

# Types, Potential, and Implications of Tourism in the Central Himalaya: A Review

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## Abstract

The Central Himalaya provides a unique opportunity to pilgrims and tourists, as it holds various types of tourist destinations and are known as a tourism hotspot. Practicing cultural, natural, adventure, village, and health tourism has high potential for tourist satisfaction and socio-economic development. This paper examines various types of tourism, their potential, and implications in the Central Himalaya. It relies on the review of existing literature and the author's observations on tourism development in this region. Various types of tourism and their potential are described, and the tourism impact on the economy, environment, and culture is discussed. Some tourism practices, primarily cultural, natural, and adventure tourism, are well-developed and developing. However, village and health tourism are underdeveloped and have yet to be initiated. Tourism has high potential for the socio-economic development of the region. Meanwhile, tourism has adverse environmental impacts, such as the depletion of faunal and floral resources, land degradation, pollution, and solid waste dumping. Furthermore, this region lacks tourism infrastructure facilities. Providing suitable facilities – a range of accommodations, proper and smooth transportation, and institutional facilities including trained tour guides, publicity of tourist destinations, and promoting local culture, food, and beverages – will support tourism development.

**Keywords:** Types of Tourism, Implications, Economic Impact, Environmental Impact, Central Himalaya


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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism, one of the largest industries in the world economy, contributes 11.6% to the global gross domestic product and employs nearly 250 million people. In 2023, international tourist arrivals reached 91% of pre-pandemic levels, with receipts totalling USD 1.4 trillion (UNWTO 2024). Among tourism destinations, mountains hold prominence, with mountain tourism contributing about 18% to the global tourism industry (Mountain Agenda 1999). Mountain areas encompass various types of tourism, with cultural and natural tourism ranking at the top. These areas comprise more than 475 protected areas in 65 countries, covering over 264 million hectares. Additionally, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has designated 140 mountain areas as biosphere reserves.

Tourism in the Himalaya has been a century-old practice, primarily focusing on cultural/pilgrimage tourism, natural tourism, adventure tourism (mass tourism), and eco-tourism (Sati, 2021, 2018, 2015, 2013). The Himalaya boast a spectacular and heterogeneous landscape with rich diversity in the natural environment (Apollo, 2017, 2017; Huddart and Stott, 2020). Millions of tourists, pilgrims, hikers, trekkers, and climbers visit the high mountain areas (Ives, 2004; Zurick and Pacheco, 2006; Apollo and Andreychouk, 2020). The region features numerous highland and river

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valleys pilgrimages, natural locales, trekking paths, places for mountaineering, beautiful river valleys, snow-capped mountain peaks, panoramic alpine grasslands (locally known as Bugyals), spectacular forest landscapes, and stretches of the Doon Valley and Tarai regions. Tourism in the Central Himalaya serves as an instrument for economic development and employment generation, particularly in remote and backward areas (NITI Ayog, 2018). According to data from the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Uttarakhand, tourism contributed 50% of the total GSDP during 2006-07 to 2016-17, along with increasing livelihood options for the people residing here (Uttarakhand Tourism Policy, 2018)

Pilgrimage tourism dominates among domestic tourists, while foreign tourists often opt for adventure tourism, such as high altitude trekking and climbing (Chaudhary et al., 2022). The region boasts numerous highland and river valley pilgrimages, with highland pilgrimages located above 3000 m, many of which can only be reached by trekking. Pilgrimages like Kedarnath, Yamunotri, Rudranath, Tungnath, and Madhyamaheshwar are situated in remote alpine pasturelands near the snowline in the high Himalaya, accessible by treks ranging from 4 km to 19 km. There are also many trekking routes connecting to glacial-fed highland lakes and snow-clad mountain peaks (Huddart and Scott, 2019). Mountaineering in the Himalaya is a popular activity, with a Mountaineering Training Centre located in Uttarkashi town providing training to aspiring climbers. Additionally, there are two world-famous skiing centers – Auli and Chopta – where winter sports are enjoyed. River rafting in the Ganga River, Tons River, Ramganga River, and the Kali River plays a significant role in the regional economy, with rafting competitions attracting tourists from across India and abroad. The Central Himalaya boasts numerous national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, biosphere reserves, and conservation reserves (Devi, 2019). A large portion of the region is covered by forests, with approximately 20% of the area covered by snow. This diverse landscape contributes to the development of eco-tourism. Two highly accessible national parks – Rajaji and Corbett – can be reached by train, bus, or flight, leading to well-developed eco-tourism in these areas (Puri et al., 2019). Other parks and sanctuaries, though more remote, are popular destinations for nature lovers practicing eco-tourism.

The economy of the Himalayan region is primarily agrarian-based, with over 70% of the population engaged in cultivating traditional cereals. However, the output from traditionally grown cereals is significantly low. A small portion of the population provides services to pilgrims and tourists, mainly during the pilgrimage season. Tourism offers richness in terms of overall economic development. The potential for tourism development in the Himalaya is immense and could provide a sustainable livelihood for local people if their involvement in the tourism sector is ensured. Although many scholars have conducted studies on tourism in the region (Bagri, 1994; Bansal and Kumar, 2011; Bhattacharya et al., 2011; Bisht and Negi, 1998; Gupta and Goel, 1998; Kandari and Gusain, 2001; Gurung, 1995; Joshi, 2011; Jaini et al., 2012), yet, these studies were conducted on other issues, not on the potential of tourism for economic development in the Central Himalaya. Further, no systematic study has been conducted on tourism development, explaining all types of tourism, their potential, and implications in the Central Himalaya. This study fills up the gap and delves into the potential of tourism in the Central Himalaya, elucidating the various types of tourism and their significance in the economic development of the region.

### **1.1. Study Area**

The Central Himalaya encompasses a total geographical area of 53,483 km<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 1). Rich in both natural and cultural aspects, this region features four-dimensional vertical landscapes, ranging from river valleys to middle altitudes, highlands, and snow-capped mountain ranges. Additionally, it comprises two horizontal entities – the Garhwal and Kumaon Himalayas. These diverse landforms, both vertical and horizontal, provide a suitable base for natural and adventure tourism. Moreover, the entire region is steeped in culture, customs, rituals, and hosts numerous fairs and festivals.

The highland and river valley pilgrimages have been major centers for cultural tourism since ancient times. The region is blessed with many snow-fed perennial rivers, including the Ganga and its numerous tributaries, which are major attractions for both natural and cultural tourism. Activities such as water sports, particularly river rafting, are popular. Additionally, the Ganga and Yamuna

ivers are revered as goddesses, further promoting both natural and cultural tourism in the Central Himalaya.



Fig. 1. Location map of the Central Himalaya

## 2. METHODOLOGY

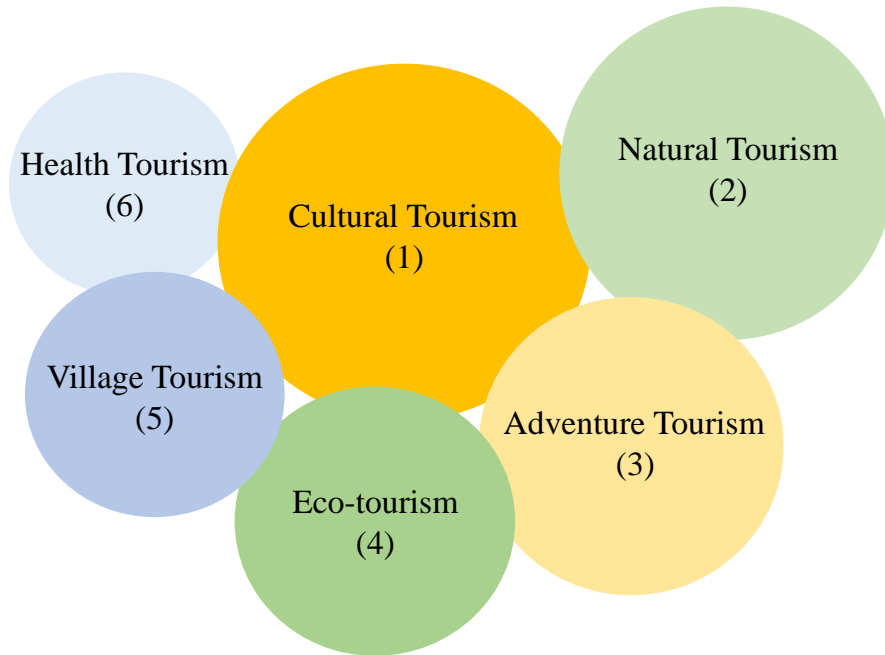
In this study, a qualitative approach was employed, primarily based on literature review and the author's observations regarding tourism development in the Central Himalaya. Data on tourist and pilgrim inflows were collected from the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board in Dehradun. The author visited many tourism destinations, including the pilgrimages in highland and river valleys. He conducted discussions, both individual and group, with 120 stakeholders from the community and government employees who were engaged in practicing tourism. Similarly, the same 120 stakeholders were interviewed. While interviewing the various stakeholders, including community members, the author observed that the high potential of tourism in the region is not harnessed optimally. Therefore, these tourist destinations are not as developed as those in other countries, particularly developed countries. Similarly, all the interviewed stakeholders perceived that tourism development in the region is not optimal and there is a vital need for sustainable tourism development.

During the expansive field visit, various types of tourism practiced in the Central Himalaya was elucidated, detailing their potential for economic development and their implications on the environment. Based on the observation of the author and people's perception, the nature of different types of tourism was categorized as developed, developing, and underdeveloped, was further examined. Based on these findings, policy measures were suggested to address the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities presented by tourism in the region.

## 3. TYPES AND POTENTIAL OF TOURISM

The Himalaya boasts panoramic cultural, natural, and forest landscapes, making it conducive to various types of tourism. Cultural tourism, natural tourism, adventure (mass) tourism, and eco-tourism are commonly practiced, with varying levels of development in terms of pilgrim and tourist

inflows and their role in economic development. Additionally, the potential for village and health tourism is significant, although their current status remains underdeveloped. Fig. 2 illustrates the status of various types of tourism based on pilgrim and tourist inflows, as well as their contribution to economic development.



**Fig. 2.** Status of various forms of tourism based on pilgrims/tourists’ inflow and their role is economic development

The major types of tourism are further divided into sub-types, as shown in Table 1. Highland and river valley pilgrimages, fairs, and festivals fall under cultural tourism. Natural tourism encompasses hill resorts, river valleys, mountains, and alpine pasturelands. Adventure tourism includes activities such as river rafting, kayaking, paragliding, mountaineering, and trekking. Due to its abundance of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, biosphere reserves, and conservation reserves, the region practices eco-tourism. Village tourism, a newer concept, has potential for development in the Central Himalaya, with options such as farm tourism, tourism centred around traditional food and beverage, tourism for peace, and leisure tourism. The region's pleasant climate and healthy environment also support health tourism, with many towns and service centers located in the Middle Himalaya having the potential to be developed as health tourism centers.

**Table 1.** Types, potential, and current status of tourism development in the Central Himalaya

Types	Sub-types	Current status
<b>Cultural tourism</b>	Highland and river valley pilgrimages	Developed
	Fairs and festivals	Developing
	Cultural processions	Underdeveloped
<b>Natural tourism</b>	Hill resorts	Developed
	River valleys	Developed
	Mountains	Underdeveloped
	Alpine grasslands	Underdeveloped
<b>Adventure tourism (mass tourism)</b>	River rafting	Developed
	Mountaineering	Developing
	Trekking	Developing
<b>Eco-tourism</b>	National parks	Developing
	Wildlife sanctuaries	Developing
	Biosphere reserves	Underdeveloped
	Conservation reserves	Underdeveloped
<b>Village tourism</b>	Farm tourism	Yet to be initiated
	Traditional food and beverages	Developing
	Peace tourism	Underdeveloped
	Leisure tourism	Developing

<b>Health tourism</b>	Highland and middle altitudes	Underdeveloped
	Service centers/towns	Underdeveloped

Source: By Author

### 3.1. Cultural Tourism

The Central Himalaya boasts rich culture and cultural heritage, with pilgrimage to the Himalaya, celebrating fairs and festivals, and cultural processions being the main forms of cultural tourism. The region is home to world-famous highland and river valley pilgrimages, which have been visited by pilgrims since ancient times (Nand and Kumar 1989). Among these pilgrimages, the Char Dhams (four pilgrimages) – Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri – hold prominence. Situated in the alpine pasturelands at altitudes of over 3000 m, these sites remain closed during the six months of winter due to heavy snowfall. Additionally, there are two well-known valley pilgrimages – Rishikesh and Haridwar – where hundreds of thousands of pilgrims visit annually. Other cultural centers include Panch Badris, Panch Kedars, Panch Prayags, Jyotirlinga, Shakti Peeths, and Siddha Peeths, which play a significant role in the cultural integration of the region. Jageshwar, Bageshwar, Mahasu Devta, and Devi Temples are major centers of cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is well developed in the Central Himalaya; however, it is primarily practiced in the major pilgrimage centers.

The Himalaya are imbued with rich culture and traditions, where folk deities such as Shiva and Shakti, along with their various incarnations, hold significant importance in society. Traditional scriptures on these deities and cultural practices have established pilgrimages in the Himalaya (Bharati, 1970; Bakker, 1990; Jha, 1991; Sax, 1991; Messerschmidt, 1992). Pilgrimage to Hindu sanctuaries, situated in the high Himalaya, has existed since time immemorial and plays a crucial role in strengthening Hindu culture and society. The Himalaya holds spiritual importance for Hindus (Grotzbach, 1994; Singh, 2013; Singh, 2002; Laidlaw, 2008). However, pilgrimage tourism has not been adequately developed, as policymakers and development researchers have not paid sufficient attention to it (Cohen, 1992; Rinschede, 1992).

Celebrating fairs and festivals is a way of life for the people of the Himalaya, where one or more fairs and festivals are celebrated every month. During these events, people participate in folk dances and songs and prepare various traditional food dishes. Some festivals span an entire month. Tourism can be developed by incorporating these festivals into the tourism experience. The cultural processions of folk deities to the high Himalaya and between different cultural realms are centuries-old practices that hold significant importance in the cultural and social landscapes. However, these practices have yet to be fully utilized for the development of cultural tourism.

### 3.2. Natural Tourism

The Central Himalaya boasts numerous natural locales, ranging from snow-capped mountain peaks to alpine pasturelands, beautiful forest landscapes, terraced agricultural fields, and fertile plains in the river valleys. All of these contribute to the spectacular natural landscape and can be harnessed for sustainable tourism development. Additionally, hill towns such as Mussoorie, Nainital, Almora, and Ranikhet, which were established by the British mainly in the 19th century, are world-famous. These towns offer a pleasant climate during the summer months and are commonly known as summer resorts. According to Grotzbach (1994), tourists flock to these hill stations during the summer to escape the heat of the Ganges Valley and enjoy the pleasant climate.

### 3.3. Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism is a rapidly growing sector in the tourism industry worldwide (UNWTO, 2014). Adventure activities typically fall into two main categories: hard and soft adventure. Hard adventure activities include mountaineering and rock climbing, while soft adventure activities are less physically demanding. On average, tourists spend around USD 3,000 per person on adventure tourism, with an average trip length of eight days (ATTA, 2014). However, earnings from adventure tourism tend to be higher in developed countries compared to developing ones, with a smaller portion of the total expenditure being spent in developing countries.

The Himalayan region provides ideal locations for adventure tourism, with activities such as trekking, mountaineering, rock climbing, kayaking, paragliding, and river rafting being popular. Major destinations for mountaineering include snow-capped peaks like Nanda Devi, Kamet, Trishul, Chaukhamba, Kedarkhanda, Bandarpunchh, Shivling, Gangotri, and Panchachulli. Trekking routes are abundant, attracting trekkers throughout the year. Many highland alpine pasturelands and pilgrimages can only be accessed by trekking, including routes like Bedini Bugyal, Dayara Bugyal, Kalindi Peak, and Hari Ki Doon. Highland pilgrimages such as Kedarnath, Madhyamaheshwar, Rudranath, Tungnath, and Yamunotri are also popular trekking destinations. River rafting is practiced in major rivers like the Ganga, Ram Ganga, Kali, and Tons. Paragliding is also gaining popularity as an adventure tourism activity, particularly along the Nayar River valley and near Bhim Tal.

### **3.4. Eco-tourism**

Eco-tourism, a form of nature-based tourism, serves as a crucial tool in conserving the natural environment while simultaneously supporting income generation and job augmentation (World Bank, 2018; WTTC, 2017; UNWTO, 2013). Additionally, it plays a role in preserving cultural heritage (WTO, 2018; GOI, 2008). Eco-tourism can contribute to the preservation of protected areas by allocating a portion of the income generated from domestic and international tourists (Buckley, 2011; Wyman and Stein 2010). Currently, eco-tourism contributes approximately 40% to gross domestic products globally (Kirkby et al., 2011; WTTC, 2014; Waldron et al., 2017). However, it is important to note that eco-tourism may also pose risks, such as biodiversity loss in protected areas (Laurance et al., 2014; Shui and Xu, 2016).

The Himalayan region is renowned as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, making it an ideal location for eco-tourism. Within the Himalayan states, there are 15 national parks and 59 sanctuaries, covering 9.6% of the geographical area within India's Protected Areas (PA) network (Rawal and Dhar, 2015). This region boasts 63% forest cover with rich faunal and floral diversity, presenting high potential for economic growth and socio-economic transformation.

In the Central Himalaya specifically, there are six national parks, seven wildlife sanctuaries, four conservation reserves, and one biosphere reserve. These protected areas occupy a total area of 7,903 km<sup>2</sup>, representing 14.8% of the geographical area. Corbett National Park and Rajaji National Park, established before 1950, have well-developed eco-tourism facilities. Chila Wildlife Sanctuary, Asan, and Jhilmil conservation reserves also attract a significant number of eco-tourists. Additionally, Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, Gangotri National Park, and Govind National Park, located in the high Himalayan region, provide suitable bases for eco-tourism.

### **3.5. Village Tourism**

The Central Himalaya boasts a spectacular rural landscape, with farmlands and settlements surrounded by rich diversity of forests, providing an ideal base for village tourism. The peace-loving people of the Himalayan region are renowned for their hospitality, making them excellent hosts for serving tourists and pilgrims. Village tourism can be further enhanced by offering local food and beverages, which are often healthy and nutritious. Additionally, the performance of folk dances and songs can entertain tourists and pilgrims, while also promoting and integrating the region's rich folk culture.

### **3.6. Health Tourism**

The climatic conditions in the Middle Himalayan region are pleasant and conducive to good health. This region is known for its therapeutic effects, particularly in curing lung and mind-related diseases. Several service centers and tourism destinations such as Chakrata, Gwaldam, Munsiyari, Chopta, Bhararisain, and Kosani have the potential to be developed as health tourism destinations. Tourists can visit these destinations primarily during the summer season to rejuvenate their lungs and improve their overall health.

### 3.7. Tourist/Pilgrim Inflows

Tourist inflow in the Himalayan states varies significantly from one state to another, with the highest number of tourists reported in the hilly parts of West Bengal (39,260,173), followed by Uttarakhand (24,951,541), Himachal Pradesh (16,042,225), Jammu & Kashmir (11,616,180), Assam (4,790,361), Meghalaya (708,048), Sikkim (624,925), Tripura (378,524), Arunachal Pradesh (279,123), Manipur (136,130), Mizoram (65,705), and Nagaland (46,658) (NITI Aayog 2018).

In the Central Himalayan region, the number of tourists varies across cultural, natural, and administrative destinations. Domestic pilgrims' inflow increased from 7.41 million to 25.26 million in 2018, with a total of 300 million domestic pilgrims visiting the region's pilgrimages. Tourist inflow in administrative towns increased from 1.97 million in 2000 to 6.7 million in 2018, with a total domestic tourist inflow of 76 million. In natural places, tourist inflow also saw a substantial increase from 1.64 million to 4.48 million in 2018, totalling 56.09 million domestic tourists visiting natural locales during the 18-year period. In terms of foreign tourist visits, the highest numbers were recorded in administrative towns, with 0.32 million visitors in 2000 and 0.5 million in natural locales. The cultural centers attracted the least number of foreign tourists (Sati, 2020).

## 4. IMPLICATIONS OF TOURISM

Tourism has numerous implications, both positive and negative. On the positive side, tourism supports economic development by generating income, augmenting employment opportunities, and facilitating infrastructure development. However, on the negative side, tourism can degrade the environment by contributing to faunal extinction, depletion of flora, and landscape degradation. Additionally, tourism has significant impacts on culture, customs, and rituals, which can be both positive and negative (Fig. 3).

### 4.1. Economic Implications

Tourism in the Himalaya is a multifaceted phenomenon and the most dynamic sector of the economy (Mieczkowski, 1995). It serves as a major source of income, with Garhwal reportedly earning between 10-15% of its revenue from taxes and levies imposed on pilgrims each year (Rangan, 2000). With a history dating back to the mid-twentieth century, tourism has played a pivotal role in shaping and influencing the development of the Himalayan region (Bisht, 2008). In 2023, nearly 6 million tourists and pilgrims visited the Central Himalayan region, contributing significantly to both revenue generation and employment creation (UTDB, 2023). The Central Himalaya holds the 12th ranking in tourism in India and has high potential for further improvement in ranking. During 2012-2016, it ranked 2nd in tourists' inflow, with a total of 24,951,540 tourists (NITI, Aayog 2018).

### 4.2. Environmental Implications

Tourism practices have significant adverse impacts on air, water, and land (Kumar et al., 2022). The substantial emission of carbon in tourist destinations, particularly during peak seasons, exacerbates environmental pollution. Tourism agencies often prioritize economic valuation of tourism practices over environmental valuation (Bhat & Bhatt, 2019). The growing demand for energy in tourist destinations further exacerbates environmental problems (Malik et al., 2011).

The increasing number of tourists is gradually leading to the degradation of the natural environment in the Himalaya, as observed by Cole and Sinclair (2002). They measured the ecological footprint of tourism as changes in the cityscape due to unplanned development, leading to water scarcity and the dumping of solid waste and sewage, thereby decreasing overall environmental quality (NITI Aayog, 2018). River water is also being polluted due to the increasing accumulation of garbage (Kuniyal et al., 2003). Dumping of unprecedented wastes in the tourists' centres are significantly changing the wildlife habitats scenario in the Himalaya, damaging endangered species and other wildlife (Puri et al., 2020; Thakur et al., 2021). Some adverse implications of mass tourism include heavy traffic congestion, deterioration of ambient air quality, increased solid waste production, and heightened demand for water. The large concentration of visitors in certain mountain destinations has resulted in alarming levels of tourism-induced environmental, socio-economic, and

cultural problems. With increasing trends in tourists, environmental and social systems are subjected to change.

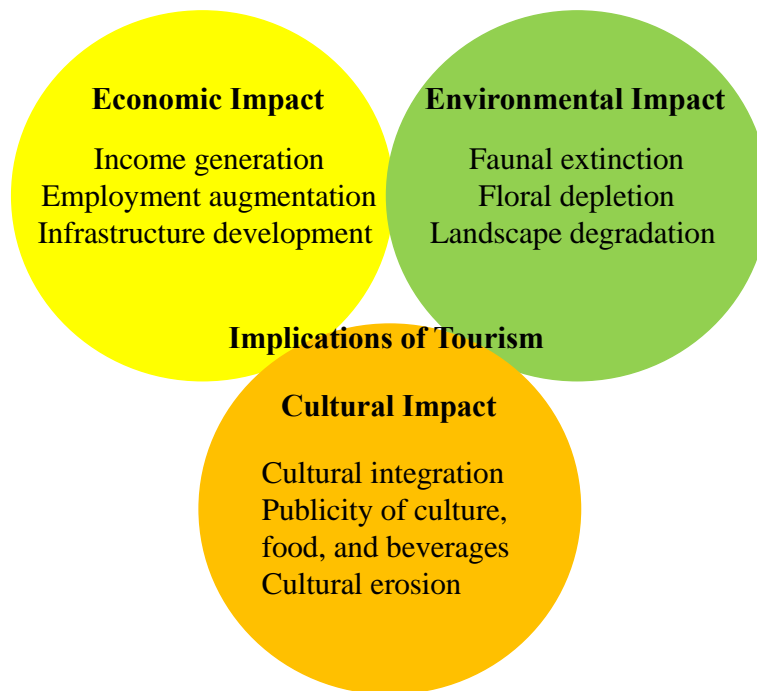


Fig. 3. Implications of tourism in the Central Himalaya

#### 4.3. Impact on Culture

The impact of tourism on culture, both positive and negative, is indeed significant in the Himalayan region. On the positive side, tourism can lead to cultural integration by showcasing local traditions through folk songs, dances, and cuisine at tourist destinations. This not only promotes the rich cultural heritage of the region but also provides opportunities for local communities to earn a livelihood. However, there are negative aspects to this cultural interaction as well. The innocence and traditional way of life of the Himalayan people, particularly those in remote areas, make them vulnerable to external influences. As tourism brings in modern cultural trends, including changes in food habits and occupations, there is a risk of cultural erosion. Local populations may abandon their traditional practices in favour of adopting aspects of the cultures brought in by tourists and pilgrims. This situation highlights the importance of promoting sustainable tourism practices that respect and preserve local cultures. Efforts should be made to strike a balance between showcasing the cultural heritage of the region to tourists while ensuring that local traditions and practices are preserved for future generations. Additionally, empowering local communities to participate in and benefit from tourism activities can help mitigate the negative impacts on culture.

### 5. DISCUSSION

This study reveals that the Central Himalaya practices various types of tourism, including cultural tourism, natural tourism, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, village tourism, and health tourism. These tourism types hold high potential for socio-economic development in the Himalayan region. Currently, cultural tourism is the most developed, followed by natural tourism and adventure tourism. However, village tourism and health tourism are still underdeveloped, despite government-initiated policies and planning aimed at their development.

Cultural tourism in the Central Himalaya has deep roots, particularly in the form of pilgrimage tourism to highland and river valley sites. Renowned destinations such as the Char Dhams, Panch Badris, Panch Kedars, Panch Prayags, Jyotirlingas, Shakti Peeths, and Siddha Peeths attract pilgrims in large numbers. The annual influx of pilgrims to these sites significantly contributes to local income generation and supports the livelihoods of the local population. As a result, pilgrimage tourism is well-developed in the Central Himalaya. Additionally, other forms of cultural tourism, such as fairs, festivals, and cultural processions, are also practiced in the region. Despite the high potential for these



tourism types, their sustainable harnessing remains a challenge. Efforts are needed to ensure that these cultural tourism opportunities are managed in a sustainable manner to maximize their benefits for both tourists and local communities.

Natural tourism ranks second in terms of tourists' inflow and income generation in the Central Himalaya. The region holds significant potential for natural tourism due to its stunning landscapes, including snow-capped mountains, river valleys, panoramic forests, summer resorts, and diverse landforms. The pleasant and healthy summers attract a large number of tourists each season. Moreover, the Central Himalaya provides an ideal landscape for the development of adventure tourism. Activities such as river rafting, trekking, mountaineering, skiing, kayaking, and paragliding are gaining popularity and are gradually being developed in the region. Despite its potential, village and health tourism have yet to be fully developed in the Central Himalaya. However, these forms of tourism hold high potential for future development and could further contribute to the region's tourism industry and socio-economic growth.

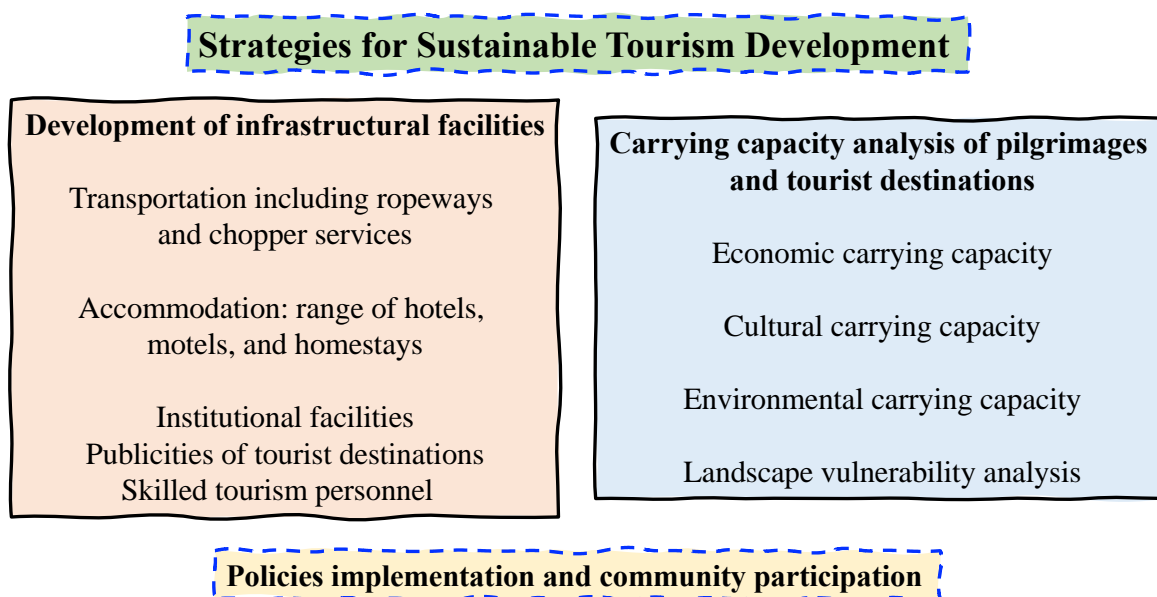


Fig. 4. Strategies for sustainable tourism development

Despite tourism being the largest sector contributing to the states' GDP, the Central Himalayan region has not been able to develop tourism to the extent seen in other mountainous regions of the world. This can be attributed to adverse environmental consequences such as air and water pollution, as well as land degradation caused by tourism activities. Several factors contribute to the slow development of tourism in the Himalaya. These include the occurrence of extreme atmospheric events during the tourism season, lack of proper transportation, accommodation, and institutional facilities. Many cultural and natural sites in the highlands remain unknown due to insufficient publicity and institutional support, with inadequate transportation facilities further exacerbating the issue. Moreover, the region's fragility to road and railway construction poses additional challenges.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed that the Central Himalayas have significant potential for sustainable tourism development. It practices various types of tourism – natural, cultural, adventure, pilgrimage, and eco-tourism. However, the region does not enjoy its tourism potential, and therefore, the level of tourism development is nominal. To address these issues and promote sustainable tourism development, strategies need to be implemented. This includes the development of infrastructural facilities such as transportation, accommodation, and institutional support. Publicity efforts should utilize various platforms including social media, print, and electronic media to showcase the tourism potential of the region. Additionally, the construction of ropeways and chopper facilities in remote tourist areas can improve accessibility. Carrying capacity analysis, considering economic, cultural, and environmental factors, along with vulnerability analysis of popular destination sites, can help in determining suitable facilities for pilgrims and tourists. Moreover, promoting responsible tourism

practices, including eco-tourism, village tourism, and health tourism, while minimizing mass adventure tourism, can contribute to sustainable tourism development in the Central Himalaya.

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