



THE IMPACT OF KASHMIR CONFLICT ON THE TOURISM INDUSTRY OF KASHMIR

Muneer Ahmad Khan* Shahneyaz Ahmad Bhat* Dr. Nisar Ahmad Wani***

*Research Scholar, School of Studies in Commerce, Vikram University, Ujjain, MP.

**Head Department of Economics, Government Degree College, Shopian, J&K.

Abstract

Jammu and Kashmir is the mainstream tourist destination in view of its vast tourist potential. The state is endowed with world class tourist potential ranging from the historical and natural sites to its scenic beauty. The tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir has a highest degree potential of attracting tourists from all corners of the world. Apart from its natural beauty and historical sites for which it is famous from centuries has one more reason for which it is famous, that is disputed territory. The Kashmir is a long pending dispute between India and Pakistan from 1947 due to which every corner of Kashmir valley has suffered badly. But the phase of turmoil from which the valley is going through form 1989 has made Kashmir valley world's largest military zone. The phase of turmoil has affected every section of Kashmir and tourism is not separate, which suffered heavily. The civil uprising of 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2016 has put the tourism industry of Kashmir of back foot. The tourism sector is the most affected sector of the turmoil.

This paper is particularly focused on to study the various impacts that this phase of turmoil and civil uprising has put on tourism sector of Kashmir. The study is purely based of secondary data which is collected by reviewing various published and unpublished articles, journals, magazines and newspaper articles.

Keywords: Turmoil, Conflict, civil uprising, tourism industry, affects etc.

Introduction

The State of Jammu and Kashmir being the adobe of Himalayas represents an epitome of natural beauty and, hence has emerged as one of the top most tourist destination of the world. The state is blessed with a varied topography that is an unusual mix of rugged mountains, green hills, holy caves and rocky deep water fjords (Dr. Deepak Jain 2013). The Jammu and Kashmir is known for its scenic landscape, beautiful valleys, lakes, snow capped mountains, cool climate, skiing, trekking and fishing opportunities, 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 (Cluster Plus, 2013).

The Jammu and Kashmir has a lot to provide to attract the tourists from all over the world. The three regions of the Jammu and Kashmir provide a wide range of products to the tourists. Kashmir valley is known for its scenic beauty, water bodies, mountainous landscapes, snow covered mountains, beautiful Gardens, lush green meadows has a lot to provide to attract the tourists. The Jammu division is known as the City of temples has lot potential in the form of pilgrimage tourism which attracts millions of Hindu devotees every year, tourists apart from other hill resorts and historical monuments. The Ladakh known as the "Moon on Earth" is part of Grater Himalayas and has emerged as a major place for adventure tourism. Ladakh is comprising of high naked peaks and deep gorges and was once known for the Silk route to Asia from subcontinent (Muneer, Shahneyaz, Suhail, 2016).

Apart from being a world class tourist destination Kashmir is known for another reason and that is conflict and instability in the region. The conflict and instability in Jammu and Kashmir have been a major hindrance to the regions development and progress. The conflict that started in late 80's and early 1990's was the turning point in the progress and development of Jammu and Kashmir in general and the back bone of states economy tourism industry in particular. The recent civil uprisings of 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2016 on one sided highlighted the Kashmir dispute prevailing since 1947 between India and Pakistan globally and put it on discussions at various international forums like United Nations Human Rights Council, United Nations General Assembly 2016 etc., on the other hand it adversely affected Kashmir economy in general and tourism industry in particular. Every section of Kashmir from poor to reach, labor, business man, hotelier, Shikara wala, transporter etc. was affected very badly apart from the teen age youth who got killed and blinded.

Objectives of Study

The paper aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To study and understand the reasons Kashmir conflict and tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir.
2. To study the impact Kashmir conflict on tourism industry of Kashmir.

Research Methodology

This research paper is purely based on the review of secondary data. The data will be collected from various secondary data sources like published and unpublished research papers, journals, books, newspapers, magazines etc.



Kashmir Conflict Background

Pre 1989, Kashmir was a 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 of tourism sector, which impacted the economy of the entire state and percolated down to every household. Tourism, which was the main stay in the economy of J&K, was deeply affected by various circumstances created out of the unsettled environment. Kashmir became a risky place for tourists as Kashmir and unrest became synonymous. Tourism and its related sectors were battered causing not only the creation of a negative Kashmir image but also loss of livelihood to those dependent on it-directly or indirectly (Shah, Wani, Mustafa 2013). The Kashmir conflict was not only of last few decades of armed struggle but it has started way back in 1947 the time of partition of two present day nuclear powers countries India and Pakistan. On the time of partition the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir Shri Maharaja Hari Singh reserve his decision regarding the merge with any of the two countries for coming future. But the fate had decided something else for the people of Jammu and Kashmir the Kabaili dynasty habitants of hilly Pakistan make armed attack on Jammu and Kashmir and Kashmir was divided into two parts one Azad Jammu & Kashmir also called POK Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and Indian Occupied Kashmir or Jammu and Kashmir (Govt. of India Report). Since the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, this unresolved land and the people who live there have been at the root of constant tension between the world's most populous democracy, India, and its neighbor Pakistan. That three major wars have been fought between those protagonists over the years only heightens the fear that now exists given their advanced technology. Global and regional implications aside, the instability and lack of any conclusive resolution to the political dispute have left the population of Kashmir divided and uncertain about their future. A land of immense beauty, Kashmir has seen its once burgeoning tourist industry fade completely in the face of military incursions and terrorist activity (The CARTER CENTER Conflict Resolution Program 2002).

Tourism Industry of 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 Jammu and Kashmir Valley are Dal Lake, Mughal gardens, Nishat Bagh, Gulmarg, Yuesmarg, Pahalgam, Kokernag, Sonmarg, Mata Vaishno Devi, Patnitop, Bahu Fort, Sanasar Lake, Amar Mahal, Hemis Gumphu, Pangong Lake, Leh fort, Magnetic Hills 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 wintersThe 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 (Hussain and Shivashanmugam 2016). Tourism plays a vital role in the economic development of a number of countries across the globe. Known for its extravagant and Santek Consultants Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi.

Tourist inflow from 1987 to 2016

S. No.	Year	Domestic tourist	Foreign tourist	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	1998	99636	10247	109883
7	1999	200162	17130	217292
8	2000	104337	7575	111912
9	2001	66732	5859	72591
10	2002	24670	2686	27356
11	2003	182205	8959	191164
12	2004	358095	18234	376729
13	2005	585702	19680	603582
14	2006	412879	20009	432888
15	2007	417260	24576	441836
16	2008	-----		22000



17	2009	-----		20809
18	2010	-----		24376
19	2011	500	8900	9400
20	2012	7200	17330	24530
21	2013	24120	10000	34120
22	2014	-----	2600	2600
23	2015	35601		56779
24	2016	-----	-----	-----

Source: Economic survey J&K (2011, 12, 13, 14 & 15)

Breathtaking 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 cultural heritage is concerned. The continual political uncertainty in general and the two decade long armed conflict in particular has unexceptionally impacted every socio-economic activity in Kashmir. And tourism is a sector that has unquestionably been the worst casualty of this continued political instability and social turbulence. Not only tourism but the allied sectors especially the Kashmiri art and craft have equally been hit. The present paper attempts to empirically study the economic impact of armed conflict on Kashmir tourism and the resultant change in the socio-economic profile of the people of Kashmir. The paper also puts forth the suggestions and recommendations aimed at optimally exploiting the potential of Kashmir tourism in the fast improving socio-political scenario (Farooq, Ambreen and Mustafa 2013).

Impact of Kashmir Conflict on Tourism Industry

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. The disturbance in any one of the three elements, will 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. 191287, the last big season before the violence started, tourism accounted for approximately 10 percent 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 labor 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.

The civil uprising of 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2016 observed to the most devastating years of the whole turmoil. During these particular years on one side a number of civilians lost their lives and thousands got injured and 100’s of people irrespective of age and gender lost their eyesight. As per the govt. figures during 2008 uprising around 65 civilians lost their lives and more than 500 got injured, the figures got increased during 2010 civil uprising in which around 127 civilian lost their lives and more than 1500 got injured and the figures of 2016 civil uprising which triggered after death of HM Commander Burhan Muzafar Wani of Tral village of Pulwama District with Police and other armed forces were horrifying in which around 100 civilian mostly teenage youth lost their lives and more than 15000 got injured besides 500 lost their eyesight highlighted the Kashmir conflict at the international forums like United Nations Human Rights Council, UN Security Council, UN General Assembly, OIC, Amnesty International etc.



These incidents declined and dented the image of Kashmir which was known as the “Paradise on Earth” and once the world’s most popular tourist destination. These conflict related incidents of Kashmir which occur usually after every one or two years created different perception among the visitors around the globe planning to visit the Kashmir to look one again the plan of journey. During 2016 Kashmir has seen a drastic decline in number of visitors particularly during peak summer. The tourism industry was completely damaged every section and every person associated with the tourism sector suffered heavy loss whether it is hoteliers, transporters, travel agents, Shakara Walas, House boat owners etc.

Conclusion

The study firmly indicates that there is a close relation between the Kashmir conflict and the growth and development of the tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir. It is found during the study that whenever there is an increase in the violence and civil uprising in Kashmir there is a drastic decline in tourist inflow in whole Jammu and Kashmir. During the period of 1989 – 1996 when the armed struggle and violence was on peak there was complete decline in tourist arrivals in Kashmir and during the period of 1997-2007 when the situation started improving we see tremendous increase in the flow of tourist towards Jammu and Kashmir. Tourists from different corners of world started visiting Kashmir again and various bollywood movies like Dil Kya Karay, Mission Kashmir etc. were picturized in Jammu and Kashmir again. This period were seen as rebirth of Kashmir for which it was known. But the civil uprising of 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2016, were found a big blow to the tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir. During these years the flow of tourist again seen declining, People where perceived to be hesitant were decision to plan a tour to Kashmir.

Therefore, the Kashmir conflict is holds a greater impact on the sustainable growth and development of tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir. The solution to the Kashmir issue is the key to sustainable development of tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir and overall social, political and economic development of whole state of Jammu and Kashmir in particular and India and Pakistan in general.

References

1. Bhatia A. K (1997), “International Tourism: Fundamentals and Problems”, New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1997.
2. Mir H. A (2014). “Impact of Tourism Industry on Economic Development of Jammu and Kashmir”, International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research, Vol. 5, Issue 6.
3. Gani N and Mir S M (2013). “A Study on challenges and Opportunities of Tourism Industry in Jammu and Kashmir (Research Article)”, 4D International Journal of IT and Commerce, Vol.3 Issue 2.
4. Ahmad I (2007). “Kashmir Heritage Tourism”, Gulshan Books, Srinagar Kashmir.
5. Ahmad F and Yaseen E (2012). “Impact of Turmoil on the Handicraft sector of Jammu and Kashmir: An Economic Analysis”, International NGO Journal, Vol. 7, Issue 5.
6. Bhat Z. A (2013). “Tourism Industry and Pilgrimage Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir: Prospects and Challenges”, International Monthly Referred Journal of Research in Management and Technology, Vol. 2.
7. Gupta S. K and Raina R (2008). “Economic Impact of Vaishno Devi Pilgrimage An Analytical Study”. International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism System, Vol. 1, Issue 1.
8. Bansal S P (2004). “Socio-cultural and Economic Impacts of Tourism on Himalayan Tourist Destination of J & K and Himanchal Pradesh”. Journal of Tourism, VI (1 & 2).