



Economic and Environmental Impact of Pilgrimage Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir: a Case Study of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Pilgrimage

KEYWORDS

Economy, Tourism, Pilgrimage, Income effect and Environmental impact.

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ABSTRACT Tourism is one of the biggest and fastest growing sectors in the global economy and has significant socio-economic, cultural and environmental effects, both positive and negative. In J&k economy, there are number of tourist places but pilgrimage tourism has its own importance after the eruption of militancy in the state. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi pilgrimage is one such place where visiting once, thought as: one can fulfill all his/her desires and simultaneously such type of visits, boost the economic growth of the state. The number of pilgrims to the Shrine is increasing with each passing year. Presently, 38,000 pilgrims visit the shrine every day, on an average. But this increasing number of tourist not only increasing the growth of the economy but directly or indirectly is influencing the environment of the state also. We have calculated the tourist's spending per trip within the state. The spending of pilgrims was mainly spread over shopping, boarding, lodging, internal transport, restaurant, Prasad and offerings etc. handicrafts, accommodation, transport and restaurant industry bears maximum impact of pilgrims spending. So we agree that tourism has improved the situation of the state but simultaneously it has put enormous pressures on the environment of the state such as soil erosion, increased pollution, waste generation, natural habitat loss and strains on water resources. Many of these impacts are linked with the construction of general infrastructure such as roads and of tourism facilities, including hotels, restaurants, shops etc. Therefore, the present paper aims to highlight the income effect and environmental impacts of pilgrimage tourism on the economy of J&K state with special reference ot Shri Mata Vaishno Devi.

Introduction

Tourism is a vital economic activity. It is a social and cultural activity increasing its tentacles from originating places to receiving places (Nabi, 2000). The Jammu and Kashmir registration of tourist trade act 1978 defines "tourist as a person or group of persons including pilgrims visiting the state from any part of India or outside India". State of Jammu and Kashmir has something for everyone may he be of any religion. Shri vaishno Devi cave, Shri Amaranth cave, Gumpas in Ladakh, Hazartbal, Baba Jitto's place and other places have their own pilgrimage value. A large number of pilgrims visit these holy places to seek the heavenly blessings. It is stated that according to Indian Cultural heritage one has to visit various tirtha or pilgrim center to earn virtue. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi is one of such famous pilgrim center where people of the country being attracted and come to earn virtue. It signifies the importance of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi as a place of religious importance and ultimately it has got a position in the tourist map of India and thought as a place of religious tourism (www.maavaishnodevi.org). The number of pilgrims to the Shrine is increasing with each passing year. Presently, 38,000 pilgrims visit the shrine every day, on an average. But this increasing number of tourist not only increasing the growth of the economy but directly or indirectly is influencing the environment of the state also.

Location of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Temple

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi temple is near the town of Katra in Reasi district in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is one of the most revered places of worship in Northern India. The shrine is at an altitude of 5200 feet and a distance of approximately 12 kilometers (7.45 miles) from Katra. The Town Katra is 50 Kms away from Jammu and 35 Kms from Udhampur and is linked by road. It has an average elevation of 754 metres (2474 feet). It is located between 32°59' N to 32.98°N north latitude and 74°57' E to 74.95°E east latitude (www.wikipedia.org/wiki/katra)

Profile of the Area

As of 2001^[update] India census, Katra had a population of 7569. Males constitute 53% of the population and females 47%. Katra has an average literacy rate of 70%, higher than the national average of 59.5%: male literacy is 75%, and female literacy is 65%. In Katra, 12% of the population is under 6 years of age (www.jandkplanning.com).

Research Methodology

The data gathered for the study came from two categories namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data was obtained through fieldwork done at railway station, bus stands in Jammu and Katra. In addition, unstructured interview were also conducted with shop owners, hotel staff, local community, and local authorities. Secondary information was gathered from news papers, books, previous researches and journals to assess the impact of tourism on various aspects of the environment i.e air quality, water quality and waste generation.

Objective

1. To examine the socio-economic profile of the tourists coming to the state for pilgrimage tourism.
2. To know the total expenditure of the tourists while traveling and staying within the state.
3. To analysis the income effect of tourism on the state's economy.
4. To know the impact of tourism on various aspects of the environment of the holy town on the basis of secondary information.

Findings

To gauge the impact of pilgrimage on different sector of economy, the spending behavior of the pilgrims has been analyzed. Whatever the pilgrims in a sector spend becomes income to that very sector in particular and income of the state as a whole. Before knowing the impact of income on the J&K economy, firstly analyzing the socio-eco-

conomic and cultural features of the respondents and their family members.

Mode of Travel

Mode of Travel	Number of Households	Percentage
Train	130	86.67
Bus	19	12.67
other	1	0.66
Total	150	100

Source: Survey Data

It is noticed that 86.67% of the respondent households used train as the mode of travel after that bus and air. Because the traveling by air is expensive one but other mode of travels are cheaper than the air ways, so people prefer train and bus.

Travel from

Travel From	Number of Households	Percentage
Within State	15	10
Outside State	135	90
Total	150	100

Source: Survey Data

From the table, it is found that majority of the pilgrims (90%) visited from outside the state. Very few were from within the state. Data on tourist arrivals in the state also show some seasonal variations. The peak seasons are in the months of Navratra follows and the summer months when school break starts. Tourist arrivals are low in the winter months.

Travel from Outside

Travel From	Number of Households	Percentage
Delhi	38	28.15
Uttar Pradesh	43	31.85
Rajasthan	31	22.96
Bihar	10	7.41
Orissa	7	5.19
West Bengal	3	2.22
Other Parts of the Country	3	2.22
Total	135	100

Source: Survey Data

With regard to outsider, the number of tourist from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Rajasthan is highest. At a low rate, the percentage of tourists from Bihar and Orissa is also noticed in the data. It shows that from all parts of the country, pilgrims are visiting to this place.

Comes in

Comes in	Number of Respondents		Number of Family Members	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Group	54	36	433	47.22
Family	76	50.67	464	50.60
Alone	20	13.33	20	2.18
Total	150	100%	917	100

Source: Survey Data

Table analysis shows, respondents under three heads. One who came in groups, second who were come with their

families and others who visited alone. It is found, maximum pilgrims i.e. 50.67% came with their family members for pilgrimage. 47.22 % came in group.

Demography

Demography	Total Number	Percentage
Male	619	67.50
Female	298	32.50
Total	917	100

Source: Survey Data

The male-female ratio of tourists in the study area revealed that majority of male is visiting as compare to their counterpart for Mata Vaisno Devi pilgrimage. The total number of pilgrims arrived was 917 out of which 619 were male and 298 were female. No doubt, female are also visiting the place but since it is a tough rout, therefore, their number is comparatively less.

Religion

Religion	Total Number	Percentage
Hindu	850	92.70
Muslim	23	2.51
Sikh	40	4.36
Christen	4	0.43
Others	0	0
Total	917	100

Source: Survey Data

It is surprise to see that along with Hindu others are also visiting at this place.

Age Group

Age Group	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage	Total	Percentage
0-15	57	9.21	43	14.43	100	10.91
15-45	369	59.61	149	50.00	518	56.49
45-60	131	21.16	78	26.17	209	22.79
Above 60	62	10.02	28	9.40	90	9.81
Total	619	100	298	100	917	100

Source: Survey Data

In case of age composition is concerned between 15-45 age groups, the numbers of male and female were higher.

Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Number	Percentage
Illiterate	39	4.25
Primary education	107	11.67
Secondary education	163	17.78
Under graduation	415	45.26
Post graduation	107	11.67
Professional	81	08.83
Others	5	00.55
Total	917	100

Source: Survey Data

Out of 917, it is found that majority of the pilgrims were educated. Only 4.25% were illiterate.

Job Status

Job Status	Number of Persons	Percentage
Private sector	205	22.36
Government sector	228	24.86
Self employed	124	13.52
Housewives	137	14.94
Unemployed	116	12.65
Students	107	11.67
Total	917	100

Source: Survey Data

This table explains the job composition of the pilgrims who arrived at his place for paying obeisance in Shri Mata Vaishno Devi. Table reveals that those who are in government and private jobs their number is highest among visitors.

Total Expenditure

Items	Total Expenditure	Percentage of Total Expenditure
Accommodation	181027	11.84
Transport	337180	22.05
Food items	444477	29.06
Parshad	99890	06.53
Others	466720	30.52
Total	1529294	100

Source: Survey Data

This table here divides the expenditure incurred by the pilgrims on different items into different groups. Total expenditure incurred by the 917 pilgrims was Rs 1529294 out of which Rs 444477 was spending on food items which is 29.06% of the total expenditure. Similarly, on others like gifts, shopping etc. was Rs 466720 that is 30.52 % of the total expenditure.

Number of Days Stay

Number of Days	Number of Persons	Percentage
One day	61	6.64
Two day	130	14.18
Three day	299	32.61
Four day	249	27.15
Five day	99	10.80
Six day	79	8.62
More than six day	0	0
Total	917	100

Source: Survey Data

The average length of stay of tourists in J&k is around 3 days. The length of stay varies from tourist to tourist, depending on their main purpose of visit. Tourists who are for only Vaishno Devi pilgrimage, they stay for a short time only, while others are stay for many days.

Income Effect of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Pilgrimage in the state's Economy

It is found that the average number of days a pilgrim stayed in the state was 3 days and per day expenditure within the state Rs. 1668. So it means per capita expenditure is Rs. 5004 for 3 days while staying in the state. Now as per the report of shrine board in the year 2011 is concerned 1.02 crore pilgrims have visited the holy cave. So the income earned by the state through Vaishno Devi pilgrimage is near about Rs **5104.08 crores**. Without taking

multiplier effect, maximum part of this amount has gone toward food items, transportation, accommodation, Prasad and for other things.

Air Quality

The annual average concentration of all the studied pollutants has been observed to be higher at the traffic crossings followed by commercial areas, thus clearly indicating the impact of vehicular traffic on ambient air quality. Further, it has been observed that concentration of pollutants has increased during peak tourist activity resulting in increase in vehicular traffic, increased burning of fossil fuels for cooking and heating in hotels, restaurants etc. Higher concentrations of particulates may be attributed to the construction of general infrastructure such as roads and airports, and of tourism facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants, shops etc. (Sharma and Rain, 2014)

Water Quality

Like air quality, impact of tourism has also been observed on water quality of the town in various researches conducted. Ban Ganga is a shallow stream originating from snow-bound hills of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine and is the main source of water supply to the inhabitants of Katra town and its suburbs. Ban Ganga is being used as a garbage dump by pony/horse owners, restaurant/hotel owners, community kitchens, army camp and above all untreated sewage from whole of Katra town with increased load than the carrying capacity of the hill town because of heavy tourist influx (Sharma and Rain, 2014).

Solid Waste Generation

In areas with high concentrations of tourist activities and appealing natural attractions, waste disposal is a serious problem and improper disposal can be a major despoiler of the natural environment, rivers, scenic areas and roadsides. As observed, households disposed solid waste near to their house, round the corner, in open plots, on roads, in open drains or burnt it out. Even restaurants, small dhabas, roadside vendors throw their waste on road. There is an absence of waste collection dustbins along major roads and sub-lanes. The estimated solid waste generation in the town is 17.4 tons/day. The data on mule dung generation has been collected from the office of the municipality. Most of the surveyed hotels/guesthouses/dharamshalas carry out self disposal of solid waste. It is either burnt out in open or gets disposed off into drains or nallah near Ban Ganga. Mostly this waste is burned in open, even plastic bags, glasses etc. are also burned in open which lead to air pollution (Sharma and Rain, 2014).

Conclusion and Suggestion

The tourists who visit the state mostly come for the purpose of pilgrimage. These pilgrims spent crores of rupees within the state. The money spent by them does not goes to one sector of the economy but it distributed in all the sectors of the economy. Secondly, from the study, it can also be concluded that tourist activities has impacted the environment of Katra town in several ways. Ambient air quality has been found to be affected because of the increase in the number of vehicles due to increased tourist activity, water quality of the main river of the town has also shown changes due to bathing and washing activities of the tourist as well as a lot of waste is being generated which is creating unhygienic conditions in the town. To avoid these impacts, tourism need to be planned, managed and undertaken in a way that is environmentally sustainable, socially beneficial and economically viable.

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