



Tourism In Kashmir: Problems And Prospects

Bilal Ahmad Khan

Pursuing Ph.D in Economics, D.A.V.V

Abstract:

Tourism is not merely an activity for entertainment. It is an enriching and energizing activity. For growth, tourism is the right vehicle. Tourism is an important industry in state and is considered as multi segmented industry, therefore provides different types of jobs like hotel managers, receptionists, guides, tour operators, travel agents, photographers and many other jobs which are required to strengthen the tourism. Kashmir is an area with great tourism potential and provides immense business opportunity for Kashmir region. The present paper attempts to examine the problems and prospects of tourism in Kashmir in order to formulate the guideline for future tourism in valley. It indicates that tourism is still in early phase of development and is viewed that valley has great potential.

Key words: *Right vehicles, Multi-segmented industries, Tourism potential, Business opportunity.*

1.Introduction

Kashmir is popularly known as "Paradise on Earth". The state is bestowed with beauty & rich forests, natural lakes, fresh water. The state of Jammu & Kashmir is known all over the world for its beautiful valleys, lakes, snow capped peaks, invigorating climate, valleys, cool climate, opportunities for trekking fishing, skiing & number of archaeological ,historical, cultural & religious places, cool climate & hospitable people. Among all industries, tourism is an important industry in the state. Tourism is considered to be economic bonanza for J & K state because industrial development is very limited to hilly terrains. Being a labor-intensive industry, the scope of employment is very vast. Tourism is regarded as multi-segmented industry, therefore provides different types of jobs like hotel managers, receptionists, guides, tour operators, travel agents, photographers & many other jobs which are required to strengthen the tourism. For centuries Kashmir has been centre of attraction. There are various places of tourist attractions in the state visited by tourist. However most of places are untapped. Tourism in Kashmir depends greatly on natural resources. Aharbal waterfall, lush vegetation & snow covered mountains have come to symbolize what tourism industry in Kashmir can offer.

At national level, our country is also progressing well in this sector. Tourism is not merely an activity for entertainment. It is an enriching an energizing activity. For a developing country like India whopping is on the path of growth through structural transformation of economy, tourism is the right vehicle. In 2005 India emerged as one among the top 40 tourism earners. With its forward & backward linkages with the host of sectors like transport, hospitality, education, health, banking etc. India is all set to reap full potential of this vibrant sector. Therefore, equipping efforts are made by govt. under five-year plans.

India has significant potential for becoming a major global tourism destination. It has always attracted people from all over the globe through supreme & sublime hospitality, viz. athithi devobhava (guest is equal to God).The World Tourism Organization(WTO) has reckoned India as the most favored destination among the countries of south Asia receiving more than 50% of total foreign tourist traffic in the area. We must appreciate the fact that India's share in global tourist arrivals is only 3.4 % while its share in the country's GDP is 12%.It has given employment to 120 lakh people directly & several lakh indirectly. Tourism surely has emerged as an instrument of employment generation, poverty alleviation & sustainable human development. The business impact of tourism

has been tremendous on travel, trade & hospitality. Indian handicrafts particularly, jewellery, carpets, leather goods, ivory & brass work are the main shopping items of foreign tourists. According to one estimate nearly 40% of tourist expenditure on shopping is spent on these items. Kashmir is also known as "Switzerland of East" and is famous for its wealth of beauty. Its snow-capped mountains, rivers and fresh water lakes offer tourists ample opportunities for trekking, rafting, skiing & mountaineering. The wondrous state of J & K is bestowed with holy spots that make it an ideal pilgrim destination in India. However Kashmir has been subject of revival claims by Pakistan & India, both of which are nuclear powers & this problem has made the state a hot bed of hostility for past six decades. This state attracted over million tourists in the year 1988. With resurgence of violence in the state, the number of tourists has dwindled considerably over last 2 decades. Tourism, one of the main Kashmir's main industries has suffered tremendously due to violence in the region. The state has lost billions of dollars in tourism revenue. It is estimated that state lost 27 million tourists from 1989 to 2002 leading to tourism revenue loss of us \$ 3.6 billion.

The peace process was started in 2004 as an attempt to settle that question of ownership over Kashmir. The peace process was a slow moving one but gave some hope to tourism sector as the number of tourists visiting the state started picked up since its initiation.

2.Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to explore possibilities for tourism prospects in J & K state & accordingly to initiate development activities in the state that will step towards growth and prosperity of tourists in the entire state.

3.Methodology

In the present study, secondary has been used. Secondary data has been collected from tourism department and economic survey of J & K. Author gathered, computed & codified the data in order to find out the impact of tourism on economy & its problems & prospects.

In order to find out the result of peace & disturbance on tourism regression method is used.

3.1.Findings

After the peace process, the sector like tourism received great importance. Fortunately Kashmir is an area with great tourism potential & provides immense business opportunity for Kashmir region. The growth rate in the tourist arrivals from 1995 to 2010 has recorded a highly fluctuated erratic trend. In the year 2000, 2001, 2002 there was a negative growth rate of (-) 92.37, (-) 54.16, (-) 165.35% respectively & thereafter there was significant increase in domestic as well as foreign tourists' arrivals in Kashmir. During 2006, the increase trend went down to a negative growth i.e.(-)40.13%.The reason was attacks on tourists in Kashmir valley.

Year	Deomestic	Foreign	Total	%Age Change Over Previous Years
1995	322	8198	8520	---
1996	375	9592	9967	14.51%
1997	7027	9111	16131	38.21%
1998	99636	10247	109883	85.31%
1999	200162	17130	217292	49.43%
2000	104337	7575	111912	-92.3%
2001	66732	5859	72591	-54.16%
2002	24670	2686	27356	-165.35%
2003	182205	8959	191164	58.68%
2004	358095	18234	376729	49.25%
2005	585702	19680	605382	37.77%
2006	412879	20009	432888	-39.84%
2007	417264	24576	441840	2.026%
2008	550100	22000	572100	22.76%
2009	520454	20809	541263	-5.69%
2010	698564	24376	722940	25.14%

Table 1: Domestic & foreign tourists arrivals in Kashmir valley from 1995 to 2010

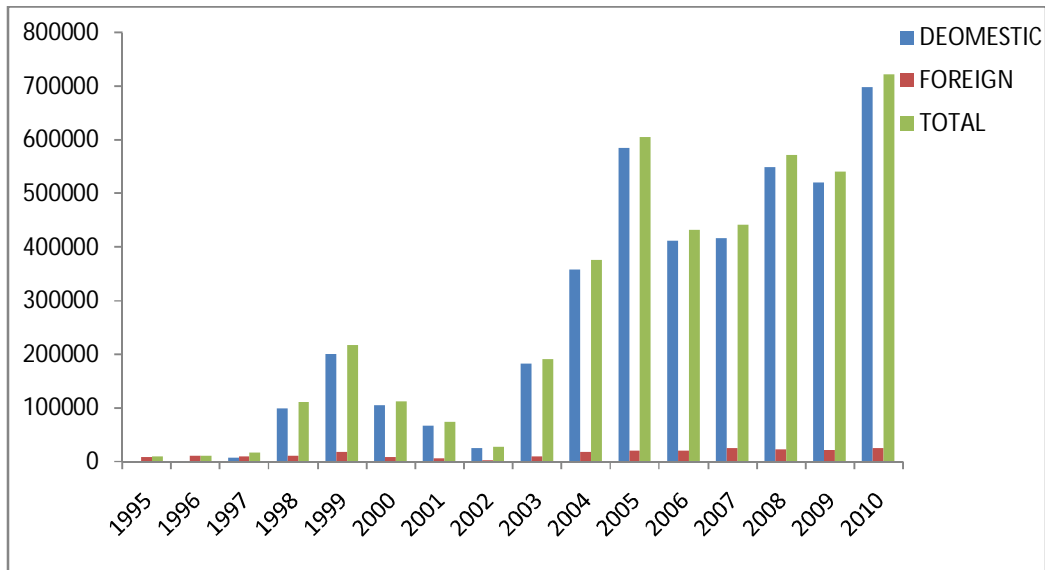


Figure 1

3.2.Result Discussion

Kashmir is affected not only by violence & turmoil. There are still some constraints which led to poor visitors' experience, slow growth of revenue. Tourism industry in Kashmir is without its problems like Inadequate capacity, costly travel, poor organization i.e. fragmented market, lack of supportive infrastructure, lapses in security & safety, uneven progress & political instability. So, whatever is the problem, suggestions must be offered for overall improvement of tourism in Kashmir valley.

- Emphasis must be placed on security of interior tourism network, make tourists feel secure & safe.
- Effective planning, development & marketing programmes should be resigned.
- Quality assurance is important to attract customers & encourage repeat visits.
- Eco tourism for sustainable livelihood must be encouraged.
- Stepping up investment & boosting infrastructure activities & enriching security should be on the top of agenda.
- Service quality i.e. in hotels, airports, railway stations etc. needed to be upgraded.
- Proper market segmentation should be done on the basis of criteria like demographic, socio economic & geographic variables.
- Education, research & training are crucial cogs in the wheel of tourism.

4. Conclusion

Finally, Kashmir is an area with great tourism potential & is a leading edge of development. Kashmir is considered as a most elite destination in the world. Tourism is the main industry in the state. It is regarded as multi-segmented industry therefore, provides different types of jobs like hotel managers, guides, travel agents and others. The enchanting geographical landscape & range of ecosystems leaves a lasting impression on the tourists in Kashmir.

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