

Introduction

According to Hindu mythology, the Himalayas are the abode of Gods and Goddesses, as well as many saints. In a sense, tourism may have begun in the Indian subcontinent in the form of pilgrimage tourism. In many parts of India as well as Nepal, pilgrimage tourism to the Himalayas still continues to be very popular, although it has never been treated as a potential stimulus for local development.

Mountain tourism is comprised of all types of visits to the mountain areas of Nepal, India, and Pakistan. However, mountain tourism is relatively different in Nepal than in the other two countries. Although the total number of foreign visitors to India and Pakistan is far greater than to Nepal, mountain tourism in Nepal is dominated, for the most part, by international visitors, whereas, in the other two countries, domestic visitors dominate the mountain tourism scene.

This paper deals primarily with mountain tourism in Nepal. The second part of the paper deals with the impacts of mountain tourism in Nepal. The third part discusses some of the major issues in the context of mountain tourism in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas, including some of the issues in the specific contexts of India and Pakistan, and presents a conceptual framework for sustainable mountain tourism. Part four of the paper presents the argument that, without local community development, tourism development alone cannot be the panacea for mountain community development in the HKH. Nepal is endowed with many resources for developing tourism, but, unless local community development coexists with tourism, mountain tourism cannot be sustainable. An important dimension of this thesis is that it integrates mountain resources, local communities, and tourism development in the context of the 'carrying capacity' of mountain areas. The development of mountain tourism depends very much on whether a growing market for it exists or not, and this is discussed in part five. The paper ends with a conclusion.