Community Perception Towards Sustainable Tourism in Almora, Uttarakhand

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Abstract

In its purest form, sustainable tourism refers to a sector of the travel and tourism business that aims to have no negative influence on the environment and local culture while promoting economic growth, job creation, and ecosystem preservation. Uttarakhand, an Indian state in the Northern Himalayan region, has long been a renowned tourist destination because of its stunningly varied landscapes, high biodiversity, ample opportunities for religious travel, and extensive cultural legacy. Almora is a famous hill station in Kumaun, lesser Himalaya, known as the cultural capital of Kumaun. Sustainable tourism promotes the local culture and creates various livelihood opportunities. The present study is based on a survey of 200 randomly selected households from five major tourist destinations: Almora, Ranikhet, Dwarahat, Sheetlakhet, and Manila. The study shows that many domestic and foreign tourists visit the study area, providing livelihood opportunities to the host community. Tourists are also attracted by the cultural specialties of the region, like Aipan art, traditional attire Pichora, and baskets made of pine needles. This promotes sustainability, creates job opportunities, makes local people economically stable, and uplifts their standard of living. The study results identified the positive perception of the host community towards tourism.

Keywords: *community, sustainable tourism, host community, cultural specialties*

Introduction

The dynamic, rapidly expanding, and widely distributed tourism sector has significantly impacted the world. The viability of the tourism industry will be threatened because the services provided are perishable goods. The long-term sustainability of the tourism industry depends on the duties and responsibilities assumed by local leaders and tourism professionals, who must plan to maximize the benefits and best use of natural resources while preserving

the destination from any harm generated by tourists' visits. The World Commission on Environment and Development(WCED), also known as Brundtland Commission, brought the term sustainable development into common use in its report called Our Common Future(1987). "Sustainable development is the development that meets the need of the present without comprising the future generation to meet their own need."

The concept of Sustainable tourism, as developed by the World Tourism Organization(W.T.O.), "Sustainable Tourism development meets the need of present tourist and host regions while protecting and enhancing for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support system".

When we say sustainable development, the most accessible definition is that we have inherited a tremendous green environment, fresh air, clean water, land, etc. Sustainability is that when we leave it for our future generation, we should leave it in the same condition without damaging it. Uttarakhand, also known as the Abode of God, land of legends, Dev Bhoomi became the 27th state of India on 9th November 2000. It is abundant in all aspects of life, from plains to snow-clad mountains, religious sites to adventure sites, food to dress, folklore to fairs. Uttarakhand is heaven for tourists. Uttarakhand lies in the country's northern part, extending between 28o 43' – 31o 27' N latitudes and 77o 34' –81o 02' E longitudes. The Kali separates it from Nepal in the east, whereas the Tons River made boundaries with Himachal Pradesh in the northwest. Uttarakhand state has a total geographical area of 53483 sq. km. It is nearly rectangular in shape, covering 358 km (east to west) km in length and 250 km (north to south), and the topography and terrain of the state are primarily hilly, with areas under snow cover and steep slopes, the hills cover 88 % of its area and rest 12 % area is left for the plains (tarai). Over the past decades, academic attention has been focused on the community's perception of tourism. Local community experience tourism in positive and negative contexts both. Brankov (2019) An enormous number of studies have been conducted globally to examine the attitude of local people towards tourism. In the context of Uttarakhand, very few studies have examined this issue. As per Bagri & Kala (2016), Locals want to increase tourism gains with the corresponding effort to reduce consequences deprived. Their perceived impacts of tourism vary across their demographic variables. According to Gupta & Rout (2017), People living in the Himalayas generally search for alternate livelihood. The tourism industry can help them if developed in the right way.

Objectives

1. To analyze the trend of tourism.
2. To identify the host community's perception towards sustainable tourism.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Primary and Secondary sources of data prepare the study. Primary data was collected through questionnaires, personal investigation, and Interaction with local people, tourists and stockholders. The information regarding tourist arrival was collected from District Tourist Office Almora. The secondary data was collected from research papers, journals, newspapers, and the Internet.

Study Area

The study area is located in and around the hill district of Almora. The district is located in the eastern part of Uttarakhand with a latitudinal extend of 29° 59' N and a Longitudinal extend is 79° 65' E. It is surrounded by the

districts of Nainital to the south, Pithoragarh to the east, Garhwal Division (Pauri district) to the west, and Bageshwar to the north. Almora district has a total area of 3139 sq. km, .of which around 41.70% is under forest area. The district is also known for its scenic landscape, rich forests and wildlife, spiritual heritage, beautiful landscapes, handicrafts, and hill cuisine. It is an important center for the art and culture of the Kumaon region. For the questionnaire-based study, I selected five major tourist destinations: Almora, Ranikhet, Dwarahat, Shitlakhet, and Manila.
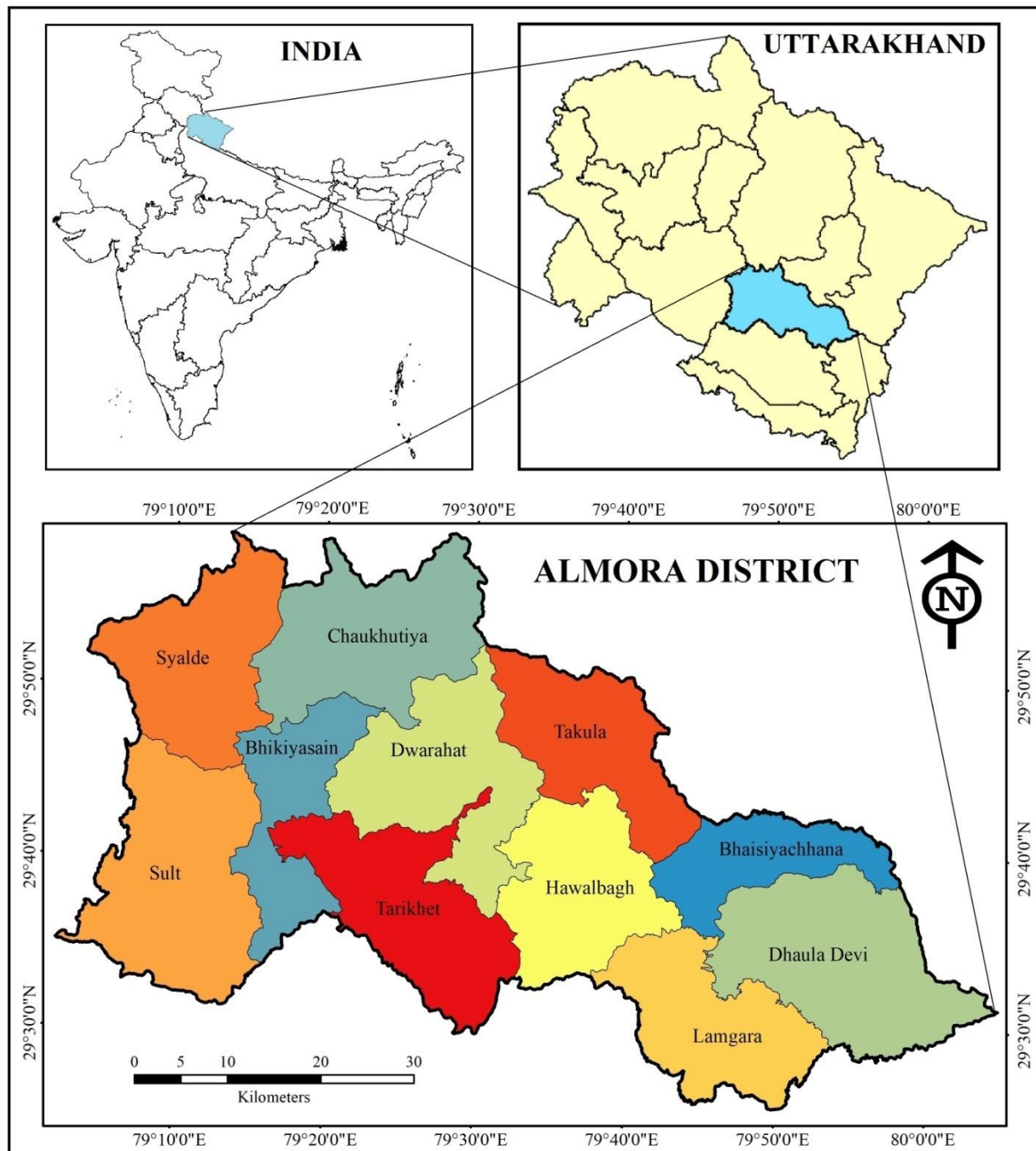

Figure- 1.1: Location Map of Study Area

The trend of Tourism in Almora

An old tourist hill station Almora is always a center of attraction for tourists from around the globe. Tourists from India as well as abroad reach here to seek health benefits as well as there are ample tourist places that attract tourists to them. When the temperature of the plains increases, people start moving towards the mountainous areas. Here I present the Data on tourist arrival from 2000 to 2022. The 22 years of data from the state formation to the present shows the tourism trend.

Domestic Tourist: When the journey is taken up within their own country's geographical and political boundaries, it is described as domestic tourism. From a tourism perspective, March to June is excellent; at this time, tourists from Delhi, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Maharastra, etc, reach Almora. Due to the rainy season between July to September, there is a decrease in the number of tourists; with the end of the rainy season, the weather begins to get cold. In October, the tourist inflow increases because Bangali tourists reach here in large numbers.

Foreign Tourists: When the journey is taken up outside the geographical and political boundaries of their native country, it is described as foreign tourists. As the summer starts, the tourist city is buzzing with foreign tourists; most foreign tourists arrive here in April due to the pleasant weather and the occasion of Navratri. Devotees from Canada, Australia, France, Germany, etc., visit the famous Haidhakhan temple and tie the knot according to Hindu tradition.

Table-1.1: Tourist Arrival in Almora (2000- 2022)

Year	Indian Tourists	Foreigner Tourists	Total
2000	64989	3633	68622
2001	67108	1664	68772
2002	71709	2398	74107
2003	80354	2931	83285
2004	80354	2931	83285
2005	79435	4921	84356
2006	81314	5225	86559
2007	88965	5131	94096
2008	93615	4821	98436
2009	97492	4530	102022
2010	95947	5031	100978
2011	98766	4465	103231
2012	101125	4373	105498
2013	76958	3499	80457
2014	81345	4020	85365
2015	89850	3440	93290
2016	101648	4358	106006
2017	108178	4524	112702
2018	114198	4144	118342

2019	159664	1920	152684
2020	38608	799	39407
2021	92292	171	92463
2022	147195	1606	148801

Source: District Tourism Officer Office, Almora
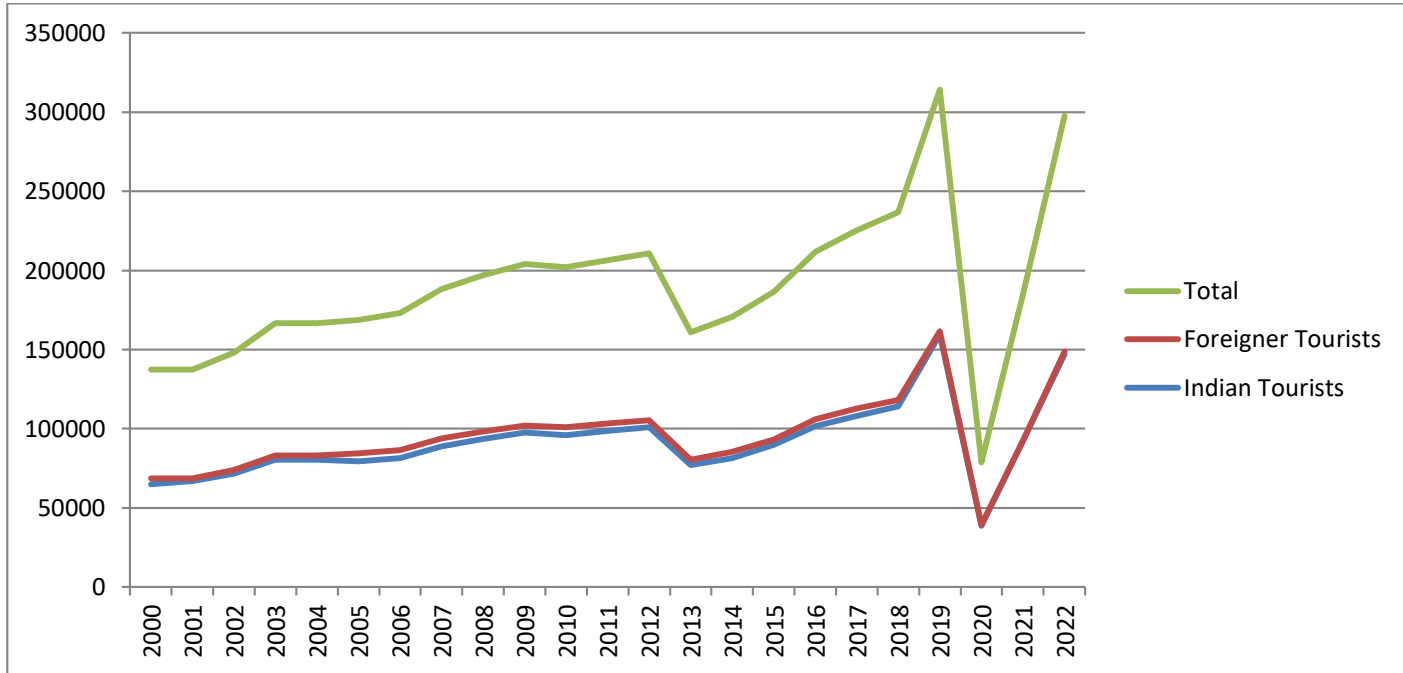
Fig:1.2   Tourist Inflow in Almora

   The table represents the increment of the number of tourists per year. We saw a sudden downfall in tourist arrival in 2013 because Uttarakhand was a victim of a great disaster in Kedarnath. After that, the number of tourists slightly increasing till 2019 and 2019 was the year when Almora received the highest number of tourists which is 152684, but after that, a considerable downfall was there because of the coronavirus and 2020 was the year when Almora received the lowest number of tourists which is only 39407. After that, the number of tourists is slightly increasing. The trend of tourists is showing a positive approach.

Community Perception for Tourism

(a) Gender

Table 1.2 reveals that 77 percent of the selected host community was male and the rest 23 percent were female.

Table 1.2: Gender-Wise Classification of Host Community

Gender	Destination					Total
	Almora	Ranikhet	Dwarahat	Sheetlakhet	Manila	
Male	24	28	32	36	36	154(77)
Female	16	12	08	04	04	46(23)
Total	40	40	40	40	40	200(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2022
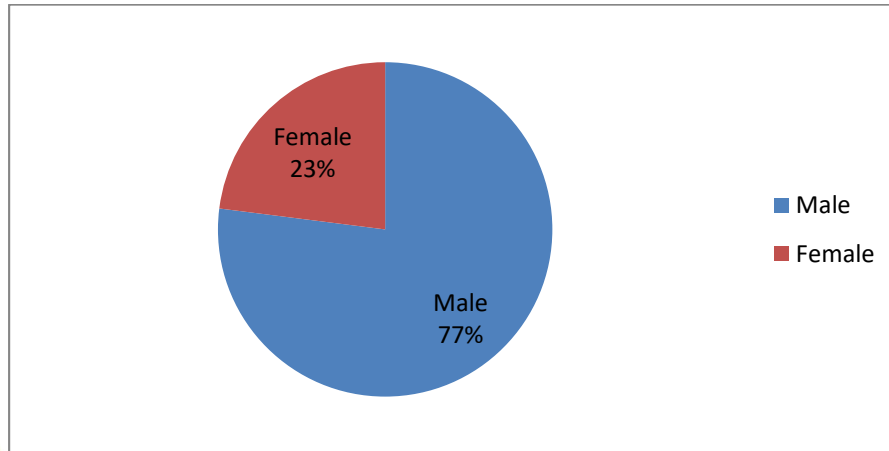
Figure-1.3: Gender-wise classification of Host Community

(b) Age

The age of the host community has a direct impact on their attitude towards tourism. Regarding the age of the host community, 38 percent belong to the age group 25 -35, 35 percent are in the age group of 35 -50, 15.5 percent are in the age group of above 50 and 11.5 percent are in up to 25.

Table-1.3: Age-wise Classification of Host Community

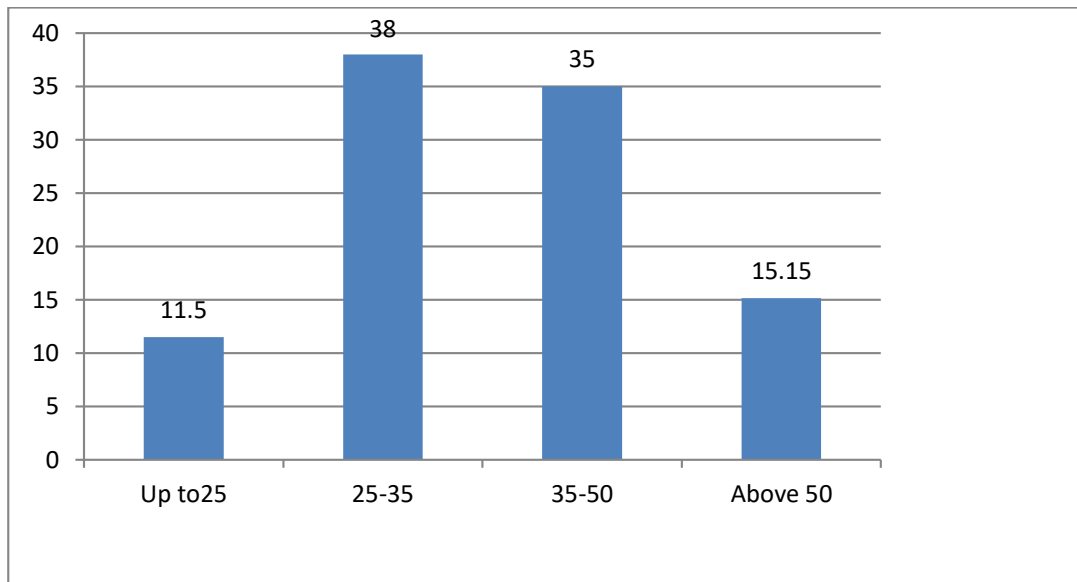| Age Group	Destination					Total
	Almora	Ranikhet	Dwarahat	Sheetlakhet	Manila	
Up to 25	08	06	04	03	02	23(11.5)
25 to 35	09	13	16	21	17	76(38)
35 to 50	22	12	13	11	12	70(35)
Above 50	01	09	07	05	09	31(15.15)
Total	40	40	40	40	40	200(100)

Source: Field Survey,2022

Fig-1.4: Age-wise classification of Host Community

(c) Involvement in Tourism

It describes how many people are involved in tourism directly or indirectly. Regarding the involvement of the host community with tourism, Table 1.4 reveals that 50.5 percent of people are involved in tourism, 24 percent people strongly agree that their no involvement in tourism,20.5 percent people accept that their family members have been involved in tourism, 5 percent people are involved in another way.

Table-1.4: Involvement in Tourism

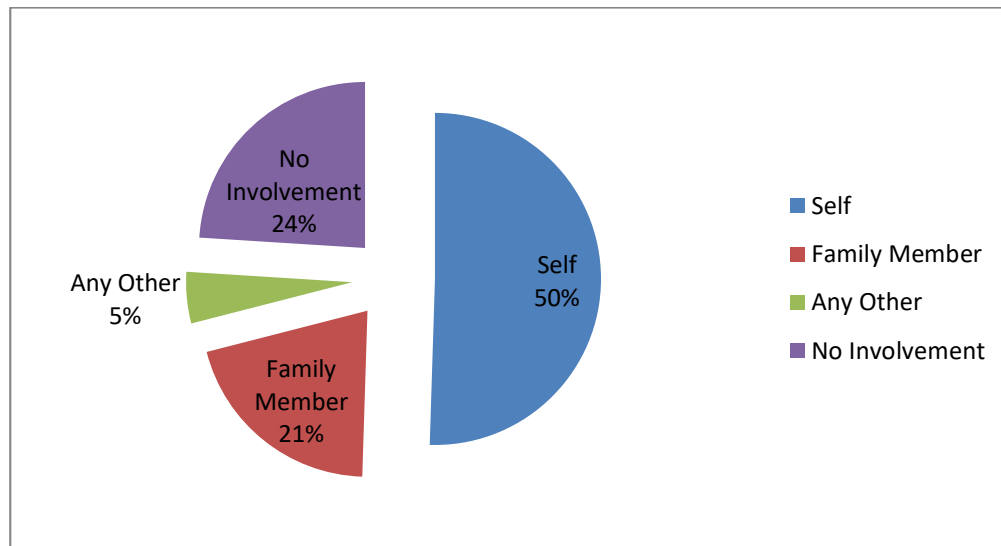| Involvement	Destination					Total
	Almora	Ranikhet	Dwarahat	Sheetlakhet	Manila	
Self	22	19	18	23	19	101(50.5)
Family Member	09	09	08	08	07	41(20.5)
Any Other	03	04	02	01	-	10(5)
No Involvement	06	08	12	08	14	48(24)
Total	40	40	40	40	40	200(100)

Source: Field Survey,2022

Figure-1.5: Involvement in Tourism

(d) Employment in the tourist season

Generally, the month of March to June or September to November is a tourist season in hilly areas and people get different types of employment in this season. Table 1.5 reveals that 61 percent of people strongly agree that they get employment in tourist season, 34 percent people disagree and 5 percent people did not give any opinion.

Table-1.5: Employment In Tourist Season

Involvement	Destination					Total
	Almora	Ranikhet	Dwarahat	Sheetlakhet	Manila	
Yes	29	28	24	22	19	122(61)
No	09	10	14	17	18	68(34)
No Opinion	02	02	02	01	03	10(5)
Total	40	40	40	40	40	200(100)

Source: Field Survey, 2022
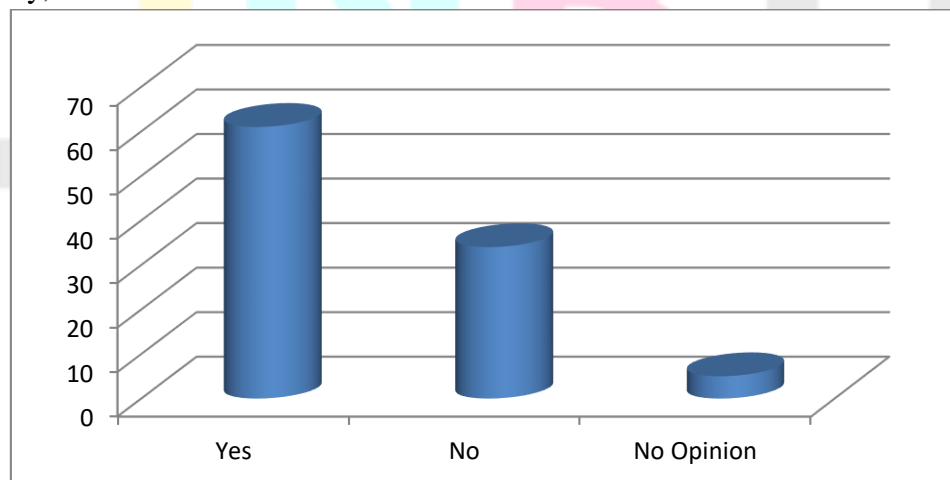

Fig-1.6: Employment in Tourist Season

(e) Type of Employment

Table 1.6 reveals which type of employment people find during tourist season. 45.08 percent of people got a job selling juice during tourist season. April to June is also a season of growing different types of local fruits which are highly demanded by tourists like Kafal, Kilmoda, Hisalu, Aadu, Khubani, Plum, etc. 28.68 percent of people selling traditional crafts, which are Aipan Art, Nameplate, Toran, Coaster made by Aipan art, Traditional attire Pichhora, Traditional ornaments like Galobandh, Nath, Pauchhi, etc., Pine needle Basket, Hand knitted cardigans, etc. 22.13 percent got the job of selling juices like Buransh juice which is very healthy for heart, Malta juice, gulab juice, etc., 4.09 percent people got other jobs.

Table-1.6: Type of employment

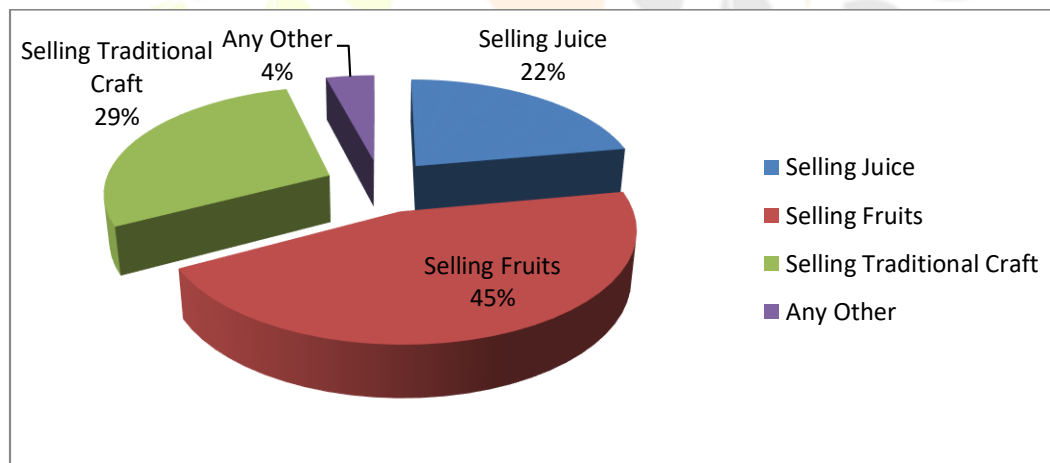| Employment	Destination					Total
	Almora	Ranikhet	Dwarahat	Sheetlakhet	Manila	
Selling Juice	11	06	06	02	02	27(22.13)
Selling Fruits	08	09	08	14	16	55(45.08)
Selling Traditional Craft	09	11	09	05	01	35(28.68)
Any Other	01	02	01	01	-	05(4.09)
Total	29	28	24	22	19	122(100)

Source: Field Survey,2022

Fig-1.7 Employment in Tourist Season

(f) Tourism Promote Livelihood

Table 1.7 reveals that 75.5 percent of people strongly agree that tourism promotes livelihood, 21.5 are not agreed, and 3 percent do not give any opinion.

Table-1.7: Tourism Promote Livelihood

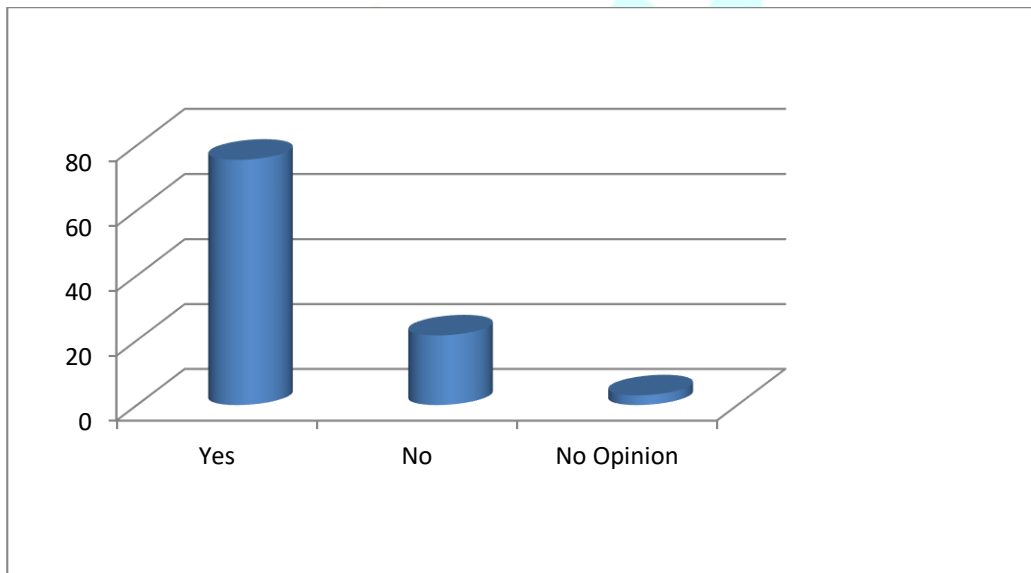| Livelihood	Destination					Total
	Almora	Ranikhet	Dwarahat	Sheetlakhet	Manila	
Yes	36	32	31	28	24	151(75.5)
No	04	08	09	10	16	43(21.5)
No Opinion	-	-	01	02	03	06(3)
Total	40	40	40	40	40	200(100)

Source: Field Survey,2022

Fig-1.8: Tourism promotes livelihood

(g) Tourism increase Living Standard

Table 1.8 reveals the connection between tourism and the living standard of local people. 68 percent of people strongly agree that tourism increases their living standard, 29 percent disagree with this statement, and 3 percent do not give any opinion about that.

Table-1.8: Tourism increase Living Standard

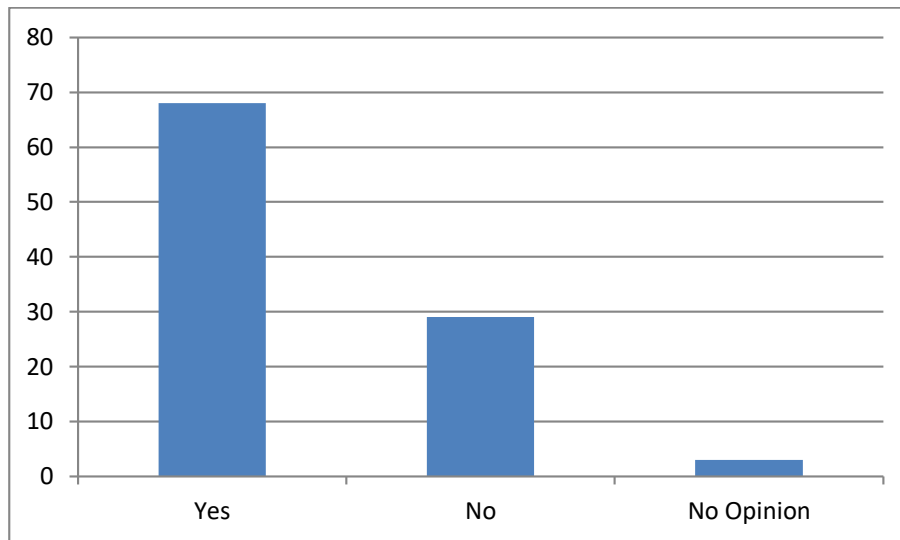| Living Standard	Destination					Total
	Almora	Ranikhet	Dwarahat	Sheetlakhet	Manila	
Yes	34	31	28	24	19	136(68)
No	06	09	11	13	19	58(29)
No Opinion	-	-	01	03	02	06(3)
Total	40	40	40	40	40	200(100)

Source: Field Survey,2022

Fig-1.9: Tourism increase Living Standard

Result

Results are based on a small survey which was followed by a questionnaire related to community perception for tourism. Some essential points of these results are as follows:

1. Based on the survey result, 50.5 percent of people are involved in tourism, 24 percent strongly agree that they are not involved in tourism,20.5 percent accept that their family members have been involved in tourism, and 5 percent are involved in other ways.
2. The result reveals that 61 percent of people strongly agree that they get employment during tourist season, 34 percent people disagree, and 5 percent people did not give any opinion.
3. Host communities get different types of jobs; 45.08 percent of people got a job selling juice in tourist season, and 28.68 percent of people sold traditional craft. 22.13 percent got a job selling juices, and 4.09 percent people got other jobs.
4. A good percentage of the host community (75.5%) strongly agree that tourism promotes livelihood.
5. The survey result reveals that 68 percent of people strongly agree that tourism increases their living standard, 29 percent disagree with this statement, and 3 percent do not give any opinion about that.

Plate-1: (a) Man Selling Kafal (b) Woman selling Juice

Conclusion

The general consensus is that Almora, located in the Indian Himalayas, is a great tourist location with plenty of resources for all types of tourism. The trend in tourism is evidenced by the consistent increase in inbound and outbound travelers. In order to better understand how the host community considers tourism, a survey was conducted, and it was discovered that locals have a favorable attitude toward it. They benefited from tourism, which raised their living level and provided them with various job opportunities. In order to improve the host community's understanding of how to interact with visitors, the government, the tourism department, and non-profit organizations can conduct workshops with their assistance. Additionally, the department has the capability to brand locally produced goods in order to draw in more tourists.

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