

IMPACT OF TURMOIL AND PEACE ON TOURISM INDUSTRY IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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Abstract

Kashmir has often been compared with heaven on earth. It is most attractive destination for tourists not only in India but all over the world because of lush green valley, pleasant climate, Snow-capped Mountains, sweat springs, green meadows. 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. In this background this paper will examine the phenomenal increase and decrease of tourists in the time of turmoil and peace in Jammu& Kashmir. Besides, paper will also try to examine the impact of tourism in shaping the peace and prosperity of the state.

Key words: Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir, Peace, Violence and Armed struggle.

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Introduction

violence as well as peace directly affects tourism industry of j&k. Jammu & Kashmir is a multifaceted tourist destination. All four seasons such as summer, winter, spring, and autumn are splendid& k 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. During the pre-militancy era favourite destinations of tourists was Gulmarg, Phalgam, Dal Lake but after the armed struggle in Kashmir numbers of tourists in Kashmir have declined substantially. Whereas, tourists arrival at Mata Vashino Devi {katra}and Ladakh region increased. However from last five to six years tourist arrival has increased in Kashmir region due to establishment of peace process. In this paper researcher have tried to find out how violence and peace impacts tourism industry of j&k.

Objectives

Present study has certain research objectives as under:

- ❖ To examine the impacts of turmoil & peace on the growth and decline of tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir
- ❖ To find out the major problems in the development of tourism in j&k
- ❖ Finally, to propose feasible suggestions for the development of tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir

Methodology

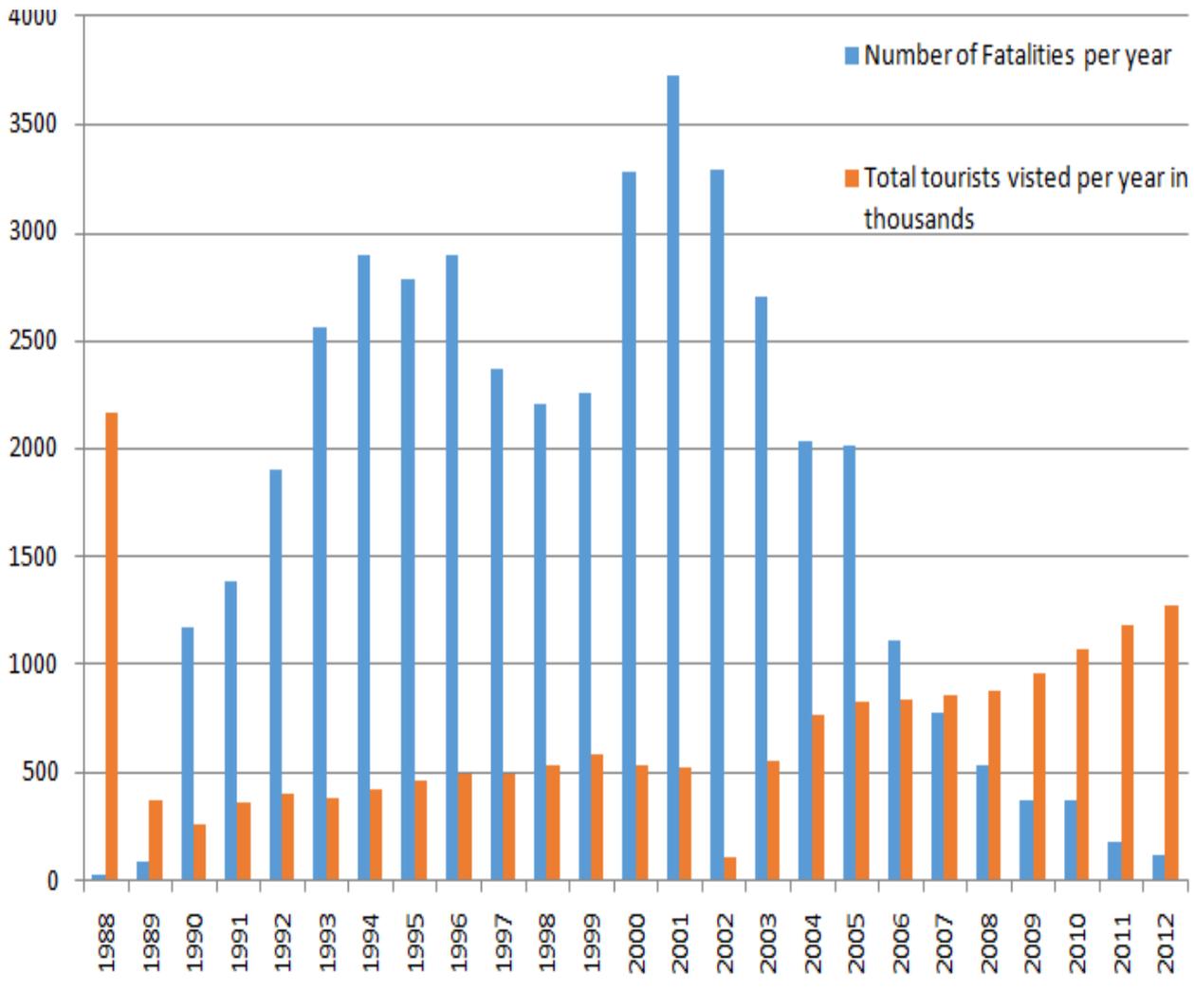
In the present study mostly secondary data have been used. Secondary data have been collected through journals, magazines, newspapers articles, and in addition to the ministry of tourism, govt. of Jammu &Kashmir.

Impacts of turmoil &peace on tourism industry in Jammu &Kashmir

Tourism which is thought to be backbone of j&k economy has severely affected by armed struggle of 1980s. The state which was favourite tourist destination for tourist deserted for tourist

after the armed struggle. The negative news of most of the national and international channels created psychological fear in the minds of the tourists. Tourist spots were totally or partially encroached by army camps and pickets. Many historical Sites were occupied by arms forces including the world famous Mughal Inns. Collateral damage affected numerous cultural and spiritual buildings. Around 180 historical Structures were gutted during militancy in the state. Such places obviously remained off bounds for tourists. . In various militancy related incidents tourists were also targeted even kidnapped they are not only afraid of being caught up in violence related incidents but also fear being used as hostages or killed after kidnapping. In Pre-militancy period, international tourists constituted a significant Portion of those visiting Kashmir. They spent on high-end handicraft products besides investing in adventure spots like trekking, skiing and rafting .But after the few terrible incidents tourist arrival declined swiftly that adversely affected tourism industry of the state. Researcher has plotted graph between the tourist's counts and number of fatalities happen annually due to armed conflict then researcher has also identified cause & relationship analysis between the two variables using liner regression.

List of tourists arrival in Jammu & Kashmir from 1988-2012



The above mentioned graph clearly shows that there is a negative relationship between the two variables armed conflict is the cause for decreasing numbers of tourists in j&k and peace is the positive cause for increasing tourist arrival in j&k. In year 1988 number of tourists visited in the state was 2200. Whereas, in 2002 only 100 tourists visited in the state this clearly shows figure differences & that how turmoil and peace directly effects arrival of tourists. It becomes quite evident from the cited graph that the arrival of tourists in j&k during pre-armed struggle period was frequently high than the year 1988 in which tourist arrival started decline at alarming rate because of political chaos in the state. However, after year 2007 peace process started in j&k that enhanced the tourist arrival in subsequent years.

Suggestion for sustainable development of tourism in Jammu & Kashmir

Following are some essential suggestions for sustainable development of tourism in the state:

- 1) Linkages with governments & agencies, tourism industry, interest groups, host communities development industries.
- 2) Tourism related infrastructure like transportation, telecommunication, restaurants shopping, support services, health & emergency services, recreation & entertainment etc should be made available with full proof safety & security
- 3) Identifying new tourist spots will go a long way in enhancing tourism potential in Jammu & Kashmir
- 4) Need to fight negative conflict prone image of state by creating massive people awareness programmes. A website should be made wherein people who have visited the state share their joyous experiences with the people who would like to come. Both electronic & print media can do this task. In addition to this, popular social networking sites like facebook should be used for this purpose.
- 5) Different types of cultural programmes and events should be organised at different parts of the state this would further boost up tourism sector of the state.
- 6) Proper tourism marketing should be done so that tourism in j&k shifted from uni-seasonal to multi-seasonal
- 7) . Demand made on human recourses, including knowledge, skills aptitudes & numbers.

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. Tourism of j&k is very rich and in this sector there are abundant opportunities for

employment so only need is to proper planning and implementation that will boost up this important sector of the growth.

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