

IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON TOURISM INDUSTRY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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Abstract

Tourism plays a vital role in economic development of number of countries across the globe. During the last two and half decades Jammu and Kashmir has been under the political turmoil. During the turmoil hundreds and thousands of precious lives have been wasted. When we look into the circumstances in Jammu and Kashmir it is not only the precious lives that has been lost, other segments of the state also received a considerable down fall. The specific objective of the study is to get the inferences about the impact of armed conflict on tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir. Known for its extravagant and breath-taking beauty throughout the world, Kashmir has aptly been described as “The Paradise on Earth”. Bubbling streams, lush green meadows and lily-laden lakes-the vale of Kashmir is any tourist’s dream. While as places like Gulmarg, Phalgam, Dal Lake, Wular Lake are worth seeing tourist spots in the valley. Besides these, Shri Mata Vashino Devi, Amar Mahal place, Ragunath Temple are most attractive tourist’s destination in Jammu region. Ladakh is no less important when it comes to the question of Tourism in J&K. Tourism tag has always placed state of J&K in the limelight of national as well as international scene. Efforts have been made to increase arrival of tourists in the state. However, state has witnessed ups & downs in the last thirty years of turmoil. The start of armed struggle in mid-80’s created the sense of fear both within the state as well outside. The state saw worst days in its history and tourism industry was greatly harmed by both armed struggle as well as by counter operations by security forces. There was hardly any tourist who would visit the state particularly valley of Kashmir once lauded as heaven on earth. However, it was only in recent last decade when state saw its revival phenomena of tourist industry. But with the growing violence and turmoil in the Kashmir since 2008 once again have put this industry in backseats. The present paper attempts to empirically study the economic impact of armed conflict on Kashmir tourism.

Keywords: *Armed conflict, Jammu and Kashmir, tourism, violence.*

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. “The world tourism organization (WTO) defines tourism as comprising the activities of people travelling to places that are not within their normal environment and the period of travel and stay does not go on for more than a consecutive year. The travel to the place is for purpose leisure, business travel and other such activities (WTO, 2002).” Tourism is one of the world’s fastest-growing industries, and for many countries, especially those in the developing world, it holds promising economic backing. 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 household. Tourism was the mainly

stay in the economy of Jammu and Kashmir, was deeply affected by various circumstances created out of the unsettled environment. Jammu & Kashmir is a multifaceted tourist destination. All four seasons such as summer, winter, spring, and autumn are splendid & it is blessed with snow-capped mountain, lush green meadows, & sweat springs. This prestigious image of J&K turned in frightened when in end of 1980s armed struggle started in Kashmir. This armed struggle resulted into deaths, human rights violation, extortion, disappearance, atrocities, agitation and aggression. Attacks by militant groups, open firing by security forces resulted into civilian killings. During the turmoil not only, precious human's lives that have been lost but also it adversely affected the tourism industry of J&K. (Mir & Ahmad, 2018)

This paper attempts to highlight the impact of turmoil and armed conflict on tourism of Jammu and Kashmir and will also try to highlight the impact of tourism in the economic development of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Kashmir conflict is one of the most staggering conflicts in international politics and its persistence involving nuclear powers is well known. Tourism in Kashmir has suffered from a long legacy of conflict, suffered through many violent conflicts throughout its history and is still struggling against many conflicting sources within the state. Conflict/ violence consistently has a negative impact on Kashmir tourism industry, even if tourists are never the people to get physically harmed. Conflict heavily impacts tourism industry. However, the recent decades have proved challenging for the state Jammu and Kashmir due to emergence and escalation of a wide variety of violent uprisings. The continual political uncertainty in general and the long-standing armed conflict in particular has unexceptionally impacted every socio-economic activity in Kashmir. Turmoil in the state, particularly of recent uprisings 2008, 2010 and 2016, hindered the smooth growth of the tourism and has discouraged most of the travellers from visiting Jammu and Kashmir most popular tourist destination. : Conflict and instability in Jammu and Kashmir have been a major hindrance to its development and progress levels. Tourism is identified as the engine of growth and Development of Jammu and Kashmir economy in general and Kashmir valley in particular. The development of tourist industry can have a significant impact on the overall growth of the state, because of its ability to create direct and indirect employment, as well as growth in allied industries. (Shah and Wani, 2013)

For the present, situation regarding tourism in Kashmir is grim. Kashmir being a disputed territory has both internal and external challenges to its tourism sector. Even countries with highly valued characteristics are hurt by conflict in their area. Likewise, Kashmir Conflict impacts multiple aspects of tourism as well as the economy of state. Consequently, as the numbers of tourists visiting decreases as does the revenue, this can quickly devastate state's economy. Not only does conflict affect the people, but the loss of the tourism industry affects many jobs around the state, leaving victims jobless in an already unstable state and economy. Violence affects tourism both contemporaneously and with lagged effects (Neumayer, 2004).

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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. (Tarlow, Pizam and Mansfield, 2006).

In the present study most of the data has been collected from secondary sources. 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 also been collected from various journals, articles, newspaper archives and online sources.

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 table 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	-	-	-

Fig:1

(Source : Shivashanmugam & Hussain, 2015)

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. The Kashmir dispute has always been seen as a fight for freedom and the right of self determination by Pakistan who “pledged moral, political, and diplomatic support to the Kashmir

cause” which also “included material support to the fighters of Kashmir”. Contrarily India perceives the Kashmir issue as a matter of terrorism in the first place and accuses Pakistan to be at fault by “sponsoring and supporting cross border terrorism” (Akther, 2007.).

Tourism, conflict and peace exist in a reciprocal triangular relationship (as shown in the figure below) in which each component impacts the others.

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF PEACE, CONFLICT AND TOURISM

Figure 2: Tourism, conflict and peace-The Linkage



Fig:2

(Source: Shah & Mustafa,2013)

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. Destinations are less appealing to tourists if they are insecure or likely to experience serious conflict (Alluri, 2009) - war, political unrest, terrorism, violations of human rights or heavy crime – regardless of the abundance of scenic or cultural attractions (Sonmez, 1998).

However, Foreign Tourist Arrival (FTA) received a major blow after Al-Farhan, a militant organization, kidnapped a group of western tourists in the early nineties, who were trekking in Pahalgam. Unfortunately, they were never found. 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. Militants also saw Indian tourists as soft targets.

It is worthwhile to mention that the primary doorway to the state of J&K i.e. the Srinagar International Airport has witnessed at least three major terrorist attacks. The impact of such violent incidents certainly deterred people across India and abroad from coming to Kashmir valley. Locals have observed that such incidents cause a huge decline in the number of tourists because they either pack their bags and leave or cut short their visit or even worse, bad mouth about the situation in the valley to keep the potential visitors away. Tourists are not only afraid of being caught up in violence related incidents but also fear being used as hostages or killed

after kidnapping. Such had been the 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 & Punjabi, 2010).

The state which was the favored situation of the tourists till 90"s has been deserted of the tourists for a very long time. Terrorism often causes cancellations and withdrawal of travel plans to certain destinations; though indicate the tourism industry as extremely indestructible (Chauhan & Khanna, 2009). The negative news by most of the international and national news channels makes it unthinkable to the people around the world to visit Jammu and Kashmir, because the way they present the news makes Jammu and Kashmir the terrorist paradise (Buckley and Klemm, 1993). Further it is suggested that locals and foreigners are equally likely to be involved in a crime scenario which causes the crucial variable "fear of the unknown and the risk" (Ahmad,2014). The news channels and reports play a very important role, the way they make situation worse in Jammu and Kashmir no one else has contributed to that. They make the dead bodies speculative in their news channels like they are showing some sort of miraculous objects not keeping in view the psychological effects they have on people. (Ashraf, 2002). In order to avoid "this intentional or unintentional damage to the travel business in Jammu & Kashmir, and to keep a positive image alive media and officers of the travel industry must cooperate and closely work together. In addition, the local tourism industry could try to implement common marketing strategies such as incentive airline tickets or hotel rate discounts (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998) to promote the destination and to limit the impact of militancy on this sector. In an attempt to gain a deeper inside view into the special relationship between terrorism and tourism many studies proposed that tourists (and sometimes also important sights) might be the perfect victim for terrorism since they are sensed as representatives of their countries and therefore cause a much higher media coverage and international attention.

CONFLICT, TOURISM AND ECONOMY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Terrorism imposes significant economic effects on societies and will not only lead to direct material damage, but also to long term effects on the local economy. The identification and the estimation of these economic effects of terrorism have received broad attention in economic literature and research during the last few decades. Primary economic impact of terrorism "refers to the effects arising from the immediate aftermath of a terrorist event". These effects include the physical destruction of urban objects, and the human casualties (injuries and losses of human life). There is a direct relationship between the armed conflict and economy of the state. Armed conflict has led to decline in handicraft business, agricultural production and tourism count, especially in the late 1980"s (Mahapatra, 2007). Even basic infrastructure like power supply, roads, communication systems and drinking water remain poor because resources are diverted to counter-terrorism activities (Mahapatra, 2007). Likewise silviculture is not possible anymore since Kashmir"s forests have become the perfect hiding place for terrorists. Inevitably there is a clear connection between terrorism and increasing unemployment as well. Statistics have shown that the employment rate declined from 44.3 percent in 1981 to 36.6 percent in 2001. Quality of education has suffered dramatically since schools and universities are often closed or even come under fire because of terrorism related activities (Jarudi, 2002). What remains are thousands of low level educated students with no hope for a job driving them to enter into terror groups. Thousands of local boys turned to militant training across the border.

As a matter of fact, Jammu & Kashmir’s economic growth could not keep up with the national level (Ahmad & Hussain, 2011) and can exhibit only 5.27 percent annual growth during the first three years of the tenth five year plan in comparison to the national average of 6.6 percent (Finance & Planning Commission, 2007). Similarly, “in 2007, the per capita income of the state is only two-thirds of the national average in India” (Finance & Planning Commission, 2007). The economic cost of the conflict cannot be confined to a particular sector of industry or investment prospect, but it had affected the important sources of livelihood of local people such as tourism, horticulture and handicraft industries also (Ahmad & Hussain, 2011). Nevertheless, terrorism and violence are not the only cause for Jammu & Kashmir’s economic depression but “poor policy management, corruption and lack of infrastructure” as well (Mohapatra, 2007).

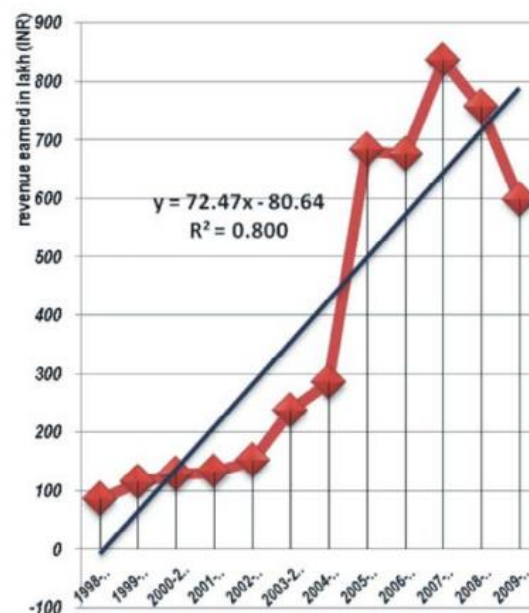
Jammu and Kashmir has tremendous potential in tourism sector. Importance of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir economy is known for decades now and its role in economic development has been an area of great interest from policy perspective, which placed Jammu and Kashmir on 17th position where as Andhra Pradesh is ranked no 1 in the list of major destinations of India (Ministry of Tourism, GOI).

The major set-back to the tourist flow has affected the economic stability of the state in general and squeezed the employment opportunities. However there has been revival of the tourist inflow in 2003 onwards with significant growth rate. The growth is more prominent in the domestic tourist flow than in foreign tourists. The number of foreign tourist to Kashmir Valley has drastically decreased from 67762 during the years 1989 to 2686 in 2006 Gulmarg is well known throughout the world for ice hockey, skiing, Golf course which is the highest of its kind and is having 18 holes. In the year 1998 commissioning of Gondola Cable Car has made the destination more attractive for the tourist especially for skiing and adventure tourism. Gulmarg Gondola Project generates a huge amount of revenue per year. Though there is continues rise in revenue generation up to 2007 but because of uprisings during 2008 in valley the revenue generation has shown downward trend. The actual value of revenue generation at some stages is lower than the value of linear trend line, signifying that the revenue generation through gondola has not flourished during 2000 to 2005, because the actual revenue generation is much lower than trend values. Similarly, the recent civil uprising during 2008 to 2010 has pushed the actual revenue downward and making this tourist destination victim of political instability which seemingly should have touched souring heig hts.

Fig:3 (right) shows Revenue Generation of Gulmarg Gondola Cable Car Project.

Source: Gulmarg Development Authority.

Tourism is the lifeline 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.

CONCLUSION

Turmoil or peace anywhere in the world directly hits almost every sector of the growth & Kashmir is not special case. The above study reveals that the tourism sector in J&K suffered a sudden downfall due to massive political disturbance after the late 1980s. The armed struggle has not only taken the precious lives but public buildings, bridges, hospitals, private institutions and shops have been gutted. Atmosphere of fear and disturbance everywhere in the state resulted into decline of tourist's arrival in the state. However, after the year 2007 tourists' arrival have started increasing due to establishment of peace process but still long way to go to make state a safer tourist's destination not only in India but also in the world. Need of the hour is to work towards sustainable tourism which will be the first step towards improving the politically disturbed scenario. Tourist flows reflect the safety and peacefulness in the destination area. Tourists generally avoid areas infested with war, terrorism and political upheaval. Political stability at any destination is the key for promoting tourism. The turmoil in Kashmir badly hit all the components of tourism industry. Tourism cannot thrive in war and conflict, with the result new areas within the state with peaceful environment attracted tourists. The main outcome of this paper is that tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir has been continuously experiencing tragic incidents either at the onset or in the middle of tourist season with the result tourist arrivals decrease. The economy of the state has been severely affected with militancy because no foreign and private investment has taken place over the years. However, efforts should be made by to attract tourist to visit Jammu and Kashmir around the globe and various required initiatives should be taken to boost up the tourism industry in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

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