



Chapter 20

India's Peaks Under Pressure: The Impact of Climate Change and Gender Issues on Mountain Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Overcrowded tourism, blocked roads, habitat loss, increased pollution, landslides, and gender issues like the security of women, sexual abuse, theft, and fraud are pressurizing tourism in the mountains under pressure. Tourism in peaks or Himalayas is highly dependent on natural resources and sensitive to climate change like global warming, excessive use of non-biodegradable plastics, and transportation. The chapter attempts to explore the gender dynamics that influence mountaineering tourism activities laying down the roles, opportunities, and challenges faced by women. Furthermore, assesses the environmental footprints like climate change, resource depletion, rising temperature, and weather patterns on India's mountain tourism. The chapter included a brief review of existing literature on mountain tourism in the Indian Himalayan Region. The chapter found challenges like household financial burden, gender inequality, gender vulnerability, limited access to digital infrastructure, and labor-intensive chores during floods are some issues faced by women onset of climate disruption.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'Himalaya' originated from two Sanskrit words; 'Hima' means "snow" and 'Alaya' means "abode" to refer to it as "the abode of snow." India in the north is surrounded by high mountains and every year, thousands of travelers from all over the world come to the peaks to witness the calmness of nature, adventure sports like trekking and hiking, and religious tourism. Nanda Devi, at 7,434 meters above sea level, is one of India's highest peaks and challenging expeditions. It involves two peaks: the Nanda Devi East and the Nanda Devi Main Peak. The second adventurous and steepest peak is Kamet in Uttarakhand, on the rocky Zaskar range. The Kamet is 7,620 meters above sea level, extended with glaciers, steep gullies, and dense forests with interesting geographical creations. Manali is one of the most charming and popular tourist destinations in Himachal Pradesh pioneers a wide range of tourist activities like trekking, hiking, climbing, boating, paragliding, expeditions, and river rafting. The Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Mountaineering and

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Allied Sports (ABVIMAS) in Manali provides various short and long-term courses on expeditions, sport tourism, and rescue operations.

Mountain communities are highly vulnerable to climate change. Climate change has affected mountain counties globally, threatening indicators like melting ice, groundwater scarcity, changing monsoon patterns, forest fire, land degradation, floods, high summer temperatures, delayed winter, shrinking weather forms, animal loss, soil degradation, landslides, and severe storms are obvious. Similar sets are observable in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), the climate and non-climate issues are increasingly multi-faceted problems like socio-demographic changes like out-migration, seasonal employment, gender insecurity, women safety, financial low footprints, and overburden of household activities. Mountain women are more vulnerable to stress related to environmental changes such as shared labor on farms, household expenditure, upbringing of children, disease management during floods, and climate shock (e.g. landslides, thunderstorms, flash floods). It further exacerbates gender roles in reinstating regular life. Women's workforce involvement in mountain tourism is limited to lower-level jobs compared to men engaged with management-level jobs. Mountain women are more specifically involved with housekeeping, pottering, dishwashing, performing regional cultural programs, ticket counters, and tea/coffee sales. Therefore, we bring together climate change and gender issues to understand the importance of mountain tourism in India.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives: The chapter's objectives are to understand the importance of mountain tourism in India and to assess the impact of climate change and gender issues in mountain tourism.

Research Design: Descriptive research design ensures an understanding of the characteristics of a phenomenon and describes community features.

Research Method: To reach the objectives, secondary data from reputed Indian government reports like NITI Aayog and IBEF reports were assessed. International organizations' reports including the United Nations World Tourism Organization, United Nations Development Programme, and Food and Agriculture Organization were selected to analyze the broader view. Further, qualitative published metrics from Statista, Environmental Performance Indicators, and the Ministry of Tourism Report 2023 were also assessed. The secondary research from the Google Scholar database from 2019 to 2014 was executed using the keywords "Climate Change" AND "Gender Issues" AND Mountain Tourism. The inclusion criteria for the selected literature are; study on the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), women's issues, and climate change. The study also includes articles or journals that used different terminology for climate 'change' like 'crisis,' and 'disruption' to explore more similar work. There is a dearth of literature on the selected criteria, therefore evidence sources like journals, articles, and books.

The chapter's first part explains the mountain tourism literature mentioning mountain tourism activities and market size in India. The middle part of the chapter assesses the impact of climate change and gender issues in mountain tourism. The last part concludes the findings of the chapter.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mountain tourism refers to "tourism activity which takes place in a defined and limited geographical space such as hills or mountains with distinctive characteristics and attributes"(UNWTO, 2024). For many Indians, Himalayans are synonymous with spiritual attainment and sacred pilgrimages, seeking peace and salvation. The relationship between tourism and mountains is very old with specific interest. Tourism in mountain regions worldwide growing (Godde et al., 2000).

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