

PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR: POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Tourism plays an important role in the economic development in the modern time, contributing in numerous ways and reinforces the inter-connected processes. The Kashmir division is concerned; Raj Taringini the chronology of the Kashmiri Kings written by Kalhana praises the beauty of Kashmir as follows: "Kasmira Parvati Paroksh; Tat Swami-ch-Maheswara". Meaning Kashmir is as beautiful as Goddess Parvati manifest; and its owner is Lord Shiva Himself". The Mughal Emperor exclaimed "Gar Firdous Bar-rue-ZaminAst; Hamin Asto, Hamin Asto, Hamin Ast". "Meaning if there is paradise on earth; this is it, this is it and this is it". Travel and tourism is the fastest growing industry in India. Pilgrimage Tourism is considering one of the fast growing forms of tourism also significant contributor to the state GDP, earns foreign exchange for the country, provides widespread employment, yields tax revenue etc. Jammu and Kashmir has immense potential for Pilgrimage tourism. Therefore, it attracts large number of pilgrims from various parts of India. Pilgrimage tourism thus provides an extra boost to the state's economy. e- Tourist visa for (FTA) Foreign tourist's arrival has touched its growth (56%) year on year until December 2016 as per the information of Ministry of Tourism. Massive expansion of foreign tourist arrivals from 45,300 in 2015 to 10, 79,696 in 2016 is only because of e- visas facility extended from 113 countries to 161 countries. The present study attempts to study the contribution of tourism industry to the state's economy and the potential and impact of pilgrimage tourism as well as challenges, which the tourism industry is facing in Jammu and Kashmir.

Keywords: Government contribution, Economy, Jammu and Kashmir, Pilgrimage tourism

INTRODUCTION

Current Scenario of Indian Tourism Industry:

Advancement of latest technology and awareness level of people creates a health environment in Indian. Tourism industry results into up gradation of tourism scenario in India. Tourism industry

has become the main driving pillar of economic Development of any country resulting in to destination Development. Apart from being as major contributor in foreign exchange, tourism industry also creates its landmark for employment generation of India. e- Tourist visa for (FTA) Foreign tourist's arrival has touched its growth (56%) year on year until December 2016 as per the information of Ministry of Tourism. Massive expansion of foreign tourist arrivals from 45,300 in 2015 to 10, 79,696 in 2016 is only because of e- visas facility extended from 113 countries to 161 countries. Government of India has announced to start number of schemes to enhance the growth of Tourism Industry and hospitality via setting up five STZ (Special Tourism Zones), special pilgrimage or tourism trains and a great Campaign (Incredible India) in its Union Budget 2017-18 Source: <https://www.ibef.org/industry/tourism-hospitality-india.aspx>

“Incredible India” as name suggests that starting from the Indus valley civilization, unique image of India. Tourists from India as well as from foreign countries have a dream to visit once in their whole lives (especially, Taj Mahal and Kashmir) which indirectly facilitates the Indian Tourist industry to explore its wings in the new era of enriched India in terms of health, wealth and prosperity (Campbell 2004). All developed as well as developing countries strives to accelerate their economic performance indicator results into excellent sustainable growth of their economies. Tourism is one of the industries where people feel enjoyment, entertainment etc. In the Dynamic Scenario, every industry stretch its landmarks so grow further in their respective area, Indian Tourism Industry continuously trying to find the new ways with the help of which Indian Tourism attain an competitive advantage in Indian economy.

Jammu and Kashmir especially Kashmir valley offers various categories of tourism. These include adventure tourism, medical tourism, water rafting, skiing, religious tourism, etc. Jammu and Kashmir has a composite culture. There is a harmonious blend of art, religion and philosophy. Religions like Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism etc. has co-existed in J&K since hundreds of years.

Tourism has now become a significant industry in J&K, contributing enormously to the state's economy and providing employment to a large number of people. Additionally, J&K is also likely to become a major hub for medical tourism if timely steps, are taken by the government authorities to exploit this opportunity as well.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In development economics, tourism is considered as the most exciting and progressive industry. Tourism can be especially important in the regional development because it diversifies the economic base of the areas and expands the employment market. Many developing economies focus on the development of the tourism, as it is an easy source for the economic growth and

development of any country (developing and developed). In economic literature, there are various theoretical and empirical studies, which analyze the contribution of pilgrimage tourism in economic growth. The empirical studies on Pilgrimage tourism and economic growth have been caring out in two broad categories: Firstly highlighting the potential of Tourism of J&K, and second, examine the causality between pilgrimage tourism and economic growth.

D. Mac Cannell. (1976) *the tourist: A new theory of the leisure class: Berkeley: University of California press.* "Tourism and Pilgrimage tourism have been said to be closely related. But the relationship between tourists and the religions and the religion contexts they visit has been neglected"

Collins-Kreiner, et al. (2010). *Tourism is the holy land, Christian pilgrimage during security crisis.* London: Ash gate.

Mishra, I. (2000). *Religious Tourism in India.* New Delhi; Mohit publications. Pilgrimage is one of the oldest forms of human mobility. It has linked to all the religions and social, political, cultural and economic implications. Pilgrimage tourism is considering as a prime industry in most parts of the world. Pilgrimage tourism not only helps in collecting foreign exchange but also helps in safeguarding the cultural heritage. Pilgrimage tourism can be helpful in removing regional poverty, generate employment and can again strengthen the cultural values. Pilgrimage tourism at the same time also helps in removing the regional imbalance and improves the standard of living of the host community.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find the potential of Pilgrimage tourism in Jammu and Kashmir.
2. To find out the major challenges and problems of Tourism Industry in Jammu and Kashmir.

METHODOLOGY

The present paper based on secondary sources. Information has been collected from various official sources like Ministry of Tourism Government of India, Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation and Directorate of Tourism, Annual Economic survey of j&k, United Nations World Tourism Organization, World Travel and Tourism Council. In addition to this, data have also, been collected from other reliable online sources like articles, journals and newspapers.

Potential of Tourism Industry in Jammu and Kashmir

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has immense potential for tourism from both domestic as well as international tourists there are a number of locations, which are untapped and can be developing as major tourist destinations. Tourism being one of the state's major industries has played an important role for developing the economy, particularly in the Valley and Ladakh regions. The industry has given jobs to a very large number of people and has generated economic activities in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in the state, which owes dependence on large extent to this industry.

Jammu and Kashmir, known for its scenic landscape, beautiful valleys, lakes, snow capped mountains, cool climate, skiing, trekking and fishing opportunities, and archaeological, historical, cultural 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. While mountainous landscape of Kashmir valley has attracted tourists for centuries across the globe. Some notable tourist places in Kashmir valley are Dal lake, Mughal gardens, 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 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. Moreover, Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu region attracts 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 known for the silk route to Asia from subcontinent.

Tourism is one of the State's major industries. It has played an important role for developing the economy, particularly in the valley and Ladakh. Being a labour-intensive industry, it has given different jobs to a very large number of people and generated economic activities in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in the state, which owes large dependence on this industry.

Kashmir has been a center of attention for different people for different reasons all over the world. There are various places of tourist attraction in the state visited by the tourists. However, most of the places with ample tourism potential are untapped.

Tourism in Kashmir depends greatly on the natural resources that this place has to offer for economic profitability. Tourism provides good sustenance to the local population and revenue to the State exchequer. The visits from domestic and international tourists provide a valuable source of earning. Visitors spending generate income for both public and private sectors besides

effecting wages and employment opportunities. Until year, 2010 there was a negative growth rate in the tourist arrivals. But during 2011-2012 there was a significant increase in volume of domestic as well as foreign tourist arrivals in Kashmir. (See table 1).

Table 1: J&k's share in foreign Arrivals

Year	India	J&K	% share
2006	34574477	41000	1.19
2007	3918160	44345	1.13
2008	4447167	46087	1.04
2009	5081504	53053	1.04
2010	5356966	55000	1.03
2011	5167699	51255	0.97

Source: M/O Tourism, GOI

Tourism of Jammu and Kashmir

The tourism holds a strategic place in the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. Tourism industry in the state helps in providing benefits like creation of employment, foreign exchange, infrastructure development and development of local industries like Handicrafts and Handlooms, which has placed Jammu and Kashmir always in the lime light at the national and international horizon. As per the World Tourism Council, an investment of 10 lakh in tourism industry will generate about 90 jobs, which are higher than its competing sector like Agriculture and Manufacturing, which will generate 45&13 jobs per 10 lakh respectively. Tourism form an integral part of the Kashmir economy.

The department of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir is a promotional and regulatory organization. In 1988, the state Government specified the duties and functions of the Directorate of J&k tourism as well as J&K tourism development Corporation, All commercial activities such as operation and management of accommodation in all tourism centre at Srinagar and Jammu Tourist Complexes, Huts and Tourist Bungalows at various resorts were entrust to the J&KTDC.

Role of Government towards Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir

The planners realizing the importance of the tourism, earmarked funds for the expansion of tourism infrastructure, identification of new resorts and re-origination of the industry. Since 1951

onwards special allocation were made of the tourism development under Five-year plans as a result tourist traffic started picking up. The state Government has recently made recommendation to the 13th Finance commission during its visit to state of J&K for release of an amount of Rs289.00 crore for future development of infrastructure and allied services in leisure tourism, pilgrim tourism, heritage tourism and adventure tourism. The recommendations also include the additional financial assistance of Rs 360.00 crore for 15 new Development authorities and 4 old Development authorities @ Rs 20.00 crore and Rs 15.00 crore respectively. The major requirements of the tourism envisaged to meet under 13th Finance Commission Award are as under:

- Development of wayside amenities.
- Creation of facilities for Pilgrim tourism
- Development of Eco parks
- Up gradation of existing tourist infrastructure facilities.
- Construction of tourist bungalows/TRS's/Tourist Huts.
- Conduct of event/Festivals.
- Development of eco tourism projects.
- Extension of sidhar Golf Course and up gradation of Royal Spring Golf Course Srinagar.
- Development of new Golf Course at Srinagar and Leh.

Table 2: shows Project wise Details

Tourism Department	Amount Earmarked (Rs. In Cores)
Development of tourism in state (Rs 400 core for 5 years) new project	2000.00
Construction of Govt. Tourist Assets in lieu of damaged/destroyed Assets	100.00
12 Development Authorities. 3 Tourist Circuits, setting up to 50 Tourist Villages proposed under PMRD 2004.And conservation of Wular Lake	81.00
Wular Conservation	60.00
Total	2241.00

Source: Economic Survey J&K (2016)

Economy

Poverty does prevail in the state with 10.35% of population living below poverty line (Economic Survey Report 2017). Life expectancy improved in the state to 72.6 years, Trailing just two states of India, Kerala and Delhi (Census 2011). Jammu and Kashmir in the last three decades achieved significant success in the economic sector. In 2011-2012 at current price GSDP was Rs 65759 crore (Units of 10 million) and increased to Rs 102681 crore in 2014-15 (Planning Commission of India). Table1 presents the GSDP and NSDP growth rate over the past few years which an average are more than 6% and it increased from 6.8% in 2005-06 to 14.46% in 2014-15.

Table 3: GSDP and NSDP OF Jammu and Kashmir:

Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	%CAGR 2011-15
GSDP Growth%	14.54	14.28	14.49	14.46	0.06
NSDP Growth%	11.80	11.50	11.80	11.90	0.06

Source: Directorate of Economic and Statistics of Jammu and Kashmir, CSO

Problems of Tourism Industry in Jammu and Kashmir

Tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir is still hampered by several problems like..

- Poor road connectivity and transportation facilities.
- Lack of basic hygienic amenities at halting points.
- Non-standardization of rates and fares.
- Lack of sound marketing and promotion strategies
- Poor maintenance of heritage sites.
- Issues regarding security and harassment
- Inadequate capacity.
- Cost travel soaring fuel surcharges, poor flight management etc.
- Gap between demand and supply of manpower.
- Lapses in security and safety incidents of tout and harassment of tourist in some places.
- Uneven progress slow growth of village tourism, lack of information about tourist profile etc.

Tourism problems are more common at tourist besides in rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir. These areas are rich in natural beauty, but they often lack basic infrastructure and

accommodation for tourists. It is very essential to promote tourism departments are always cash strapped. There is general apathy towards work along with aging workers, which never works in favor of promotional activities. What we need today is a dynamic worker that is committed to take upon tourism as a career and workup to make India a safe tourist destination. Thus, privatization of tourism sector can help to fill the gap by providing efficient and highly skilled workers and develop the necessary infrastructure to exploit the booming tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

Pilgrimage Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been a seat of reference to all major religion of the world, this state is full of holy sites and most of these sites are located in between the scenic surroundings of great Himalayas. This aspect is responsible for attracting large number of tourist every year, which has ultimately led to a boom in the tourism industry of the state. This way, tourists not only just explore the spectacular landscapes but also have the opportunity of worshipping at the respective religions shrines. Jammu and Kashmir has various Mosques and Temples, which are just marvel creations. The state stands as an epitome of religions tolerance visiting Hari Parbat Pilgrim centre where a Temple, a Gurudwara and a Mosque stands side by side gives a feeling of pure brotherhood in between of major religion of Jammu and Kashmir.

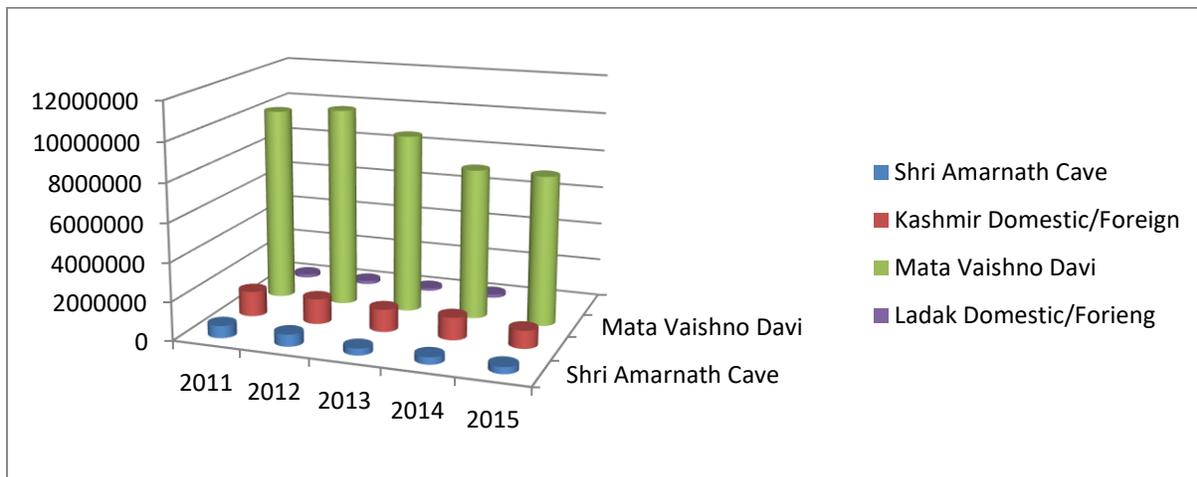
Jammu and Kashmir has various pilgrim destinations for Muslims, Hindus and Budhists. The very famous Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine and the Amarnath Temple are located in the state, there sites are the most valued and sanctified of Hindu pilgrimage sites where thousands of devotees pay homage every year. For Muslims, there is the Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar, where the sacred hair (Moi-e-Muqqadas) of Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W) is preserved and the truthful come to pay homage. The Shadhara Sharief located in Rajouri District of the state is like an emblem of communal harmony. Baba Ghulam Shah was born in Raval Pindi, Pakistan. Made Shahdara his house and Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus visit this shrine for offering prayers and seeking the blessings of Pir (Saint). Ladakh has a captivating barren landscape and attracts innumerable tourist who are keen to experience the lush atmosphere which forms the back ground to several monasteries and monastic festivals here (See Table2).

Table 4: Tourist Arrivals in Jammu and Kashmir

Year	Kashmir Valley		Jammu	
	Amarnath Ji	Domestic/Foreign	Mata Vaishno Devi	Ladak Domestic/Foreign
2011	634000	1314432	10115232	179204
2012	621000	1308765	10394000	178750
2013	353969	1171130	9287871	137650
2014	372909	116718	7803193	181301
2015	352771	927815	7776604	146501

Source: Economic Survey J&K, 2014-15

Tourist Arrivals in Jammu and Kashmir



Source: Constructed based on Table 4.

Challenges of Pilgrimage Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir

Katra is the transit point for the famous Mata Vaishnov Devi Shrine but due to lack of any interesting tourist circuit or activities within Jammu, the pilgrims do not generate significant business for the tourism industry there. A number of budget travelers do not even use the hotels or restaurants, preferring to cook their own food and travel by a hired bus. To encourage the pilgrims to stay longer Jammu must develop its potential alternative religious circuits like Shiv Khori- Machail. Kailash Parvat in Bederwah, Pingla Devi in Ramnagar. Improving the condition of the roads, regular state transport buses, helicopter services and budget hotel would be useful interventions. In case of Ladakh a Buddhist circuit covering the monasteries would be an attraction to tourists from Japan, China and south Asia countries. Moreover if the Kailash

Mansarovar yatra through the Damchuk route could be opened the region would benefit significantly from the tourist influx. This would need diplomatic consultations with China. Kashmir has a number of Mosques and Darghas located at the sites of great historical significance that need to be developed and promoting. The pilgrim circuits would be in addition to other infrastructure also requires capacity building of the youth to act as khadims/shrine guides- a potential employment generator.

CONCLUSION

Tourism is lifeline of Jammu and Kashmir and all possible efforts need to be undertaking for retaining, maintaining and sustaining it. Tourism opens up new window for resources, both investment generation and revenue generation leading to employment generation as well as economic development of the local populace. The tourism infrastructure like wider and smooth roads, transport including provision for Airlines and Rail services, up gradation of hotels, development of tourist places in Jammu and Kashmir should strengthened. There is dire need to build alternative roads in some places to ensure better connectivity. The State sparsely populated and scattered, as it is need more airports and better air connectivity as well. Steps should be taking to restore the ancient splendor of the monuments. The religious sites in all the three regions of Jammu and Kashmir need a very special focus for the development of basic infrastructure to attract pilgrims in huge numbers. The present discussion on issues like tourism in the country attractive tourism spots, different relevant Govt. initiatives for promoting this sector to justify the reliance of this study.

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