

Impact of Insurgency/Militancy on Tourism Industry of Jammu and Kashmir State



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Abstract

Tourism plays a vital role in the economic development of a number of countries across the globe. Known for its extravagant and breathtaking beauty throughout the world, Kashmir has aptly been described as "The Paradise on Earth". Kashmir is second to no place in the world as far as its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage is concerned. Bubbling streams, lush green meadows and lily-laden lakes-the valley of Kashmir is any tourist's dream. Alongside, Kashmir is affluent in historical sites, unique handicrafts and handmade items. However, the geo-political status of Kashmir has become one of its greatest handicaps. The continual political uncertainty in general and the two decade long armed conflict in particular has unexceptionally impacted every socio-economic activity in Kashmir. And tourism is a sector that has unquestionably been the worst casualty of this continued political instability and social turbulence. Not only tourism but the allied sectors especially the Kashmiri art and craft have equally been hit.

Keywords: Jammu and Kashmir, Economy, Insurgency, Tourism.

Introduction

Conflict and instability in Jammu and Kashmir have been a major hindrance to its development and progress levels. Tourism is identified as the engine of growth and Development of Jammu and Kashmir economy in general and Kashmir valley in particular. The development of tourist industry can have a significant impact on the overall growth of the state, because of its ability to create direct and indirect employment, as well as growth in allied industries. Tourism will likely contribute to the growth of secondary sectors such as handicrafts, which have historically benefitted from visitors to the state. As tourism is widely recognized as a major mechanism of employment generation, especially in the service sector, holds significant role for poverty alleviation and unemployment in the state.

Kashmir being an important tourist destination in India has witnessed downfall because of the ongoing unrest especially during the last two decades which has hindered the smooth growth of tourism industry. The valley of Kashmir has been engulfed in a violent situation since 1989, which has threatened the sustainability of tourism industry. The political instability in turn has greatly altered the direction, flow, pattern and volume of tourists to the destination. There has been extensive interest in the transport properties of bismuth because of its unusual behavior that is exhibited due to the low density and very high mobilities of carriers. Bismuth behaves like a metal though not strictly metallic. Its behavior is in between a metal and a semiconductor. Both holes and electrons are found to be responsible for the transport properties. The purpose of this work is to reexamine the transport properties of doped semimetal. We present in this article the results of Hall coefficient study of gallium doped bismuth single crystal.

Methodology

In the present study mostly secondary data have been used. Secondary data have been collected from various interim and annual reports presented to The Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India. In addition to this, data have also been collected from various journals, articles, newspaper archives. The research is also based on the referred sources – published, unpublished and electronic.

Objectives

1. To examine the impact of militancy on tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir state.

2. To study the foreign and demotic tourist flow since political instability in the state.
3. To examine the role of tourism industry in economy of the state.

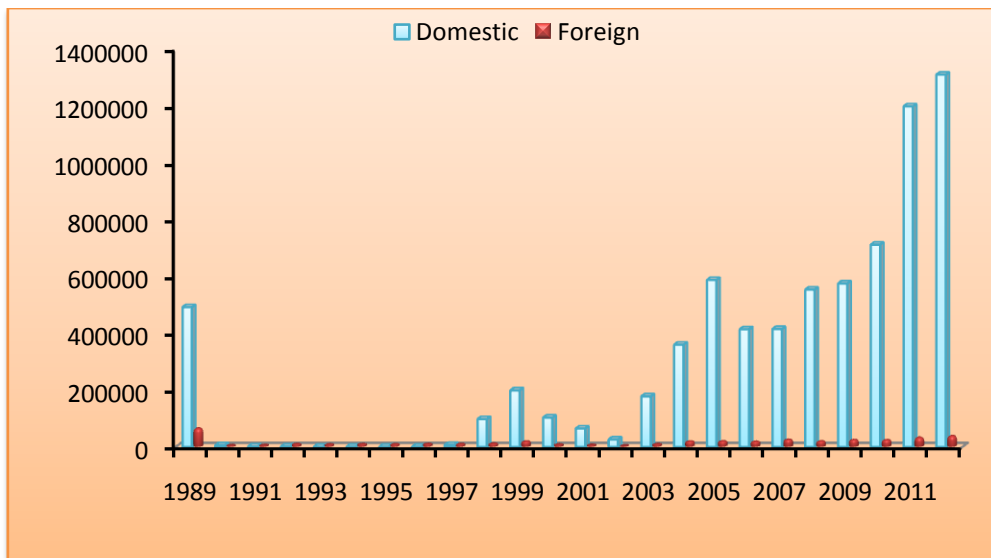
Review of Related Literature

At the early stage of the present exercise, an attempt was made to highlight the ideas and views of eminent scholars in the two fields of terrorism and tourism through a thorough review of the relevant literature. There have been a number of studies on these subjects worldwide and with a particular reference to Jammu and Kashmir. Social scientists, defence analysts, tourism experts, top brass of defence services especially after retirement, counter terrorism specialists and peace researchers have been attentive to the problems of their concerned areas over a period of time reflecting their views, experiences and thoughts to overcome the challenges thrown by terrorism. From the vast array of published studies, researcher has narrowed down on certain studies, selected the appropriate tool for analysis of the present research work.

P. Rajan et al. (2006) This book deals with the historical survey of the state, analyses the worst of global terrorism, traces out the roots and present status about the terrorism in J&K, makes an updated and comprehensive survey about tourism in J&K till July 2005, examines the impact of terrorism on J&K tourism and finally makes the reader understand the latest developments in the State of Jammu and Kashmir with regard to tourism. The study goes to prove that there is very little impact of terrorism on the performance of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Kucukaltan (2006), the rapid change in

Graph: Showing Tourist flow in Jammu and Kashmir state from (1989-2012)



Source: Department of Tourism Srinagar Jammu and Kashmir

Before militancy intensified in 1989, tourism formed an important part of the Kashmiri economy. The tourism economy in the Kashmir valley was worst hit. However, the holy shrines of Jammu and the Buddhist monasteries of Ladakh continue to remain popular

consumer preferences pertaining to tourism brings an increase in demand elasticity together. Besides, the fact that security gradually gains importance in tourism has become an important factor that affects demand. Global terror, which gains impetus with the globalization across the world, has been affecting tourism where the effects of globalization are felt the most. Seasonality of tourism and frequent occurrence of crises led by terror have caused tourism to rank first among sectors with high venture in terms of both business and tourism.

Rajan et al. (2006) this is really a very nice compilation about the situation in Jammu and Kashmir due to lack of governance. It also defines the terrorism issues of the state. It is completely a bible for the students to research on the past situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Discussions

The tourism, industry and trade have suffered a major setback (about 15 – 25 percent loss) due to the disturbed conditions in the state. Fear of violence and threats to life have also caused fleeing of outside labour. In addition, the non-functioning of the banking system on account of abductions, robberies, hartals, bands etc. had greatly affected the resource availability to business and trade. The militants have deprived banks of crores of rupees since January 1990. Above all, the beleaguered state apparatus had failed to augment resources by way of excise duty and sales tax, power and water tariff, passenger tax and other levies. For the past two decades, the various tax recoveries in the valley have been virtually negligible and the state government has registered a loss of more the 20 crores

pilgrimage and tourism destinations. Every year, thousands of Hindu pilgrims visit holy shrines of Vaishno Devi and Amarnath which has had significant impact on the state's economy. The Vaishno Devi yatra alone contributes Rs. 475 crore to the local

economy annually.

Tourism in the Kashmir valley has rebounded in recent years and in 2009, the state became one of the top tourist destinations of India. Gulmarg, one of the most popular ski resort destinations in India, is also home to the world's highest green golf course. However with the decrease in violence in the state has boosted the state's economy specifically tourism. It was reported that 7.36 lakh tourists visited Kashmir in 2010 including 23,000 foreigners. In 2011, the number of tourist arrivals in Kashmir touched the mark of 10 lakh.

Jammu & Kashmir was a mainstream tourist destination long before tourism in the modern form emerged as a growth industry. The state's scenic beauty, its temples and shrines and its rugged terrain offered broad based attraction for tourists across the entire spectrum, and tourism had for long remained the backbone of J&K economy. This healthy growth got derailed in the wake of the insurgency of the 1990s. Over the last two years, tourism has begun to recover, but it is still a far way off from becoming the preeminent engine of growth that it once was. This is an opportune time for J&K to aggressively reposition itself as a tourist destination riding on the back of the economic buoyancy around the world and at home in India. The state needs to market itself in three distinct niches leisure tourism in the valley, religious tourism in Jammu and adventure tourism in Ladakh.

If there were no insurgency, tourism would have maintained its growth track and it is estimated that annual tourist arrivals today would have been in the range of 15-18 lakhs. Tourism's share of the state's GSDP, which was 10% in 1988/89, would have gone up to 15%-20% if not higher. 5.4 Pilgrim tourism to the Jammu region of the state has remained largely unaffected by the insurgency. The Mata Vaishnodevi temple which is a year round attraction and the Amarnath Yatra for which Jammu is a base have maintained healthy flow of tourists into Jammu. The number of pilgrims was 61 lakhs in 2004, 62 lakhs in 2005 and 47 lakhs in 2006 (up to August 2006).

Compared to any other, tourism trade has witnessed a phenomenal growth in the state since independence. The number of tourists visited in the valley has increased manifold. The figures in the above table shows that the highest number of tourists visited Kashmir Valley were during 1978 to 1989; right from that number of tourists has fluctuated significantly and resulted in a great fall due to militancy in Kashmir Valley.¹²

It was estimated in 2007 that the Vaishno Devi yatra contributed 4.75 billion (US\$73 million) to the local economy annually a few years ago.¹⁴ The contribution would be much more now as the numbers of visitors have increased considerably. Foreign tourists have been slower to return. The British government still advises against all travel to Jammu and Kashmir with the exception of the cities of Jammu and Srinagar, travel between these two cities on the

Jammu-Srinagar highway, and the region of Ladakh.¹⁵

Besides Kashmir, Jammu region too has a lot of tourism potential. There are various places in Jammu which are worth seeing. Bhau Fort in Jammu city is the major attraction centre for the tourists visiting the city. Bage-e-Bahu is the other tourist destination. Aquarium established by the fisheries department is being visited by many these days. Jammu is being majorly visited by the tourist from across the India as an pilgrimage to Mata Vaishno Devi. Mata Vaishno Devi is located on the trikuta hills which are around 40 to 45 km away from Jammu City. Approximately 10 million Pilgrims visit this holy place every year.

The tourism industry in the state plays vital role in the development of the regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The state has been a place of religious activities and shrines having their own religious values, which attract thousands of pilgrims every year. With the arrival of winter, the state offers a multitude of options for winter sports activities.

According to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the tertiary sector in the state contributes nearly 44.2 per cent to the states GSDP (at current prices, 2007-08). Amongst the various sectors coming under tertiary sector, Tourism is a key contributor to the sector growth of 8.7 per cent. On the contrary, figures on foreign tourist arrivals show a major decline in the growth rate, probably due to the security/law and order issues.¹⁶

Table 51: Domestic and Foreign Tourists arrival in Jammu & Kashmir.

Particulars	2008		2009		2010	
	Domestic In Lakhs	Foreign In Lakhs	Domestic In Lakhs	Foreign In Lakhs	Domestic In Lakhs	Foreign In Lakhs
Jammu & Kashmir	76.39	0.55	92.35	0.54	99.73	0.48
J&K Growth Rate	-	-	20.9	-1.8	8	-11.1
All India	5630.34	143.81	6688	183.72	7402.14	118.53
All India Growth Rate	-	-	18.8	-0.06	10.7	24.2

Source: Ministry of Tourism Jammu & Kashmir 2011.

Key observations based on statistics mentioned in Table are as follows:

1. The total tourist visits in India during 2010 was 7580.7 lakhs out of which nearly 1.32 percent tourists visited Jammu and Kashmir.
2. Amongst these 1.32 percent tourists, 99 percent were domestic tourists.
3. Domestic tourist inflow is high during the period of June-July and October to March (20 Years Perspective Plan, 2003).

The state is full of valleys, trekking trail, snowy mountains, meadows, lakes, garden and orchards, monuments and temples, forts, monasteries

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and palaces. While Ladakh is the choice of foreign tourists, Jammu and the valley attracts a larger number of domestic tourists. According to official website of Department of Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir, following are the list of major tourist destinations coming under these three regions:

Jammu Region

Jammu, Akhnoor, Jhajjar Kotli, Aghar Jitto, Patnitop, Sanasar, Bhaderwah, Kishtwar, Baba-Dhansar, Reasi, Sihard Baba, Udhampur, Kud.

Kashmir Region

Srinagar, Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonamarg, Daksum, Kokernag, Yusmarg, Aharbal, Watlab, Verinag, Lolab Valley.

Ladakh Region

Kargil, Zanaskar, Leh, Nubra, Lamayuru, Spituk.

Another issue that remains almost elusive in the context of tourism sector in the state is that, while in the pre-militancy era the favourite destination was the beautiful Kashmir valley, the present period has witnessed increase in number of the tourists to Vaishno Devi shrine, in Jammu region and to Leh in Ladakh. During their surveys in Leh the authors interacted with many local and foreign tourists who regularly visit the area and are quite keen to visit Srinagar but prefer not to go (Personal Communications, May 21-June 1, 2007). Though the number of tourists to Srinagar has increased with the launch of the peace process, their specific targeting by the militants has led to decline in their numbers. The local people bemoan this tragedy befalling on them. In 2002, just over 27,000 tourists dared to visit the Kashmir Valley, frightened off by the anti-Indian insurgency, which has claimed up to 70,000 lives since erupting in 1989. So far this year, according to official figures, the area has received almost one million holidaymakers – more than 23,000 of them from outside India.

Tourism in the Kashmir valley has rebounded in recent years, and in 2009, the state became one of the top tourist destinations of India. Gulmarg, one of the most popular ski resort destinations in India, is also home to the world's highest green golf course.¹⁸ However, the decrease in violence in the state has boosted the state's economy and tourism.¹⁹ It was reported that more than a million tourists visited Kashmir in 2011.

Conclusion

The above analysis reveals that the Tourism sector in J&K suffered a sudden downfall due to the massive political disturbance which struck the state in late 1980s. Prosperity was hit on all indices and

development took a back seat. Tourist flows reflect the safety and peacefulness in the destination area. Tourists generally avoid areas infested with war, terrorism and political upheaval. Political stability at any destination is the key for promoting tourism. The turmoil in Kashmir badly hit all the components of tourism industry. However, the opportunities are enormous as the state is not only endowed with scenic beauty but rich flora and fauna as well. All it requires is intelligent planning and an iron will.

Suggestions:

1. Political stability is very important as the tourists should not feel any trust deficit while visiting to the tourist destinations of the state.
2. There should be equitable development of tourist destinations of the all the regions of the state so that the state will attract more and more tourists, because tourism sector plays a very important role in economy and job generation in the state.
3. Militancy should be curbed so that tourists feel free from attacks and incidents.
4. Government policies should be made to promote tourism in a better way.

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