

Available online at <http://www.ijims.com>

ISSN - (Print): 2519 – 7908 ; ISSN - (Electronic): 2348 – 0343

IF:4.335; Index Copernicus (IC) Value: 60.59; Peer-reviewed Journal

Adventure sports: A study on safety issues in Rishikesh

Shardul Semwal

Department of Geography
D.B.S (P.G) College, Dehradun
Uttarakhand-248001

Abstract Rishikesh, located in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, emerged as a prominent face of adventure tourism globally. Every year, thousands of enthusiastic tourists visit the city in search of exhilarating adventure. This paper focuses on the safety issues in adventure sports in the region. The news of adventure turning into misadventure has increased in the recent past. The data has been collected through a personal visit to adventure city. The safety issues were personally witnessed that raised various concerns regarding the way adventure sports are conducted. The situation calls for strict laws to regulate the adventure activities in the region.

Keywords Rishikesh, Adventure sports, safety issues.

Introduction Rishikesh, which has emerged as an international destination for health and wellness has made its mark as an adventure destination too. In case of Rishikesh spiritual and adventure tourism has gained recognition world over. Adventure tourism is resilient, supports local economies, attracts high value customers and encourages sustainable practices. Adventure activities can be localized in a particular place or could be extended over a region defined across a district in a particular state or across states. Similarly, the activities could vary greatly among tourists based on interests, inclinations and physical capacities. Adventure is identified in terms of two main categories – hard & soft adventure. Both activities are highly lucrative segments. Adventure sports like trekking, white water rafting, sailing, boating, kayaking, canoeing, yachting, water-skiing and parasailing, bungee jumping etc are currently available in Rishikesh. Adventure travelers often seek unique or new travel destination and activities. They are usually young less than thirty. Such young adventure enthusiast should be provided with best of safety facilities, which have not been up to the mark in the study area.

Methodology The month of June 2017 has been taken for research study. The data has been collected for first 10 days of June month. The purpose of choosing this month was that during this time the adventure sports are at its peak and tourist inflow is very high. The primary sources of data were tour operators(who would take bookings for the adventure tourist), localities etc. Secondary sources were newspapers, reports and government officials and websites. The methods were direct interviews, questionnaire for sport participants, tour operators, instructors and localities. The questionnaire involved question to assess the satisfaction level of adventure sport participants with the safety measures undertaken during sports activity. A sample size of 30 foreign (outside the state of Uttarakhand) participants per day was chosen for a period of 10 days i.e. 300 different participants for 10 days. Satisfaction level was measured through questionnaire which involved 5 simple questions. Simple method was follows to assess the result . People with less than or equal to 2 positive answers had low satisfaction level , similarly, people with 3 positive and 2 negative answer had moderate satisfaction level and people with 4 and above positive answers had high satisfaction level . The ‘yes’ in the questionnaire did not mean a positive answer or ‘no’ as negative answer. For example if question 5 had more ‘yes’ as answer it means that the participants answered negatively.

Similarly, data was also collected for the risk factor involved in adventure sports and was analyzed for same 30 foreigner participants per day for the same 10 day period . In addition, this data also had 10 locals every day for same 10 day period i.e. 100 locals. The participants were asked to choose a number from 0 to 10 , which depicted different level of risk factor. Numbers from 0-3 depicts low risk factor, 4-7 depicts moderate risk factor and 8-10 depicts high risk factor.

Study area Rishikesh is a small town in the northern state of Uttarakhand, India. Scenically located where the Ganges River comes down from the Himalayas, the town is known as the "*Gateway to the Garhwal Himalayas*" and "*Yoga Capital of the World*". It has been a part of the legendary 'Kedarkhand'. Legends state that Lord Rama did penance here for killing Ravana, the asura king of Lanka; and Lakshmana, his younger brother, crossed the river Ganges, at a point, where the present 'Lakshman Jhula' bridge stands today, using a jute rope bridge. Rishikesh is at 30.103368°N 78.294754°E. It has an average elevation of 372 meters (1,220 ft). According to Köppen-Geiger climate classification system, its climate is humid subtropical (Cwa).selected areas

of Rishikesh were taken for study. The areas selected for study were Shivpuri for camping, Cliff jumping and rafting, Mohan chatti for bungee jumping and giant swing. These two areas provide maximum numbers of adventure sports at one place. Adventure sports are in full flow in the month of may and June in the area. Moreover, the tourist inflow is very high during this period owing to the favorable weather conditions in the region. The summer season in particular offers the best time for adventure sports in Rishikesh.

Questionnaire: category 1

Q:1 Were the sports instructor professional and trained?	Yes/No
Q:2 Were the sports safety equipment (life protection gear) full proofed and reliable?	Yes/No
Q:3 Were medical facilities (first aid, ambulance) available at the spot of sport activity?	Yes/No
Q:4 Any medical checkup before taking up sport activity?	Yes/No
Q:5 Any kind of forceful instigation or negative encouragement from sports instructor at the time of sport?	Yes/No

Category 2: Risk factor involved in different adventure sports.

Risk factor	Risk level points
Low (0-3)	
Moderate (4-7)	
High(8-10)	

Results The study in Fig 1 shows various levels of satisfaction of 30 adventurers for 10 consecutive days. It demonstrates that the level of satisfaction in sports participants with regard to the level of safety measures was quite low. 62% of the participants were unsatisfied with the lull safety measures being followed. The majority of adventurers praised the professional attitude and well behaved nature of the instructors but , were critical of their semi-trained skills. However “The guides are required to undergo training from time to time. Those who had already gone through such training session need refresher course” said Kiran Todaria, president, Indian Association of Professional Rafting Outfitters (IAPRO). According to majority of participant’s safety equipments were full proof with around 10% complaining of the low standard equipments being used. One the concerning outcome was that 95% of them said ‘no’ to the answer of medical facilities and pre checkup at the spot of activity. Some even complained of the forceful instigation by sports instructor at the time of sports activity. Balmohan, a an adventure tourist from Nagpur, Maharashtra, along with his friend was forced by his rafting instructor to jump into the Ganges, failing to do so, he threatened to turn the raft upside down. The instructor was of the view that such things removes fear from one’s body and mind and also nothing would happen as everyone is equipped with life support jackets. Such experiences could be thrilling indeed, positively or negatively, depends. Accordingly 62% were low satisfied, 32% were moderately satisfied and 6% were highly satisfied with the safety measures Fig 1.

Fig 2 assesses the level of risk to life in adventure sports they participated. The table indicates only the number of persons experiencing a sport to be low, moderate or highly risky. The data indicates that 78% of foreigners felt most the sports activity to be highly risky, 14% thought it to be moderately risky and 8% to be low risky. Contrary to this the local adventurers thought the same adventure activities to be low to moderately risky. 40% locals said that they were low risky, 37% as moderately risky and only 23 % to be highly risky. Such variation could be attributed to the familiarity of the locals with the risky and challenging life of the hilly areas in comparison to the plain areas.

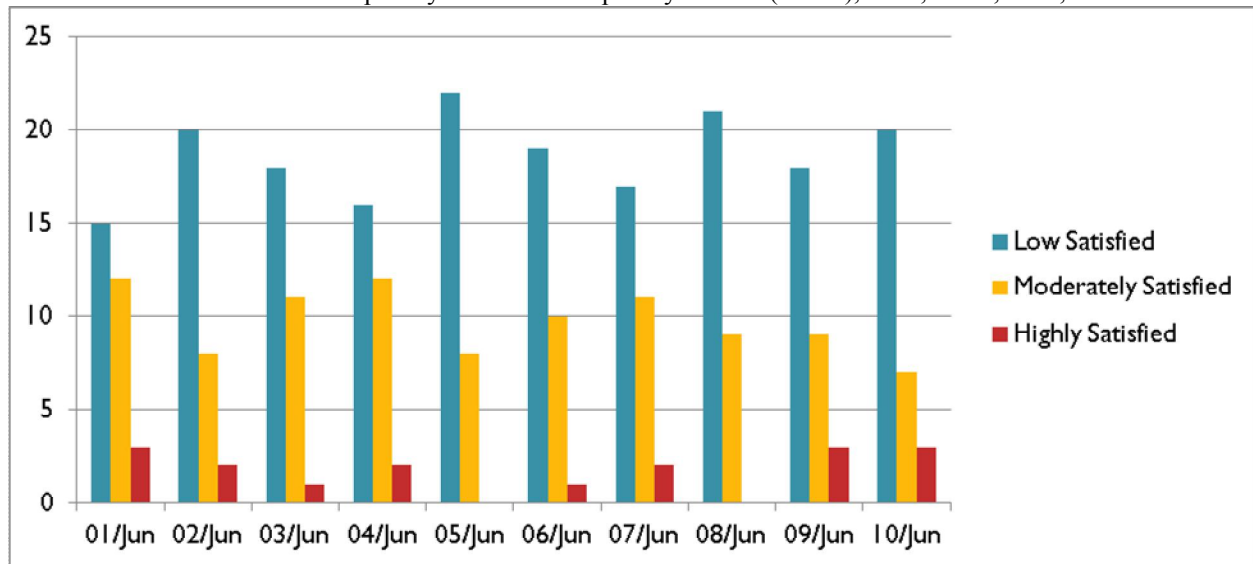


Fig 1: Satisfaction level of participants in adventure sports.

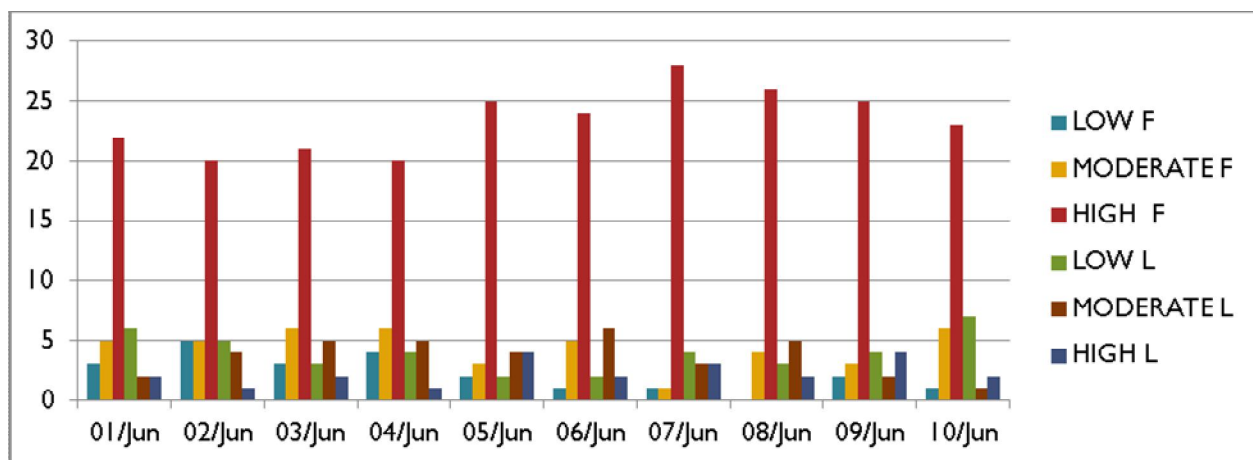


Fig 2: level of risk factor involved in adventure sports. Note: F=foreigners & L=locals.

Conclusion Life is itself an adventure but conscious adventure should be safely executed. In Uttarakhand, Rishikesh in particular, the deaths and casualties during adventure activity have increased in recent past. In January 2018 Death of Delhi woman while rafting in rishikesh highlight violation of safety norms. In 2017 35-year-old Subhash Kumar from Delhi died when his raft capsized while taking a turn on the “golf course’ rapids. Had he been tied to the raft, he would not have stuck in there. In 2013, the adventure industry was struck by a major tragedy when six persons died during rafting. As a norm, a child below 14 years, a woman in a saree and a person above 60 years are not allowed to do rafting. But the rules are mostly bypassed. The Uttarakhand High Court banned water sports, white water rafting and paragliding and many other sports activity in the state until a policy is formulated to regulate the activities. The HC placed the ban citing safety and environmental concerns. In its order the court asked the state government to come up with a transparent policy in this regard. The court emphasized the need to promote tourism but not without regulating it. Sports for pleasure cannot be allowed to end in disaster, said the court .The paper draws a fact that adventure sports involve a high risk factor. They should be performed with utmost safety as life is at risk all the time. Such risk can be reduced only if high standard of safety norms are followed. Adventure activities should be well regulated with strict laws and high penalties. Though the state of Uttarakhand to an extent regulates adventure tourism but safety regulations are still lacking. Liability should be accorded and world class safety standards should be followed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Arora S. (2007), “Adventure Tourism and Sports Issues and Perspectives”, Cyber Tech Publications, New Delhi.

2. Badan B. S. and Bhatt H. (2007), "Adventure Tourism", Common wealth Publishers, New Delhi
3. Beedie P. and Hudson S., (2003), "Emergence Of Mountain Based Adventure Tourism", Annals of Tourism Research, Vol-30, No.3
4. Christiansen, D. R. (1990). "Adventure Tourism." In Adventure Education, edited by J. C. Miles and S. Priest, 433-442. State College, PA: VentureWilliams
5. Indian Adventure Tourism Guidelines. (2017). Adventure Tour Operators Association of India. Retrieved October 15, 2018 from govt tourism website
6. India. Retrieved October 15, 2018 from <http://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/Indian%20Adventure%20Tourism%20Guidelines%20Oct%202018.pdf>.
7. P. and Soutar G., (2009), "Value, Satisfaction And Behavioral Intentions In An Adventure Tourism Content", Annals of Tourism Research, Vol-36, No-3.