

IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON TOURISM IN KASHMIR

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ABSTRACT

Many countries around the world rely heavily on tourism to support their economies. According to legend, Kashmir is known around the world as "The Paradise on Earth," because of its breath-taking beauty. Kashmir's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage are unrivalled anywhere on the planet. Every traveller fantasises about seeing Kashmir's lush green meadows, bubbling streams, and lily-covered lakes. Due to the on-going armed conflict that began in the early 1990s, this tourist destination has lost its appeal. When the tourism industry nearly collapsed in 1991, it had a significant impact on the entire state's economy, as well as individual households. Hundreds of thousands of people have died because of the chaos. Not only have precious lives been lost in Jammu and Kashmir, but the state's economy has also suffered a significant setback. Jammu and Kashmir has been undergoing political turmoil for the past 25 years. The tourism industry, without a doubt, has been hit the hardest by the on-going social and political unrest. The tourism industry has been hit just as hard as the allied industries, particularly Kashmiri art, and craft. The present paper attempts to empirically study the impact of armed conflict on Kashmir's tourism. This supports the results, which were interpreted by the graphical representation.

Keywords: - Tourism, Kashmir, Economy, Poverty, Armed Conflict etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

It's difficult to get enough of Kashmir's jaw-dropping scenery, which is found throughout the region. Kashmir, with its snow-capped mountains, wildflower meadows, massive glaciers, and glistening lakes, has been compared by travellers to a miniature version of heaven on earth. While the pristine image of Kashmir has been replaced by a more foreboding one, it remains one of the most (Islam, 2014) beautiful places on Earth. The Kashmir dispute has resulted in two major wars, thousands of deaths, and a slew of human rights violations and atrocities committed by both India and Pakistan. The public's comprehension of Kashmir's violence is limited. Today's most common sources of hostility in the country are suicide bombings, militant attacks, and the use of force by security forces. Every day, innocent civilians are killed. Throughout the year, numerous reports of rape, torture, and death in custody are filed. Since 1989, the area has been plagued by widespread violence. The economy of Kashmir has been severely impacted by the on-going violence, which has claimed numerous lives. The economy of Jammu and Kashmir has been severely harmed by a lack of interest in starting a business and a decline in tourism. Following an outbreak of violence, a popular tourist destination in pre-militancy Kashmir was abandoned, and visitors to the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine and Amarnath also decreased. Over the last few years, the number of tourists visiting the Vaishno Devi shrine in (Mir et, al 2018) Jammu and Leh in Ladakh has increased in Jammu and Kashmir.

Tourists to Srinagar have increased since the peace process began, but militants have specifically targeted them, causing their numbers to decline. Residents of the neighbourhood are devastated by this tragedy. The economy in Kashmir has collapsed because of the on-going conflict. Thousands of people used to visit the valley, but now only a few hundred do. The number of visitors fell from millions in 1980 to a few hundred during the height of the unrest. Agriculture, horticulture, and the handicraft industry have all been adversely affected by the country's current state of violence. These sectors, however, have developed a life of their own among the local populace, but they are not thriving. The state's agricultural and (Mustafa 2013) horticultural products are well-known. However, conflict has harmed this natural gift. The horticulture industry has also been negatively

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impacted by the on-going conflict, both directly and indirectly. These issues are thoroughly discussed in the section titled "Challenges and Opportunities." In this study, we examined the impact of the unrest on the economy of Jammu and Kashmir and the tourism sector. We discovered a strong correlation between the state's economy and tourist count, as well as the evolution of armed conflict.

Impact on armed conflict on the Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir

Travelling to a new location for a short period of time as well as the activities that people engage in while they are there are referred to as tourism. J & K relies heavily on the tourism industry. A large portion of the state's GDP and foreign exchange earnings come from tourism, which also generates a significant (Ahanger 2018) amount of tax revenue. Pilgrimage tourism is also a big draw in Jammu and Kashmir. The conflict's progression has had a significant impact on Jammu and Kashmir's once-vital tourism industry. For a long period of time, the state that was a popular tourist destination in the 1990s has been largely deserted. Despite the tourism industry's remarkable resiliency, acts of terrorism frequently cause travellers to postpone or cancel their travel plans.

Jammu and Kashmir is portrayed as a terrorist paradise by the majority of international and national news channels, making it nearly impossible for people around the world to visit. This research shows that both native and foreigners are equally likely to be involved in a crime scenario in which the critical variable "fear of the unknown and risk" is present. It is impossible to overestimate the role of news outlets and reports in the deterioration of conditions in Jammu and Kashmir (Islam, 2014). On their news channels, they treat dead bodies as speculative, ignoring the psychological impact they have on people. When it comes to preventing "intentional or unintentional damage" to Jammu and Kashmir's tourism industry, the media and industry representatives must work closely together to keep a good public image.

In addition, the local tourism industry could work together on marketing strategies such as discounted airline tickets or hotel rates to promote the destination and lessen the impact of militants on this sector of the industry. Study after study has shown that terrorists prefer to target tourists (and occasionally important landmarks) because they are seen as ambassadors of their countries, resulting in a disproportionate amount of media attention (Shahet, al 2018) and international concern. In response to the involvement of the countries of origin, the actual targeted government's pressure increases, and the worldwide publication of militants' opinions, travel is the best channel for militants to communicate their messages and demands (Richter, 1983). Attacking a tourist is seen as an attack on the government in this context as well, which is why tourists are attacked from time to time to express their anger at the government (Ryan, 1993). Resistance members have attacked tourists and residents alike in Jammu and Kashmir on numerous occasions. Such an investigation will also investigate how armed conflict affects the state's tourism sector.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- To unmask the meaning and importance of tourism sector in Kashmir.
- To explain and analyse the impact of armed conflict on tourism sector in Kashmir.

3. MATERIALS AND METHOD:

The study used both a survey and a documentary method to gather information on the impact of armed conflict on tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. The research is based on both primary and secondary sources of information. The research adopted both qualitative and quantitative method with simple random sampling to tabulate the data. An interview schedule was used to collect responses from 199 target respondents belong to tourism sector like houseboat owners, shikhara owners and hotel owners regarding the impact of armed conflict on tourism in Kashmir. In addition, the study used official government of India publications, as well as secondary data from books, journals, and the internet.

4. Background of the respondents

Table1.: Demographic profile of the Respondents

S. NO	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
01	AGE: 18-30 Years	91	45.7%
	31-43 Years	108	54.27%
02	Gender: Male	125	62.81%
	Female	74	37.18%
03	Educational: Graduate	111	55.7%
	Above Graduate	88	44.22%
04	Place of living: Rural	102	51.25%
	Urban	97	48.74%
05	Occupation Shikaras	121	60.80%
	Hotel owners	78	39.19%
	Govt employee		
	Private employee		

Source: Primary Data

The above table 1 reveals that the dominant majority of the respondents i.e., 54.27% per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 31-43 years while the 45.7% per cent belong to the age group of 18 to 30 years, Further the distribution of respondents with respect to their gender. It is revealed that of the total respondents in the sample, 125 i.e. (62.81%) respondents were male, and 74 (37.18%) respondents were female. Further, the majority of the respondents were graduate 111, i.e. (55.7 %) while the above graduate respondents were only 88 i.e. (44.22%). Table 1 also reveals the place of living wise distribution of the respondents. 102 (51.25%) of the respondents live in the rural area, while the remaining 97 (48.74%) live in the urban area, as shown graphically below. Further the study demonstrates the distribution of respondents 121 (60.80%) belongs to Shikaras as their occupation and respondents of 78 (39.19%) belongs to hotel owners. The study's findings on Impact of Armed Conflict on Tourism in Kashmir, as gathered from the respondents, are presented in tabular form below.

Result

The Study adopted surveys, a questionnaire used to collect the response from 199 target respondents in both Kashmiri and Urdu language. The respondents were male as well as female mainly chosen from tourism sector. The three point scale has been adopted for finding the result from the respondents viz Y- Yes, N- No and NI: No idea. The Three-point scale is mentioned below:

Views of respondents on Impact of armed conflict on tourism in Kashmir

Table 2

.NO	STATEMENT	Y	N	NI	Total
1.	Does armed conflict reduces the GDP growth in tourism sector?	113 56.7%	53 26.6%	33 16.6%	199 99.9%
2.	Do you feel that armed conflict shrinks the material culture i.e., tourism of Jammu and Kashmir?	133 66.8%	41 20.6%	25 12.5%	199 99.9%

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3.	Do you feel that armed conflict declines the employment opportunities in tourism sectors in Kashmir?	93 46.7%	63 31.6%	43 21.6%	199 100%
4.	Are tourist arrival percentage declines in Kashmir due to armed conflict	87 43.7%	59 29.6%	53 26.6%	199 100%

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 (Q1) shows the frequency of armed conflict reduces the GDP growth in tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir. The total number of 113 (56.7%) of respondents showed Yes with the question and said that armed conflict reduces the GDP growth in tourism sector due to persistent strikes and stone pelting. There are 53 (26.6%) of respondents who choose no when they were asked about armed conflict reduces the GDP growth in tourism sector. But a minuscule percentage of respondents 33 (16.3%) opined to no idea, when asked about armed conflict reduces the GDP growth in tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

Table 2 (Q2) it's found that majority of the respondents 133 (66.8%) have felt the impact on tourism in the form of internet blocking and regular combating between Indian army with militant organisations. While 41 (41.6) of respondents have not experienced such problems. Further 25 (12.5%) of respondents has no such idea about the statement.

Table 2 (Q3) reveals that 93 (46.7) of respondents have suffered by employment opportunities in tourism sector due to persistent collapse and loss of tourism industry. It's found that respondents of 63 (31.6%) have not undergone through any such problem, while as 43 of respondent's 21.6 percent of respondents have felt no idea about the statement.

Table 2 (Q3) makes it clear that 87(43.7%) of respondents have endured decline in tourist arrival in Kashmir due to threat and insecurity. It's found that respondents of 59 (29.6%) have not undergone through any such problem, while as 53 of respondent's 26.6 percent of respondents have felt no idea about the statement.

5. CONCLUSION

According to the analysis above, the state of Jammu and Kashmir experienced severe political unrest that caused the tourism industry there to suddenly collapse. Development was put on hold while prosperity suffered across the field. This caused a severe economic downturn to be triggered. Which will require a long time to undo? The urgent requirement is to move toward planning. Sustainable tourism will be the first step towards fixing the current situation.

To put it simply, the state's economy has taken a major hit because of the on-going armed conflict. There is a clear negative impact on state tourism industries from armed conflict, and the cause-and-effect relationship was discovered using an interview schedule method with random sampling of respondents in order to determine how these impacts on tourism.

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