The results highlight the tour leader's critical role in the tour product's success on a psychological, spiritual, and practical level. This gives tour operators in the global market useful information that improves their comprehension of visitor satisfaction in the context of guided package tours.

#### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To examine the differences in preferences and perception towards branded destination

#### **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology chapter outlines the systematic framework used to investigate the research topics and acts as the study's methodological blueprint. This chapter, which deals with study methodology, provides a thorough rundown of the selected approaches, including sampling plans, data collection methods, and analytical approaches. A research challenge can be solved methodically with the help of research methodology. There is a lot of potential for tourism in the states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, and both are always working hard to build their brands among travelers. Both Indian states have a long history of tourism and draw large numbers of visitors to various tourist attractions. High performance and a certain degree of happiness are not assured by the creation of a nice environment and infrastructure. To obtain a competitive edge and increase visitor happiness, a significant deal of research is required to examine the historical significance and other tourism-related concerns. Using a sample of tourists from a few carefully chosen destinations in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, the current study employed an analytical hierarchical method, a multicriteria decision-making tool, to analyze the motivational factors that influence tourists' desire to visit a place or destination. Both exploratory and descriptive research methodologies were used in this study. Answers to many of the questions addressed with prior knowledge of the situation or issues being studied can be found through descriptive research. A questionnaire and opinion survey techniques have been employed in exploratory research to conduct the study. A closed-ended, self-structured questionnaire has been created that covers a number of factors related to traveler decisions (variables found in the literature review) and how they relate to traveler preferences, satisfaction, destination loyalty, intention to return, and tourism enhancement. The Statistical Package for the

Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used to transcribe the quantitative data in order to compute descriptive statistics and do analysis of variance. Analysis and interpretation of data have been done using SPSS (Version 26).

## 6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### The Demographic Analysis

**TABLE - 6.1 AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Category	Frequency	Percent
Below 25 years	120	30.76
25-35 years	150	38.47
35-45 years	100	25.65
Above 45 years	20	5.12
Total	390	100.0

### Interpretation

Table show the "Age of Respondents." The study divided the respondents' ages into four groups: "Below 25 years, 25-35 years, 35-45 years, and Above 45 years." According to the analysis, of the 390 respondents, 150 (about 38.47%) are between the ages of 25 and 35, and 120 (approximately 30.76%) are under the age of 25. Accordingly, 69.23% of the respondents are under 35, meaning that the majority of visitors visiting Uttarakhand and Himanchal Pradesh are young people.

**Table-6.2 Gender of the Respondents**

Category	Frequency	Percent
Male	210	53.84
Female	180	46.16
Total	390	100.0

### Interpretation

"Gender of Respondents" is represented in Table. "Male and Female" are the two groups into which the survey has divided the respondents' genders. Analysis showed that, of the 390 responders, the greatest number, 210 (or roughly 53.84%), fell into the "Male" category, while 180 (or roughly 46.16%) fell into the "Female" category. One explanation for this significant variance could be that women were reluctant to complete the survey or that their male partners were manipulating the females' responses to the fullest extent possible. Even though the data shows that the majority of visitors are men, the personal interactions with tourists indicate that women were not very interested in filling out the questionnaire, and some of them gave their questionnaires to their male companions to complete. Because of these female behaviors, the study's findings were skewed toward men (Badoni M, 2024).

**Table-6.3 Marital Status of the Respondents**

Marital Status of Respondents		
Category	Frequency	Percent
Not Yet Married	167	42.82
Married	223	57.18
Total	390	100.0

### Interpretation

The "Marital Status of Respondents" is shown in Table. The two marital status categories used in the study are "Married and Not Yet Married." According to the analysis, 223 (about 57.18%) of the 390 respondents fell into the "Married" category, while 167 (around 42.82%) fell into the "Not Yet Married" category. Other categories, such "divorced, widow, or widower," also apply to some of the responders. However, as is the case in the current study, these categories have not been taken into account because of the low response rate. Out of these respondents, just seven responses have been gathered. The study does not include responses from these groups.

### *Assumption of Normality and multicollinearity*

Skewness, kurtosis, variance inflation factor (VIF), and tolerance values were taken into consideration in order to analyze the normalcy of the data. Lower skewness and kurtosis values are generally advised (Field, 2009); also, the VIF should not exceed 3.3 (Gómez, Lopez & Molina, 2015; Petter, Straub, & Rai, 2007). As tolerance levels approaching zero indicate the presence of significant collinearity, Hair et al. (2013) advise keeping greater tolerance values for establishing absence or little multicollinearity. The aggregate measures used to show that

the variables satisfied the multicollinearity assumptions for additional parametric treatment are displayed in Table.

**Table 6.4- Results for Multicollinearity Measures**

Constructs	Skewness	Kurtosis	Tolerance	VIF
Destination Brand Awareness	-0.26	-0.15	0.50	1.43
Destination Brand Image	-0.65	1.75	0.41	1.80
Social Self Image	-0.60	0.22	0.43	1.68
Perceived Quality	-0.42	0.17	0.36	1.60
Perceived Value	-0.51	0.12	0.60	1.30
Destination Brand Trust	-0.57	0.45	0.54	1.41
Destination Brand Loyalty	-1.01	1.13	1.00	1.00

### *Profile of the Tourist Respondents*

**Table 6.5- Respondents Profile (Tourists)**

	Demographics	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	82
	<b>Female</b>	38
<b>Age Group</b>	15- 24	46
	25-34	35
	35-44	20
	45-60	10
	60 or above	9
<b>Education</b>	Post-graduation	45
	Bachelor Degree	46
	Intermediate	12
	High School	9
	Below High School	8

<b>Occupation</b>	Student	45
	Business	20
	Service	25
	Self-employed	12
	Agriculture	6
	Retired	4
	Not Employed	5
	Other	3
<b>Nationality</b>	Indian Tourist	95
	Foreign Tourist	25
<b>Duration of Stay</b>	Day Tripper	25
	2-4 days	40
	5-7 days	18
	7-9 days	7
	10 days or more	30
<b>Monthly Income</b>	Not earning	40
	Under 10,000	16
	10,000-20,000	15
	20,000-30,000	20
	30,000-40,000	10
	40,000 or above	19
<b>Noticed Ad of Uttarakhand</b>		
<b>Indian Tourists</b>	Yes	75
	No	45
<b>Foreign Tourists</b>	Yes	50
	<b>No</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Purpose of Visit</b>	Leisure	65
	Business	10
	Adventure activity	15
	Education	20



	Visit friends and relatives	10
<b>Visited Uttarakhand Before</b>	First time	45
	Second time	25
	More than two times	30
	Frequent visitor	20
<b>Accommodation</b>	5 star or 5 star deluxe	13
	4 star hotel	15
	3 star hotel	35
	2 star or less	30
	Lodge/ Dharamshala	17
	Other	10
<b>Sources of Promotion/Advertisement</b>	Television	35
	Newspaper	15
	Internet	37
	Outdoors	12
	Brochure, shopping guide	7
	Two or more sources	24

The United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) were the two nations that contributed the most in terms of arrival numbers, as shown by the graphical representation of foreign visitors' nationality in Figure. Twenty nations were represented among the international tourists who responded overall, with the UK, USA, New Zealand, Germany, and Australia making significant contributions. The arrival trend of international tourists in the state aligns with the previous findings of Bansal and Gangotia (2010). Together with the statistical data from the cross tabulation, the graph in Figure 7.3 provides a visual representation of the respondents' nationality at the district and region levels. It shows that, while more foreign visitors were in the Garhwal region, more domestic tourists arrived in Nainital than in any other district.

## 7. CONCLUSION

According to qualitative analysis, the overall pictures displayed on the official websites of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand verified that each state has a distinct destination image, which is also supported by objective 2's inferential analysis. Both states employ "Natural and Scenic Views" as their primary criterion, which includes natural beauty, snow, and mountains. As a result, most of the photographs on the official websites of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand highlight these features. A larger portion of both states are covered or situated beneath mountains because they are tied to the Himalayan area of India. In Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, mountains are featured in 37% and 38% of the total number of photos, respectively. More religious features including holy rivers, temples, forests, and trees can be found in Uttarakhand. Trekking and other adventure sports are then featured, along with snow. Places like Haridwar, Rishikesh, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gopeshwar, and others are well-known for pilgrimage activities, and the government is eager to promote them in order to boost domestic travel. Additionally, Uttarakhand uses the term "Chardham" to refer to four distinct and holy locations: Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri. Numerous tourists visit these locations each year, increasing the state's domestic foot traffic. Certain locations, such as Chopta, the Valley of Flowers, Nainital, Dehradun, and Mussoorie, are associated with mountains that have water features and forests. As a result, Uttarakhand presents holy sites to tourists as an example of a successful travel destination.

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