

TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SRINAGAR: A CASE STUDY OF THE KASHMIR VALLEY

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Abstract

Development is generally seen as a continuous process that promotes economic growth, social improvement, and positive changes in society. Its main goal is to improve the quality of life of people by creating income and employment opportunities while also protecting environmental resources. In this regard, tourism has become one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world, contributing greatly to both national and regional economies. In Jammu and Kashmir, tourism is an important and multi-dimensional sector that provides various employment opportunities in areas such as hospitality, travel services, guiding, transportation, and other related activities. The region's rich culture and beautiful natural landscapes attract many visitors and help boost economic activity, contributing nearly 6.99 percent to the region's GDP. Due to the mountainous terrain, large-scale industrial development is limited, so tourism acts as a key economic alternative. This is especially true in Srinagar District, which has great tourism potential and many business opportunities. However, the tourism sector has often been negatively affected by periods of instability and violence in the region. This study aims to examine the role of tourism in fostering economic growth and development in Jammu and Kashmir, with special reference to Srinagar, while also identifying key challenges. The research is qualitative in nature, relying on primary and secondary data, and employs a documentary and analytical approach using thematic tools to ensure objective conclusions.

Keywords: *Challenges, Development, Economy, Government, Tourism*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon in which people go to nations or places outside of their typical environment for personal or business/professional reasons. These people are known as visitors (they can be tourists, excursionists, residents, or non-residents), and tourism refers to their activities, some of which entail tourism expenditure. Today, tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest expanding sectors. India is one of the world's most intriguing and appealing tourist destinations. There are a few causes for this. First, she is well-known for her scenic beauty. Second, India's architecture, sculpture, and monumental structures are among the finest creations known to civilized man. (A. K. Bhatia. 1978). Kashmir is a tourist's delight. Its natural beauty and pleasant atmosphere have earned it the title of "Tourist Paradise". With its lakes and mountains, rich Chinars, lofty cylinders, exquisite fruits, and old monuments. Its rivers and streams teem with Himalayan trout, as well as a plethora of natural wonders, have made Kashmir, as G.T. Vigne predicted in 1885, the must-see destination for eastern travellers. Dar, S.A., and Sakthivel, P. (2022).

The study focuses on the Srinagar district, also known as India's summer capital. Srinagar is known as "heaven on Earth" because to its natural beauty. Pashmina shawls are unique, classic, and well-known over the world. Tourism, farming, and agriculture provide the majority of people's income. Muslims make up a sizable proportion of Srinagar's population. The Srinagar district in the state of Jammu and Kashmir has the potential to become a major tourism destination around the world. Tourism's importance in the economic development of Srinagar district has piqued the interest of policymakers (Bhat, Z. A., 2013; Asif Hussain, 2016). In recent years, the tourism business has grown dramatically around the world, becoming a vital aspect of human leisure and expedition, contributing to the growing economy. Junaid Aslam (2018). The most essential economic attribute of tourism-related activities is that they contribute to three high priority goals: income production, job creation, and

foreign exchange earnings. In this regard, the tourism industry has the potential to be a major driver of economic growth. Pablo Juan (2017). Almost every economy in the world relies heavily on tourism to generate revenue, provide job opportunities, and boost GDP. In Jammu and Kashmir, the tourist industry is also playing an important role in the overall development of the state economy. Kashmir has appropriately been dubbed "Heaven on Earth" for its breathtaking beauty around the world. The tourism industry in Kashmir has enormous potential, and it also gives numerous commercial opportunities for the residents of the Kashmir region. This report examines the potential, prospects, and difficulties of the tourist business in Jammu and Kashmir. (Shaib, M. S. M., Gulzar, M. K. R., and Jain, M. 2018).

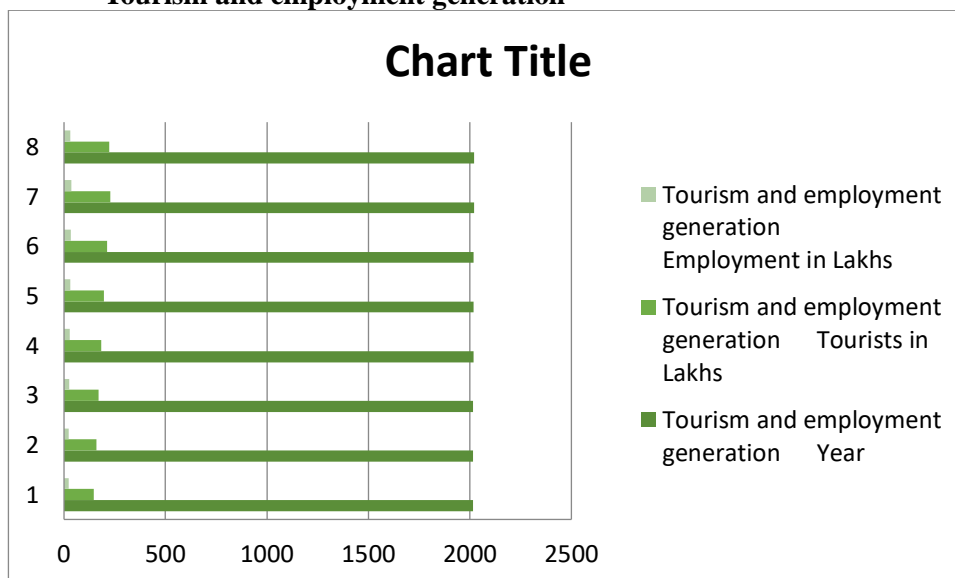
Tourism and employment generation

| Year | Tourists in Lakhs | Employment in Lakhs |
|------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 2014 | 147.37 | 23.102 |
| 2015 | 159.29 | 22.643 |
| 2016 | 171.10 | 24.613 |
| 2017 | 183.79 | 28.317 |
| 2018 | 197.45 | 30.569 |
| 2019 | 213.3 | 32.67 |
| 2020 | 226.9 | 35.063 |
| 2021 | 223.10 | 32.065 |

Table 1: Impact of tourist inflow on employment from 2014 to 2021

Source: Santek consultants Pvt.Ltd. New Delhi

Tourism and employment generation



Literature review

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Rafia Tabasum et.al 2017 | Political turmoil impacting pilgrimage tourism in Jammu & Kashmir: A geographical study” |
| 2. | Rather, A. Y. (2022). | Kashmir tourism: Possibilities and Challenges |
| 3. | M. Maqbool Bhat 2018 | Tourism is the backbone of Jammu and Kashmir economy- hoax or reality |
| 4. | Gadoo, et, al (2012). | Role of tourism in economic development of jammu and kashmir–a case study of J&K tourism department (doctoral dissertation)” |
| 5. | Stynes, D. j. (1999). | Approaches to estimating the economic impacts of tourism |
| 6. | Priya, et.al | Kashmir tourism and challenges. |
| | Khanday et, al (2016). | Policy, planning and administrative setup of jammu and kashmir tourism–an overview |
| 7. | Cardenas-Garcia, et, al. (2019). | Tourism as an economic development tool. Key factors |
| 8. | Dar, S. A., & Sakthivel, P. (2022). | Mobile Technology for promotion of tourism in Kashmir a study of Srinagar District |

Research objectives

1. Understanding tourism and its impact on economic development.
2. Analyze how tourism development agencies promote the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir.
3. Explain the key tourist attractions in Srinagar.
4. What issues hinder the tourism industry's growth?
5. Suggest measures to improve the tourism business in Jammu & Kashmir.

Methodology

Two research methodologies were employed to acquire the information required for the study to achieve its goals and objectives. One approach used a documentary, while the other relied on analytical techniques. To provide a fair judgment, I collected and analyzed qualitative data. Secondary information from books, websites, newspaper stories, various Indian reports, and a number of international journals and periodicals was qualitatively examined using theme analysis software. Furthermore, the research is based on some personal observations because the researcher resides in Jammu and Kashmir and is familiar with the development of Kashmir, having witnessed both insurgency and prosperity.

Discussion and Result:

Jammu & Kashmir are widely regarded as paradise on Earth. The Farsi couplet states that if there is heaven on earth, it is this, this, and this (Amir Khusrou). The couplet sparked the interest of several monarchs in ruling over Kashmir. Natural beauty and picturesque locations have made it a popular tourist destination around the world. Jammu is known for its temples, Kashmir Valley for its lakes and gardens, and Srinagar is a modern water wonderland dominated by Dal Lake and its winding waterways, tree-lined Nagen Lake, and the Jehlum River. Take a daytime and evening trip on one of the wooden boats known as shikaras to fully immerse yourself in the local way of life. Explore the 400-year-old Mughal gardens on land, which were built by Emperor Jahangir for his wife. Be amazed by local crafts including embroidered shawls and weaved silks. Jammu & Kashmir has been a popular tourist destination for decades, making it one of the world's most visited regions. The flood of tourists, which numbers millions each year, has an impact on the region's social and economic environment. It is estimated that between 50 and 60 percent of the population in Jammu and Kashmir work in the state's tourism industry in some form. The tourist sector contributes approximately 15% of the state's gross domestic output (Aqib Rather, 2022). Tourism has expanded and diversified over the previous six decades, emerging as one of the world's largest and fastest expanding economic sectors. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's estimations, travel and tourism contributed \$7.6 trillion to the economy in 2014. In 2014, travel and tourism supported 277 million employments, accounting for one out of every eleven worldwide. (Asif Hussain, 2016)

Tourism, particularly in Srinager, plays an important role in Jammu and Kashmir by providing economic benefits such as employment, foreign exchange, infrastructure development, and the development of local industries such as handicrafts and handlooms, which has kept the district in the spotlight on a national and international scale. The tourism industry plays an important part in the state's economy, as evidenced by the fact that it accounts for 5.92 percent of India's GDP and 8% of the Jammu and Kashmir economy. Tourism opportunities abound in Kashmir Valley, particularly in the Srinager district. The service sector accounts for 56 percent of the Jammu and Kashmir economy. The other two major sectors of the state economy are industry (28.8 percent) and agriculture (16 percent). Tourism contributes significantly to the state's economy. Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the Kashmir Valley, with a focus on the Sringer region, offers a variety of tourism opportunities. These include adventure tourism, pilgrimage tourism, medical tourism, water rafting, skiing, and so on. Jammu & Kashmir has a constructed culture. There is a harmonic combination of art, religion, and philosophy.

Tourism has substantial potential to generate employment opportunities across diverse sections of society. With the growth of tourism, related activities such as cultural handicrafts, tourist inflows, and guiding services also expand, thereby creating livelihood opportunities for artisans, guides, and other service providers. As the largest service-sector industry, tourism makes a significant contribution to a region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), foreign exchange earnings, tax revenues, and overall employment generation. GDP is widely regarded as the most comprehensive indicator of economic performance, as it reflects the aggregate output of all sectors of the economy. According to estimates by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), global tourism receipts reached a record level of US\$ 1,159 billion in 2013. International tourist arrivals have demonstrated sustained growth over time, increasing from 25 million in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 528 million in 1995, and 1,087 million in 2013, with projections suggesting an increase to 1.8 billion by 2030. In India, foreign tourist arrivals in 2013 increased by approximately 4.1 percent over 2012, with 68.48 lakh tourists visiting the country during January–December 2013 compared to 65.78 lakh in the previous year. During the same period, foreign exchange earnings from tourism amounted to US\$ 18.133 billion. However, following the abrogation of Article 370 and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir experienced severe disruption, with Srinagar district being the most adversely affected. Reports indicated significant job losses and substantial financial setbacks within the industry. Nevertheless, recent data from the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department reveal signs of recovery, with a notable rise in tourist arrivals during 2021 and 2022. Despite earlier declines since 2019, stakeholders such as shikara owners, hoteliers, travel agents, and tourist guides remain optimistic about a revival. Against this backdrop, the present study examines the challenges confronting tourism in Srinagar district, evaluates the role of the Tourism Department in promoting the sector, and highlights major tourist attractions that contribute to Srinagar's global appeal.

Issues facing Jammu and Kashmir's tourist sector

Tourism, as a labor-intensive business, provides a wide range of employment opportunities in Jammu and Kashmir. Tourism is a multi-segmental sector; thus, it offers a variety of employment such as hotel managers, receptionists, accountants, clerks, guides, travel agents, chefs, and transportation operators. As a result, policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders must collaborate to provide possibilities that focus on local communities, boost conservation efforts, and connect with enterprise development. Citation: A study on the challenges of the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir. A northern state of India. (Hitesh Sharma, 2024)

A variety of reasons contribute to Jammu & Kashmir's poor growth rate. Armed militancy, a lack of competent administration, and sound fiscal management have all contributed to the tourism industry's slow economic growth in Jammu and Kashmir. The government's role in tourism and the development of the sector is widely acknowledged, although academic debate about the form and extent of such involvement is minimal. This is especially true when it comes to certain aspects of state engagement, such as supporting human resource development (HRD) in tourism. Baum, T. and Szivas, E. (2008).

The tourism business in Kashmir continues to lack sufficient management and direction. Instead of an increase in the tourism industry, a decline has been recorded. Tourists are also put off by the occasional turmoil, terrorism, and criminality. It is regrettable that tourism, which could have been a lucrative running sector, has been ignored and is on the decline (Seth, P. N., & Bhat, S. S., 2003). Tourism plays a key part in economic development throughout the world. However, Kashmir's geopolitical standing has become one of its most valuable handicrafts. Kashmir, which witnessed the genesis of instability in 1989, also saw the ramifications in various aspects of life. The tourism industry, which is seen as Kashmir's economic boon, has suffered greatly, and it is certainly the worst victim of the country's ongoing political turmoil and social unrest. Hamid Mir (2016). Over the past two to three decades, tourism in the state of Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed noticeable growth; however, a substantial

portion of its developmental potential remains underutilized and unrealized. The expansion of the tourism sector has been constrained and largely unsatisfactory due to a range of persistent structural and managerial challenges. Inadequate transportation networks and poor road infrastructure continue to hinder tourist mobility across the region. Additionally, the absence of basic sanitation facilities at tourist rest sites, inconsistencies in pricing and service charges, and the neglect of several tourism destinations have adversely affected visitor experiences. The sector further suffers from limited carrying capacity, a shortage of trained and experienced tourism professionals, and operational inefficiencies such as fuel surcharges and ineffective flight scheduling. Deficiencies in physical infrastructure—including deteriorated road conditions, unhygienic facilities, and weak communication systems—have contributed to rising travel costs. Concerns related to security and safety, along with incidents of harassment and unauthorized access by visitors, remain significant deterrents. Moreover, uneven development is evident in areas such as village tourism, inadequate understanding of visitor profiles, and the prevalence of ill-trained or illiterate tourist guides. Collectively, these issues continue to impede the sustainable growth and competitiveness of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Famous Tourist places of Srinager District

1. **Dal Lake** is located in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir. The term “Dal Lake” is technically incorrect, as *Dal* itself means lake in the Kashmiri language. This urban water body plays a central role in tourism and recreation and is often referred to as the “*Jewel of Kashmir*” or “*Srinagar’s Jewel*.” In addition to tourism, the lake supports local livelihoods through activities such as fishing and the harvesting of aquatic plants.
2. **Hari Parbat**, also known as *Kooh-e-Maran*, is situated to the west of Dal Lake in Srinagar. The fort was constructed in the eighteenth century by the Afghan governor Atta Mohammad Khan, while the surrounding wall was built earlier in 1590 by Mughal Emperor Akbar. The site is surrounded by important religious structures of different faiths and offers a panoramic view of Dal Lake. Maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India, the fort remains a prominent historical monument and overlooks the Makhdoom Sahib Shrine.
3. The **Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden**, earlier called the Model Floriculture Centre, is located in Srinagar on the foothills of the Zabbarwan Range, facing Dal Lake. Spread over about 30 hectares, it is the largest tulip garden in Asia. Established in 2007 to promote floriculture and tourism, the garden is arranged in seven terraced levels. Besides tulips, it also features flowers such as hyacinths, daffodils, and ranunculus. The annual Tulip Festival, held during spring, attracts large numbers of tourists to the Kashmir Valley.
4. **Nishat Bagh** is a Mughal terraced garden located on the eastern side of Dal Lake near Srinagar. It is the second-largest Mughal garden in the Kashmir Valley, after Shalimar Bagh. The name *Nishat Bagh* means “Garden of Joy” or “Garden of Delight,” reflecting its scenic beauty and historical significance.
5. **Shalimar Bagh** is a famous Mughal garden situated on the right bank of Dal Lake, on the outskirts of Srinagar. Built in 1619 by Emperor Jahangir for his wife Noor Jahan, the garden represents the peak of Mughal Garden design. Also known as Farah Baksh and Faiz Baksh, it is now maintained as a public park and is often described as the “*Crown of Srinagar*.”
6. **Pari Mahal**, meaning “*The Angels’ Abode*,” is a seven-terraced garden located on the Zabbarwan mountain range overlooking Srinagar and Dal Lake. Built in the mid-seventeenth century by Mughal prince Dara Shikoh, it reflects Islamic architectural styles and Mughal artistic patronage. The site originally served as a residence and library and was later used as an observatory for teaching astronomy and astrology. It is located close to the Cheshma Shahi Garden.

Role of Tourism Agency

The Department of Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir serves as an administrative body that oversees various field agencies and line departments involved in the development and improvement of tourist facilities, as well as the preservation and promotion of the state’s rich cultural heritage. It functions as the principal developmental, promotional, and regulatory authority for tourism under the Government of Jammu and Kashmir. Tourism is a key sector of the state’s economy, and therefore the Department of Tourism plays an important role in presenting Jammu and Kashmir as a major tourist destination within the country. The department operates through two provincial directorates located in Jammu and Srinagar, along with tourist offices established at major tourist destinations across the state. In addition, the department maintains six promotional offices outside the state, located in New Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Kolkata. There are also twenty area-specific tourism development authorities within the state, each led by a Chief Executive Officer, which actively work towards

developing tourism potential and creating tourist infrastructure in their respective regions. Furthermore, the department has administrative control over two corporations, several clubs, and five societies.

The Role and Objectives of Tourism is as under

The overall planning and execution of plans for the development, upgrade, and improvement of tourism infrastructure in the state. Support for the private sector industry in the form of incentives for establishing various tourism facilities, as well as for promoting and marketing their products and services. The promotion and marketing of various tourist locations and state-owned items. The travel trade is regulated by the execution of the terms of the J&K Registration of Tourist Trade Act. The development of tourism infrastructure through public investment. The development of tourism-related infrastructure through an incentive framework for private investment. Destination development is regulated in a planned manner while keeping carrying capacity, ecological balance, and environmental considerations in mind. Developing skills among youth to make them employable in the tourism industry as service providers. Organizing numerous festivals and events, as well as engaging in travel marts, road shows, and FAM tours at both the national and international levels.

Suggestions

The Department of Tourism plans to conduct a detailed assessment of infrastructure gaps at major tourist destinations in Jammu and Kashmir. Based on this assessment, a comprehensive ten-year action plan will be prepared to develop tourism infrastructure at key destinations, newly identified tourism circuits, and travel trails, along with improved connectivity. To support this long-term development, the government will gradually increase budget allocations each year for tourism infrastructure creation. Tourism infrastructure will be upgraded in a planned manner within a two-kilometre radius of major tourist destinations. Standard facilities such as safe drinking water, toilets, sewerage systems, parking spaces, paved roads, parks, street lighting, public furniture, and improved communication services will be provided to enhance the overall tourist experience. The Department of Tourism will also encourage private sector participation through Public–Private Partnership (PPP) models to develop infrastructure at selected tourist sites. Greater coordination among departments such as Horticulture, Agriculture, Culture, Youth Services and Sports, Handicrafts, Forests, and other related sectors will be ensured to support tourism development. Emphasis will be placed on sustainable and eco-friendly tourism by addressing social and environmental concerns. Scientific methods for solid and liquid waste management will be adopted, and high standards of sanitation and hygiene will be maintained at all tourist destinations.

Development at pilgrimage sites located in environmentally sensitive areas will strictly follow environmental and forest conservation laws. The department also aims to promote adventure and water-based activities such as rafting, water sports, boating, and aero-sports, along with mapping potential sites for these activities across the region. To meet growing tourist demand, improvements in hotel accommodation are necessary. Tourist safety and security will be given priority to enhance the international competitiveness of Kashmir as a destination. Skill development and training of the tourism workforce, including hotel staff, tour operators, guides, and escorts, will be strengthened. Effective marketing strategies will be adopted to promote Kashmir at national and international levels. Proper utilization of funds, community participation, improved road connectivity between tourist attractions, and direct air connectivity with the Middle East and Far East are essential for the sustainable development of tourism in Kashmir. (Dar, 2014).

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