

Unrest and Tourist Preferences: With special reference to Tourism Industry in Kashmir Valley

TANVEER A. DARZI* and JAVAID IQBAL KHAN**

*Tanveer A Darzi, Ph.D., Lecturer, Directorate of Distance Education University of Kashmir. India

**Javaid Iqbal Khan, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics University of Kashmir. India

ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to understand the impact of unrest, conflict and security situation on tourist preferences. During the unrest period tourist inflows to Kashmir valley has come down significantly, while states like Himachal Pradesh and Kerala continued to enjoy growing tourism inflows. Even after restoration of some level of normalcy (post 2001) tourists have shown reluctance to visit sensitive tourist destinations within the valley. This tendency has led to lopsided development of both the tourism destinations and tourist infrastructure within the Kashmir valley. Increased pressure on a small number of tourist destinations has choked the prospects of destination development on the one hand and perception of insecurity has halted destination diversification on the other. This study based on primary and secondary sources establishes the link between political instability and a drop in tourist inflows to Kashmir valley. It also brings to fore the impact that political environment has on the choice of destination both at the interstate and intra-state levels.

KEYWORDS: *Unrest, Destination, Inflow, Kashmir, Tourism.*

Introduction

With an increase in per capita income across the globe the tendency of people to move has increased over the last 2 to 3 decades. People have now started to visit places, nearby and far off more frequently. This indeed is not to say that tourism as an activity is of recent origins. Tourism is as old as human civilization itself. Humans have been travelling since the beginning of time. Basic human needs of food, water and safety were the early travel motivations for people to dislocate for a purpose. When humans began to settle at one place, trade and pilgrimage were the stimulators. With time both the purpose and motivations for people to move from one place to another and back to the original place underwent changes. As a consequence of the milestones achieved through continuous scientific inventions and discoveries and more so in the post-industrialization era with human life becoming more luxurious the urge to travel has increased exponentially. Tourism of all sorts and in all forms has diversified remarkably over the past half a century.

This Industrial diversification globally has resulted in an increase in the number and frequency of tourist visits across all the nations. Global tourist arrivals have crossed the one billion mark and reached an all time high of 1.035 billion in 2012.(UNWTO, 2012). Tourism as such is one of the fastest growing industry of the world and is perhaps the only industry that impacts one and all. The spatial interactions with which tourism is wrought make it a unique human endeavour. Tourism as an industry is believed to have very strong multiplier effects, particularly for the host population as such has been very sought after. However travelling for leisure, which forms the core part of tourist activity, is a multidimensional activity. This tourist activity is affected by factors, which are both endogenous as well as exogenous. Among the former are the tourist (own) circumstances, tastes and preferences, which are guided and shaped by a multitude of factors. Among the latter are the factors which are not under the direct control of the tourist but which play a crucial role in his decision-making about the travel plan. Exogenous factors among many others, political environment at the destination is of prime importance. The security predicament at the tourist destination is one of the most powerful explanatory variables for fluctuations in tourist arrivals.

Political environment and more specifically political violence has been found negatively related to tourist activity (Neumayer, 2004). This political violence and for that matter violence in any of its manifestations is detrimental to the influx of tourists. Afghanistan witnessed a 60 percent fall in tourism between 1978 and 1979 consequent upon the change of regime and the violent atmosphere that unfolded thereafter. A violent atmosphere does not affect the tourist scenario at a point of time but proves detrimental to the long term growth of tourism and tourist activity at a place, Tourists may not return or recommend a destination to others if they have felt unsafe while visiting there.(George, 2003). This makes the multiplier effect to work in reverse. It is in this backdrop that this paper investigates the impact of violence on tourism industry of Kashmir valley.

Impacts of Unrest on Tourism

Conflict, a state of dispute and distrust, decelerates sustainable growth of the tourism sector if it leads to violence and threatens peace. However, minor conflicts which are manageable have often been conducive to peace if the issues are addressed in a timely manner and involve cooperation among the concerned parties. Destinations are less appealing to tourists if they are insecure or likely to experience serious conflict (Alluri, 2009) - war, political unrest, terrorism, violations of human rights or heavy crime – regardless of the abundance of scenic or cultural attractions (Sonmez, 1998). Although there are instances of tourist attractions based on war and atrocities, tourism in general is highly vulnerable to turmoil and can thrive only under peaceful conditions (Mihalic, 1996; Neumayer, 2004; Pizam and Mansfeld, 2006; Tarlow, 2006).

The major negative impacts of the armed-conflict on tourism were decline in the number of tourist arrivals, loss of revenue from tourism, decrease in the average length of stay of tourists, reduction in the quality of services obtained by tourists, increased military or armed police force presence, and increased fear and uncertainty among tourism entrepreneurs

Previous Research

The International Law Dictionary defines political violence as “War, revolution, civil strife, terrorism, and similar acts that can result in injury or loss of property” (Bledsoe & Boczek, 1987). Political instability is also defined as “A situation in which conditions and mechanisms of governance and rule are challenged as to their political legitimacy by elements operating from outside of the normal operations of the political system” (Hall & O’Sullivan, 1995b). These types of instability can not only deter tourist visitation but also be detrimental to the growth of tourism in the affected areas. Economies that thrive on tourist revenue are gravely affected in terms of their economic development as a consequence of the strife. It can take years or even decades for an area to recover from political violence or instability. Whether it be terrorism or political instability, tourists who are aware of this instability may tend to decide avoid visiting an affected tourism destination for fear of becoming victims themselves.

Understanding and delineating the impact of armed violence on the tourism sector and on tourist visitations on the basis of an empirical approach is a recent phenomenon. The literature in this area of study is scanty. However, the available literature on the subject unanimously supports the argument that tourism can come to a halt in an insecure environment, irrespective of the nature of insecurity. This insecurity is heightened with the outbreak of armed conflict. “There is a logical connection between terrorism and tourism, indeed travel has been associated with increased vulnerability to all types of crime from biblical days Richter and Waugh (1986 p. 231). Tourism in general is highly vulnerable to turmoil and can thrive only under peaceful conditions (Mihalic, 1996; Neumayer, 2004; Pizam and Mansfeld, 2006; Tarlow, 2006). Peace is a catalyst to tourist activity in a region. Natural beauty alone cannot, has not and will not attract tourists. Peace is reported to have a direct relationship with tourism (Bhattarai and Dahal, 2007; Grandon, 2007; NTB, 2008b; Upadhayaya, 2008b; Upreti and Upadhayaya, 2009). Destinations cease to be appealing to tourists if they are insecure or likely to experience serious conflict (Alluri, 2009) - war, political unrest, terrorism, violations of human rights or heavy crime – regardless of the abundance of scenic or cultural attractions (Sonmez, 1998). Tourism is a highly sensitive and responsive sector. some of the major negative impacts of the armed-conflict on tourism were decline in the number of tourist arrivals, loss of revenue from tourism, decrease in the average length of stay of tourists, reduction in the quality of services obtained by tourists, increased

military or armed police force presence, and increased fear and uncertainty among tourism entrepreneurs. (Upadhayaya, et al, 20116).

Kashmir is a land of indefinable beauty. Praises for the scenic attractions of this land have originated at all times. For ages human endeavour has invested efforts to interact with Kashmir's beauty, explore it and describe and highlight it to the outside world. It is a natural grandeur. Unparalleled in diversity, the state of Jammu and Kashmir in general and the valley of Kashmir in particular offers immense tourist attractions throughout the year: Valleys, meadows, gardens, hillocks, mountains, monuments (historical and religious), lakes, rivers and waterfalls to name a few. Sheikh Nor-ud-Din Reshi¹ has commented on the beauty of Kashmir in the following linguistics, more than 600 years ago:

***“Every minute that is spend here
Will be deducted from my stay in heaven”***

Conflict and Its Consequences on Tourism

In Kashmir property worth billions of dollars got destroyed, investment opportunities turned bleak and even the self sustaining and age old economically viable sectors like tourism and Handicrafts took a beating both in terms of output and employment²

As far as the impact of violence in Kashmir on its tourism sector is concerned, it is but obvious that it is among the worst hit. Number of Tourists (both foreign and domestic) dwindled. The number of foreign tourists to Kashmir valley has declined from 59938 in 1988 to 22000 in 2008 thereby showing a decrease of 172.44%. As against this, the flow of foreign tourists to Ladakh has been encouraging as the number has swelled from 16256 to 33000 for the same period. (Economic Survey 2008-09, Government of Jammu and Kashmir pg, 17)

As the Economic Survey 2008-09, Government of Jammu and Kashmir stated:

“It is a stark reality that till late 1980s the state of J&K would attract huge number of national as well as foreign tourists, but the tourism sector received a serious jolt with the out breaking of militancy in the year 1989. The tourism influx declined considerably up to 2002 during which period the state heavily suffered in this sector due to the effect of the militancy. The tourist rush in the year 1988 was recorded as the highest. The infrastructure created over the

¹Sheikh Noor-ud-din, also known as Nund Rishi, was a famous Kashmiri saint who belonged to the Rishi order. He was born in 1377CE, corresponding to 779 Hijriat Qoimuh, Kulgam and he died at the age of 63 years in the year of 1440 CE or 842 Hijri. In various circles, is also called Alamdar-e-Kashmir and Sheikh-ul-Alam and is the patron saint of Kashmiris, highly revered by both Muslims and Hindus.

² Various issues of the Digest of Statistics Govt of J&K.

years suffered colossal damage besides the destruction to the gardens and parks. With the improvement in the security scenario the government made all possible efforts and took all possible steps for the revival of the tourism sector by raising the requisite infrastructure for restoration of the pristine glory of the places of the tourist attraction. The average flow of tourists between 1990 and 1996 was just around 10000 per annum". (pg 323)

Objectives of the Study

Based on the observations drawn from the literature review in general and those reported by the Economic survey 2008 -09 of the Govt of J&K the present study is carried out to understand the dynamics of the decline in the tourist visitations to Kashmir from 1989 to 1996. The inferences of this understanding are drawn from tourist perceptions about political violence and security perceptions by means of a field survey. The research objectives will aim to reveal the correlation (if any) between tourism and security environment and that tourism is highly impacted security situation of the destination in general. These objectives will include the following:

1. To shed the light on the relation between tourism and unrest and how tourism is highly impacted by security perception in general.
2. To understand the influence of political instability on tourist preferences and choice identification.
3. To underline the impact of political situation the tourist decision in selecting the destination.
4. To assess the relationship between Return of normalcy and change in the tourist's perception of the insecurity situation in the short run.

The Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study states the following: (Tourism is likely, to be negatively impacted by conflict.)

Importance of the Study

The valley in particular has witnessed varied degrees of intensities of violence (Parlow, 2012) with brief periods of stability and violent eruptions. During heightened violence and political tension the tourism influx to the valley declined sharply and the tourism industry collapses immediately and once we had a period of stability the tourism sector flourishes and the influx of tourists showed a remarkable increase (J&K Economic survey 2008).

Study Methods

This study is based on a comprehensive review of published and unpublished literature, reports and data and an in-depth field survey. Primary information was collected from July 2012 to October 2012 in three major tourist destinations of

Kashmir - Gulmarg in Baramulla, Pahalgam in Anantnag, and the Mughal gardens in Srinagar A total of 203 tourists were served a questionnaire of which 121 were male and 82 were females. Of the 203 tourists 147 were domestic and 56 were foreigners.

Analysis of the Questionnaire

The data of the questionnaire were entered to the computer by using SPSS system (Statistical Package for social Science). The descriptive statistical method was followed in the presentation of the data through using the tables and diagrams concerning the answers of the study sample subjects on the questions of the questionnaire while the student-t-test was used to test the hypothesis, which states that tourism is impacted negatively by political issues.

The study sample subjects were categorized according to age, gender status (domestic or foreign) and according to their answers on the questions of the questionnaire. The answers for each question were distributed according to the aforementioned criteria. The answers were graded as follows:

Strongly Disagree: 1

Disagree: 2

Neutral: 3

Agree: 4

Strongly agree: 5

Accordingly the mean average is: 3.

The study sample subjects covered two hundred and three persons

Data Analysis

Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample subjects according to the age group, the percentage of each group according to the gender is also clarified in this table.

Table 1: Age category: Type of gender cross-tabulation (Sample)

Age Category	Male	Female	Total	%
Less 25	5	9	14	6.9
25 - 34	37	25	62	30.5
35 - 44	34	28	62	30.5
45 - 54	29	4	43	21.1
55 - 64	11	5	16	7.9
65 - 74	5		5	2.5
More than 75		1	1	0.49
Total	121	82	203	100

Table shows the distribution of the sample subjects according to age categories and by gender. 61% of the subjects located in the second and third categories, between 25 to 44 years old and followed by the fourth category, which represents 21%. The lowest category is the seventh, which represents about 1%.

The answers of the study sample subjects on the first question of the questionnaire, which is about the impact of political conflicts, are shown in table 2 below.

Q1. Political conflicts in a region have a serious impact on travel decisions in general.

Table 2: Political unrest and travel decisions: Type of gender cross-tabulation

Political Conflicts	Type of Gender		Total	%
	Male	Female		
Strongly disagree	5	4	9	4.4
Disagree	22	16	38	18.7
Neutral	33	23	56	27.6
Agree	47	27	74	36.5
Strongly agree	14	12	26	12.8
Total	121	82	203	100

The number of the sample subjects who answered by agree and strongly agree was one hundred (100) people of the total subjects a percentage of 36.5% and 12.8% respectively. Those who answered by disagree and strongly disagree were 47 people of the total or a percentage of 18.7% and 4.4% respectively, whereas the neutrals were 56 people, a percentage of 27.6%. Almost 50% of the respondents were positive towards this question, which impacts the travel decision of the tourists and ultimately impacts the flow of tourists to a place with political disturbances.

The answers of the respondents on the second question of the questionnaire which, is about the political situation in tourism destinations to be visited by the tourist, are shown in table 3 below and also by gender

Q.2. Violence at the intended place of vacation induce a change in the travel plan and decision

Table 3: Impact on the tourist decision in selecting the destination type of gender cross-tabulation

Political Conflicts	Type of Gender		Total	%
	Male	Female		
Strongly disagree	1	1	2	0.98
Disagree	9	7	16	7.9
Neutral	14	13	27	13.3
Agree	72	42	114	56.15
Strongly agree	25	19	44	21.7
Total	121	82	203	100

The table shows that those who answered by disagree and strongly disagree were 18 people with a percentage of 7.9% and 0.98%, and those who answered by neutral were 27 people which represents 13.3% of the total subjects, where as those who answered by agree and strongly agree were 158 people of the subjects total which represents 56.2% and 21.7% respectively. This high percentage indicated that political situation has a critical impact on the tourist decision in selecting the destination, which finally impacts the tourism industries and the stakeholders.

Responses about the political instability on tourists' decisions and on tourism in general, are clarified in table 4 below.

Q.3. Levels of violence and sense of insecurity has a high negative impact on the selection of the tourist spot within a region.

Table 4: Political instability and tourist decisions to visit or not to visit a particular place within the valley: Type of gender cross-tabulation

Political Instability	Type of Gender		Total	%
	Male	Female		
Strongly disagree		1	1	0.49
Disagree	15	12	27	13.3
Neutral	22	11	33	16.25
Agree	47	34	81	39.90
Strongly agree	37	24	61	30.04
Total	121	82	203	100

Twenty eight people answered by strongly disagree and disagree which represents a percentage of 1% and 13.3% respectively, where as those who answered by agree and strongly agree were 142 people which represents 40% and 30% respectively, however; the neutrals percentage was 16%. The high percentage of those who answered by agree and strongly agree which is 70% indicates that political instability has a high negative impact on tourist decisions to visit or not to visit a particular place within the valley. Tourist showed eagerness to have been able to visit far off places like karnah, bangus, lolab and scores of such other destinations but refused to have any plans for actually visiting these places. This result of the field study has important but negative repercussions on the efforts for a balanced development of tourism in the valley of Kashmir.

Table 5 below reflects the answers of the respondents on the fourth question of the questionnaire, which is about the international tension and the reaction of the tourists to the directives of the politicians in their countries.

Q 4. Return of normalcy DOES NOT change the tourist's perception of the insecurity situation in the short run

Table 5: Return of normalcy and change in the tourist's perception of the insecurity situation in the short run: Type of gender cross-tabulation

International Tension	Type of Gender		Total	%
	Male	Female		
Strongly disagree	9	2	11	5.4
Disagree	9	8	17	8.4
Neutral	28	24	52	25.6
Agree	59	32	91	44.8
Strongly agree	16	16	32	15.8
Total	121	82	203	100

Eleven (11) people of the subjects representing 5.4% answered by strongly disagree and seventeen (17) people representing 8.4% answered by disagree. Those who answered by neutral were 52 people representing 25%. However; 91 people representing 44.8% answered by agree and 32 people representing 15.76% answered by strongly agree. A total of 61% were in favour of this question where as 14% were against it and those who were neutral representing 25%. Responses to this question reveal the long lasting impact of violence on the future development of tourism in the affected area. Tourists in general take time to assess and adjust to the changing security situation at a place that has been affected by violence of one kind or the other in the recent past.

Table 6 below shows the answers of the sample subjects on the last question of the questionnaire, which is about the impact of political propaganda on the travel decision of the tourists.

Q5. Political propaganda about a place has a positive impact on tourist preferences of actually visiting the place

Table 6: Political propaganda about a place and tourist preferences of actually visiting the place: Type of gender cross-tabulation

Political Propaganda	Type of Gender		Total	%
	Male	Female		
Strongly disagree	19	12	31	15.3
Disagree	32	19	51	25.1
Neutral	34	31	65	32
Agree	29	17	46	22.7
Strongly agree	7	3	10	5
Total	121	82	203	100

The answers of this question are quite different from the previous ones. In the first four questions the positive answers were higher than the negative ones, however; in this question 40% of the sample subjects answered by disagree and strongly disagree, whereas 28% answered by agree and strongly agree and 32% were neutral. Although, the percentage of those who were in favour of this question was 28% but we still notice the impact of the political propaganda on tourists.

Conclusion

The results of the questionnaire approved that tourism is vulnerable to the political events and negatively impacted by political instability, political tension, political conflicts, terrorism and international political relationships. 78% of the respondents believe that the political situation in the destination is important for them and they asked about it before visiting it. 70% of the respondents took the political instability as an element, which prevent them from visiting the instable destination. 61% of the respondents also agreed on the negative impact of the international tension on tourism and 50% believe in the negative impact of political conflicts of politics on tourism. Generally speaking international tourism is impacted by politics and political events across the world. The travel decisions of the tourists are impacted by political events and to a high degree political events decided the tourism destination to be visited by the tourist.

The student-t-test was also used to test the study hypothesis, which states that: "tourism is likely to be negatively impacted by armed conflict". The test was

conducted by using the followed standard statistical methodology as follows:

$$H_0: M = 3$$

$$H_1: M \neq 3 \text{ or } M > 3$$

$$: 0.05 \text{ or } 1 = 95\%$$

$$T: \underline{M - M_1} = 8.773$$

$$\frac{S}{\sqrt{N}}$$

T: 8.773 (Average Rank)

Since the calculated value for T is > than the tabulated value on $\alpha = 0.05$ we accept the results of the questionnaire which indicated that tourism is negatively impacted armed conflict through impacting the travel decision of the tourists. Therefore; the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted for the purpose of the study.

Table 7: The Sample Statistic

Number of subject	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard error mean
203	3.4877	0.79204	0.05559

Table 8 below shows the student-T-test conducted according to the standard methodology

Table 8: Average Rank T-test

T	N-1 df	Sig. 2-tailed difference	Mean	95% confidence interval of the difference	
				Lower	Upper
8.773	202	0.000	0.4877	0.3781	0.5973

The results of the questionnaire approved that tourism is vulnerable to the political events and negatively impacted by political instability, political tension, political conflicts, terrorism and international political relationships. 78% of the respondents believe that the political situation in the destination is important for them and they asked about it before visiting it. 70% of the respondents took the political instability as an element, which prevent them from visiting the instable destination. 61% of the respondents also agreed on the negative impact of the international tension on tourism and 50% believe in the negative impact of political conflicts of politics on tourism. Generally speaking tourism is impacted by politics and political events across the world. The travel decisions of the tourists are impacted by political events and to a high degree political events decided the tourism destination to be visited by the tourist.

References

- Alluri, R.M. (2009). *The Role of Tourism in Post-Conflict Peace building in Rwanda*. Bern: Swisspeace. p76
- Aziz, H. (1995). Understanding attacks on tourists in Egypt. *Tourism Management*, 16(2), 91-95.
- Bhattarai, B. M., & Dahal, B.M. (Eds.). (2007). *Report on Peace and Press: Vital Forces for Tourism Development*. Kathmandu: Nepal Travel Media Association (NTMA) p.65
- Bhattarai, K., Conway, D., & Shrestha, N. (2005). Tourism, Terrorism and Turmoil in Nepal. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32(3), 669-688.
- Grandon, R. (2007). *Nepalese Tourism: the Challenges*. Kathmandu: Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents.
- Hall, C.M. 1994, *Tourism & Politics: Policy, Power and Place*, pp60-103, Published by John Wiley & sons, London.
- Hall, C. M & V. o'Sullivan, 1996, *Political Stability & Violence: In Tourism, crime & international security Issues*, A. Pizam & Y. Mansfeld, eds, pp105-121, New York: Wiley.
- Mihalic, T. (1996). Tourism and warfare – the case of Slovenia. In A. Pizam & Y. Mansfeld (Eds.), *Tourism, Crime, and International Security Issues* (pp. 231- 246). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Neumayer, E. (2004). The Impact of Political Violence on Tourism. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 48(2), 259- 281.
- Pizam, A. (1982). Tourism and crime: is there a relationship? *Journal of Travel Research*, 20(3), 7-10.
- Raina A.K (2000). *Tourism Industry in Kashmir* , Shipra publications New Delhi ,165-167
- NTB. (2005). *Sustainable Rural Tourism for Improved Livelihood of Local Communities – With special reference to Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme*. Unpublished draft paper to discuss for a regional interaction program. Kathmandu: Nepal Tourism Board (NTB). (as quoted by Upadhayaya, P.K. 2009)
- Pizam, A. (1999). A comprehensive approach to classifying acts of crime and violence at tourism destinations. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(1), 5.
- Sonmez, S. F., & Graefe, A. R. (1998). Influence of Terrorism Risk on Foreign Tourism Decisions. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(1), 112-144.
- Tarlow, P.E. (2006). A Social Theory of Terrorism and Tourism. In Y. Mansfeld., & A. Pizam (Eds.), *Tourism, security and Safety* (pp. 33 – 47). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Upadhayaya, P.K. (2009). Post Conflict Tourism in Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities for Preventing Latent Conflict. *The Gaze Journal of Tourism and Hospitality*, 1(1), 28-42.
- Upadhayaya, P.K., & Sharma S.R. (2010). Sustainable tourism and post-conflict state building. In B. R. Upreti., S.R. Sharma., K.N. Pyakuryal., & S. Ghimire (Eds.), *The Remake of a State, Post-conflict Challenges and State Building in Nepal* (pp. 87- 109). Kathmandu: South Asia Regional Coordination Office of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR North-South) and Human and Natural Resources Studies Centre, Kathmandu University.