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OBJECTIVES

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

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ADVENTURE TOURISM POTENTIAL: A STUDY OF KASHMIR**FARHAT BANO BEG****RESEARCH SCHOLAR****SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY & TOURISM MANAGEMENT****UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU****JAMMU****DR. ASHOK AIMA****PROFESSOR****THE BUSINESS SCHOOL****UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU****JAMMU****ABSTRACT**

Tourism continues to be a critical source of economic investment in the state. The tourism trade is one component of the economy organization and marketing. Adventure tourism is one of the strongest cores within tourism. The variety of landscape is a vital component of local tourist trade. Land use policies and economic development strategies in the future can have a significant impact on the maintenance of these critical natural resources. Adventure tourism is fastest growing segment and turned out to be an immense business opportunity for Kashmir region. The paper examines the psyche of the adventure tourist in the region. The present research looks at those who come into the region for a brief period as visitors. The paper is conceptual in nature and the main focus of the paper is to discuss on the adventure tourism which is still in the early phase of development in the valley. The study explores the important adventure tourist destinations in Kashmir. The study therefore recommends various strategies in order to broaden the base of tourist arrivals on one hand and sustained the growth on the other hand.

KEYWORDS

Adventure, Kayaking, Market segment, Resources.

INTRODUCTION

Adventure tourism is an outdoor leisure activity that generally takes place in an unusual, exotic, remote or wilderness setting, sometimes involving some form of unconventional means of transportation and tending to be associated with low or high levels of physical activity. As the name suggests it entails an element of risk and can range from 'getting wet' to 'getting high' to 'getting faster'. Adventure tourism is at the cutting edge of world tourism, and its newness merits a comprehensive examination, unhindered by the confines of traditional delineations. Despite a number of attempts to define the concept of 'adventure tourism', consensus remains to be lacking within the academic community; indeed, as the boundaries of knowledge are receding, the number of proposed definitions and conceptualizations appear to be increasing. A recent proposition that adopts a fresh perspective by identifying an individual's state of mind as the central factor in the creation of 'adventure' is offered by Swarbrooke *et al.* (2003), who believe that an adventure tourism experience will be:

- (1) be of a heightened nature— a stimulating context will induce a range of emotions (of which excitement will be key), and separate it from everyday life;
- (2) entail intellectual, physical or emotional risks and challenges — these will be absorbing; and
- (3) be intrinsically rewarding, providing opportunities for enjoyment, learning and self-development.

An Adventure Tourism business provider can arrange a single adventure or a combination of adventure pursuits for paying tourists. When considering an Adventure Business it is probably more cost effective to concentrate on the aspects that you are good at and have a specialized interest in. Unlike other tourism businesses an Adventure Tourism enterprise will rely heavily on the specialist interest, experience and skills. Therefore, the specialist understanding required for adventure activities, is a critical area of experience for a would-be adventure tourism entrepreneur. Adventure tourism is a special form of tourism. The Adventure Travel Trade Association found that 26% of travelers engage in adventure activities on vacation and valued international adventure tourism as an US\$89 billion industry. India has a huge Adventure tourism potential but it is still at an early stage of development and the segment is now becoming a point of focus with the Ministry of Tourism and Various state tourism boards. Activities like Diving and Snorkeling, whitewater rafting and kayaking, skiing and snowboarding, hiking and biking, climbing and mountaineering, sailing and sea kayaking, Hang gliding and paragliding, contains a strong element of adventure. Adventure tourism in India is still in the early stage of development but the country has great scope and the segment is now becoming a point of focus with the Ministry of Tourism and various state tourism boards.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kshitij Sxena and A.K.Dey (2010) wanted to identify main motivational factors of attraction towards adventure sports among youths of National Capital Region. The main objective of the study was to improve the effectiveness of integrated marketing communications strategy. Sophie Price and Cian O Driscoll, aims to discuss the importance of managing perceived risk in the adventure tourism industry and the current the current use of management strategies. Peter B. Myles (2003) explored in his topic that there is a global concern that ecotourism and adventure travel is becoming a mass tourism market rapidly losing its tourist appeal. This will require repositioning ecotourism and adventure travel in the marketplace by introducing elements of exclusivity, perhaps at a premium price, so that the true value of the outdoor tourism experience will be measured by learning from nature rather than by boasting of luxury lodges in exotic locations filled with noisy, adrenalin pumping activities. Christian Schott (2007) examines the distribution channels structure as well as underlying factors influencing the most prominent channel choices within the adventure tourism industry. Paige P. Schneider (2007) attempts to segment the adventure travel market based on activities available to consumers. Mirna Soininen (2007) did this study for the purpose of searching for new marketing implementations for adventure travels to South-America. Adventure tourism is a rapidly growing sector in the industry, but is not commonly applying special marketing methods by the management. This research was completed by analyzing two young adventure travel companies and their current marketing applications.

TOURISM IN KASHMIR VALLEY: RESOURCE ATTRACTION

The northern most part of India and one of the three administrative provinces of Jammu & Kashmir State, valley of Kashmir is nestled in the towering Himalayas. This region often being called as "Switzerland of the east" and "Paradise on earth" consists of 10 districts namely Anantnag, Pulwama, Kulgam, Budgam, Shopian, Srinagar, Baramulla, Bandipora, Kupwara & Ganderbal. The valley offers variety of attractions for all kinds of tourists. Every district in the valley has something to attract the tourists of different nature and taste. Tourism in Kashmir is not a new concept but it has been synonymous with tourism from the time immemorial. The valley of Kashmir has attracted the attention of the countries beyond the frontiers of India and it has been an unending attraction of the visitors down the ages. The nature of Kashmir offers varied attractions to the tourists, which always made the Kashmir a land of great fascination and charm. Its

natural beauty, religious sites and rich cultural heritage makes it an ideal tourist destination. Major tourist places of Kashmir have been taken into account for development as these places hold tremendous tourism potential and have the inflow of both foreign and domestic tourists. A category wise classification of these major tourist places is given below.

S.No	Category	Name of the places
1	Scenic attractions a) Hill station	Gulmarg, Tangmarg, Sonamarg, Pahalgam, Yusmarg, Kokernag, Aharbal, Doedpathri
	b) Lakes	Dal, Nigeen, Manasbal, Wular, Alpathar, Vishensar, Krishansar, Gadsar, Satsar, Gangbal, Tarsar, Marsar
	c) Mountains and Peaks	Pir Panjal, Harmukh, Kolhoi, Kousarnag, Sheshnag
	d) Wild life protected areas	Dachigam National Park, Gulmarg wildlife sanctuary, Overa wildlife sanctuary, Baltal (Thajwas) wildlife sanctuary
2	Religious a) Muslim	Dargah Hazratbal, Shrine of Pir Dastigar, Chararsharif, Ahmshrief, Zain Shah wali, Baba Reshi, Jamia Masjid Srinagar, Shah Hamdani Masque, Pather Masjid, Aali Masjid, Janbaz Wali, Pir Baba Gafoor
	b) Hindu	Amarnath cave, Khir Bhawani, Shanker Acharia, Sharkia Devi,
	c) Sikh	Gurdwara Chati Padshahi Srinagar, Tapayana Sahib, Gurdwara Parimpillan Uri
3	Archeological and Historical	Hariparbat Fort, Pari Mahal, Badshah Dumat, Pantherthan, Harwan, Burzahama, Parhaspora, Pattan, Naranthal, Ushkura, Manasbal, Zainlank.
4	Other attractions	Royal Spring Golf Course, Mughal Gardens: (Nishat, Shalimar, Cheshimashahi, Harwan), Gulmarg cable Car, Uri Hydel Project. There are three universities in valley of Kashmir i) University of Kashmir Srinagar, ii) SKUAST Shalimar iii) IUST Awantipora

ADVENTURE TOURISM IN KASHMIR

J&K state is the India's northernmost state, lying between six mountain ranges and covering an area of 2,22,236 sq. kilometers. It is located between 32°17' and 36°58' North latitude, and between 37°26' and 80°30' East longitude. Jammu & Kashmir has three distinct regions viz. Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir valley – offering a rich diversity in landscapes, religions and people. Tourism is considered to be an economic bonanza for Jammu & Kashmir because industrial development is very low due to hilly terrains. Tourism is considered as a multi-segmented industry which provides different type of jobs like hotel managers, receptionists, guides, tour operators, travel agents, photographers, etc to strengthen the tourism. Kashmir has been considered as a centre of tourism attraction for different people. There are various places of tourist attraction in the state visited by the tourists. Jammu & Kashmir Tourism has declared 2011 as the year of the Adventure Tourism. Tourism in Kashmir depends on the natural resources that this place offers for economic profitability. Aharbal waterfall, lush vegetation and snow covered mountains have come to symbolize what the tourism industry in Kashmir can offer. Kashmir is taken as an enchanting and captivating luxury tourist destination where one can enjoy a leisurely holiday in the most wonderful climate surrounded by some of the world's best scenery. Kashmir is the world's most challenging destination for what is known as the "Adventure Tourism". One can say that Kashmir is the "Ultimate Adventure".

The Kashmir valley received the highest ever number of 13.14 lakh tourists which was 79% higher over the previous year. Table1 shows the estimation of the number of domestic tourists' arrival in India. Has increased from 563 million (2008) and 669 million (2009) to 740 million (2010), respectively. According to the statistics shown in the Table1, the annual growth rate of domestic tourists is increasing, but, with declining growth rate i.e. 20.9 percent for 2009 to 8 percent in 2010. 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. The observation based on the Table1 is as follows:

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

TABLE1: 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	79.39	0.55	92.35	0.54	99.73	0.48
J&KGrowth Rate	-	-	20.9	-1.8	8	-11.1
All India	5630.34	143.81	6688	143.72	7402.14	178.53
All India Growth Rate	-	-	18.8	-0.06	10.7	24.2

Source: Ministry of Tourism

The adventure tourism in the valley of Kashmir offers the tourists with wonderful opportunity to explore the vast terrains of the exotic Himalayan mountain ranges. Apart from natural beauty, the unique landscape of Kashmir also encourages one to find out one's inherent sporting caliber. With the increase in number of operators and tourists worldwide, adventure tourism has been identified as one of the fastest growing segment. Adventure tourism could be classified into three categories:

- **Aerial adventure**
- **Water adventure**
- **Land adventure**

The activities which are offered by the different agencies in valley of Kashmir are paragliding, parachuting, white water rafting, skiing, skating, angling, golfing, Mountaineering and climbing, etc. One of the famous adventure destinations in Kashmir is Gulmarg which is the ultimate destination for skiing. All the skiing equipment may be easily hired by there. The skiing season at Gulmarg is from November to February. The slopes in Gulmarg varying between 8,700 and 10,500 feet make the ski runs the highest in India. Besides, Gulmarg is the only heli-skiing resort in Asia. Even the amateurs can enjoy with the ski lifts and the chair lifts. The beauty of the Kashmir valley will not fail to mesmerize. Skiing as an adventure sports is fast catching up with the tourists coming to the Kashmir valley. Kashmir is the best place for those who have an interest in adventure sports. Two British Army Officers, Maj. Metcalf and Maj. Hadow set up the Ski Club of India at Gulmarg in 1927. Snow Skiing has been popular in the state of Jammu and Kashmir since then. Before independence, two skiing events used to take place annually at this ski resort during both Christmas and Easter. The skiing season in Gulmarg starts around mid-December and ends around the mid-April. One of the draws of skiing tourism in Kashmir is the friendly atmosphere of the valley. Also, it is probably the cheapest ski resort in the world, making it quite suitable for learning purposes too. Gulmarg also offers some exciting treks to the tourists, especially in the northern Pir Panjal Range. Some of the popular treks from Gulmarg are: Alpathar Lake, 13 km from Gulmarg.

Sindh and Lidder Rivers are famous for white water rafting. River rafting tourism was introduced quite recently in Kashmir valley. Lidder River in pahalgam is quite popular in river rafting. Minister of State for Tourism and Culture has introduced commercial white water rafting in a big way in pahalgam. Pahalgam is the starting point of some of the best that trekking can offer in the Himalayas. Trekking to Kolahai Glacier is dream come true- and there are potential treks to across

the ranges to Sonmarg and Ladakh. Besides, there are many day treks originating in pahalgam for the novices, like hiking to Basisaran or to Chaunasar and Mansar lakes, or not to forget to Sheshnag or all the way to Amarnath Cave. To attract tourists and promote adventure sports, the government is given green signal to market the traditional trekking and mountaineering routes, including troops dominated peaks of Sonmarg and Pahalgam. The mountaineers, trekkers or tourists intending to trek the peaks will get all the facilities, including the gear and equipment at nominal charges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following directions in this regard will be as:

- Efforts should be made to provide the information to the tourists about the famous adventure tourism destination.
- State government should develop the policies that support and foster adventure tourism in the state.
- Destinations with unusual or rare natural resources should be well-managed and not exploited so as to earn high praise from adventure travelers.
- Adventure tourism should be promoted in such a way so that it will bring about an enormous change in terms of revenue. Effective marketing is a key element for the growth of tourism.
- In depth market research should be carried out and a detail plan prepared before proceeding with such a venture.
- Security safety precaution should be taken care.

CONCLUSION

Adventure tourism is big business. It is major part of tourism Industry. It is one of the main reasons of people to travel. Adventure tourism has a great potential in the valley of Kashmir. Kashmir valley offers diversity of landscape and range of ecosystem lure the tourists to have the glimpse of such enchanting place. Tourism in Kashmir has improper contribution towards state economy where the expectation of tourists especially foreigners is not being met according to their needs. There is need to improve the standards of the accommodation sector in adventure tourism destinations so that the delivery mechanism in these establishments will meet the requirement of the tourists. Political and social instability also effects the growth of tourist arrivals negatively. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been declared as 'disturbed area' since long and has been living in the middle of various crises which hinders the growth of tourism in the state. Therefore, efforts should be made to promote peace in the state.

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