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Perception of over tourism: A study of Shimla town

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Abstract
The effect of electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM) has significantly transformed e-marketing, particularly in the tourism and hospitality sectors. The rise of social media and digital platforms has made them the most prominent sources of information. Online traveler-generated content, such as travel blogs and Online Travel Reviews (OTRs), offers valuable insights into travelers' experiences, opinions, interests, and changing travel patterns, as well as information about both mainstream and offbeat attractions. This content, created by users, provides a large volume of reviews that assist other travelers in making decisions during the pre-travel phase. It also helps in identifying and measuring visitors' perceptions, satisfaction levels, and evolving travel trends. This research paper focuses on the experiences of tourists visiting Kufri, a popular tourist spot of Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, between August 2019 and 2024. The study examines a sample of English-language OTRs from Trip Advisor, specifically investigating the interactions between tourists and local stakeholders. Shimla, known for its colonial architecture, cool climate, and scenic landscapes, is facing the challenge of over tourism. Various studies have applied models such as Doxey's Irridex and Butler's Tourist Life Cycle to explore the stages of residents' reactions and the evolution of a tourist destination due to tourism development—from growth to decline. By analyzing tourists' interactions with host community, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges posed by over tourism. It also offers insights into destination management and preparations needed for future tourism, aiming to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of tourism in Shimla.

Keywords: Tourists, experiences, online travel reviews, host community, impacts, over tourism

Introduction

Shimla, the capital of the Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh in Northern India, is located at 2397.59 meters above sea level in latitude 300 6 N and longitude 770 11 E. The climate, surroundings, and geographic location of this well-known hill city are all well-known. As British India's summer capital in the first half of the 1800s, Shimla rose to prominence. Because of its climate, which is similar to that of England, the British used to come here in the summer to escape the intense heat of the Indian plains. With the growth and development of its infrastructure, Shimla went from being a town to a city throughout time. Nonetheless, its colonial character has been preserved, as evidenced by its historic structures, well-educated locals, and year-round good weather. As they say, "Shimla is an Indian town that looks and feels like a village in Northern England, and it's a state capital at that" (Khan, 2014). The city is a well-liked vacation spot that is visited all year round for a number of reasons. It is seen as the worst example of Victorian-modern design because it does not represent either Indian or British traditions, or it has combined both. Within or across state borders, it has been predominantly inhabited by people of many communities and beliefs. Most city dwellers are either private business owners or employees of the state or central government. It attracts a wide variety of tourists, particularly in the summer. Many problems arise for tourists during the this time of the year, including the lack of accommodations due to the high number of tourists during some seasons, the lack of new tourist attractions, the dirty and awkward public areas, the incapacity to control taxi drivers and porters who try to con tourists, and the scarcity of tour guides in the town (Pubby, 1996). These issues are all clear manifestations of over tourism. The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines "*over tourism*" as a situation when huge masses visit a place to utilize their free time that results in ruining the local environment, making it difficult for the inhabitants to stay there, whereas *Collins Dictionary* describes it as a phenomenon in which tourists overrun famous tourist destinations, that too, in an unsustainable manner.

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Literature Review

[1] The Guardian highlights agitations in response to the increased strain due to over tourism throughout the European continent. The article's main concerns were tourism phobia and the protests that have broken out in places like Venice, Barcelona, Dubrovnik, and others, where residents have been publicly voicing their annoyance and hostility over growing housing costs, congestion, and environmental damage. Residents have spoken out against visitors, citing the negative impacts of mass tourism on their cities and neighborhoods which are deteriorating their quality of life, and general well-being. The reasons differ from city to city such as, in Spain, rental platforms (Air BnB) due to which the housing costs is increasing for residents; similarly, Venice is under acute pressure on its physical carrying capacity (55,000 residents and over 20 million annual visitors). The negative impacts are influencing the citizens to move out of their homes and agitate against cruise ship arrivals and uncontrolled tourism on its fragile and vulnerable environment. As remedial measures, heavy fines are introduced on tourists, unlicensed Airbnb rentals new tourism accommodations are banned in Barcelona & Venice, respectively; people are installed to police overcrowding at main tourist cities, Dubrovnik, in Croatia, cameras are installed to do the same, strict regulations are framed against antisocial behaviour of tourists in Rome and parking of food trucks and using of selfie sticks are restricted at important points in Milan. Duncan McCann, a researcher at the New Economics Foundation, linked these protests to socio-political system: with economic inequalities and political neglect. Talib Rifai, former Secretary General of UNWTO has called for the need of sustainable practices with which tourism enriches the experiences of both visitors and local people. Diversifying tourist attractions, managing tourism, particularly in season time and addressing the concerns faced by local community are need of the hour. Encouraging collaborative efforts between governments, private sector and local population will medicate the negative impacts of tourism. Such tensions between visitors and residents will intensify and threaten the long-term viability of these popular tourist destinations without such interventions (Coldwell, 2017) [2].

An article published online explored the origin, meaning, and implications of the term, "over tourism". It was first defined as significant challenge for travel destinations that imposes on local economies, environments, and socio-cultural systems by Rafat Ali in 2016. Harold Goodwin called it the opposite of what the principles of responsible tourism have emphasized. It is described as a process affecting both groups (visitors and locals), leading to the degradation of travel destinations. The key drivers are rooted in socioeconomic and demographic factors and the growing number of global tourist arrivals such as rising middle class and wealth; the emergence of a growing middle class in developing nations, easy access to international travel, influence of single nation (China) in expanding travel market, preference of experience-based travel among millennial, in particular over material possessions. These factors have resulted in various negative consequences like overcrowded infrastructure, physical damage to cultural and natural sites, and alienation of local communities. Many destinations are struggling to manage these challenges sustainably including: Venice (Italy), Dubrovnik & Hvar of Croatia, Barcelona & Balearic Islands (Spain), Amsterdam (Netherlands), Botswana, etc. They destinations struggle with overcrowding, rising rents of platforms like Airbnb, illegal short-term rentals and unregulated holiday rentals, disruptive tourist behavior, etc. To combat these issues, these destinations are have banned large cruise ships, imposed fines for tourist misconduct, capped daily visits, banned construction of new hotels, and introduced tourist taxes for maintenance of local environment. (Dickinson, 2018) [3].

Over tourism has emerged as a global challenge in continents of Europe, Asia, South America, and Africa which is linked to shortcomings in revenue management strategies. Ineffective revenue management practices like dynamic pricing, price differentiation, and channel management have contributed to excessive tourist numbers. Many destinations have even failed to identify and target appropriate markets. There has been a significant impact on the destinations, accessibility and price competitiveness. Current management strategies also focus on increasing visitor numbers which prioritizes short-term gains rather analyzing customer behavior; as a result of tourism demand get stimulated excessively. Tourism demand surpasses supply, business enterprises leverage revenue management techniques to capture consumer surplus but when these techniques are not effectively applied they lead to over tourism. Therefore, tourism demand and supply need to be balanced to ensure a sustainable approach to manage visitor numbers. A shift in focus towards attracting high-value visitors who are committed to a sustainable and inclusive growth should be drawn to promote responsible tourism. (Seraphin & Ivanov, 2020) [4].

The tourism growth models have led to negative impacts which need a shift towards responsible planning of tourism. Over the past four decades, scholars have cited the unregulated growth of tourism and its increasing impacts on destination. The relationship between residents and tourists, the tourism area life cycle, and tourist carrying capacity have been under examination. The increasing demand for mobility, leisure, and unique experiences & exponential visitation growth has led to pressure on communities Negative impacts such as loss of sense of belonging, increased congestion, and real estate speculation are seen as key players in causing over tourism. There is a need for bottom-up technical and political solutions to balance economic, social, cultural, and ecological factors mitigate over tourism challenges. A call for an all-inclusive tourism development which engage local stakeholders, associations, governments, marginalized groups and share benefits is required (Milano & Cheer, 2021) [5].

Enhanced transportation, low-cost airlines, and budget accommodations have made travel more accessible. Social media is playing a significant role in popularizing destinations. This has led to overcrowding, environmental degradation, and strain on resources in various regions. Over tourism poses a serious threat to tourist destinations due to increased mobility and affordability, influence of social media content and inadequate regulations. It is also linked with environmental risks, landslides, deforestation, unplanned development, etc. Therefore, it requires sustainable infrastructure, community involvement, and responsible travel practices to preserve cultural identity and natural resources (Singh & Chhering, 2024; Nabi, 2024) [6].

Social networking sites have emerged as an important source of information which help users to post comments, complain, and influence audience. A research on Trip Advisor reviews of restaurants show that technology facilitates the understanding of behaviors, provides information, enhances decisions and competitive pricing. It also ensures efficiency, convenience, and affordability. The study emphasizes the role of user-generated content (UGC) in tourism industry. Consumers use UGC to retrieve information, improve decision-making, and share experiences both during and after their trips. The results of the study indicate a pattern of positive and negative comments, with majority of positive inputs. It is concluded that hospitality and tourism services get promoted through UGC which reduce risk and uncertainty, helps in decision-making and destinations' marketing (Amaral *et al.*, 2014) [7]. A similar study notes that traditional methods like surveys and interviews are no longer essential for studying consumer behavior. UGC provide a rich and dynamic source of data. The image of a tourist destination can be measured through various dimensions like designative, impressive, and prescriptive aspects. A. random sample of 300,000 Trip Advisor reviews was collected from 2013 to 2018 to tourist demand. Findings underscore the value of UGC in resource allocation and promoting sustainable development. The study highlights the role of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWoM) in strategic destination management and image building. Travelers trust on opinions shared through social media platforms. It is suggested to focus on to improve urban spaces, promote sustainable tourism, cleanliness, safety, and behavior of stakeholders. Tourists should be diversified to less-explored areas having attractive natural resources, alongside proper destination planning to reduce exploitation (Marine-Roig, 2019) [8].

Another study based on national parks and its role in promoting natural heritage. Sustainable approaches require balance of physical activities, ecological awareness, and community participation in order to protect natural resources. Tourists prioritize physical activities only rather than connecting with nature. Their intentions of visiting stress environments, lead to overcrowding and harm sensitive ecosystems. Their engagement with local culture and heritage is minimal, and interactions with local stakeholders are superficial. Such tourists should be directed to less vulnerable areas, buffer zones entries should be restricted, ecological education and awareness should be encouraged. (Niezgoda & Nowacki, 2020) [9].

Over-tourism is not a single cause behind anti-tourist feelings among residents. These anti-tourism sentiments based on their underlying causes can be categorized into five forms: elite-based, intra-tourist, soft-target, targeted, and exclusion-based sentiments. The current protests against over-tourism largely fall under the last category. Identification of the roots of these protests is important to develop effective solutions. Perceived symptoms of over-tourism include growing populations, housing shortages, traffic, and rising inequality. Cities have become increasingly attractive as sites of consumption for both tourists and residents. However, national and local governments have significantly reduced material support in various areas, such as dismantling public housing, shifting toward private-sector-led urban development strategies, and cutting welfare spending. Governmental and tourism authorities prioritize tourism due to its economic value over the wellbeing of local communities. This leads to frustration and annoyance among locals. Several other factors contributing to the opposition against tourism such as the high cost of transportation services, the growth of the sharing economy, and the rapid expansion of Chinese outbound tourism make them even more agitated. They are excluded not only from the benefits of tourism but also from the decision-making processes. It involves only tourism providers and tourists and sideline residents. Current measurements of tourism impacts focus majorly on arrivals and gross earnings and neglect social and economic implications for local communities. To address the issue of over-tourism, it is essential to involve residents at different stages of destination management & planning. It is to be understood that tourism activities do not occur in isolation and affect all stakeholders, including residents; failure to address such, result in an escalation of protests rather than their resolution (Clancy, 2020) [10].

Himachal Pradesh is facing a significant threat due to influx of visitors which is straining the state's fragile ecology and local communities Key issues such as overcrowding, pollution, wildlife disturbance, and deforestation contribute towards over tourism. Poor waste disposal management and unchecked vehicle inflow further fuelling the problem damaging both natural and cultural sustainability. Cultural erosion and over-commercialization are also disrupting traditions and identities of locals and posing economic challenges, including seasonal employment, rising living costs, and housing pressures. Main tourist attractions such as the iconic *Mall Road in Shimla* faces overcrowding, littering, pollution, traffic congestion, and inflated prices. Its historical charm is deeply eroded and affecting residents' quality of life (Condingnest, 2023; Prakash, 2024) [11].

The study examines Trip Advisor reviews posted in 18 years to identify tourist experiences in urban green spaces. Both positive and negative reviews were noted. Findings highlight positive strengths and attraction understandings, while negative reviews reveal management and operational issues seeking maintenance. It is mentioned that the titles of reviews also play a significant role in shaping reader perceptions. Risks during such studies include fake reviews, linguistic diversity, and exclusion of other data sources. Reviews also reflect polarized views and neglect neutral/average experience (Saoualih *et al.*, 2024).

Research Gap
Most of the studies have exclusively relied on the data available on Trip Advisor for generating user based content. Predominantly these case studies examine physical activities; stress of over tourism on destinations, impacts on stakeholders and local environment but none of them have noted attitude and behavior of stakeholders towards tourists. The interaction between the local communities and tourists studied are totally for sake of balancing the demand and supply sides of the tourist services; hence, are superficial; with no exploration of connections between them. Therefore, this research is organized to study visitor interaction with local residents.
"How do visitor interactions with local stakeholders, as reflected in Trip Advisor reviews, influence their overall tourism experience and perceptions at a tourist destination?" This research question aims to study nature of visitor-stakeholder interactions and its impact on tourist satisfaction and experiences.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the nature of visitor interactions with local stakeholders
2. To evaluate the impact of these interactions on the overall visitor experience
3. To identify themes and sentiments of tourists in reviews related to interactions with local stakeholders.

Table 1: Codes frequency and potential level of criticism.

Codes	Frequency	Potential level of criticizm
Horses	50	High
Rides	29	Moderate to high
Adventure	24	Moderate
Apples	18	High
Experience	16	High
Cab drivers	14	High
Place	13	Moderate to high
Park	8	High
Packages	6	High

Data Collection & Methodology

For this study, Kufri, a popular tourist destination in Shimla, was selected. The research is conducted qualitatively, utilizing content analysis as the method to analyze the data. The data was collected from a secondary source, specifically from online reviews posted on the popular travel website, Trip Advisor. The Online Travel Reviews (OTRs) were gathered over a five-year period, from August 2019 to August 2024. A total of 46 reviews were recorded during this time frame. The reviews were organized chronologically in an MS Excel spreadsheet, including details such as the reviewer's name, the month and year the review was posted, the reviewer's place of origin, and the type of trip (friends, family, or couple). The data was then edited, formatted, and uploaded to NVIVO software for code identification. Nine distinct codes were identified, which were further analyzed by counting their frequency in the travelers' references. The references were categorized into four sentiment groups: positive, moderately positive, negative, and moderately negative. Based on this content, four key themes were identified, with 18 specific indicators noted.

Findings

The findings reveal patterns from the nine most frequently occurring codes/words in reviews related to tourists' experience in Kufri. This analysis reflects predominance of negative sentiments; high level of criticism against safety, pricing, mismanagement and attitude of stakeholders.

Horses
Frequency: 50

- Tourists criticized conditions, hygiene and safety regarding horse riding
- Horse owners were aggressive and inexperienced
- Condition of roads was critical; they were poorly maintained, slippery, and dirty
- Overpricing and high-pressure sales tactics

Example

- "Do not fall prey to taxi drivers and horse owners who charge high to visit this place."
- "500 per person horse ride, which will take you to the top of the mountain and bring back."

Rides
Frequency: 29
Issues:

- Adventure rides such as zip lines and Burma bridges are popular but poorly maintained.
- Overpriced
- Safety issues, dusty and no options for toddlers.

Example

- "500 for horse ride and 500 for entry to their adventure camp where a zip line ride is complimentary."
- "500 Per Person for 1km ride in dusty and dirty route, Please use a mask."

Adventure
Frequency: 24
Issues:

- Main attraction is adventure sports but lacks proper management.
- Adventure packages were very costly

Example

- "If you are into adventure sports, better go to Manali."
- "Horse-riding agencies con you into buying adventure sports packages."

Apples
Frequency: 18
Issues:

- Attractions were misrepresented
- "Apple gardens" sold as main attraction in packages but consisted of only a few trees.
- Descriptions were misleading, extra charges for imposed if transportation was asked.

Example

- "The apple garden they talk about is just 3 to 4 trees, not worth the visit.

Experience
Frequency: 16
Issues

- Terrible, Fraud, Dangerous, and Overcrowded, congested, unhygienic, polluted.
- Positive reviews were less and mostly related with adventure sports.

Example

- "It was almost a near-death experience and people should never visit Kufri at least for this horse riding and sightseeing."

Cab Drivers
Frequency: 14
Issues

- Cab drivers were commissioned by horse owners and adventure operators to overcharge tourists.
- Such linkages were disturbing
- Tourists were pressurized by drivers and local guides.

Example

- "Your cab drivers will try taking you there to get a cut from the horse/pony riding scammers."

Place
Frequency: 13
Issues
- Good option for adventure lovers but overall experience was terrible.
- Place was overcrowded, highly congested with no scenic beauty
- Traffic
- Lacks authentic experiences
- Less appealing compared to alternatives like Shimla.

Example
- "This is an extremely bad place for any fun."

Park
Frequency: 8
Issues
- Amusement parks; poorly maintained and overpriced.
- Visitors had urged to visit Kufri Nature Park and Zoo only

Example
- "Please use your time in Kufri in exploring the sanctuaries and bird parks nearby."

Packages
Frequency: 6
Issues
- Expensive packages; overpriced
- Misleading descriptions
- Lack transparency and accountability
- Unclear inclusions in package
- Hidden costs

Example
- "You WILL get LOOTED by the local tourist guides/package providers there."

Sentiment Analysis of Reviews
The reviews have been categorized into very positive, moderately positive, moderately negative, and very negative with the help of NVIVO Software. The breakdown of sentiments indicates skew towards negative sentiments. In total, 114 negative reviews are noted out of total of 151 sentiments (approximately 75%).

Positive Reviews (Total: 37)
Very Positive (10)
- These reviews show overall satisfaction and good experience

- Uniqueness of adventure activities and scenic views
- Examples:
- "This is an amazing place to visit."
- "A good place for sports and adventure lovers."

Moderately Positive (27)
- Some attractions or activities were okay while some require improvement.
- Mild dissatisfaction with services and infrastructure.

Examples
- "If you are an adventure junky and want to enjoy activities in snow-clad mountains, this is a place to be."
- "Good place to have some thrill adventure."

Negative Reviews (Total: 114)
Moderately Negative (64)
- Disappointment with logistics, infrastructure and pricing.
- Criticism about improper maintenance, pricing, traffic congestion and overcrowding.

Examples
- "500 per person for 1km ride in dusty and dirty routes. Use a mask or you might fall sick."
- "Adventure sports are overpriced and not worth the money."

Very Negative (50)
- Grievances regarding safety and hygiene,
- unethical practices such as scams by guides or cab drivers), and
- Extreme terrible experiences.
- Physical danger, risk of accidents
- Dissatisfaction
- Fraud advertising.

Examples
- "It was a near-death experience, and people should never visit Kufri for horse riding or sightseeing."
- "You WILL get LOOTED by the local tourist guides/package providers there."

Thematic Analysis
Based on the findings, four key themes have been identified: 1) Services, 2) Local Stakeholders 3) Tourist Spot & 4) Overall Experience. The themes are categorized into 14 specific indicators; each of which has been described to highlight the problems shared through UGC by visitors.

Table 2: Themes and corresponding identified indicators.

Themes Identified	Indicators
Services	**1. Overpricing & Hidden Charges** Tourist packages, adventure activities, and horse riding were overpriced; the owners changed their attitude, increased the prices of activities after reaching tourist spots and misbehaved if tourists did not agree. **2. General pricing of services** Tourist Accommodation, taxi fares, rides and tickets were costly **3. Perceived Value of services** Services fail to satisfy visitors expectations, led to disappointment
Local Stakeholders	**4. Behavior:** There were instances where visitors were ill-treated by stakeholders. Horse owners were aggressive when visitors did not agree with them; their safety and security while horse riding was compromised due to their unprofessional and untrained practices. **5. Fraudulent practices and scams**

	Local stakeholders like tour operators, taxi drivers and guides misled tourists with false promises and descriptions. **6. Lack of Guidance and Support** While performing adventure rides, tourists felt being unguided, their safety was compromised, staff did not pay much heed to their safety
Tourist Spot	**7. Unsafe** Serious issues have been noted which visitors have posted about. Lack of maintenance of rides, unsafe rides, poor roads and trails can invite serious accidents and injuries concerns. **8. Amenities** Lack of basic facilities and public amenities. No proper washrooms, medical services and dirty pathways make the place unhygienic. **9. Animals** Horses were made to pull more weight than their capacity. They are beaten up if they serve their masters, poorly treated and no immediate medical access in case of injury to any animal. **10. Traffic Congestion and Bursting Carrying Capacity** There has been enough mentions of traffic which makes difficult for tourists to reach this tourist spot especially during peak season time. The place gets overcrowded; no limitation on number of entries which is degrading the local environment of this place. **11. Threat to local ecology and animal habitat** Vehicle emissions, land pollution, forest fires and other such causes can lead to degradation of ecology and destruction of those forests which serve as homes to various species of flora and fauna.
Overall Experience	**12. Resentment & Disappointment** A few visitors have given a positive feedback to overall experience; it is largely negative highlighting disappointment with their visit. It indicates a low chance of visitors' decision of revisiting the place. **13. Discontentment** Basic services, adventure sports and physical activities could not meet the expectation level of visitors. They were charged for even those rides which were non-functional or poorly maintained. **14. Recommendations for Alternative Destinations** Visitors have recommended visiting other destinations like Manali & near-located attractions of Shimla like Narkanda for better experience and even suggested to avoid this tourist spot even if offered a free visit.

Discussion

The overall sentiment is overwhelmingly negative; with highlights on administrative issues, whereas positive reviews include suggestions, call for improvement, and environmental conservation. Safety concerns, dangerous rides, and poorly maintained adventure sports are key drivers of negative reviews. Tourists have reported feeling cheated by stakeholders because of high prices, hidden costs, and aggressive sales practices. Other issues noted are lack of hygiene and cleanliness, overcrowding, and traffic congestion. However, the place is loved by adventure-lovers and thrill-seekers. The snow-covered mountains, scenic landscapes, and adventure activities have been well appreciated by visitors, particularly in the winter season. The experiences of this tourist spot are hindered by challenges across four key areas. The tourists are charged heavily for sightseeing and basic amenities offered to them. Frequently they get cheated for paying more money for low-quality and cheap services; some charges are kept hidden; nonpayment of such amounts makes stakeholders ruthless towards them and leads to conflicts. They try to gain as much as possible from tourists; join hands together, and commission each other for liaising of various tourist services. This leaves tourists with no preferences of their own, a low level of competitive pricing, and has to ultimately pay what is demanded. Even high costs do not justify the services and facilities: often low value and quality are presented before the tourists. Such unjustified tactics of stakeholders and conflicts disturb the socio-cultural climate of the place. Locals are often seen opposing tourists and getting united with each other rather than raising their voices against their wrongdoings. Further destination management and planning strains the industry; lack of safety concerns, risk of accidents, slippery roads, injuries while performing adventure sports, etc., have not been taken into consideration by the authorities. The animals (horses) are ill-treated, with no maintenance of safety or hygiene conditions, no medical facilities, and no check on the capabilities of their masters to tackle them. Tourists have even cringed about basic amenities and public utilities. No proper washrooms or hospitals around. Key issues of overcrowding and traffic congestion make tourists stand in long queues for hours to reach the spot. These are often addressed as major symptoms of over tourism and environmental degradation. Therefore, there is a need to frame proper destination management policies in order to regain the lost charm of Kufri. There have been recommendations mentioned to visit other places rather than Kufri to get a good, satisfactory travel experience which are either nearby Shimla or other destinations of the state like Manali.

Recommendations and Suggestions
Addressing Behavior of stakeholders

Horse owners should be given proper training on safe riding practices; pathways should be repaired and maintained for smooth rides & eliminate accidents on slippery, muddy, or uneven roads. To enhance hygiene, proper cleaning schedules should be created to maintain hygiene and sanitation for the area; also waste management plan should be designed to dump horse dung. Monitoring system should be set up to track unethical practices by locals like cab drivers, such as collusion with horse owners and package sellers. Tourism and transport service authorities should introduce trained drivers to reduce dependency on private cabs who would charge fixed rates. Such rate lists and contacts of them should be placed at various entry/exit points for tourists to easily contact them. Certification system for horse owners, guides, and adventure operators should be introduced to ensure safety and quality standards. Tourist Help Desk should be set up at major entry points to address queries, complaints, and provide accurate

information. Emergency Services should be established to strengthen emergency response systems and address injuries or accidents promptly.

Adventure Rides

Rules and regulations should be strengthened by the authorities or concerned associations; regular inspections should be conducted to maintain standards of adventure rides as well as ensure safety. Such methods in price standardization for rides should be practiced which are transparent and acceptable to all and rates at entry points should be displayed to prevent overcharging. Kids' friendly activities and rides should also be started to cater to families with young children.

Addressing Misrepresentation of Attractions

The marketing and promotion of tourist attractions should be realistic; exaggeration should be avoided by stakeholders like apple gardens. Everything should be clearly stated; any topic of ambiguity can build the expectation level of visitors higher. The seasonal availability of attractions like apple orchards should be highlighted and accurate descriptions in promotional materials should be ensured. Guided tours with knowledgeable staff only should be promoted to provide genuine insights about the area and its attractions.

Enhancement of the Tourist Experience

The number of tourists should be allowed at certain attractions should be limited during peak times to improve crowd control and overall experience. Alternate tourist sites should be developed nearby to reduce reliance on specific attractions like Kufri.

Conclusion

Kufri is a tourist hill spot lying in the lap of the Himalayas, known for its scenic landscape, snow-clad mountains, and winter sports. It holds immense potential for attracting the global tourism market and developing as a resort destination for all 365 days. However, currently it is highly suffocated with key issues of over tourism, the causes of which largely depend on visitor-resident interaction. Indeed! Tourism is a major economic driver for the state of Himachal Pradesh, which cannot be ignored for the sake of its negative impacts. However, under ongoing conditions, it is hard to predict its sustenance in the long run. There is an urgent call for addressing the grievances of both residents and tourists to continue practicing tourism activities in such sensitive ecological zones of the Himalayas. Even if negative experiences are outweighing positive ones, one can see this as the opportunity to change our strategies towards more sustainable ones. There have been enough instances of blaming tourism activities and tourists' behavior as major causes of over tourism, but it needs to be observed that such issues are equally caused by ill-practices of stakeholders, destination planners, and their administrative and political systems. Therefore, it's time we start bringing a change in our usual practices and take a step forward to improve visitor satisfaction also.

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