

A Study on Challenges of Tourism Industry in Jammu and Kashmir

Syed Mohd Hussain¹, Dr T Shivashanmugam²

¹Research Scholar Department of Management & Research

²Director of the Department of Management & Research, AVS College of Arts and Science Salem

Abstract: *Tourism plays a vital role in economic development of a number of countries across the globe. Kashmir knows for its extravagant and breath taking beauty throughout the world, Kashmir has aptly been described as 'The Paradise on Earth'. Kashmir is second to no place in the world as far as its natural beauty and rich culture heritage is concerned. However the recent decades have proved challenging for nations due to emergence and escalation of a wide variety of violent conflicts around the state. The continual political uncertainty in general and the two decades long armed conflict in particular has unexceptionally impacted every socio-economic activity in Kashmir. Turmoil in the state, particularly of last two decades, hindered the smooth growth of the tourism and has discouraged most of the travellers from visiting India's most popular tourist destination. Add to this it also not only tourism but also indirectly the economic activities related to tourism.*

Keywords: Tourist, socio-economic, conflict, Kashmir

1. Introduction

Tourism around the globe is considered as a major tool of development and in the recent past it has proved its potential by emerging as the fastest growing Industry contributing about 9% to global Gross Domestic Product 8.7% of total employment. Pre 1989, Kashmir was paradise in the true sense. The ongoing armed conflict that erupted in early 1990s has hit hard the tourism sector causing the loss of tourist appetite for this particular destination. By 1991 there was a virtual shut down to tourism sector, which impacted the economy of the entire state and percolated down to every house hold. Tourism was the mainly stay in the economy of Jammu and Kashmir, was deeply affected by various circumstances created out of the unsettled environment.

The Kashmir conflict is one of the most staggering conflicts in International politics and its persistence involving nuclear powers is well known. Though the parties involved in the conflict have their own perspectives regarding the cause and course of conflict, almost all agree that the region is in dire need of peace as well as substantial economic development. Besides damaging infrastructure of the region, the violent conflict has discouraged private investment, pushing the economy towards stagnation. Additionally Jammu and Kashmir is also likely to become a major hub for medical tourism if timely steps taken by the government authorities to exploit this opportunity. In this study we have tried to identify the challenges of the state of Jammu and Kashmir on the tourism sector.

2. Objectives Of Study

The present study has following specific research objectives

- 1) To find out the major challenges and problems of tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir.
- 2) To find out the impact of tourism in the economic development of Jammu and Kashmir.
- 3) To provide suggestions for the full exploitation and development of Tourism Industry in Jammu and Kashmir.

3. Methodology

In the present study mostly secondary data has been used. Secondary data have been collected from various interim and annual reports presented to the ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India. In addition to this, data have been collected from various journals, articles, news paper archives. The research is also based on the referred sources- published, unpublished and electronic.

Tourism Industry in Jammu and Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir is known for its scenic landscape, beautiful valley, lakes, snow capped mountains, cool climate, skiing, trekking opportunities and religious places all over the world. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has three distinct regions viz., Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. All the three regions have immense potential for tourism from both domestic as well as international tourists. Its impact is visible in the service industry sectors, such as transport, hospitality, horticulture, handicraft and small scale Industry. Tourism and Kashmir protect both as they are not mutually exclusive. Both have an indissoluble relationship that has an age. Some notable tourist places in Kashmir Valley are Dal lake, Mugal gargens, Nishat Bagh, Gulmarg, Yeusmarg, Phalgam etc. Kashmiri's natural landscape has made it one of the popular destinations for adventure tourism in South Asia. Marked by four distinct seasons, ski enthusiasts can enjoy the exotic Himalayan powder during winters. Jammu is also known for its ancient temples, Hindu shrines, gardens and forts. The Hindu holy shrine of Amarnath in Kashmir attracts millions of Hindu devotees every year and Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu region also attract tens of thousands of Hindu devotees every year. Jammu's historic monuments feature a unique blend of Islamic and Hindu architecture styles. Ladakh the third and important region of the State has emerged as a major hub for adventure tourism. This part of Greater Himalaya called 'Moon on Earth' comprising of naked peaks and deep gorges was once know for the slik route to Asia from subcontinent. Tourism in Kashmir depends greatly on the natural resources that this place has to offer for economic profitability. The visits from domestic

and international tourist provide a valuable source of earning. Visitors spending generate income for both public and private sectors besides effecting wages and employment opportunities.

Peace, Conflict and Tourism

Tourism is conflict sensitive and positively responsive to peace. Conflict decelerates growth of the tourism sector if it leads to violence and threatens peace. Thus peace conflict and tourism are indisputably linked. Disturbance in any of the three elements, imbalances the other two. Therefore tourism in general is highly vulnerable to turmoil and can thrive only under peaceful conditions. Perusing the statistics it can clearly be understood how hard the conflict affected tourism. Tourist arrival was remarkable 7.2 lakh in 1989 but saw a drastic dip in 1991 when it was negligible 6287. The following diagram shows the changes in tourists.

S. No	Year	Home	Foreign	Total
1	1987	664081	57537	721654
2	1988	662097	59938	722035
3	1989	490212	67762	557977
4	1990	6095	4627	10722
5	1991	1400	4887	6287
6	1992	1175	9149	10324
7	1993	-	8026	8026
8	1994	500	9314	9814
9	1995	322	8198	8520
10	1996	375	9592	9967
11	1997	7027	9111	16131
12	1998	99636	10247	109883
13	1999	200162	17130	217292
14	2000	104337	7575	111912
15	2001	66732	5859	72591
16	2002	24670	2686	27356
17	2003	182205	8959	191164
18	2004	358095	18234	376729
19	2005	585702	19680	603582
20	2006	412879	20009	432888
21	2007	417260	24576	441836
22	2008	-	-	-
23	2009	-	-	-
24	2010	-	-	-
25	2011	500	8900	9400
26	2012	7200	17330	24530
27	2013	24120	10000	34120
28	2014	-	2600	2600
29	2015	35601	21198	56799
30	2016	-	-	-

1987, the last big season before the violence started, tourism accounted for approximately 10 per cent of the state's income. During the next 23 years of unrest, tourism contributed virtually nothing to state's economy. As a result of this specific incident negative travel advisories to visit Kashmir were issued by various foreign countries. This adversely affected the tourist revenue generated by foreign visitors. Such has been impact of conflict in the valley that its main city Srinagar was once declared as the most threatened site in India by the World Monuments Fund (WMF), placing it on the 2008 list of Most Endangered sites (Winter and Punjab, 2010). From 8th May 2016 violent incidents certainly deterred people across India and abroad from coming to Kashmir valley, bad mouth about the current situation in the valley to keep the visitors away.

Economic, Employment and Tourism

Jammu and Kashmir has tremendous potential in tourism sector. Importance of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir economy is known for decades now and its role in economic development has been an area of great interest from policy perspective, which placed Jammu and Kashmir on 17th position where as Andhra Pradesh is ranked no 1 in the list of major destinations of India (Ministry of Tourism, GOI). Tourism being a labour intensive industry provides a very vast scope for employment opportunities in Jammu and Kashmir. Tourism is regarded multi-segmental industry, therefore it provides different types of jobs like hotel managers, receptionists, accountants, clerks, guides, travel agents, chefs, transport operators etc. Therefore the policy makers, non-governmental organizations and other stake holders must work in coordination to create opportunities that centre on local communities promote conservation efforts and link with enterprise development.

Need to review Tourism

Tourism is perhaps the only sector which starts paying off immediately as it has no gestation period. The other developmental activities like roads, railways, construction, mega projects etc take time to complete function and payoff. Sometimes these projects are delayed due to displacement, land acquisition, environmental problem etc. The Central and State governments have to form special groups to generate employment and prospects of tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir and has to work tirelessly to capitalize on this potential sector.

4. Suggestions

From the above finding its clear that tourism is an important sector of development for Jammu and Kashmir economy. Following are some suggestions with regard to future development of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir.

- 1) Development of a strong network among government and various agencies, which would work towards re-marketing Kashmir tourism on modern basis.
- 2) Identifying new tourist spots will go a long way in enhancing tourism potential of the valley.
- 3) Jammu and Kashmir tourism needs enough measures to provide proper security to tourists so that a sense of safeness will be felt by the tourists.
- 4) Jammu and Kashmir is one of the best destinations with regard to some new areas which include Adventure tourism, Medical tourism, polo tourism etc, which needs to be explored and thus giving a new sense of hope to tourism.
- 5) Tourism should be shifted from being a seasonal commotion to all year around activity. Proper tourism marketing of each season can increase the tourist activity manifold.

5. Conclusion

Tourism is the life line of Jammu and Kashmir and all possible efforts need to be undertaking for retaining, maintaining and sustaining it. Tourism can play an effective role in integrating the entire universe. The above analysis reveals that the Tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir suffered a sudden downfall due to the massive political disturbance which stuck the state in late 1980's. even though

tourism creates jobs and contributes significantly to economic growth, it is not automatically a solution for poverty reduction, the different terrains of the State coupled with law-and-order problems have contributed to poor connectivity in the region. The rail-road mix of transport in the state is very low. There is dire need to build alternative roads in some places to ensure better connectivity. Steps should be taken to restore the ancient splendor of the monuments. All it requires is intelligent planning and iron will.

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