

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY TOURISM SECTOR OF KASHMIR – A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is the rising sector all over the world. Kashmir is known for its rich potential for tourism and the region has huge number of natural, religious, cultural, scenic attractions etc. The valley is globally recognised tourism destination famous for its potential of carrying out different forms of like adventure tourism, religious tourism, cultural and heritage tourism etc but the internal issues with the state is creating a barrier in tourism activities. The research paper will discuss various recommendations of committees at National and Regional level. This paper will highlight various issues and challenges faced by tourism sector of Kashmir region. Paper will also discuss various initiatives taken by GOI in promoting tourism by including it in five years plans.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a brief movement of people to a place that is other than their usual place of residence for not more than one consecutive year and less than 24 hours for experiencing different forms of tourism like recreation, religion, leisure, sports, adventure, medical etc. A person who is out for tourism is usually called as Visitor. Tourism is mainly a service industry that deals with variety of service offerings like providing accommodation, transportation, catering services like food and beverages to a tourist.

COMMITTEES FORMED BY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ON TOURISM

(a) Sir John Sergeant Committee (1945)

First formal efforts to promote tourism were made in year 1945 when a committee was formed under the chairman Sir John Sergeant by Government of India.

Main recommendations of the committee:

- Introducing separate representative organization for tourism and also regional tourism offices/counters in metropolitan cities.
- Promoting tourist traffic was given national importance so separate organisations were in need to take certain initiatives in certain matters such as:
 - i. Marketing/ publicity in India and abroad.
 - ii. Publishing literature on tourism.
 - iii. Capacitive building training for guides.
 - iv. Liaison with stakeholders can provide support to tourism.
 - v. Keeping a frequent contact with other stakeholders of tourism.
 - vi. Keeping record of tourist statistical data.
 - vii. Having a good coordination with the air and train service providers.
 - viii. Provision of having chain of first class hotels of international standard.
 - ix. Introducing publicity wing in capitals of other countries like London, New York from where good number of tourists is expected to come.

(b) L. K. Jha Committee (1963)

The ad-hoc committee was formed by Government of India in March 1963 as a investigating team to see the reasons for decline in arrivals of tourists in 1962. The L.K Jha committee came with following solutions:

- i. Issuance of visa on arrival to tourists without visa for more than 72 hours.
- ii. Shopping and entertainment facilities.
- iii. Setting additional tourists offices abroad.
- iv. Setting 3 separate government cooperation's to develop hotel, transport and entertainment facilities.
- v. Building additional 5500 hotel rooms in next five years.

- vi. Approval for official restaurants shops and guides.
- vii. More stress on facilities at airports.
- viii. Provision of adequate facilities by the Indian Airlines.
- ix. Setting permits room system in Delhi.
- x. Importing cars.
- xi. Training sessions to immigration and custom officers.
- xii. Improving tourist publicity.
- xiii. Development of selected tourist centers.

(c) Report on Cultural Tourism (1968)

To explore cultural and heritage potential of India for tourism development Dr. F.R. Allvin was hired by DOT through UNESCO for his expertise and his committee gave their recommendations.

The committee laid stress on standardized facilities at heritage sites, all the monuments having such potential must be preserved, areas around must be protected by creating national parks.

They further recommended tourism department to publish literature about tourism like books, posters, scholarly guide books on these sites etc. They suggested directorate of tourism (DOT) and ASI to have a good coordination. Further recommendations suggested to preserve and conserve wildlife and to do an infrastructural development of these sites.

(d) Estimates Committee of the Parliament (1969)

The members of committee were of opinion that organisational setup of department was not up to satisfaction of the committee. The committee recommended there must be effective central organisation to have strong tourism outcome at all levels. The committee stressed on to ensure that right people are selected for right job with skill and calibre.

(e) Indian Institute of Public Administration Study on Models of Tourism (1970)

The DOT authorized Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) to go for the research on what kind of organization and pattern of staffing is needed in year 1970. The department suggested abolishing the set up of bureaucratic rules, patterns and other constraints as such set up doesn't have flexibility in making promotion and announcing the Indian tourism on world map. It also suggested 2 different types of models for giving a new shape to tourism organisation. But later the recommendations were declined by Government.

(f) UNDP Study on Tourist Organization (1970)

The UNDP team led by Dr. Timothy O'Driscoll was invited in 1970 to make tourism department much better wing. The task of constructing the recommendations was assigned to Indian Institute of Public Administration in 1972. The major recommendations given by committee laid stress on setting up National Tourist Authority having a marketing approach to sell the Indian tourism. Further the body recommended on giving more incentives to travel trade agencies, infrastructural development especially in case of accommodation, also focus was given to enhancing the amenities and facilities at tourist spots.

(g) National Committee on Tourism (1986)

To flourish the tourism industry and to achieve the long-term goals National Committee on tourism was formed in 1986 by planning commission. The committee included members from all stakeholder parties of tourism and was headed by the Chairman of the Trade Fair Authority of India.

The main recommendations of the committee were:

- i. State should concentrate on broad level tourism planning and should not keep its approach limited to regional levels as tourism is a national product.
- ii. The strategies for development must be on principle of low cost economy with high and efficient performance, improvements in infrastructure.
- iii. For a equal development of tourism, it is necessary to develop selected tourist circuits, diversify tourism get the concept of traditional sight-seeing tours changed, more focus on adventure and non traditional tourism and also explore new tourist generating markets
- iv. More professionalism, packaged tours, incentives to travel trade people.

- v. Bring changes in the existing organizational structure of the DOT and create an apex body, namely National Tourism Board.
- vi. Ensuring quality and training programs.
- vii. Eco-friendly tourism.
- viii. IITM must be developed as an apex body in travel trade tourism education development

(h) The National Action Plan (1992)

National action plan came into existence in 1992 for getting the things done in a right way. The objective was to incorporate the strategies for the areas where Indian tourism was weak. The following strategies were considered for achieving the objectives:

- i. Increasing employment opportunities;
- ii. Developing tourism facilities for budgetary category;
- iii. Diversification of tourism products;
- iv. Socio-economic development of areas;
- v. Development of international tourism and optimization of foreign exchange.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tourism in Indian scenario

India has seen a speedy growth over a decade in tourism sector and has emerged as one of most motivated destination to visit for both international and domestic tourists. The initial formal efforts for tourism in India were initiated in the year 1945 under the Chairman Sir John Sargent. Further the developments for tourism got into existence in 1956 along the Second Five Year Plan. The tourism industry of India achieved its pace and fame in later part of 70's and in initial years 80's. The major motivation factor of tourism at initial stage was religious and business purpose and elite class of society started to experience travel for leisure and recreation.

Tourism in India is diversified and has emerged as one of largest service providing industry that offers variety like religious, sports, heritage, cultural, adventure, medical etc forms of tourism. The MOT GOI (Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India) is the nodal agency for the up gradation, promotion and future developments of tourism in India. MOT GOI also looks after and maintains the Incredible India campaign. The Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) was the first tourism corporation in India. The organisation was formed in the year 1966 for the tourism infrastructural development and also enhancing the service offerings.

The tourism industry has seen a rapid growth and holds a huge significance in Indian economy. As per the calculations of World Travel and Tourism ₹14.02 crore (US\$220 billion) or 9.6% of GDP in 2016 were generated from tourism, and also created 40.343 million jobs that was 9.3% of total employment. As per the present scenario tourism industry is forecasted to grow at 6.8% annually. The 2017 report of Travel & Tourism Competitiveness has placed India on the 40th rank among overall 136 countries. The price competitiveness of Indian tourism sector has been given 10th ranking out of 136 countries in the report. The report also exhibits the positives about air transport system in India (ranked 32nd), which is considered to be good as the country is still in stage of development, and the transport infrastructure ranked 29th among 136 countries. In report India scored high in terms of the natural resources and strong cultural where it ranked 9th. In India, The national policies for the promotion and development of tourism are drafted by Ministry of Tourism, the stakeholders of the industry that includes central/state ministers, agencies, state government, stakeholders of union territories and the representatives of private sector are consulted and their ideas are taken into consideration by Ministry for consultations and collaborations.

Table 1: FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVALS (FTAs) IN INDIA, 2000-2015

Year Annual Growth (%)	FTAs in India	Annual Growth (%)
2000	2649378	6.7
2001	2537282	-4.2
2002	2384364	-6.0
2003	2726214	14.3
2004	3457477	26.8
2005	3918610	13.3
2006	4447167	13.5

2007	5081504	14.3
2008	5282603	4.0
2009	5167699	-2.2
2010	5775692	11.8
2011	6309222	11.8
2012	6577745	4.3
2013	6967601	5.9
2014	7679099	10.2
2015	8027133	4.5

(Source: Bureau of Immigration, India)

At present the efforts are laid on introduction and promotion of new forms of tourism in which country have potential such as cruise, rural, eco and medical tourism. Even having such a huge potential for diversified forms of tourism, the security loopholes and criminal activities has been the drawback, especially security issues faced by female visitors, theft and looting of foreigners etc, forms a persisting trouble that has embarrassed the Indian tourism industry.

TOURISM IN KASHMIR

Kashmir is a place well known for its hospitality and offering huge variety of attractions that motivates tourists all over to visit here for different tourism purposes. The friendly nature and value system has added to the scenic beauty, culture, heritage and other attractions.

Kashmir the name that flashes so many thoughts in mind and one of primary thought is the scenic beauty of Kashmir, the topography of the place and its attraction has been admired all over the globe and for which it's called paradise on earth, the place is well known for its range of towering mountains, rivers, meadows, large glaciers, cuisine, culture and heritage etc. Not only huge variety of attractions the pleasant climatic conditions of Kashmir makes it a paradise on earth.

Table 2: Domestic/foreign tourist arrivals in Kashmir from 2000-2013.

(Sources: Department of tourism, Govt of Jammu & Kashmir)

Year	Domestic tourists	Foreign tourists	Total (000 NO'S)
2000	104.38	7.58	111.92
2001	66.73	5.86	72.59
2002	24.67	2.69	27.36
2003	182.81	8.96	191.97
2004	358.10	18.63	376.73
2005	587.70	19.68	605.38
2006	412.88	20.01	432.68
2007	417.26	24.58	441.48
2008	551.04	21.58	572.63
2009	577.34	23.91	601.25
2010	710.50	25.98	736.48
2011	1282.36	32.12	1314.47
2012	1274	37.17	1311.84
2013	1142.2	37.1	1172.3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper attempts to theoretically review studies conducted by researchers and practices followed by organizations. Secondary data was the main source for data collection. The secondary data was collected from reports, journals and magazines. Data was also collected by surfing the net and the relevant websites.

Objectives of the study

This study has been conducted to attain following objectives;

- (i) To study the policy recommendations and plans for tourism at national level.
- (ii) To study the various issues faced by tourism sector of Kashmir region.
- (iii) To review the various problems that the state is facing in tourism development.

RESULTS

4.1 ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY THE TOURISM INDUSTRY OF KASHMIR

Even with so much of potential and vast variety of tourism resources Kashmir is facing many challenges and issues as a tourist destination. Having so much to offer for tourism there are number of destinations that are still untouched, unexplored and unknown to world. The Kashmir has a potential of becoming the best niche tourism market as unlike other destinations as it has a huge range of offerings from adventure, leisure, religion to entertainment etc.

(a) LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE

The travel and tourism industry across the world suffers from poor infrastructure. And Kashmir has no different scenario. The infrastructure includes overall facilities provided by the stakeholders. Kashmir faces range of infrastructural issues from just having one airport (which is not technically sophisticated) to no rail connectivity with other states. The road accessibility to most of tourist spots of the valley remains affected during winters which definitely leaves an image of disgust on visitors mind. Not only tourist arrival is hampered but tourism stakeholders find it difficult to provide the amenities at particular destination because of poor accessibility.

Kashmir ranks very low in number of branded hotels in fact there is no star categorised hotel which is again challenging issue as most of high end tourist won't prefer to visit. The most of hotels and houseboats don't have STP's (sewage treatment plants) and even the quality of services is not meeting the standards.

- **Lack of Professionalism:** Tourism being the service sector requires lot professionalism as the quality of service is largely dependent on how professionally services are offered. The travel and tourism sector includes tour operators, hotel employees, guides and escorts and other people involved in carrying out tourism operations. As per the reports of Ministry of Tourism only 50% of the employees in functional operations of hotels are fully trained and surprisingly the figure further reduces to 35% when it comes to restaurants and food outlets. The lack of professionalism in the service offering of the tourism sector leaves a negative vibe in the mind of tourists and they may prefer not to visit again therefore giving a challenge to the marketing of tourism. The students graduating from the only Hotel Management institution running in the state look for career opportunities outside the state. Even due to less developed hospitality sector the valley also reasonably fails to produce the professionals.

- **Poor telecommunication network:** Since most of tourist destinations in Kashmir are in remote interiors and yet there is no mobile phone networking which is again challenging for tourism industry in present day world. Even today in some of prime destinations like Sonamarg, Apharward, Doodhpathri etc there is no telecommunication which adds to the drawback of destination.

- **Less sophisticated TIC/TRC (tourist information/reception centres):** The tourist information/reception (TRC) centres that are technically sound and with proper information are prerequisite of tourist spots. Being politically disturbed area there is much more need for sophisticated tourist information or tourist reception centres. It has been seen there is absence of an updated information systems with quick retrieval facilities at TIC/TRC in Kashmir causing inconvenience to tourists.

- **Weak communication skills:** No matter how high end tourist may come but for some basic services like guides, escort, pony etc they have to rely on the local intimates of destination only and due to lack of communication skills services get affected. As most of local workers are not familiar with non local languages and their services doesn't meet the expected standard of the tourist that adds to the challenges faced by tourism industry.

(b) POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Travel and tourism sector in Kashmir has been the victim of political disturbances since early 90's. Tourism of Kashmir faced a failure during 1990's, after Kargil war, due to uprisings in 2008 & 2010, after that devastating floods of 2014 & now due to unrest of 2016. The political disturbances have put a huge setback for tourism in Kashmir. Tourism is an activity that needs peace and without peace the tourism is impossible. This is the one of key issues that tourism sector of Kashmir is facing.

• **Loopholes in the safety and security of the tourist:** Maslow hierarchy of need rates security and safety at no. 2 after physiological needs. This is level of significance that the security or safety of the person holds. Even if the potential of India and the Kashmir in tourism industry is high but unfortunately security of tourist has been 1 of the major drawback, as per the WTO India is ranked 74 among the 140 countries on the parameters of security which the matter of concern for tourism industry. Indeed nothing works if the tourists face security concerns. The state of JK has been the 1st Indian state to introduce concept of tourist policing but still the threat of terrorism and political outrage has been adding to the negativity of Kashmir. Political stability is of major importance to any investment but holds more significance to tourism because of what is being sold: serenity, fun, leisure, comfort and these can be successfully marketed only under peace and stable situation. Tourist arrivals act as a barometer of the safe and secure image of a state. Not only terrorism or political outrage but thefts, other crimes and safety related issues are also matter of concern in marketing of the tourist destination. E.g.: The Gondola accident that took place on 25/06/2017 causing death of 7 persons including 4 tourists.

(c) SEASONALITY

Despite being one of most beautiful and attractive tourist spot most of the destinations in Kashmir have failed to be round the year tourist destination. The trend here has been in summers prime destinations are Mughal gardens, Sonamarg and pahalgam while most the tourists prefer Gulmarg in winters. The DOT (directorate of tourism) Kashmir is facing big challenge to make Kashmir round the year tourist destination. The poor infrastructure to a large extent is responsible for making Kashmir a seasonal tourist destination. The seasonality has two major outcomes that create a challenge for tourism in Kashmir.

- **High employee turnover:** the tourism business are unable to provide round the year salary to their employees as during some part of a year they don't earn a penny and that forces employees to switch from their workplace, which puts the industry in challenging position.
- **Over charging of amenities:** since the industry is working in seasonal phase, the tour operators, travel agents, local service providers, hoteliers etc most of the time over charge the guest in order to compensate the expenses during the slack season. The tourist has to pay more for the services that are provided at much lower costs at other places.

(d) ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- Increased air pollution
- Land degradation.
- Exploitation of resources
- Loss of biological diversity
- Water pollution primarily because of no STP'S (sewage treatment plants) in hotels.

(e) MEDIA PREJUDICE

The national and local media plays a crucial role in tourism boosting and in Kashmir media is reasonably biased when it comes to updating the ground reality of overall situation in Kashmir. As media being on negative lines, it has resulted in downfall in arrivals of tourist in recent past. Media reports about Kashmir have added to negative marketing of the region which has become a big challenge for tourism industry to overcome.

(f) MORE PRIVATE INVESESTMENTS

Private sector plays a major role in any sort of developments. The tourism spots of Kashmir have rich potential for different forms of tourism. Therefore initiatives must be taken to attract private entrepreneurs towards development of tourism industry. Ministry of tourism must provide attracting schemes for emerging entrepreneurs with good scope for their investments and also initiatives of PPP (public private partnerships) must be given due consideration like all other developed tourist destinations do.

E.g. Indira Gandhi International airport spread across an area of 4 sq km, the Brownfield IGI airport project was undertaken jointly by the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and infrastructure company GMR group in a PPP (Public-Private Partnership) mode. The airport caters large number of tourists with world class standards.

CONCLUSION

The place is with endless tourism opportunities and high potential in tourism, not only it has ability to carry one form of tourism but huge variety of tourism activities because of its topographic, geographic,

cultural and religious features and attractions. But still with so much potential the valley is facing issues in promotion and development of tourism due to loopholes in security, infrastructure, negative media approach and dwindling interest shown by the stakeholders, govt agencies and private entrepreneurs.

Since the industry is already facing losses, the need of hour is that govt, stakeholders and other personals linked directly or indirectly need to work in coordination towards development and promotion of tourism in Kashmir. The state has potential for tourism because of its vast tourism resources and now the time has come when stakeholders of state need to use the tourism potential in better and developed manner to boost the tourism industry of what is called Paradise on Earth.

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