

Impact of Tourism on the economy of Gulmarg Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has a huge potential to become a major tourist destination all over the world. Gulmarg is the major tourist destination in the state of Jammu and Kashmir which successfully attracts lakhs of tourists every year. The role of tourism industry in the economic development of Gulmarg in Jammu and Kashmir has been an area of great interest from the perspective of policy makers. To understand the impact of tourism on the economy of Gulmarg in Jammu and Kashmir the present study has tried to analyze various parameters of economic development which includes flow of tourists, generation of employment, development of infrastructure and regional development.

1. Introduction

The tourism industry has become one of the fastest and largest growing economic sectors all over the globe. The estimates of world travel and tourism council shows that the contribution of tourism to the world economy in the year of 2014 was US \$ 7.6 trillion. In the year of 2014 2.1 million new jobs were directly generated by the tourism sector and a total of 6.1 million new jobs have been created by tourism industry in the world as a result of total direct, indirect and induced activities. The contribution of tourism industry in providing the employment has grown to 2.3 % in the year 2014 and its contribution to the GDP has grown to 3.6 % which gives rise to the faster and wider economy and has shown a positive growth for the fifth successive year. In total 277 million jobs in 2014 have been supported by the tourism industry one in eleven of the total population of world¹. This is the evidence which shows that the tourism industry is a key engine for job creation and global growth.

In India the total number of foreign tourists in the year of 2013 has shown an increase of around 4.1 % over the year of 2012. During the period of 2013 around 68.48 lakh tourists visit India against a total of 65.78 lakh in the year of 2012².

In the northern most state of India "Jammu and Kashmir" the tourism sector has been identified as an industry which possesses huge potential of development next to horticulture and agricultural sector³. The lush green forests, perennial rivers, sweet springs, pleasant climate and picturesque alpine scenery of the valley of Kashmir which is commonly known as "the paradise on earth" has become an international tourist destination⁴ while as the region of Jammu which is commonly known as land of temples is successfully attracting huge number of pilgrims. Ladakh which is also known as the moon land has become a much popular destination particularly for adventurous tourists.

Gulmarg is one of the major tourist destinations in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and is very much popular all over the world. Tourism has played an important role in the overall development of the economy of Gulmarg. This world famous tourist destination is surrounded by lush green forests, sweet

springs and picturesque alpine scenery and pleasant climate successfully attracts lakhs of tourists towards itself. The tourist related activities are creating huge employment opportunities in Gulmarg. The region of Gulmarg has no other option than tourism for employment as the region is located in a far flung area of Kashmir having no industrial or any other well developed sector. The people of this region mostly depend upon the tourist related activities as they have no other option for employment except tourism sector. So it is very much necessary that the tourism should be developed very well in order to increase the flow of tourists which in turn will increase the employment opportunities in the region along with the growth and development of the economy of Gulmarg.

2. Methodology adopted

This study is based on secondary data which has been collected from different sources like Jammu Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation, Directorate of tourism Jammu and Kashmir, Gulmarg tourism development corporation, annual economic survey of J & K, world travel and tourism council, united nations world tourism organization and other published official reports and research papers.

3. Flow of tourists in Gulmarg

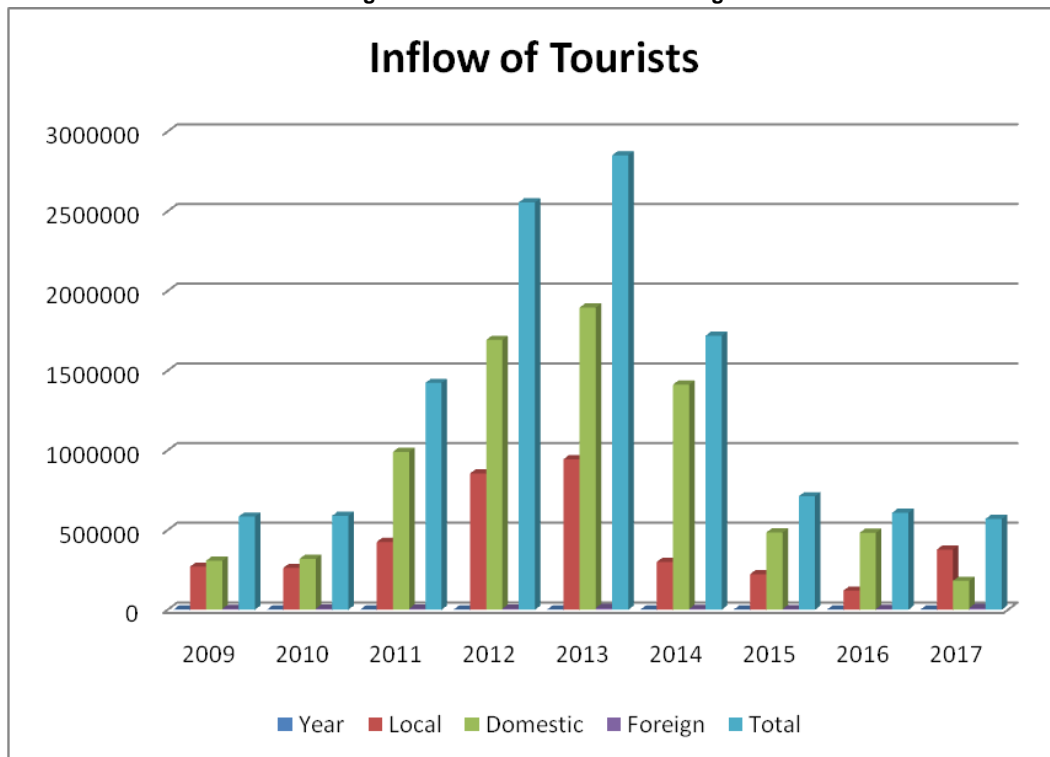
This study has explained the flow of tourists from the year of 2009 – 2017 and found that there was an increasing trend in the flow of tourists except a few in which the political condition was not favorable. The tourism sector has emerged as an essential and one of the huge contributors to the economy of Gulmarg. Up to the year of 1989, tourism has been a major economic activity of the region. Unfortunately it was hard hit with the sudden outbreak of terrorism. This in turn badly affects the employment opportunities of its people and the stability of the economy. However recently it starts improving and the year of 2013 has made a history by surpassing the previous flow of tourists in the region. It was estimated that around 2851102 tourists visit Gulmarg in the year of 2013 which was a tremendous achievement for the region. The tourist arrival in the world famous tourist destination has been shown in table 1.

Table 1 Flow of Tourists to Gulmarg at Aggregate level

Year	Foreign	Local	Domestic	Total
2009	6003	270123	308136	584262
2010	6773	262701	319545	589019
2011	7282	425219	990460	1422961
2012	7481	855034	1693140	2555655
2013	10964	943843	1896295	2851102
2014	5976	300220	1412472	1718668
2015	3879	223359	484850	712088
2016	5254	119871	483405	608530
2017	11229	377446	181577	570367

Source: Office of the Assistant Director Tourism, Gulmarg

Figure 1: Flow of Tourists to Gulmarg



Source: Office of the Assistant Director Tourism, Gulmarg

The table and figure 1 shows the composition of the flow of tourists to Gulmarg Jammu and Kashmir from the year of 2009 to 2017. The data shows that there was an increasing trend in the flow of tourists in Gulmarg from 2009 to 2013. The flow of tourists starts declining by 2014 onwards which was the result of disastrous flood which badly hit almost whole region of the valley of Kashmir. The situation starts improving in the year of 2016 but again because of the prevalence of violence in the region at the end of this year this sector was again badly damaged and the flow of tourists again starts decreasing there by lead to huge damage to the tourism sector. The instability has been found the main reason behind the downfall of tourists in the region. However it is necessary to mention here that in order to meet the needs of such tourist inflow, there is a need to carry out the developmental process in a coordinated direction.

4. Employment generation

Broadly speaking the employment generated by tourism may be classified into three categories. The first one is direct employment where the goods and services are directly sold

e.g. shops, restaurants, hotels etc. The second is the indirect employment in which goods and services are supplied to the tourism business and the third one is investment related to employment in construction and other industries which are related to capital goods⁶.

The flow of tourists has a direct impact on the economy of Gulmarg as the population of the region mostly depend on the tourism related activities. It was found that the increase in the flow of tourists has increased the employment opportunities in the region. The tourists who visit Gulmarg need the services which are given by the people who are working there who in turn get the employment opportunities with the flow of tourists.

5. Infrastructure development

Both development of infrastructure and tourism sector are interrelated to each other as the better facilities of infrastructure will lead to more tourism related activities. Less developed infrastructure is the main reason behind underdevelopment of tourism industry. The development of infrastructure includes better sanitary conditions, good

infrastructure facilities and increase in intake capacity during the peak seasons and the proper development of human resources. It was found that the infrastructure of Gulmarg in terms of accommodation is not well developed. It was found that there arises a huge problem particularly in peak season when the flow of tourists remains high. It becomes very hard to accommodate all the tourists in peak season and sometimes tourist's fails to accommodate themselves in Gulmarg. The very need of the hour is to increase the infrastructure in terms of accommodation so that the flow of tourists can be accommodated very well.

Table 2 Tourism Infrastructure in Gulmarg in terms of accommodation

Hotels	Number	Rooms	Beds
A category	17	614	1228
B category	21	306	612
C category	8	41	82
JKTDC Huts	22	5	90
Guest Houses	16	76	152
Total	84	1082	2164

Source: office of the Assistant Director Tourism, Gulmarg

The above table shows the number of hotels, rooms existing in these hotels and total bed capacity registered with tourism office Gulmarg. A total number of 84 hotels exist in Gulmarg with 1082 number of rooms and 2164 beds available. This study found that the infrastructure in terms of accommodation is not sufficient to accommodate all the tourists who are travelling to Gulmarg. So there is a great need of the hour to increase the infrastructure in terms of accommodation in Gulmarg. The government is taking all possible steps in order to improve the infrastructure of the tourist destinations. However a lot has been achieved but a lot needs to be done.

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6. Regional Development

Tourism acts as a catalyst in the development of far flung and backward areas. It has been found that most of the scenic and beautiful tourist destinations are located in backward areas which have a positive contribution in the development of these regions through development of local industries. Same is the case with Gulmarg which is located in a far flung area but has successfully made a great contribution in the development of the region along with its adjacent areas.

7. Conclusion

This study found that tourism is playing positive role in the economic development of Gulmarg as tourism is the leading industry in Gulmarg and has great potential for employment and regional development.

Tourism development has contributed positively to the development of this underdeveloped region. Since Gulmarg is very rich in scenic beauty and other eco tourism attractions.

Development of tourism has been now a days accepted everywhere in the world as one of the major means of developing the economy of the country. This is particularly true in case of Gulmarg in Jammu and Kashmir, where industrial sector is nil. The only sector in the present situation where Gulmarg can rely upon with confidence is the development of tourism. As the valley of Kashmir has got a brand name in tourism as "Paradise on the earth". The significant impact of tourism on Gulmarg in Jammu and Kashmir economy justifies the necessity of Public intervention on one hand and promoting and increasing tourism demand on the other hand, fostering the development of tourism supply.