



Reviving Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir: Strategies and challenges

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Abstract

Tourism is one business that is regarded to have the potential to boost GDP, contribute to foreign exchange, and provide employment for low-skilled workers. One of the most important features of tourism is cultural exchange between people from other countries and governments. Tourism is considered as both an economic option and a major social and human influence. The state's turmoil, particularly in the previous 20 years, has slowed tourism growth and kept the bulk of visitors from visiting India's most popular tourist destination. Add to that not only tourism, but also its indirect economic consequences.

Keywords: Foreign exchange, tourist destinations, cultural exchange, and unrest

Introduction

Tourism is recognized as a major driver of development, with its rapid growth making it one of the fastest-expanding industries globally. It contributes about 9% to the world's GDP and accounts for 8.7% of global employment. Tourism refers to travel for leisure, recreation, or business, and tourists are individuals who visit places outside their usual surroundings for less than a year for various purposes, as defined by the World Tourism Organization. Global tourism has seen significant growth, with international tourist numbers increasing from 25 million in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000, and 1,186 million in 2015. In India, tourism has a broader economic impact through its links to other sectors like agriculture. It generates additional income, creates jobs, and helps reduce poverty. Furthermore, tourism promotes national unity, preserves natural and cultural heritage, and enhances social and cultural interactions. Over 450 million domestic tourists travel across India annually, fostering a deeper understanding of the country's diversity. Jammu and Kashmir, often referred to as "paradise on earth," is a globally renowned tourist destination known for its stunning landscapes. Singh (1993) ^[20] highlighted the importance of providing high-quality facilities, services, attractions, transportation, infrastructure, and employee training to

ensure sustainable tourism development. Research by Huh (2002) ^[21] found a significant connection between tourist satisfaction and gender but no meaningful differences based on age, origin, education, income, or group size. However, prior travel experiences influenced satisfaction levels, while factors like length of stay or travel distance did not. Kendell (1993) ^[22] suggested the government should adopt a hands-off, "laissez-faire" approach to tourism development.

Objectives

The study will look at the tourism business in Jammu and Kashmir in brief.

1. To assess the performance of Indian tourism.
2. To raise public awareness of the various types of tourism available in Jammu & Kashmir.
3. To determine which types of tourism are most popular among visitors to Jammu and Kashmir.
4. To investigate the role of tourism in the economic growth of Jammu and Kashmir.
5. To make recommendations for the complete development and exploitation of the tourism industry in Jammu & Kashmir.

Methodology

The current study drew mainly on secondary data.

Secondary data were acquired from many interim and annual reports issued to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Data was collected from multiple journals, publications, periodicals, and newspaper archives. The research also relies on referred materials, which include published, unpublished, and electronic sources.

Review of Literature

According to Economist Intelligence Unit (1973), the tourist industry is the one that generates foreign exchange, helps the balance of payments, creates jobs, raises people's quality of life, and has links to other economic sectors. According to Charles, William, and Var (1973) ^[12], expanding tourism sectors in developing nations is necessary to raise peoples' purchasing power. In addition to being a vital vehicle for social and cultural development, tourism also fosters employment, according to Kumar (1992) ^[11]. Additionally, tourism encourages goodwill among nations. The Indian government is currently working to fully utilise its tourism resources through the involvement of the corporate sector and other incentives. Anand (1976) ^[2] emphasised the cause of India's poor traffic, and this issue is underlined by contacts with tourists, communications with other countries, and consumer preferences. Tourism is a business that necessitates marketing efforts. In his study on tourism as an instrument of economic development, Kapoor (1976) ^[3] stated that tourism has a large potential and is regarded as the industry whose development ensures the simultaneous development of other connected businesses. According to Ferrario (1978) ^[4], the ultimate test of what constitutes a tourist resource and the degree of its attraction is largely determined by the tourists' preferences, interests, and needs. According to Laxman (1980) ^[5], Indians charge more from tourists than other developing countries. India's share of foreign exchange is merely 0.5 to 0.7 percent, indicating overcharging. According to Laxman (1980) ^[5], tourism is the world's second largest industry now, behind oil. It is a multibillion-dollar industry worth \$70 billion a year, employing 300 million people in 1980 alone. Customer satisfaction is defined by Bitner and Hubbert (1994) ^[6] as a customer's feeling or attitude towards a service after using it. Several studies have also found a link between service quality, satisfaction, and behavioural intention, and then between service quality and behavioural intention.

Tourism in India

India's tourism industry has expanded significantly in recent years. One of the most well-liked foreign travel destinations is India. Through tourism, foreign tourists can comprehend and experience India's diverse culture first hand. Official estimates indicate that in terms of growth in both the number and income of foreign visitors, the Indian tourism industry has outperformed the world tourist industry.

Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir

All throughout the world, Jammu and Kashmir is known for its stunning environment, magnificent valleys, lakes, snowcapped mountains, cool climate, skiing, trekking opportunities, and religious sites. Jammu and Kashmir is divided into three different regions: Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. All three regions have enormous tourism potential from both domestic and foreign visitors. Its impact can be

seen in areas of the service industry such as transportation, hospitality, horticulture, crafts, and small-scale industry. Both tourism and Kashmir are protected since they are not mutually exclusive. Both have an irreversible age-related link. Dal Lake, Mughal gardens, Nishat Bagh, Gulmarg, Yousmarg, Phalgam, and other popular tourist destinations in Kashmir Valley include. The natural scenery of Kashmir has made it one of the most popular adventure tourism destinations in South Asia. Skiers may enjoy the exotic Himalayan powder during the winters, which is distinguished by four distinct seasons. Jammu is also noted for its old temples, Hindu shrines, gardens, and forts. Millions of Hindu worshippers visit the Amarnath sacred site in Kashmir each year, while tens of thousands more visit the Vaishno Devi shrine in the Jammu region. The historical structures of Jammu exhibit a distinctive fusion of Islamic and Hindu architectural influences. Ladakh, the third and most significant region of the State, has become a significant centre for adventure travel. The silk route to Asia from the subcontinent was formerly recognized for passing through this region of the Greater Himalaya dubbed as "Moon on Earth" because of its bare peaks and deep canyons. Kashmir's tourism industry heavily depends on the region's natural resources for economic viability.

Various types of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir

Adventure tourism: The distinctive geographical and climatic characteristics of Jammu and Kashmir offer exceptional opportunities for adventure tourism, a sector that has gained significant popularity in contemporary times. The region supports a wide range of adventure activities, including river rafting, rock climbing, mountaineering, trekking, skiing, and snow climbing, with numerous locations catering to these pursuits. As the northernmost state of India, Jammu and Kashmir is uniquely positioned for adventure tourism, largely due to the presence of the majestic Himalayan Mountains. Notable adventure tourism sites include the Great Karakoram Range and Nun-Kun Mountains for trekking, the Zaskar and Indus Rivers for river rafting, and Gulmarg for skiing and snow climbing. The state's diverse topography and climatic conditions provide an expansive and varied array of adventure tourism possibilities, encompassing activities in both forested and desert landscapes.

Cultural Tourism: Jammu and Kashmir is also known as the home of rich heritage, culture, and history. Over the years, Jammu and Kashmir was ruled by a number of different people, and each of them had a profound influence on the region's culture. Different cultures have left their mark on dance, music, celebrations, architecture, traditional customs, food, and languages. Jammu & Kashmir's culture is so diverse and vibrant as a result of the influence of these numerous cultures. This cultural diversity contributes to Jammu and Kashmir's status as the top destination for cultural tourism. Jammu and Kashmir's culture is thus an intriguing reflection of colour, zest, and harmony. Because Jammu and Kashmir has unique characteristics of old tradition and deep ethnicity, it stands out as being completely different from other cultural attractions.

Eco-Tourism: Ecotourism is the practise of visiting natural

regions without affecting the ecosystem. Ecotourism provides locals with many ways to make money, and these individuals then take various steps to preserve and safeguard the environment and local natural resources. With its natural richness, Jammu & Kashmir is one of the nation's untapped destinations for ecotourism. In Jammu and Kashmir, some of the top destinations for ecotourism include Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonmarg, and Kokarnag. Eco-tourism is much more than just a catchphrase for people who enjoy travelling and enjoying nature. Additionally, eco-tourism aims to promote and aid the variety of local economies, which depend heavily on tourism-related revenue. By taking part in this kind of tourism, local families and service providers can assist their families. In addition to all of these things, the money made by tourism aids and encourages governments to sponsor training and conservation projects. Eco-tourism is all about protecting the environment around you, as well as the natural delights and forest life.

Heritage Tourism: Heritage tourism is a significant part of Jammu and Kashmir tourism. Historical tourism is usually expected to emerge as the most important sort. Tourism in terms of luring visitors to the state. Jammu and Kashmir has a wonderful past that is still visible in its diverse Heritage monuments, including Hari Parbat Fort, Mamleshwar Temple, Bohu Fort, Martand Sun Temple, and Akhnoor Fort, among others. In order for the tourism industry to thrive, the Jammu and Kashmir government must take a real interest in cultural preservation.

Pilgrimage Tourism: Jammu and Kashmir is a religiously significant state with numerous sacred pilgrimage sites. As a result, pilgrimage travel in Jammu & Kashmir is immensely popular and quickly growing. Pilgrimage is a common religious practise based on the assumption that particular locations are more powerful than others. Mata Vaishnov Devi is one of the few spots in India where large crowds come from all over the country and the world. Shri Amarnath cave is a Hindu holy spot that is only visited by pilgrims for 30-50 days per year, generally around July. Hazratbal Shrine is another spiritual site that is popular with travellers.

Others: Besides these types of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir, there are other types of tourism which are quite famous among not only among domestic tourists but also among foreign tourists. Noteworthy among them are Leisure tourism, wild life tourism, wellness tourism and cruise tourism.

Economic, employment and tourism

Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir has enormous potential. The importance of tourism in the economy of Jammu and Kashmir has been recognised for decades, and its role in economic development has been an area of great interest from a policy standpoint, with Jammu and Kashmir ranked 17th in the list of major Indian destinations, while Andhra Pradesh is ranked first (Ministry of Tourism, GOI). Tourism, as a labor-intensive industry, offers a wide range of job opportunities in Jammu and Kashmir. Tourism is a multi-sector industry, thus it offers a variety of employment such as hotel managers, receptionists, accountants, clerks,

guides, travel agents, chefs, transport operators, and so on. As a result, policymakers, non-governmental organisations, and other stakeholders must collaborate to provide possibilities that centre on local communities, promote conservation initiatives, and connect with entrepreneurial growth.

Need to review tourism

Given that there is no gestation period, tourism is arguably the only industry that produces income immediately. Roads, trains, construction, megaprojects, and other developmental activities require time to complete and yield rewards. Sometimes these projects are delayed due to environmental concerns, land acquisition, relocation, etc. To boost employment and the tourism industry's possibilities in Jammu and Kashmir, the federal and state governments must assemble expert teams and put out great effort to capitalise on this exciting sector.

Suggestions

It is evident from the findings above that the tourist industry is a significant area of economic growth for Jammu and Kashmir. Here are some recommendations for the future growth of Jammu and Kashmir's tourism industry.

1. Creation of an effective network between the government and a number of organisations that would work to promote Kashmir tourism in a contemporary manner.
2. Finding new tourist destinations will significantly increase the valley's tourism potential.
3. Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir requires sufficient safeguards to give visitors adequate security and a sense of security.
4. Jammu and Kashmir is one of the best places to visit in terms of certain new niches that need to be explored, such as adventure tourism, medical tourism, polo tourism, etc., giving the industry new life.
5. It is time for tourism to stop being a seasonal hubbub and become a year-round endeavour. Each season's tourism activity can be multiplied with effective promotion.

Conclusion

Jammu & Kashmir depends on tourism for its livelihood; hence every effort should be made to keep it alive. Incorporating the entire cosmos can be accomplished with the help of tourism. According to the data above, Jammu and Kashmir's tourism industry suffered a dramatic decline as a result of the severe political unrest that gripped the region in the late 1980s. The state has an extremely low rail-road mix of transportation. In some locations, alternative roads must be built immediately to ensure greater connection. It is necessary to take action to bring back the monuments' former splendour. All that is needed is shrewd planning and unwavering determination. The fact that these diverse forms of tourism are somewhat interconnected must also be taken into account. Even though many of the tourist spots in Jammu and Kashmir are well-known to visitors. Many visitors, nevertheless, were unaware of the variety of opportunities that this state might provide. Only until this issue is effectively addressed and all sorts of tourism that our lovely state offers are sufficiently promoted will this

sector of the economy see significant returns. If these recommendations are taken into consideration, Jammu & Kashmir can become a popular tourism destination. The local community should engage with the government to promote the growth of tourism in the state because the government cannot do it alone.

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