PERCEPTION OF STAKEHOLDERS TOWARDS PILGRIM TOURISM IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Nufazil Altaf
Student, Central University of Kashmir, Srinagar, India
Email: nahangar113@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
Tourism being the world’s largest industry in terms of its growth and potential has become the subject of many researchers; pilgrim tourism being the part of tourism industry has been used as the subject of this study in order to access the perception of stake holders towards pilgrim tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. Jammu and Kashmir is a state that is considered a holy place by people of all religions not only one gets to explore the stunning landscapes of Jammu and Kashmir, one can also have the opportunity to worship the Lords and get their blessings. The state has many temples, shrines and mosques which in themselves are wonder creations. When it comes to religious tolerance, the state stands as an epitome. To aid the study, data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources for in depth investigation. The data collected from the respondents are tabulated and analyzed into logical statements using percentage and mean score analysis.

Keywords: Tourism; Pilgrim Tourism; Jammu and Kashmir

INTRODUCTION
Tourism is one of the world’s fastest growing industries at present. In India although tourism has the distinction of being the third largest foreign exchange earning industry after “gems & jewelry” and “readymade garments”, its share in the world’s tourist traffic is a mere 0.51%. Traditionally, the hilly towns like Shimla Mussorrie, Nainital, Srinagar, ooty etc attracted the rich people from the planes, tourists who used to come to these hill station to get rid of heat of the planes in the summer months or to see snow-fall during the winters. In case of Jammu and Kashmir, the tourism contributed significantly to the economy of the state. Tourism creates employment and brings attractive returns to the investors in tourism related industries at low investments. It is estimated that about 20 percent of the state’s population is directly or indirectly connected with the activity which contributes about 16 percent to the state domestic product. Many regions the Jammu and Kashmir is full of sacred shrines of all religion. The state is home to the most worshiped sites like Amarnath caves, Vaishno Devi and Hazarathal; also the most famous Buddhist monasteries and temples that are visited for their architecture and serenity. A single largest source of investment and employment, while it does not have the same ‘smokestack’ image as the manufacturing industry; it is by no means environmentally benign, generating significant levels of pollution and consuming considerable amounts of natural resources.

Amongst the long list of places of tourist interest in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the most popular destinations are:
- Bahu Fort of Jammu
- Gulmarg
- Sonamarg
Jammu and Kashmir is a state that is considered a holy place by people of all religions. The state brims with sacred sites, visited by pilgrims from all over the world. Most of these holy sites are situated amidst the picturesque surroundings of mighty Himalayas. And this attribute has now started attracting many tourists as well to these sites. That way, not only do they get to explore the stunning landscapes of Jammu and Kashmir, they also have the opportunity to worship the Lords and get their blessings. The state has many temples, shrines and mosques which in themselves are wonder creations. When it comes to religious tolerance, the state stands as an epitome. A pilgrim, who comes to J&K, should not leave without visiting the Hari Parbat pilgrim center where a mosque, a temple and a Gurudwara stand side by side. The sight itself gives you the undiluted feeling of brotherhood.

Famous Pilgrim Destinations

**AMARNATH CAVE:** The Cave of Amarnath is situated around 145 km away from Srinagar and is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Every year, the government of Jammu and Kashmir organizes a yatra to Amarnath in the month of July and August. It is during this time when the white Shivalingam build of ice starts to take form. On the full moon day, it attains complete form and it is this day that is believed to be the day when Lord Shiva told the secret of creation of life and immortality to Goddess Parvati that was overheard by two doves. Amarnath Yatra has the potential of generating Rs 2,400 cr annually for the Jammu and Kashmir government, provided the Pilgrim is kept open for devotees around the year. This estimated amount is higher than the annual revenue earned by the state. This has been stated by a study done by Professor S.K. Jain, head of the management department at IIT Delhi. The report says, "If the yatra is allowed throughout the year, Rs 2,400 cr can be generated which is more than the revenue earned by the state." The study points out that the stoppage points in the Kashmir Valley would include three nights on the Baltal route and six nights on the Chandanwari route. These halts cost approximately Rs 3,000 per head. "According to these figures, four lakh yatris who undertake the Pilgrim currently would be contributing Rs 120 cr to the economy of Jammu and Kashmir," says the study.

**VAISHNO DEVI:** Situated 62 km away from Jammu, Vaishno Devi shrine is located at an altitude of 1615 m above sea level. It is one of the most important pilgrim place for Hindus around the world. The shrine is located inside a cave on Trikuta Hills. To reach here, one has to start climbing from Katra, which is around 14 km from here. Many pilgrims cover this distance bare foot to please the Goddess and get her blessings. Inside the cave there are three rocks cut statues that represent the three Goddesses. Goddess Kali in right, Goddess Lakshmi in center and Goddess Saraswati in the left. Every Hindu believes that his life gets blessed as he visits the cave and gets a look of the three idols.

**HAZRATBAL SHRINE:** The shrine is located on the banks of Dal Lake in Srinagar and is one of the most important pilgrim places for Muslims in the state. This is the place where Prophet Mohammad's (S.A.W.) holy hair is kept inside a glass casket. The hair is kept for public display only on auspicious days. The Shrine was built sometime in the 17th century by Muslim Auqaf Trust. The main reason for its construction was to preserve the holy hair of Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.). The shrine is also known by many other names like Madinat-us-Sani, Assar-e-Sharif, and Dargah Sharif. The mosque is also famous for the many fairs that are held in the premises which attract a lot of pilgrims as well as tourists here. Hazratbal Mosque is the most important Muslim Religious place, situated on the western shore of Dal Lake. Its pristine white marble elegance is reflected in waters of the lake. Friday prayers are offered at Hazratbal and attended by throngs of people. Hazratbal is remarkable for being the only domed mosque in Srinagar; the others having distinct pagoda like roofs. The shrine – mosque complex
is situated on the western shore of the Dal Lake opposite Nishat Bagh and commands a grand view of the lake and the mountain beyond. The Hazratbal shrine lies at a distance of 25 kilometers from the Badgam district in Srinagar, Kashmir. This Pilgrim destination is known by a number of names viz. the Assar-e-Sharif, Madinat-us-Sani and the Dargah Sharif. Mughal emperor Shahjahan's brother constructed the Ishaat Mahal at the site of the shrine sometime in the year 1623, later when the emperor himself visited the site he ordered the place to be converted into a prayer house. The shrine as such was built by the Muslim Auqaf trust. Before the Hazratbal shrine was constructed the sacred hair was placed in the shrine of Naqshband Sahib. The architecture of the shrine is a combination of Mughal and traditional Kashmiri.

MONASTERIES IN LADAKH: In Ladakh, Leh has maximum number of monasteries and the most important as well. The monasteries here are part of different sects of Tibetan Buddhism mainly Red Hat Sect (Kagyupa) like the famous Hemis Monastery and Chemrey Monastery and Yellow Hat Sect (Gelugpa) like Thikse Monastery and Spituk Monastery. There are few monasteries belonging to Nyingmapa and Sakyapa. The main monastery in Ladakh is Hemis Monastery, which is also the biggest in the region. Apart from the famous Hemis Festival, the monastery is also renowned for the biggest Thangka painting in the world, which stands two floors high in length. Many come here as tourists and adventurers, but leave as pilgrims who saw it all.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Tourism is an important activity all over the world. All countries endeavor to promote tourism and make all the efforts in this direction. Like most other industries tourism - viz. hotel industry, transport industry, aviation industry, restaurant industry and several others. Thus tourism generates more employment and income to the local people than what can be done by promotion of any other industry. Accordingly tourism is the most preferred and the fastest growing industry at present. Following are some of the studies related to the subject under study:

Azizan Marzuki, tourism is always regarded as an important means to benefit local communities. Despite the massive amount of money spent on tourism development, no study had been conducted to relate tourism spending with the impact tourism on development of local economy and socio-culture.

In another study made by Youngsun Shin, it has been observed that a close connection has been observed in many parts of the world between various forms of peace through tourism and tourism through peace. “The relationship between tourism and peace” issue as was found in the literature concentrates mainly on with the socio-psychological attitudes towards tourism, although economic studies measuring the impact of peace on tourism are relatively few.

Mohinder Chand And Heera Lal hold a view that hotel and tourism, with its immense employment generation capability is very often called ‘people intensive industry’. In this industry, human resources constitute a higher element of total operating cost.

In the opinion of S.K. gupta, shri Mata Vaishno devi shrine has become a very popular destination among pilgrims. Pilgrim tourism to vaishno devi shrine constitutes an important component on the total tourism in J&K. It has contributed effectively to the growth and development of the place. Every year around 7 million pilgrims visit the shrine which is influencing the socio-economic environment of the region.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
- To evaluate the perception of stakeholders about pilgrim tourism of the J & K State.
- To identify the areas of weakness required to be taken care of for the overall development of pilgrim tourism in the state.
- To suggest the ways and means to promote pilgrim tourism in the state in order to make it viable.
DESIGN

A survey was undertaken to evaluate the perception of stake holders on pilgrim tourism of the J&K state by administering questionnaires to the respondents. An exploratory research design was adopted to conduct the study in order to evaluate the perception of stake holders in the state. In order to get the relevant data, primary data was collected by administering questionnaires to the various respondents.

QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to evaluate the perception of stake holders in the state, a well designed questionnaire was framed. The questionnaire consisted of 12 statements. For seeking information from the respondents and for its presentation 5-point likert scale was used.

SAMPLE SIZE

A sample of 100 respondents was taken up for the purpose of the study. The sample consisted of hotel/restaurant owners, shopkeepers, and professionals and government officers as respondents in order to evaluate the perception held by the said respondents.

SOURCE OF DATA

Both primary and the secondary data was collected and used in this project. Primary data was collected by administering questionnaires to the various respondents. Information about perception of stake holders on the pilgrim tourism of the J&K state, were obtained from the respondents concerned and from other secondary sources such as magazines, journals, newspapers. Previous studies on the sample were also used.

SCORING AND DATA ANALYSIS

The entire data collected both from primary and secondary sources for the project was statistically analyzed to evaluate the perception of stake holders in the state about pilgrim tourism. Various statistical tools like percentage and mean score analysis is used for tabulation and analysis of data, logical statements drawn thereof.

Table 1. Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. NO</th>
<th>STATEMENTS</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree (5)</td>
<td>Agree (4)</td>
<td>Neutral (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>There is enough potential for pilgrim tourism in J&amp;K.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Decades long political disturbance in J&amp;K has an adverse effect on its pilgrim tourism.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pilgrim tourism helps in the economic development of the J &amp; K state.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pilgrim tourism promotes unity between all Communities.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pilgrim tourism is an effective means of livelihood for the poor and unemployed.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. Data Analysis (Contd…)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>S. NO</th>
<th>STATEMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree (5)</td>
<td>Agree (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Flow of pilgrims provides enough revenue to the state.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Government facilitates the flow of pilgrims to the state.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>There are many places that are yet to be put on the Pilgrim map.</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Flow of pilgrims increases state tax revenues.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Infrastructure for pilgrim tourism is satisfactory.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Pilgrim Tourists feel satisfied with the services provided by the hosts.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Pilgrim tourism helps in the Economic Development of the State.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretations of statements in table 1.

Statement 1:- respondents have shown high level of satisfaction with the potential for pilgrim tourism in the J&K state, and they considered J&K state to have a rich potential for pilgrim tourism. This is evident from the above table as 59% of the respondents strongly agree and 41% of the respondents agree with the statement that there is enough potential for pilgrim tourism in J&K.

Statement 2:- respondents strongly agree with the statement that Decades long political disturbance in J&K has an adverse effect on its pilgrim tourism. This implies that there could have been more development in pilgrim tourism if the state would have not been hit by a political disturbance.

Statement 3:- respondents strongly agree with the statement that Pilgrim tourism helps in the economic development of the J & K state. It implies that pilgrim tourism in j&k has an important role to play in economy of J&K.

Statement 4:- respondents agree with the statement that Pilgrim tourism promotes unity between all Communities. It implies that pilgrim tourism can help in restoring peace in j&k.

Statement 5:- respondents strongly agree with the statement that Pilgrim tourism is an effective means of livelihood for the poor and unemployed. Pilgrim tourism can promote the development of the poor and unemployed.

Statement 6:- respondents agree with the statement that flow of pilgrims provides enough revenue to the state. This implies that there is still a room for improvement on this front.

Statement 7:- respondents agree with the statement that Government facilitates the flow of pilgrims to the state. It implies that government is an active agent for the promotion of pilgrim tourism and should continue to do so.

Statement 8:- respondents strongly agree with the statement that. There are many places that are yet to be put on the Pilgrim map. It implies that there is a scope for places to be explored and put on the map.
Statement 9: respondents agree with the statement that flow of pilgrims increases state tax revenues. It implies that pilgrim tourism adds to the states treasury.

Statement 10: respondents are neutral with the statement that Infrastructure for pilgrim tourism is satisfactory.

Statement 11: respondents agree with the statement that Pilgrim Tourists feel satisfied with the services provided by the hosts. It implies that j&k is provides hospitable services.

Statement 12: respondents agree with the statement that Pilgrim tourism helps in the Economic Development of the State. It implies that pilgrim tourism is one of the key players that promotes the economic development within the state.

**FINDINGS**

The findings are tabulated using likert scale for measuring the awareness of consumers towards green marketing (Highest Rating is 5-Strongly Agree and lowest 1-Strongly Disagree)

**Table 2.** Computed mean scores of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. NO</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION FILLED BY RESPONDENTS</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE (5) IS CONSIDERED AS HIGHEST VALUE.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>There is enough potential for pilgrim tourism in J&amp;K.</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Decades long political disturbance in J&amp;K has an adverse effect on its pilgrim tourism.</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Pilgrim tourism helps in the economic development of the J &amp; K state.</td>
<td>4.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Pilgrim tourism promotes unity between all Communities.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Pilgrim tourism is an effective means of livelihood for the poor and unemployed.</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Infrastructure for pilgrim tourism is satisfactory.</td>
<td>2.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Pilgrim Tourists feel satisfied with the services provided by the hosts.</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Pilgrim tourism helps in the Economic Development of the State.</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONCLUSIONS**

The present study concludes that the J&K state owes its development of economy to its tourism industry. Pilgrim tourism being a part of the tourism industry of the valley has tremendously led to the development in the economy of J&K. After the remarkable decline in the political unrest and return of normalcy in the valley tremendous increase in the pilgrim tourism traffic has been witnessed this has accelerated the tempo of economic development in the state.

- There is tremendous potential for pilgrim tourism in the J&K state.
- Despite having tremendous potential for pilgrim tourism, the decades long political unrest in the state has adversely effected the promotion of pilgrim tourism in the state.
The pilgrim tourism has helped in the economic development of J&K at a very fast pace and is expected to develop much faster in the times to come.

The study shows that pilgrim tourism in the state provides a chance for the promotion of communal harmony and unity among the people having allegiance to different religions.

Undoubtedly pilgrim tourism is an effective means of livelihood for the poor and unemployed people in general and the concerned in particular.

Despite the existence of innumerable spots of pilgrim tourism in the state, there are yet many more spots to be developed and brought on the pilgrim map of the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Efforts must be made to restore peace in the state to promote the inflow of tourists from in and outside the state.
- Flexibility in conducting trade activities related to tourism.
- Development and exploration of more tourism/pilgrim destinations.
- Formulation and implementation of policies on tourism front should be made quickly.
- Investments to be made in advertisements, so as to promote j&k as a tourism/ pilgrim destination.

REFERENCES