



Border Tourism and National Security in India: A Study of the Border Tourism with Special Reference to Uttarakhand State

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Received: 24.11.2022; Revised: 22.12.2022; Accepted: 23.12.2022

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Abstract: Uttarakhand is a crucial border state in India and has a geostrategic importance. The falling population in border villages of Uttarakhand, located within 5 kilometres of the international border, raised a huge concern of border security in recent time. These border village residents as well as nomads in the upper reaches are an invaluable asset for the security forces with respect to early warning and surveillance of unmanned areas. Therefore, it is important to stop the forced migration from the border areas. Border tourism can play a significant role to engage the locals in tourism activities and stop them to migrate other cities in search of bread and butter. In the recent time, border tourism has been given a considerable attention by the Government of India. Amritsar (Atari) and Rajasthan border with Pakistan has been promoted among tourists as border tourism areas. In the same way, the Government of India has promoted North-East Indian states for border tourism with Inner Line Permits. The state of Uttarakhand shares the border with China and Nepal. This border sharing has a huge potential of border tourism development in the state. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the opportunities of border tourism in the Uttarakhand state along with its importance in national security. Furthermore, this paper finds out the opportunities of border tourism in Uttarakhand and the future roadmap of its development.

Keywords: Border tourism • border sharing • national security • Uttarakhand, inner line permit

Introduction

Borders play an important role between different countries for the mobility of their residents. In different parts of the world these geographical areas are treated as tourists' destinations and known as 'border tourism' destinations (Marcu, 2015). In today's globalized world, borders are viewed as a bridge which enables frequent communication, collaboration and openness (Johnson et al., 2011; Newman, 2006). UNWTO defined border tourists as a person who stays in the border frontiers of two countries for 24–72 hours (Valenzuela, 2003). These tourists visit the frontiers for the purpose of leisure, entertainment, religious, business, social events and visiting friend and relatives.

It has been observed that many border areas are geographically isolated and economically marginalized. Tourism activities in the border areas can lead to various benefits and border growth (Hoekman et al., 2008). It can lead to

the enhancement of local economy (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004) and generates employment opportunities for local residents (Gu & Ryan, 2008). Tourism can bring the investment opportunities for new businesses in the border areas (Dyer, Gursoy, Sharma, & Carter, 2007) which can raise the standard of living of the local population (Ahmed & Krohn, 1992).

Uttarakhand is a border state of India which has a vital position among the northern Himalayan states. The state share approximately 350 km and 275 km long border with China and Nepal respectively. There are 13 districts in the state; out of which five are border districts. Udham Singh Nagar and Champawat districts shares border with Nepal. Whereas, Chamoli and Uttarkashi districts shares border with China. The fifth district, Pithoragarh, shares border with both China and Nepal. The steep decline in the number of residents and increasing number of



ghost villages along the border areas became a vital concern for the armed forces along with state government. As per the statistics of migration commission, there are likely no families living in at least 16 of the villages that are within a 5-kilometre radius of the international border (Anab & Jha, 2020). It leads to the demographic change in the border region with proximity of Tibet (a territory occupied by China). The consistent decline in the number of border area residents became a primary national security concern of the state as well as central government. To check the problem of migration, there is a need to promote border tourism in the state. Border tourism gives a unique experience to the travellers who are in seek of learning and interacting with various cultures nurturing in border areas.

The increasing migration from the border districts of Uttarakhand is a serious concern for the national security of the country. The People's Liberation Army' (PLA) of China posing a serious threat to border security along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The contemporary situation along the Chinese border and increasing migration in the border areas became a serious concern for the policy makers as the mere presence of people on the border helps the nation to maintain its sovereignty and integrity (Gupta, 2021). Reports are that the Chinese government would like to create "Xiaokang" (well-closed) border defence communities to intrude the border areas (Ranade, 2019). Although, the government of India denied several times that there was no such intrusion by Chinese soldiers along the Indian border (Hindustan Times, 2021).

India and China are the emerging economies in the world. Therefore, there are possibilities that the neighbouring country may keep a surveillance on the Indian territory all along the border areas (PNS, 2021). The increasing migration may give further opportunity to the border countries to encroach the Indian

territory and later claim it as disputed land. Under the influence of China, Nepal also creates a border dispute with India. In various cases it has been noticed that the so called "ghost villages" along the border areas are occupied by migrated Nepali citizens (Venkatesh, 2015). The increasing encroachment of ghost villages by Nepali citizens may change the demography of the border regions in coming years which may cause an internal security threat to India. It has also been noticed that the migrated Nepalese are engaged in illegal activities and use Uttarakhand border as a gateway to enter Nepal (Das, 2020). Late General Bipin Rawat, former Chief of Defence Staff, was of the view that the migration from Uttarakhand would be detrimental for India's national security (PNS, 2021). The Ministry of Defence also referred the people living in border areas as "strategic assets of the country". For better and improved infrastructural development, an additional funding has been promised by the Indian government through Border Area Development Programme (Press Information Bureau, 2018).

Review of Literature

Bringas and Verduzco consider security as a significant component for border destinations. They identified three major dimensions of security i.e., (i) population security, (ii) regional security, and (iii) national security (Bringas & Verduzco, 2008). It is possible for tourism in border regions to provide advantages that will support border expansion (Hoekman et al., 2009). In addition, there is a need to identify and discuss the barrier functions of borders which might be of either natural or manmade origin (Timothy and Tosun, 2003). The day-to-day life along the border influenced directly or indirectly by the proximity of boundary. The life of border landers may get influenced by the matching discourses and practices of border areas. But the border landers have their own



characteristics. Their action, resistance, contestation, and other such activities constitute a crucial discourse in modern border study as a means of forging new social understandings of the border (Singh, 2014). As Mansfeld and Korman say, the term "border tourism" should be used as an umbrella term for all types of borderland tourism and attractions that have grown up because of the border itself (Mansfeld, & Korman, 2015).

Uttarakhand is an international border state of India. The economy of Uttarakhand is tourism driven. The tourism sector contributed more than half of the state's GDP from 2006-07 to 2016-17 (GSDP) (Uttarakhand Tourism policy, 2018). It also provides a huge employment and entrepreneurship opportunities to the youth of state. Recently the state received the "best tourist destination" and "best film destination" award from Union Ministry of Tourism for its overall development in tourism sector (Indian Express, 2022). Uttarakhand is full of natural resources which gives a boost to eco-tourism, nature tourism and home stay tourism. All these forms of tourism can be significant in border areas and also keep a check on forced migration which ultimately can help to keep a close vigilance in border areas.

To keep the national security intact there is a need to develop India's border communities with basic facilities like water, road, electricity and other financial allocations. There is a need to advocate the concept of border tourism to strengthen the border security. Border tourism initiative would enhance tourism and curb migration from border settlements (Harindran, 2022). There is a need of capacity building and skill development among the border area residents to scale up the quality of human resource while creating employment opportunities (PHDCCI, 2021). The government in India is paying an extra attention on border tourism promotion while keeping the border security in mind.

In India, various border states like Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujrat, Jammu & Kashmir and North-

Eastern states are working on the concept of border tourism. The Central government approved the proposal of Rajasthan government to develop Shri Tanot Complex in Jaisalmer as a border tourist attraction for which the government sanctioned rupees 17.67 crore for tourism-related activities and infrastructure development in the region (Travel News, 2022). Jammu & Kashmir is becoming another border tourism attraction for the tourists. Areas like Teetwal on the Line of Control in north Kashmir, Suchetgarh along the Pakistan border in the Jammu district and Turtuk on the LOC in Ladakh becoming popular among tourists and registering a big number of tourists footfall (Statesman News, 2022). The Gujrat government is also working keenly on border tourism. Recently in 2022, "Nadabet Indo-Pak Border" tourism project was added to the border tourism map of India. This project is called "Seem Darshan" project which will connect the tourists with defence personnel and boost border security. Rupees 125 crore were also spent for the infrastructural development at Nadabet. The beating retreat ceremony on the lines of the one that is held at the Wagah-Attari border is one of the main highlights at Nadabet (India News, 2022).

Uttarakhand can also promote border tourism in its Garhwal and Kumaon region. Banbasa in Champawat district sharing border with Nepal and can be an ideal border tourism destination. Pithoragarh district is sharing border with China and Nepal and can be promoted as a border tourism district of India. Mana-Niti-Mallari in Garhwal region are also sharing border with China. These destinations can be well developed for the border tourism promotion.

Objectives

1. To study the importance of border tourism in national security
2. To evaluate the potential of border tourism in Uttarakhand



3. To evaluate the existing schemes and programs for the development of the border areas in Uttarakhand

Methodology

The exploratory method with both primary and secondary sources of data has been used for this study. Primary data is collected through interviews and personal interactions with scholars and experts in this field. Secondary data collected from various reports from the Government of India, Uttarakhand State Government, published material from various established agencies and comments of the authors. The study will highlight key findings and suggest recommendations for future policy and planning implications made in this regard.

Potential Border Tourism Destinations of Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand's four district i.e., Champawat, Pithoragarh, Chamoli and Uttarkashi are the border districts having potential to attract tourists. Banbasa in Champawat district shares border with Nepal. The border area is known for the Banbasa Barrage and Dam built on river Sharda. Famous Purnagiri Temple is another attraction for the tourists visiting Banbasa. The majority of tourists or visitors visit this border area either to see the border of two countries or for trade purposes. The accommodation units for the tourists are there in the Banbasa and Tanakpur.

Pithoragarh is another border district of Uttarakhand sharing border with Nepal and China. Destinations like Jhulaghat, Gunji village, Lipulekh pass, Askot Sanctuary etc. can be visited in Pithoragarh. Jhulaghat is a small town on the Indo-Nepal border. It was named after a hanging bridge on the Kali River. Tourists can enter to Nepal through this bridge. Another border destination in Pithoragarh is Gunji village which is administered by India. Nepal has a dispute with India over this village. The village is officially listed in Indian map. This village is on the traditional Indian/Nepalese route to

Kailas–Mansarovar. Tourists visiting to these villages generally get accommodated locally in the home stays or nearby small hotels.

Chamoli district of Uttarakhand shares border with China and have destinations like Niti, Mana, Malari, Valley of Flower etc. to visit. Tourists can visit the Mana village but if they would like to go beyond Mana, they need a special permission from the local administration. Mana is small village to stay overnight. Home stays are easily available there. If visitors would like to stay in a hotel, then they need to back trek to Badrinath where a range of accommodation units are available. Malari is a small village near Tibet border which has been declared world heritage site. The village is known for its natural landscape and old traditional houses.

Another border district of Uttarakhand is Uttarkashi which is known for its serene destinations. Border destinations like Nelong Valley and Gartang Gali are famous in Uttarkashi. Nelong valley is an inner line area in India–China border. It is approximately 100 km from Uttarkashi head quarter. The Gartang Gali is a wooden bridge earlier used as the trade route between India and Tibet. Recently the Government of Uttarakhand opened the Gartang Gali trek for tourists. The opening of Gartang Gali will promote the rural tourism with better expedition facilities and generate local employment in the associated areas.

Uttarakhand need to exploit the potential of border tourism in systematic manner. Basic amenities and facilities along the border areas required to accommodate the tourists. The tourism policy planners of the state must keep an extra eye on the huge potential of border tourism and formulate such policies which can promote the border tourism in Uttarakhand.

Government programmes and schemes for border area development

1. **Border Area Development Programme (BADP):** The Border Area Development Programme is a



centrally sponsored scheme which was initiated in the year 1993-1994. Initially, the plan was executed in the Western Border States to create infrastructure to support Border Security Forces. Later on, the program was expanded for socio-economic facets like health, education, agriculture and other linked industries. The plan was also expanded to the eastern states, sharing border with Bangladesh, during the eighth five-year plan. With the help of Panchayati Raj institutions, autonomous councils, and local bodies; the BADP is being carried out in a manner that is both participatory and decentralised. The Basic Adoption and Development Program is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) which extends its reach

to 9 blocks across 5 border districts in the state of Uttarakhand. The initiative will extend its reach to include all of the census villages and towns, as well as semi-urban and urban regions, that are within a distance of 0 to 10 kilometres (aerial distance) from the first habitation from the International Boundary (IB). The nodal agency implementing this scheme in Uttarakhand is the State Project Management Unit (SPMU) which with the close cooperation of district government is in charge of making sure that the blocks and villages that are close to the international boundary (IB) have access to important infrastructure services (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2020).

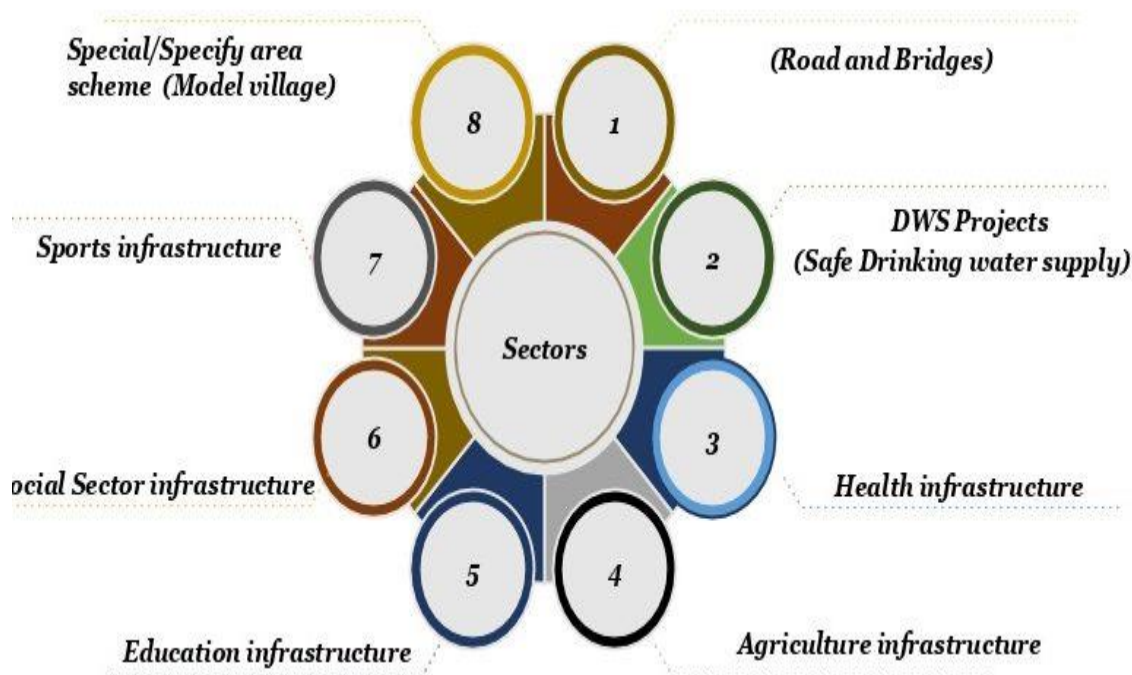


Fig 1: Thematic areas of Border Area Development Programme

Source: [Department of Rural Development, Government of Uttarakhand](#)



Table 1: BADP 9 Blocks of 5 border Districts in Uttarakhand State

State	District	Block
Uttarakhand	Pithoragarh	Munakot
		Munsyari
		Dharchula
		Kanalichena
	Champawat	Champawat
		Lohaghat
	Chamoli	Joshimath
	Uttarkashi	Bhatwari
	Udham Singh Nagar	Khatima

Table 2: BADP Fund Allocation and Release to Uttarakhand State from 2015-16 to 2021-22

Year	Funds Allocated (In Lakhs)	Release (In Lakhs)
2015-16	3360	2794
2016-17	2708	2708
2017-18	3100	3100
2018-19	2920	2920
2019-20	4360	4360
2020-21	714	714
2021-22	3025	3025

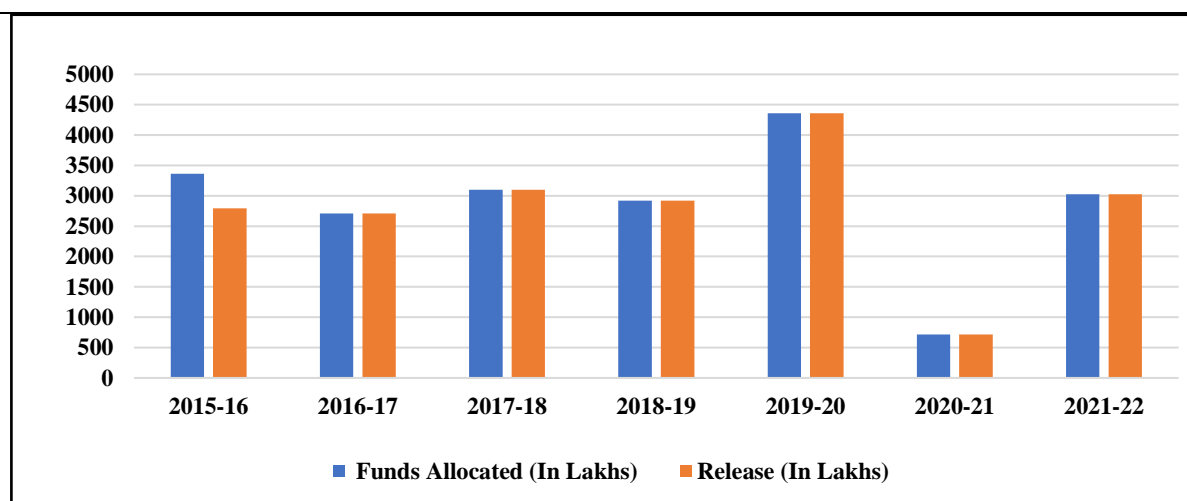


Fig 2: Source: [Annual Report Ministry of Home Affairs From 2017-18 to 2020-21](#)

2. Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP): The Union Budget of 2022-23 has included a new Vibrant Villages Programme for northern border settlements. The program includes village infrastructural development,

roads, housing, tourist centres, renewable energy sources, direct-to-home educational channels, and livelihood aids via various funding schemes. The main aim of this program is to modernise India's



border villages and enhance infrastructure in communities along the India-China border in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Arunachal Pradesh (PIB, 2022) to protect the sovereignty of the country and prevent confrontation with neighbouring states (Invest India, 2022). The Ministry of Tourism, through VVP, striving to boost border tourism in the northern border states having low population border villages and weak accessibility (PIB, 2022).

3. Mukhyamantri Border Area Development Programme

(MBADP): The "Mukhyamantri Border Area Development Program" was initiated by the Uttarakhand government in the year 2020-21 to develop an area up to 50 km from the village near international border. The government has identified 9 development blocks in 5 border districts of the state for this purpose. The MBADP will run parallelly with Centre's Border Area Development Plan, however the two programmes do not overlap. Major aim of this program is to provide better resources of sustainable living and self-employment to those families residing near the 9 border blocks so that it may discourage the migration and encourage reverse migration.

Importance of Border Tourism in National Security

National and border security is the key aspect of border tourism. Along with defence forces local border residents can help in the border security. But there is need to keep a check on migration and provide basic amenities and facilities to the local residents and visitors. Following major points must be kept in while developing the border tourism:

- 1. Inner line Permit (ILP):** Inner Line Permit is a special provision made by Indian government to visit the border areas of border states in India. A special permission is required from the local administration, Indian army and Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) force to visit the border areas of Uttarakhand. Sometimes the need of ILP become an obstacle in growth of tourism in the border areas. Nelong Valley in Uttarakhand only receives 400-450 visitors every year due to the need of ILP. Only 24 domestic tourists are allowed to visit Nelong valley in a day without a permission to stay there overnight. The Indian Army is working on a plan to relax the ILP in the state of Uttarakhand. The state government also made a demand to union Home Ministry to remove the Inner Line Permit system from the Uttarakhand border along with China (Gupta, 2022) so that maximum of tourists can visit the border areas under the supervision of Indian defence forces.
- 2. Migration:** The migration of people living in border areas is a major concern not only for the Uttarakhand state but also for national security. Responding to a RTI request; the Uttarakhand government revealed that out of 5 lakh people, around 1,18,961 departed from the state permanently in the preceding decade which leads towards the increasing number of ghost villages in the state (Upadhyay, 2021). The demographic changes in the border districts of Uttarakhand causing a worry of border safety. Due to the proximity with Chinese border, there is a need to inhabit these ghost villages again. Border tourism can



help the state government in this regard(PNS, 2021).

Unemployment and lack of opportunity drive people for out-migration from mountainous districts of Uttarakhand. State out-migration averages at 50.16. The Migration Commission, constituted in 2018 analysed that the out-migration increased in the last 10 years and people abandoned their villages and migrated to the cities in search of employment, education and health(Upadhyay, 2018).

People residing in the high-altitude border areas of Uttarakhand evacuate

themselves in the winters and travel to the lower Himalayan permanent settlements. Residents of Mana and Niti-Malari villages(seasonal villages) go to Joshimath/Pandukeshwar and Tapovan/Joshimath respectively during winter season with their animals. During the summer, they return to their communities to find better grazing grass and rare Himalayan fungus like *Yarsa Gumba* or *Keeda Jadi*. These locations, formerly seasonal, now indicate persistent migration(Kullashri, 2022).

Table 3: Showing total number of uninhabited villages and villages with 50% decline in population in five districts bordering areas

S.No.	District	Number of Uninhabited Villages	Villages where Population decline more than 50 percent
1.	Uttarkashi	70	63
2.	Pithoragarh	75	45
3.	Chamoli	41	18
4.	Champawat	64	44
5.	U.S. Nagar	19	9

Source: Rural Development and Migration Commission Report, 2019

3. Lack of basic amenities and facilities:The poor infrastructural development and lack of basic amenities and facilities in the border region is a major concern for border tourism development. The pull factor that attracts the youth comprises better employment opportunities, quality education, healthcare facilities, better transportation, and improved communication networks in the plain areas. At the same time, irregular terrain, hardships, low agricultural output, poor communication network, and remoteness further contributes to the push factor for the local people(Singh,1998).These border

districts generally show a significant ‘out-migration tendency’ due to lack of proper infrastructure facilities, basic amenities and facilities, poor connectivity (road, air, internet), lack of opportunities, and harsh climatic conditions.

Discussion

Uttarakhand state’s major revenue is generated from the service sector. Tourism plays a significant role in service sector.As of now Uttarakhand tourism majorly focuses on pilgrimage tourism. There is a need to shift focus from pilgrimage to other potential forms of tourism like border tourism.The schemes launched by central and state governments for



border tourism promotion must be implemented on ground at a serious note. Schemes like BADP, MBADP and VVP are facing severe lack of technical employees to execute these schemes on ground. It is imperative that a methodical strategy for the convergence of various development plans be conceived upon and put into action. The Nodal Officers should be kept in the loop on the various initiatives that are being implemented

by the various agencies. Encourage tourism in the border area by relaxing the Inner Line Permit (ILP) norm for domestic tourists and giving incentives to villagers living there. In addition to the relaxation of ILP, restrictive policies pertaining to the environment, land ownership, and incentives to the local population for encouraging settlement and economic activity need to be framed and reviewed.

Table 4: Reasons of Out-Migration from five border districts of Uttarakhand (In Percentage)

District	Employment	Medical Facilities	Education	Infrastructure	Poor Agriculture Produce	Followed the Family that Migrated	Destruction of Agricultural produce by wild Animals	Others
Uttarkashi	41.77	6.04	17.44	2.29	7.14	2.1	4.04	19.17
Pithoragarh	42.81	10.13	19.52	4.97	4.66	2.36	4.8	11.48
Chamoli	49.3	10.83	19.73	4.93	4.73	2.51	3.09	4.87
Champawat	54.9	6.67	10.24	5.46	6.31	4.3	6.65	5.46
U.S. Nagar	65.63	16.2	2.73	0.05	0.64	1.69	0.82	15.85

Source: [Rural Development and Migration Commission Report, 2019](#)

Tourism in border areas can produce benefits that encourage border growth, positive attitudes, employment opportunities, enhanced local economy, increased standard of living of the local population, and improved investment opportunities. It also encourages cultural exchange, recreational facilities, leisure opportunities, and natural resource promotion. Therefore, It is important to improve the visitor's knowledge and attitude towards the various tourist attractions of the border destination to achieve the perceived value impacts on the tourists' satisfaction which will help to reinforce the tourists' loyalty towards the border destination. The increasing Migration and growing tussle with China along LAC, need a 'Whole of Government'

approach. There is a requirement of participation of all the stakeholders like various ministries and local people to protect the border and grow the border tourism. A public-private partnership and agreements is also required to optimise the available resources in the border areas and improve the local economy, thereby attracting the population to tourist destinations with great potential.

The lack of infrastructures, basic amenities and facilities, poor health and education system, and livelihood are major cause of migration in the mountain regions. Connectivity projects need to be developed rapidly. The government must provide job opportunities to the local youths in the field of local adventure sports, and Eco-tourism. The



locals should be encouraged to establish medium and small-scale industries on subsidised rates for generating livelihood. For the accommodation purposes in the border areas the homes in nearby villages should be converted in the home stays. The basic facilities of road, water, communication and connectivity must be provided in the border areas so that the visitors and locals can have a good experience.

The tourists visiting border areas would like to understand the life of locals living there. They also would like to experience the border life along with the local culture, cuisine and traditions. Their behaviour and visiting satisfaction to a border destination brings a quality change in the phenomenon of border tourism. Maximum of tourists visit border destinations to feel and experience the life of the soldier protecting their motherland. Some of them are curious to see the border between countries for first time to make it a life time experience. More competition and promotion of border destination can bring more tourists' satisfaction and more development in the border areas. Therefore, this can help to increase the number of visitors and incomes to destination.

The successful commercialization of border tourism can provide tourist more options to choose a holiday destination which can enhance their satisfaction level and make them a repeat customer. The border destinations of Uttarakhand are full of natural beauty, flora, fauna and cultural diversity. Proper connectivity, infrastructural development and promotion of border destinations can make Uttarakhand a popular destination for border tourism worldwide.

Conclusion

The strategic location of Uttarakhand is quite significant from the national security point of view. The development of border tourism can play a vital role in the protection of its border areas. Border tourism can check the increasing migration from the state as well. The

infrastructural development, quality education and health, agricultural advancement, safe roads can also help in reverse migration and border security. The central and state government are taking initiative in this front. Keeping in view the Chinese assertiveness, the project of 'all weather road' is one of the initiatives of central government to connect the Indian border states with border roads. Uttarakhand has a huge potential in the border tourism sector but it required quality tourism instead of quantity tourism. Hence, sustainable development in the border areas is important for a pathway towards tourism and national security. There is a need to ease the rules in border areas. After the Indo-China war of 1962, people of Mana village were not allowed to go to Devtal Lake (Mana Pass) for worshipping their ancestors. Recently in 2021, the Indian Army relaxed the rules and allowed people of Mana village to visit Devtal to worship their ancestors. Such changes can bring a confidence among the people living in the border areas. It can also establish a healthy relation between the local people and the defence personnel. Therefore, taking the local residents in confidence is a crucial aspect for developing border tourism in Uttarakhand.

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