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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	IMPACT OF FACEBOOK USAGE ON STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: THE CASE OF WOLLEGE UNIVERSITY <i>V.P.S. ARORA & SARFARAZ KARIM</i>	1
2.	A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AMONG WOMEN EMPLOYEES OF ITES COMPANIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SELECTED COMPANIES IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT <i>DR. S. GANESAN & SUKANYA.L</i>	7
3.	IMPACT OF VILLAGE INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATED BY KORBA COALFIELDS OF CHHATTISGARH (INDIA) ON VILLAGERS' WAY OF LIVING <i>A S BABU & SUKANTA CHANDRA SWAIN</i>	11
4.	REVENUE MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF BHARAT SANCHAR NIGAM LIMITED <i>DR. U. PADMAVATHI</i>	18
5.	DIGITAL MARKETING – WAY TO SIGNIFICANCE <i>SEMILA FERNANDES & VIDYASAGAR A.</i>	22
6.	PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN SUGAR INDUSTRIES <i>M. SARADADEVI & K. YASODA</i>	28
7.	FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT INFLOWS, TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SKILLED HUMAN BEHAVIOR: A MULTIVARIATE GRANGER CAUSALITY STUDY – EVIDENCE FROM FRANCE <i>DR. BHUMIKA GUPTA & DR. JASMEET KAUR</i>	32
8.	CONSTRUCTION OF INTER QUARTILE RANGE (IQR) CONTROL CHART USING PROCESS CAPABILITY FOR STANDARD DEVIATION <i>DR. C. NANTHAKUMAR & S.VIJAYALAKSHMI</i>	35
9.	EQUITY SHARE PERFORMANCE OF AUTO MOBILE INDUSTRY IN BSE <i>M. NIRMALA & P. PAVITHRA</i>	39
10.	TURN OF THE MONTH EFFECT IN INDIAN METAL SECTOR WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BSE METAL INDEX <i>J. SUDARVEL & DR. R. VELMURUGAN</i>	43
11.	ROLE OF MAHILA SAHKARI BANK IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT <i>DR. R. P. AGRAWAL & AJITA SAJITH</i>	46
12.	STRESS AMONG IT SECTOR EMPLOYEES <i>SABARI GHOSH</i>	49
13.	MOBILE BANKING IN INDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON HDFC BANK AND AXIS BANK <i>N. NEERAJA</i>	54
14.	LEADERSHIP REQUIREMENTS TO MANAGE GLOBAL BUSINESS <i>DEEPA NATHWANI</i>	58
15.	A STUDY ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG TEACHERS IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS OF DINDIGUL DISTRICT <i>DR. R. RADHIKA DEVI & SOUNDARYA.N.</i>	63
16.	A STUDY ON CONSUMERS OPINION TOWARDS ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COIMBATORE CITY <i>NITHYA M & T. RAHUL PRASATH</i>	67
17.	AN EVALUATION OF SERVICES BY DOCTORS PROVIDED BY PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES <i>MENKA TRIPATHI & DR. PRATIBHA JAIN</i>	74
18.	OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TO TOURISM INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR <i>MUNEER A KHAN, SHAHNEYAZ A BHAT, SUHAIL A BHAT & MUDASIR AHMAD WAR</i>	79
19.	PERCEPTION OF STUDENT TOWARDS FATE AND LOCUS OF CONTROL AT HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL: A STUDY IN PERCEPTION <i>P. THANGARAJU</i>	83
20.	SOCIO ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF HANDLOOM WEAVERS: A STUDY OF KARIMNAGAR DISTRICT <i>ANKAM SREENIVAS & KALAKOTLA SUMAN</i>	85
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK & DISCLAIMER	96

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OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TO TOURISM INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzed the different challenges and opportunities available for the tourism industry in the present global competitive environment apart from giving brief introduction to the tourism and tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir. The data used for this research work is secondary data. This paper is compiled into two parts. The first part of the paper provides a brief introduction about the tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir and tries to put light on different areas of the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir (leisure tourism, pilgrimage tourism, adventure tourism, trekking, skiing, winter sports etc.). The second part of the paper tries to find various challenges and opportunities available to the tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir and give proper suggestions in order to utilized these challenges and opportunities in the positive manner for the betterment of the tourism industry, by making brief review of the various research papers and research work done by the researchers in the field of tourism industry.

KEYWORDS

tourism industry, global competitive environment, adventure tourism, pilgrimage tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is concerned with pleasure, holidays, travel and going and arriving somewhere. Tourism consists of the activities undertaken during travel from home or workplace for the pleasure and enjoyment of certain destinations, and the facilities that cater to the needs of the tourists. Tourism involves a journey and services like transport, accommodation, catering and viewing etc., the journey to and stay at a site outside the normal place of work and residence for a short period. The tourism industry has significant environmental, cultural, social and economic effects, both positive and negative. Travel and tourism have been important social activities of human beings from time immemorial. Tourism has outshined traditional industries to become one of the world's largest and fastest growing economic activities. According to the estimates from the World Travel and Tourism council (WTTC) in 2015, tourism generates around 277 million jobs worldwide and amounts 7.6 trillion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounts 10% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Apart from economic benefits, tourism plays a vital role in cross-cultural exchange of the two cultures. It provides opportunities to adapt the qualities of different cultures, as tourists are also bound to cause tension among the local population by introducing new life styles and progressively promoting social, cultural and religious disruptions. Tourism provides opportunities to local people to raise their living standards by increasing employment opportunities. Tourism services as a means of conserving the cultural heritage of the local area which otherwise might be lost due to development.

Tourism is the most vibrant tertiary activity and a multi-billion-dollar industry in Jammu and Kashmir. Tourism is the right vehicle for a developing the state's economy. The value added effect of tourism is increasing. The role of tourism is essential in the economic development of the state. Tourism industry employee's a large number of people, both skilled and unskilled. Hotels travel agencies, transport benefit a lot from this industry.

Jammu and Kashmir presents the distinction of multifaceted variegated and unique cultural blend. The mountainous state is blessed with lofty snow clad peaks, deep gorges, glaciers, lush green meadows and verdant valleys full of Chinar trees, beautiful silky lakes charming flora and fauna, making it a "Paradise on Earth". It is an excellent base for leisure and adventurous holidays amidst breath taking scenery.

Jammu and Kashmir has a very rich history and a distinct culture where people of all faiths live in perfect harmony. It houses some of the most sacred temples, mosques, monasteries and caves. Kashmiri handicrafts are well known all over the world. The ancient tradition of crafting a paper machine, wood carving, carpet and shawl making etc. generates substantial amount of foreign exchange.

Jammu and Kashmir is mainstream tourist destination in view of its vast tourism potential. The state is endowed with world class tourism potential ranging from the historical and natural sites to its scenic beauty. The other important aspects of tourism potential are the existence of Shrines, monasteries, temples and cave temples. Various places of the state attract tourists from across the world. Expenditure by tourists has multiplier effect. Tourism sustains many sectors like trade, hotels, and restaurants, transporters etc., and is considered as a key for economic development of the state. The state has the potential for all types of tourism like leisure tourism, adventure tourism, pilgrimage tourism, sports tourism, winter sports tourism, water sports tourism etc.

The natural beauty of the valley of Kashmir is well known widely and has deservedly won high praise from travelers, since time immemorial. There are there three divisions of the state (a) Jammu, (b) Kashmir, and (c) Ladakh region. Ladakh is included in Kashmir division for administration purposes. However, the three divisions of the state viz., Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh have different climatic conditions from each other. Due to the climatic differences among the three divisions the Jammu and Kashmir state provides all round tourist destinations for visitors. The state experiences extreme climates in the summer and winter. The weather is pleasant from October onwards. However, the best time to enjoy Kashmir and the adventures of Ladakh region is between May and September. (Beigh 1987).

The state has some of the best tourist spots and owing to its high altitude, it is home to a lot of Himalayan glaciers and rivers. Jhelum, Indus, Tawi, Ravi and Chenab are the major rivers flowing through the state. Major tourist attractions in the state are: Kashmir division: - Gulmarg, Pahalgam, Sonmarg, Dal Lake, Manasbal Lake, Wallur Lake, Shalimar Garden, Nishat Bagh, Achabal, Kokernag, Chashmi Shahi, Harwan, Dachigam National Park, Aharbal, Yusmarg, Daksum, Shrine like Dargah Hazratbal, Peer Dastgeer Sahib, Sheikh-ul-Alam (RA) Charari Sharif, Baba Reshi Tangmarg, Shankar Acharya, Shri Amarnath. Jammu Division: Patnitop, Mansar, Sanasar, Amar Mahal Palace, Akhnoor, Surinsar, Bhadarwah, Batote, Akhnoor, Bahu Fort, Mata Vaishno Devi, Raghunath Temple, Dogra Art Gallery, Buda Amarnath, etc. Ladakh Division: Zoji La, Dargil, Lamayuru, Lakir and Basgo, Leh, Kardungla Pass, Hamis Gumpa, Thinksy Gompa, Shey Palace and Gompa, Spituk Gompa, Phyang Gompa, Pangong Lake etc. (Vishal Pub. 2015).

POTENTIAL OF TOURISM INDUSTRY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Jammu and Kashmir is known for its scenic landscape all over the world. Tourism forms and integral part of the state's economy. The tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir has a tremendous potential from both domestic and international tourists visiting in large numbers every year. Tourism being the state's largest and major industries has and will play an important role in improving and maintaining the sustainable development of the state's economy.

The Jammu and Kashmir has a lot to provide to attract the tourists from all over the world. The three regions of the Jammu and Kashmir provide a wide range of products to the tourists. Kashmir valley is known for its scenic beauty, water bodies, mountainous landscapes, snow covered mountains, beautiful Gardens, lush green meadows has a lot to provide to attract the tourists. The Jammu division is known as the City of temples has lot potential in the form of pilgrimage tourism which attracts millions of Hindu devotees every year, tourists apart from other hill resorts and historical monuments. The Ladakh known as the "Moon on Earth" is part of Grater Himalayas and has emerged as a major place for adventure tourism. Ladakh is comprising of high naked peaks and deep gorges and was once known for the Silk route to Asia from subcontinent. (Bhat 2013).

Tourism industry being a labor intensive industry provides a vast scope for employment opportunities for Jammu and Kashmir, which is currently struggling with the immense growth of unemployment. The employment opportunities provided by this industry are comparatively higher than other industries. Tourism industry is the multichannel industry and hence involves proper involvement and participation of different sub industries; therefore, it provides different types of jobs like Hotel managers, receptionists, accountants, clerks, guides, travel agents, chefs, transport operators, drivers, labors, pony wala etc. The industry also contributes to the economy of Jammu and Kashmir in various ways which include: (Gani & Mir 2013)

- I. Contribution to state's income generations
- II. Expansion of employment opportunities in the state
- III. Tax revenue
- IV. Generation of Foreign exchange
- V. Transfer of regional economy
- VI. Social and cultural effect
- VII. Up-gradation and expansion of basic infrastructure.
- VIII. Development of backward areas.
- IX. Political relations
- X. Peace and progress

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGES

The history of Jammu and Kashmir is full of ups and downs and has seen large number of political and social changes from past thousands of years. The history of Jammu and Kashmir reveals both destructive periods as well as the golden era. From the time of its emergence it has always remained first choice for all rulers, when it comes to travel for leisure for them. It was the beauty of Kashmir the Mughal emperor Shahjahan cited the famous words that if *"there is haven of earth, it is here, it is here, it is here"*. Once it was the first choice for film industry of India for making films here even a large number of films have been casted here. But last three decades have changed the whole scenario of the tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir. The turmoil left just black dots on the tourism history of the Jammu and Kashmir. Every corner of the state has seen the destructive period. (Zameer, 2013).

The various challenges that the tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir is currently facing are the major hurdles in the way of overall tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir. The major challenges that are faced by the tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir include:

1. TERRORISM

Terrorism is one of the biggest challenges that every sector of the state is facing, particularly from the last two and half decades. The state has seen a vest era of its history. During this period the most affected area was tourism. The perception of tourists regarding Jammu and Kashmir as a tourist destination has challenged and they scare to travel to Jammu and Kashmir in general and Kashmir valley in particular. So the biggest challenge at present is to change the perception of tourists around the world, motivate and attract them to visit the Jammu and Kashmir and enjoy the glory of nature at its best.

2. INFRASTRUCTURE

Travel and Tourism industry up to a greater extent depends on a wide range of infrastructure services like- airports, roads, railways and ports, as well as basic infrastructure services required by Hotels, Restaurants, Shops and recreation facilities (e.g. telecommunications and other utilities) (Mir, Gani 2013). It is the combined effort of tourism and infrastructure that unpin and strengthen the economic, environmental and social benefits for the sustainable and overall development of economy and people. To develop any new scenic tourist place or to further develop an existing tourist destination, good infrastructure is essential to sustain the quality, economic viability and growth of travel and tourism. Good infrastructure will also be a key factor in the tourism industry's ability to manage visitors flow in ways that do not affect the natural or built heritage, nor contradict against local interest. The available infrastructure in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is not appropriate enough to accommodate the ever increasing flow of tourists. So the Tourism infrastructure development is among the major challenges, that the state administration is currently facing, particular under the present circumstances when state government is already facing the heavy financial crises. The challenge before tourism authorities and allied agencies is to manage the industry and its necessary infrastructure in order to maintain the future growth of the industry and explore the benefits of the industry for the sustainable development of the state.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The growth of tourism and increased number of tourists is a positive sign for sustainable development of the tourism industry and economy of Jammu and Kashmir. But as we now that Jammu and Kashmir falls in Himalayan mountain ranges and is bestowed by the nature itself with his immense natural beauty. Every were in Jammu and Kashmir the natural beauty at its best. Therefore, environmentally the Jammu and Kashmir is very sensitive and anything will harm its environmental balance. So to develop infrastructure of the state allow the increasing flow of tourists with taking harming or unbalancing the ecological and environmental state of Jammu and Kashmir is a major challenge for the government of state and the allied agencies associated with the tourism industry. The tourists visiting the tourist sports and the local public doing business in these areas are always in direct contact with environment and are major contributors of environmental pollution in these areas hence are major threat to ecological and environmental balance in Jammu and Kashmir. (Sharma, Raina 2014). The policy makers both at regional level and at national level, non-governmental organizations, and other stake holders must therefore, work in coordination to create opportunities that center on local communities, promote conservation efforts to protect the ecological and environmental balance of Jammu and Kashmir and link conservation with enterprise development. (Naseem, Mir 2013).

4. CHALLENGES BEFORE PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been a seat of reference to all major religions of the world. The state is full of holy sites and most of these sites are located in between the scenic surroundings of great Himalayas. This aspect is responsible for attracting a large number of pilgrim tourists every year, and the number of tourists is increasing with good growth. The pilgrimage destinations of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs of Jammu and Kashmir have lot of potential for

attracting the tourists from various parts of the country and from abroad. But the problem with state government is to the lack of proper facilities available for the visitors. There is lack of boarding, lodging, transportation, Communication, inconvenient roads, unhygienic conditions, pollution and other number of issues that have become a big challenge for the authorities to cope up with.

Apart from the above the tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir is facing other several problems and challenges in many other ways which include (Bhat 2013).

- Lack of basic hygienic amenities and halting points.
- Non-standardization of rates and fares
- Lack of sound marketing and promotion strategies
- Poor maintenance of heritage sites
- Issues regarding security and harassment
- Lack of passionate and trained professionals
- Inadequate capacity
- Costly travel-soaring fuel surcharge, poor flight management etc.

OPPORTUNITIES

The Tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir is definitely facing a large number of challenges in different ways from different sources but still this industry has a greater number of benefits and opportunities for state both in economic and non-economic terms. The various opportunities available for overall sustainable development of Jammu and Kashmir include:

1. EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Tourism industry being a labor intensive industry provides a vast scope for employment opportunities for Jammu and Kashmir, which is currently struggling with the immense growth of unemployment. Tourism has played an important role in the employment generation from past with great potential to increase it further in the coming future (Hilal 2014). The employment opportunities provided by this industry are comparatively higher than other industries. Tourism industry is the multichannel industry and hence involves proper involvement and participation of different sub industries; therefore, it provides different types of jobs like Hotel managers, receptionists, accountants, clerks, guides, travel agents, chefs, transport operators, drivers, labors, pony wala etc. Therefore, the policy makers at regional level and central level and the allied agencies should work in coordination with each other and draw the policies which are capable to explore the hidden employment opportunities of the Tourism industry for the state of Jammu and Kashmir (Bhat 2013).

2. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Tourism has outshined traditional industries to become one of the world's largest and fastest growing economic activities of the present era. Tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir is also considered as a major tool for economic development. Apart from agriculture and horticulture tourism is the main and most important source of income for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. (Dube, 1987) confirmed in his study that tourism contributes to better income generation. As per the estimates the amount of revenue generated by tourism industry mainly in the form of taxes, export earnings, Foreign exchange is more than 3000 crores to the State Gross Domestic Product (SGDP) (Choudhary, 2002) which is highly expected to raise in future times in multi fold. Tourism industry has a greater economic impact on the financial conditions of a large population which is directly or indirectly associated with the tourism industry, whether it will be a Hotel owner or water working in the hotel, a tour operator or a driver, a pony wala or a labor everyone in Jammu and Kashmir is economically dependent on the tourism industry. Studies confirm that tourist spending has a positive relation with income, revenue generation and savings i.e. increase in tourist spending will result in an expansion of income, taxes and savings, speeding up the developmental process (Mir, 2014).

3. INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Tourism and development of infrastructure are interrelated sectors in the sense that better infrastructure will provide the way for more tourism related activities. Lack of infrastructure is among the main causes of underdevelopment of tourism (Bhatia, 1997). The infrastructure development includes better road connectivity, better sanitary conditions, telecommunication, rest houses, restaurants, better electricity facilities etc. The tourism industry can act as a catalyst in the development of backward and far flung areas of the state (Smith- Stephen, 1989). Development of tourism will lead to the progress in rural as well as in urban areas. Developed tourism infrastructure can lead to the development in social life of people and lead to overall development of the region. Apart from developing new tourist spots and the required infrastructure, it is more important to put stress on the maintenance of existing tourist spots and the infrastructure available at these spots, because tourists attract towards a tourist destination only if they feel that the arrangements and facilities at that destination are sufficient to satisfy them (Mir, 2014).

4. SOCIO-CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Tourism is travelling of people from the place of their normal living to any other place for the purpose of leisure, business, pilgrimage, research etc. Promoting tourism means attracting more and more tourists from different parts of world with varied cultural, social and religious beliefs and life styles will visit Jammu and Kashmir. This will be an excellent opportunity for Jammu and Kashmir people to exchange the different cultures, and social beliefs and thoughts with each other. Through this people of the state will be able to know the world. This socio-cultural exchange can bring revolutionary changes and allow the people to live new, improved and better life.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The tourism industry is globally recognized as one of the fastest growing industry, so is the case with Jammu and Kashmir. Tourism industry is no doubt the life line of Jammu and Kashmir and is among the major contributors to economic development of the state. This industry is full of challenges and opportunities as discussed above which needs proper attention and comprehensive policy making from administrative side. Tourism can play essential and effective role in integrating the entire universe. Tourism industry can open new avenues of resources both for income/ revenue generation and investment which leads to more employment opportunities and socio-cultural and socio-economic development of people of Jammu and Kashmir. The development, jobs, income generation and investment did not come automatically, therefore, it is important for administration at central and state level, local investors, businessmen and other stakeholders to actively participate in tourism activities and formulate effective policies for the better exploitation of the opportunities hidden in the Industry. Better infrastructure, road connectivity, communication, identification of new tourist spots, up gradation of existing tourist sites in Jammu and Kashmir is need of the hour. New and effective promotional channels should be utilized to change the bad perception among certain visitors, due which they are not ready to visit the place. More efforts need to be taken to strengthen the security of the state, in order to make tourists feel safe while travelling Jammu and Kashmir.

Tourism has the potential to increase public appreciation of the environment and to spread awareness of environmental problems when it brings people into closer contact with nature and the environment. This confrontation may heighten awareness of the value of nature and lead to environmentally conscious behavior and activities to preserve the environment. All stakeholders whether at state government or central government must work in a coordinated manner and take effective measures should be taken to explore the resourceful opportunities of Tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir in order to become world class tourist destination as first choice for tourists all over the world.

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