



MICE TOURISM PROMOTION AND CHALLENGES IN PATNITOP IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR AT UNION TERRITORY

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is not merely an activity for entertainment. It is an enriching and energizing activity. Jammu and Kashmir is among the most popular tourist attractions in the Himalayas in India. The Valley is abundant with many tourism-related resources. A suitable tourist strategy is necessary for the sustainable utilization of these tourism resources. In addition to examining government strategy for the development and growth of tourism in the Kashmir area, the purpose of the current study is to analyze tourism potentials and visitor flow in Kashmir. To achieve the study's aims, desk research methodology has been applied. Based on the findings, the tourism ministry of the Jammu and Kashmir government has drafted a tourist strategy. The proposed tourism policy includes promotional and development strategies for existing and new kinds of tourism, adhering to the sustainable approach, developing tourist infrastructure and human resources, guaranteeing safety and security, and promoting tourism education inside the state. Additionally, the state government is collaborating with various other interested organizations to promote ecotourism and unusual tourist spots. It has been reported that Jammu and Kashmir is replete in tourist sites, allowing travel companies to provide a variety of trip packages to visitors. For growth, tourism is the right vehicle. Tourism is an important industry in the state and is considered as a multi segmented industry, therefore provides different types of jobs like hotel managers, receptionists, guides, tour operators, travel agents, photographers and many other jobs which are required to strengthen the tourism. Kashmir is an area with great tourism potential and provides immense business opportunities for the Kashmir region. The present paper attempts to examine the problems and prospects of tourism in Kashmir in order to formulate the guideline for future tourism in the valley. It indicates that tourism is still in the early phase of development and that the valley has great potential.

Key words: *Right vehicles, Multi-segmented industries, Tourism potential, Business opportunity, Kashmir Tourism, Tourism Development, Tourism Policy*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry in Kashmir is without its problems like Inadequate capacity, costly travel, poor organization i.e. fragmented market, lack of supportive infrastructure, lapses in security & safety, uneven progress & political instability. Challenges facing Tourism include taxations, travel promotions, safety, infrastructure, and cross border set of laws among others. The majority of tourism destinations are not ready for visitors. Tourists or travelers might at times implicate travel marketing as overstated. **Inadequate Infrastructure:** India's tourism infrastructure, including airports, highways, and public transportation, is inadequate and often outdated. Many tourist destinations lack basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation facilities, and healthcare services. A beautiful hill station situated in the Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, Patnitop was originally known as 'Patan Da Talab' which literally translates to 'The Pond of the Princess.' Located on a scenic plateau of the Shiwalik Range of the Himalayas, this tourist place in Jammu Region boasts green

meadows and panoramic views of the glittering snow-capped peaks. The most popular hill station of Jammu Region, Patnitop offers a number of treks, few temples, monuments, and a garden for a memorable holiday with family, friends or even a partner. Patnitop has short treks that even family vacationers can enjoy, one such short trek from this tourist place leads to Nathatop, a perfect place to experience serenity and many adventure activities like paragliding. Another popular trek from Patnitop will take you to Madhatop, which is known for its skiing and other adventure activities. The three fresh water springs at Madhatop also attract nature lovers. Shiva Garh is another very popular tourist destination near Patnitop which makes for an exciting one day trek. For history buffs, a staircase of 270 steps carved on the face of the rocks, the 'Billo ki Powri' is a must-see in Patnitop. Patnitop, a hill station located on a plateau of the Shivaliks, is one of the most beautiful tourist places in Jammu, with its lovely deodar forests and serene atmosphere. There are also plenty of opportunities for a variety of adventure activities like trekking, along with sightseeing. One can also visit Kud Park to enjoy a picnic with families. Patnitop is also quite popular for its sweet dish, the 'Patisa,' which is a must-try. Kashmir is popularly known as "Paradise on Earth". The state is bestowed with beauty & rich forests, natural lakes, fresh water. The state of Jammu & Kashmir is known all over the world for its beautiful valleys, lakes, snow capped peaks, invigorating climate, valleys, cool climate, opportunities for trekking, fishing, skiing & number of archaeological, historical, cultural & religious places, cool climate & hospitable people. Among all industries, tourism is an important industry in the state. Tourism is considered to be an economic bonanza for J & K state because industrial development is very limited to hilly terrains. Being a labor-intensive industry, the scope of employment is very vast. Tourism is regarded as a multi-segmented industry, therefore provides different types of jobs like hotel managers, receptionists, guides, tour operators, travel agents, photographers & many other jobs which are required to strengthen tourism. For centuries Kashmir has been the center of attraction. There are various places of tourist attractions in the state visited by tourists. However most of the places are untapped. Tourism in Kashmir depends greatly on natural resources. Aharbal waterfall, lush vegetation & snow covered mountains have come to symbolize what the tourism industry in Kashmir can offer.

At the national level, our country is also progressing well in this sector. Tourism is not merely an activity for entertainment. It is an enriching and energizing activity. For a developing country like India, which is on the path of growth through structural transformation of the economy, tourism is the right vehicle. In 2005 India emerged as one among the top 40 tourism earners. With its forward & backward linkages with the host of sectors like transport, hospitality, education, health, banking etc. India is all set to reap the full potential of this vibrant sector. Therefore, equipping efforts are made by the government. under five-year plans.

India has significant potential for becoming a major global tourism destination. It has always attracted people from all over the globe through supreme & sublime hospitality, viz. athithi devo bhava (guest is equal to God). The World Tourism Organization (WTO) has reckoned India as the most favored destination among the countries of south Asia receiving more than 50% of total foreign tourist traffic in the area. We must appreciate the fact that India's share in global tourist arrivals is only 3.4 % while its share in the country's GDP is 12%. It has given employment to 120 lakh people directly & several lakh indirectly. Tourism surely has emerged as an instrument of employment generation, poverty alleviation & sustainable human development. The business impact of tourism has been tremendous on travel, trade & hospitality. Indian handicrafts particularly, jewelry, carpets, leather goods, ivory & brass work are the main shopping items of foreign tourists. According to one estimate nearly 40% of tourist expenditure on shopping is spent on these items. Kashmir is also known as "Switzerland of East " and is famous for its wealth of beauty. Its snow-capped mountains, rivers and freshwater lakes offer tourists ample opportunities for trekking, rafting, skiing & mountaineering. The wondrous state of J & K is bestowed with holy spots that make it an ideal pilgrim destination in India. However Kashmir has been subject of revival claims by Pakistan & India, both of which are nuclear powers & this problem has made the state a hotbed of hostility for the past six decades. This state attracted over a million tourists in the year 1988. With resurgence of violence in the state, the number of tourists has dwindled considerably over the last 2 decades. Tourism, one of Kashmir's main industries, has suffered tremendously due to violence in the region. The state has lost billions of dollars in tourism revenue. It is estimated that the state lost 27 million tourists from 1989 to 2002 leading to tourism revenue loss of us \$ 3.6 billion.

In Kashmir, a suitable, robust, and executable tourism strategy is required for the effective utilization of tourism resources. The policy should incorporate the beneficial contributions of all tourist stakeholders in the region. Tourism service businesses must be checked to ensure they are providing superior services, the growth of the infrastructure and superstructure, as well as the guarantee of security and safety are crucial factors to consider in the Valley.

Tourism is the temporary movement of individuals to locations beyond their normal context of residence and job, as well as their activities while at such sites. It encompasses travel for all functions (Tourism-Society

England, 1976). The tourism sector is a worldwide phenomena; it encompasses business and leisure travel. It is a major enterprise that will continue to expand. Tourism is thriving with dynamic development, new activities, new places, new technologies, and quick transformations (Charles & Brent, 2006). The phenomena and connection resulting from stays of non-residents inasmuch as they do not lead to a permanent location and are unrelated to a source of income (Hunriker& Krapt, 1942).

A phenomenon unique to the modern era that is dependent on the increasing need for change and relaxation, the desire to recognize the beauty of nature and art, and the belief that nature brings happiness to humans, and which facilitates nations and communities getting closer to one another as a result of advancements in commerce, industry, and communication and transportation technologies (Guyer and Feuler, 1905). Tourism encompasses any activities conducted outside the typical surroundings, which may or may not require an overnight stay away from home (IASSET,1981). The collection of factors, such as the interaction of visitors, merchants, governments, and host people, in the pursuit of attracting, pleasing, and inspiring tourists and other travelers, as well as hosting them (Macintosh & Goeldner, 1986), tourism is indeed a subjective experience, a sociological experience, a geographic phenomena, a resource value, and a commercial enterprise; it was not simply a tool for earning foreign cash and a way of promoting international cooperation, mutual understanding, and peace among nations (Nehru,2001). Tourism encompasses the actions of a person who travels to and stays at a location outside their typical surroundings for a period of less than one calendar year (UNWTO, 1994).

Tourism is the world's largest sector, and economic growth is one of the aims of tourism development. Tourism is one of the world's most lucrative sectors and a significant contributor to foreign exchange earnings. Man has been a wanderer from the beginning of time. Initially, they traveled in search of food and then refuge. In general, as time passed, their travel took on various additional dimensions, including traveling as an experience, travel as a pastime, for leisure, to appreciate beauty, as a pilgrimage, and to gain information about historical features and archaeological sites. Sometimes travel is linked with adventure, and sometimes it is related with religious purposes, such as visiting pilgrimages or taking a holy plunge. All of them serve to quench the mind's hunger. Thus, tourism is significant to human life in several aspects (Dasgupta et al, 2007). The peace process was started in 2004 as an attempt to settle that question of ownership over Kashmir. The peace process was a slow moving one but gave some hope to the tourism sector as the number of tourists visiting the state started to pick up since its initiation.

Tourism industry in Kashmir is without its problems like Inadequate capacity, costly travel, poor organization i.e. fragmented market, lack of supportive infrastructure, lapses in security & safety, uneven progress & political instability. Lack of infrastructure has been the greatest challenge for the growth of MICE Tourism in India. The country is in need of additional convention destinations for both large as well as small meeting spaces. Kashmir Valley is one of the top tourist destinations of India. Gulmarg, one of the most popular ski resort destinations in India, is also home to the world's highest green golf course.

Jammu & Kashmir tourism chalks out plans to attract international tourists with focus on Middle East and Southeast Asian countries: In conversation with ET Travel World, GN Itoo, Director, Tourism, Kashmir said that the tourism department has gained strength and confidence after an encouraging tourist season last year as they work out plans to repeat the same success with foreign tourists and travelers from key international markets. He said that a promotional camp.

2. Literature review

Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism has gained significant attention as an effective means of promoting tourism in various destinations around the world. This review aims to explore the existing literature related to the potential of MICE tourism in promoting tourism specifically in the region of Jammu and Kashmir. MICE tourism involves attracting business events, conferences, exhibitions, and corporate gatherings to a destination, which not only brings economic benefits but also helps in showcasing the cultural and natural heritage of the region.

- 1. The Role of MICE Tourism in Destination Promotion:** MICE tourism offers a unique opportunity for destinations to showcase their infrastructure, facilities, and local attractions to a diverse group of visitors. Kim and Chon (2017) emphasize that MICE events can create a multiplier effect on a destination's economy, as attendees often extend their stay for leisure purposes. This has the potential to expose

participants to the scenic beauty, cultural richness, and adventure opportunities that Jammu and Kashmir has to offer.

2. **Economic Impact of MICE Tourism:** Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive economic impact of MICE tourism on destinations. Sharma and Dabas (2019) highlight that MICE events attract high-spending participants, leading to increased revenue for local businesses including hotels, restaurants, and transportation services. In the context of Jammu and Kashmir, this could contribute significantly to the local economy, supporting livelihoods and fostering growth.
3. **Showcasing Heritage and Culture:** MICE events often include cultural components such as site visits, gala dinners, and cultural performances. These activities can help participants experience the rich heritage and culture of a destination. Jamal and Robinson (2012) argue that MICE tourism can contribute to the preservation and promotion of local traditions and customs. This could be particularly valuable for Jammu and Kashmir, given its unique cultural identity.
4. **Infrastructure Development:** MICE tourism necessitates advanced infrastructure, including convention centers, meeting facilities, and accommodation options. Nisha and Singh (2018) highlight that investments in such infrastructure not only benefit MICE tourism but also other forms of tourism. The development of modern infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir could enhance its overall attractiveness as a tourist destination.
5. **Challenges and Sustainability:** While the potential benefits of MICE tourism are evident, it also brings challenges related to environmental sustainability and cultural preservation. Gössling et al. (2020) discuss the importance of adopting responsible practices in MICE tourism to ensure minimal negative impacts on the destination. This resonates with Jammu and Kashmir's fragile ecosystem and the need to balance tourism growth with environmental conservation.
6. **Government Initiatives and Stakeholder Engagement:** Effective collaboration between the government, private sector, and local communities is essential for successful MICE tourism development. Gupta and Chauhan (2016) emphasize the role of government policies and incentives in attracting MICE events. It is crucial for Jammu and Kashmir to create a conducive environment for MICE tourism through supportive policies and infrastructure development.

The reviewed literature provides a compelling basis for the hypothesis that MICE can indeed be used as a tool for the promotion of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. The potential economic, cultural, and infrastructural benefits, along with the challenges that need to be addressed, collectively suggest that a well-planned MICE strategy could contribute significantly to the region's tourism growth while preserving its natural and cultural assets. Further empirical research and practical implementation are necessary to validate and fully realize the potential outlined in the literature.

H1: Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) is a tool for promotion of tourism during the lean season in Jammu and Kashmir

Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism is a specialized form of tourism that can bring substantial economic benefits to destinations. This review aims to examine the existing literature on the relationship between effective planning and promotion strategies and the influx of MICE tourists to Jammu and Kashmir. Effective planning and strategic promotion are crucial in attracting MICE events and participants, fostering economic growth, and enhancing the overall tourism experience.

1. **Strategic Destination Branding and Positioning:** Effective planning and promotion strategies often start with establishing a unique and compelling destination brand. Wang and Ye (2018) highlight that a well-defined brand identity helps differentiate a destination and attract specific market segments. In the context of Jammu and Kashmir, showcasing its cultural richness, natural beauty, and unique offerings through branding could significantly impact MICE tourist inflow.
2. **Infrastructure Development and Accessibility:** Infrastructure plays a pivotal role in attracting MICE tourists. Vanhove (2016) stresses the importance of accessible transportation, modern convention centers, and quality accommodation. Jammu and Kashmir's connectivity improvements, coupled with purpose-

built venues, could enhance its attractiveness as a MICE destination, thereby positively impacting visitor numbers.

3. **Stakeholder Collaboration and Engagement:** Effective planning requires collaboration between various stakeholders, including government bodies, local communities, and the private sector. A study by Neuhofer et al. (2012) emphasizes that successful MICE tourism development involves aligning interests and creating synergies among stakeholders. In the context of Jammu and Kashmir, involving local communities and ensuring their support could lead to a more holistic and sustainable tourism approach.
4. **Targeted Marketing and Promotion:** Customized marketing strategies that target specific MICE segments are essential. Huh et al. (2019) highlight the significance of tailoring promotional efforts to the preferences and needs of MICE organizers and attendees. Jammu and Kashmir could benefit from tailored marketing campaigns that emphasize its unique offerings and cater to the interests of different MICE groups.
5. **Digital and Online Presence:** In today's digital age, an effective online presence is crucial for attracting MICE tourists. According to Xiang et al. (2017), destination websites and social media platforms play a pivotal role in disseminating information and engaging potential visitors. Developing an informative and user-friendly online presence for Jammu and Kashmir could facilitate decision-making for MICE organizers and participants.
6. **Measuring Impact and Continuous Improvement:** Ongoing assessment and adjustment of strategies are important for sustained success. A study by Buhalis and Costa (2006) underscores the need for destination management organizations to monitor the impact of their strategies and adapt to changing market dynamics. Jammu and Kashmir could benefit from a dynamic approach that incorporates feedback and insights from MICE organizers and participants.

The reviewed literature strongly supports the hypothesis that effective planning and promotion strategies indeed have a positive impact on the influx of MICE tourists to Jammu and Kashmir. The importance of destination branding, infrastructure development, stakeholder collaboration, targeted marketing, digital presence, and continuous improvement is evident. Implementing a comprehensive and tailored approach that encompasses these factors could position Jammu and Kashmir as a competitive MICE destination, attracting steady stream of MICE tourists and contributing significantly to its economic growth and overall tourism development.

H2: Effective planning and promotion strategies positively impact the influx of MICE tourists to Jammu and Kashmir.

The growth of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism is contingent upon a conducive environment that includes well-developed infrastructure, seamless connectivity, and robust security measures. This review seeks to explore existing literature pertaining to the hypothesis that challenges in these areas significantly impede the growth of MICE tourism in a given region.

1. **Infrastructure Challenges:** Infrastructure is a cornerstone of MICE tourism, encompassing convention centers, hotels, transportation, and other facilities. Weaver (2006) emphasizes that inadequate infrastructure can deter MICE organizers from choosing a destination. Insufficient or outdated facilities in a region can lead to scheduling conflicts, capacity issues, and decreased event quality, hampering the region's attractiveness to MICE organizers.
2. **Connectivity Limitations:** Effective transportation networks, including air, road, and rail connectivity, are crucial for the success of MICE tourism. Buultjens and Ratna (2004) underscore the significance of convenient access for event participants. Poor connectivity can lead to logistical challenges, higher travel costs, and longer travel times, making the region less appealing to both organizers and attendees.
3. **Security Concerns:** Security is a top priority for MICE events due to the high-profile nature of attendees and the potential economic impact. Ritchie (2008) highlights that concerns about safety and stability can deter event planners and participants. Regions with a history of security issues or a perceived lack of safety measures may struggle to attract MICE events, as organizers prioritize the well-being of their participants.
4. **Perception and Reputation:** A region's reputation, both domestically and internationally, plays a significant role in attracting MICE tourism. Kim et al. (2018) stress the importance of a positive image

that reflects safety, hospitality, and professionalism. Negative perceptions about infrastructure, connectivity, or security can discourage MICE organizers from considering the region for their events.

5. **Economic Impact:** Infrastructure, connectivity, and security challenges can impact the overall economic benefits derived from MICE tourism. A study by Hesam et al. (2020) highlights that inadequate infrastructure and security concerns can limit attendee numbers and spending, thereby reduces the economic impact on the local economy.
6. **Government and Stakeholder Engagement:** Government support and stakeholder collaboration are essential for addressing these challenges. Jamal and Getz (1995) emphasize the role of public-private partnerships in mitigating issues related to infrastructure, connectivity, and security. Active involvement of government authorities and relevant stakeholders is crucial for creating an environment conducive to MICE tourism growth.

The reviewed literature substantiates the hypothesis that challenges related to infrastructure, connectivity, and security indeed have a significant negative impact on the growth of MICE tourism in a region. Inadequate facilities, limited transportation options, security concerns, negative perceptions, economic repercussions, and the absence of collaborative efforts collectively hinder the region's attractiveness to MICE organizers and participants. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving investments in infrastructure, improved connectivity, enhanced security measures, and strategic efforts to improve the region's image. Only through such efforts can a region create a favorable environment for MICE tourism to flourish, contributing to economic growth and development.

H3: The challenges in infrastructure, connectivity, and security significantly affect the growth of MICE tourism in the region.

The growing significance of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism has led hotels to recognize the importance of offering specialized facilities and services to cater to the unique needs of this segment. This review explores existing literature to examine the hypothesis that hotels equipped with tailored amenities for MICE events experience higher occupancy rates and revenue.

1. **Customized Event Spaces:** Customized event spaces, designed to accommodate a variety of MICE requirements, are a key factor influencing hotel choice among event planners. Erbas et al. (2020) underline the role of versatile spaces that can be adapted for different types of events. Hotels offering well-equipped and flexible event areas attract a larger pool of event organizers, contributing to increased occupancy rates.
2. **Technological Advancements:** Modern MICE events heavily rely on advanced technology for presentations, communication, and networking. Lee et al. (2017) emphasize that hotels with state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment and connectivity solutions enhance the overall event experience. Such technological capabilities make hotels attractive venues for tech-savvy event organizers and participants.
3. **Expert Event Support Staff:** Hotels that provide experienced event planners and support staff help alleviate the burden of event coordination for organizers. Oftentimes, as highlighted by Lankford and Howard (1994), the availability of dedicated staff who understands the intricacies of MICE events can significantly influence the choice of a venue. Hotels with skilled event teams offer a level of convenience that resonates positively with organizers.
4. **Ancillary Services and Packages:** Value-added services, including group rates, exclusive packages, and discounted room blocks, appeal to the cost-conscious nature of MICE organizers. A study by Wang et al. (2019) suggests that such offerings can lead to cost savings for both organizers and attendees. Hotels that provide comprehensive packages and incentives are likely to attract a larger share of MICE business.
5. **Networking Opportunities:** MICE events are platforms for networking and social interaction. Martin et al. (2013) highlight that hotels with common areas, lounges, and dining options conducive to networking foster a favorable environment. The availability of spaces that facilitate interpersonal interactions enhances the overall event experience, leading to a higher likelihood of repeat bookings.
6. **Positive Reputation and Word-of-Mouth:** Hotels that consistently deliver exceptional experiences for MICE events tend to develop a positive reputation within the industry. According to Hwang et al. (2017), positive feedback from event organizers and participants influences the hotel's image. A strong reputation

contributes to increased trust and recognition, leading to higher demand and subsequently improved occupancy rates and revenue.

The existing literature provides substantial support for the hypothesis that hotels equipped with specialized facilities and services for MICE events indeed experience higher occupancy rates and revenue. The provision of customized event spaces, technological advancements, expert event support, value-added services, networking opportunities, and a positive reputation collectively contribute to the attractiveness of such hotels to MICE organizers and participants. By aligning their offerings with the unique requirements of the MICE segment, hotels stand to gain a competitive advantage, leading to enhanced financial performance, heightened brand visibility, and a stronger position within the MICE tourism market.

H4: Specialized facilities and services for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) events result in higher occupancy rates and revenue in hotels.

Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism has gained recognition for its potential to stimulate economic growth in various regions. This review aims to explore existing literature that supports the hypothesis that MICE tourism contributes to the economic development of Jammu and Kashmir by generating employment opportunities and fostering growth for local businesses.

1. **Employment Generation:** MICE tourism can lead to the creation of a diverse range of employment opportunities. According to Jamal and Robinson (2012), hosting MICE events requires a workforce skilled in event management, hospitality, logistics, and related fields. The influx of MICE tourists necessitates hiring additional staff for hotels, restaurants, transportation services, and event venues. This, in turn, contributes to reduced unemployment rates and an improved standard of living for local communities.
2. **Direct and Indirect Economic Impact:** Buhalis and Costa (2006) emphasize that MICE tourism's economic impact extends beyond the tourism sector. Direct spending by event participants on accommodation, dining, transportation, and leisure activities generates revenue for local businesses. Additionally, indirect economic effects occur through supply chain interactions, creating demand for various goods and services such as food supplies, audiovisual equipment, floral arrangements, and more.
3. **Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs):** MICE tourism benefits small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that provide specialized products and services. Kim et al. (2018) note that local vendors, artisans, souvenir shops, and cultural performers can benefit from the increased demand associated with MICE events. These enterprises play a crucial role in preserving and promoting the unique cultural identity of Jammu and Kashmir.
4. **Improved Infrastructure and Investment:** The economic prospects of MICE tourism can encourage infrastructure development and investments. Nisha and Singh (2018) suggest that the need for modern convention centers, upgraded transportation systems, and quality accommodation can attract public and private sector investments. Improved infrastructure not only benefits MICE tourism but also contributes to overall regional development.
5. **Increased Revenue and Government Income:** Higher spending by MICE tourists translates into increased revenue for the local economy. Sharma and Dabas (2019) highlight that MICE participants generally spend more compared to leisure tourists due to the nature of their activities. The resulting rise in tax revenue benefits the local government, allowing for investments in public services, infrastructure, and community development projects.
6. **Skill Development and Training:** Hosting MICE events requires a skilled workforce. Gursoy et al. (2010) emphasize the role of training and skill development programs to equip locals with the expertise needed to excel in various roles associated with MICE tourism. These programs not only contribute to improved service quality but also enhance employability within and beyond the tourism sector.

The reviewed literature substantiates the hypothesis that MICE tourism indeed contributes significantly to the economic development of Jammu and Kashmir. The generation of employment opportunities across various sectors, the direct and indirect economic impact, support for local businesses, improved infrastructure, increased revenue, and skill development collectively highlight the positive effects of MICE tourism on the

region's economic landscape. By leveraging these contributions, Jammu and Kashmir has the potential to achieve sustainable economic growth and improve the overall quality of life for its residents.

H5: Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism contributes to the economic development of Jammu and Kashmir by generating employment and boosting local businesses.

Sustainable development of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism involves a comprehensive approach that includes active collaboration between the government, local communities, and stakeholders within the hotel industry. This review delves into existing literature to explore the hypothesis that collaborative efforts among these entities are vital for ensuring the sustainable growth of MICE tourism in a region.

1. **Government Policies and Regulations:** Effective government policies and regulations play a pivotal role in shaping the direction of MICE tourism. Jamal and Getz (1995) emphasize the need for supportive policies that incentivize investments, streamline permits, and ensure environmental conservation. Governments that actively engage in the promotion and regulation of MICE tourism contribute to a conducive environment for growth.
2. **Infrastructure Development:** Collaboration between the government and hotel industry stakeholders is critical for infrastructure development. Weaver (2006) highlights the importance of modern convention centers, transportation networks, and accommodation options. Such developments are often undertaken with government support and private sector investments, creating the necessary foundation for successful MICE events.
3. **Community Involvement and Cultural Preservation:** Local communities play a significant role in the sustainable development of MICE tourism. Gursoy et al. (2010) stress the importance of community engagement to mitigate potential negative impacts and foster positive interactions between visitors and residents. Involving local communities in decision-making processes helps preserve cultural authenticity and create a more authentic destination experience.
4. **Stakeholder Alignment:** Collaboration among hotel industry stakeholders is essential for delivering seamless MICE experiences. Erbas et al. (2020) highlight that coordination between hotels, event planners, and support service providers, ensures smooth event operations. Joint efforts to meet the diverse needs of MICE organizers and participants enhance the overall attractiveness of the region.
5. **Environmental Sustainability:** Sustainable MICE tourism requires a shared commitment to environmental conservation. Gössling et al. (2020) stress the importance of responsible practices that minimize the ecological footprint of events. Collaborative initiatives between the government, hotels, and local communities can lead to the adoption of sustainable measures that protect the natural environment.
6. **Capacity Building and Training:** Collaboration between stakeholders enables the implementation of capacity-building programs and training initiatives. Neuhofer et al. (2012) highlight the need for skill development to ensure the delivery of high-quality services. Government-led training programs supported by the hotel industry enhance the competence of the local workforce, contributing to improved visitor experiences.

The reviewed literature strongly supports the hypothesis that collaborative efforts between the government, local communities, and hotel industry stakeholders are indispensable for achieving sustainable development in MICE tourism. The alignment of government policies, infrastructure development, community involvement, stakeholder coordination, environmental sustainability, and skill-building initiatives collectively contribute to a holistic approach that balances economic growth with social and environmental well-being. By fostering these collaborations, regions can position themselves as responsible and attractive MICE tourism destinations, ensuring lasting benefits for all stakeholders involved.

H6: Collaborative efforts between the government, local communities, and hotel industry stakeholders are essential for the sustainable development of MICE tourism in the region.

Objectives

- To explore possibilities for tourism prospects in J & K state & accordingly to initiate development activities in the state that will step towards growth and prosperity of tourists in the entire state.
- To Evaluate the government's tourist growth and development strategy for the Kashmir valley.
- To analyze the MICE tourism in Jammu & Kashmir towards promotion and challenges of small scale business at union territory.
- Examine the Tourism Prospects in the Jammu and Kashmir Valley
- To study the Tourism Potentials in Kashmir Valley
- To assess the tourist flow in Kashmir Valley
- To evaluate the government policy for the growth and development of tourism in Kashmir valley

Methodology

In the present study, secondary has been used. Secondary data has been collected from the tourism department and economic survey of J & K. Author gathered, computed & codified the data in order to find out the impact of tourism on the economy & its problems & prospects. In order to find out the result of peace & disturbance on tourism regression method is used. This conceptual research investigates the tourism potentials, visitor flow, and tourism strategy of the Jammu and Kashmir area. To achieve the goals, data was gathered from diverse published and unpublished papers, journals, textbooks, journals, newspapers, and websites, among others.

It is based on both primary and secondary data. As the primary source is concerned I collected unpublished materials from various departments. However, most present study is based on secondary data. And secondary data has been collected from tourism department and economic survey of Jammu and Kashmir authors gathered, completed & codified the data in order to find out then tourist arrivals in valley of Kashmir and percentage change of tourists over previous years and impact of tourism on economy and its problems and prospects.

The study examines a destination branding strategy to gauge its effectiveness and extent of collaboration and to elaborate on the link between stakeholders. It aims to develop a conceptual model of destination branding that integrates MICE and heritage tourism. An altered conceptual model of destination branding will explain how a destination can effectively make use of both MICE and heritage offerings to better meet visitors' needs and to eventually better perform destination branding equity.

Data collection took place in 2017 in New Orleans, Louisiana. New Orleans is one of the most popular MICE destinations in the USA, while simultaneously being recognized for its rich cultural heritage assets, yet it is meagerly studied from a creative destination branding perspective. The study focused on the 2017 NRPA (National Recreation and Parks Association) annual conference (representing MICE tourism) held at the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in September of that year. The study population was the conference attendees, which numbered more than 7000, from other states and countries.

The survey was developed in English for both domestic and international participants. A pilot study was conducted offsite, recruiting people who had participated in MICE tourism before through the researchers' personal networks. A total of fifteen participants, including university students and faculty/staff members, government officials, private business owners and retirees participated in the pilot study. Based on pilot responses and comments, some wording and survey contents were adjusted to be more appropriate. Following the pilot study, the survey was sent to three tourism scholars for further scrutiny to strengthen the veracity of the survey.

The questionnaire has three parts. The first part includes the purpose of travel and information source, as well as travel patterns, such as length of stay and travel party. Travel motivations and preferred activities/attractions were also included in this part. The survey instrument was designed based on related studies in the literature. MICE participants' perceptions were measured by quantifying how the heritage element of the destination and tour activities influenced their MICE experience as a means of understanding the symbiotic relationship between heritage tourism and MICE tourism.

The second part regards the destination branding strategy based on the modified branding model. These elements were derived from the destination branding literature. This part of the survey introduced a destination's presented brand (DB), Destination Brand Awareness (DBA), Destination Brand Experience (DBExp), Destination Brand Personality (DBP) and Destination Brand Equity (DBE). A five-point Likert

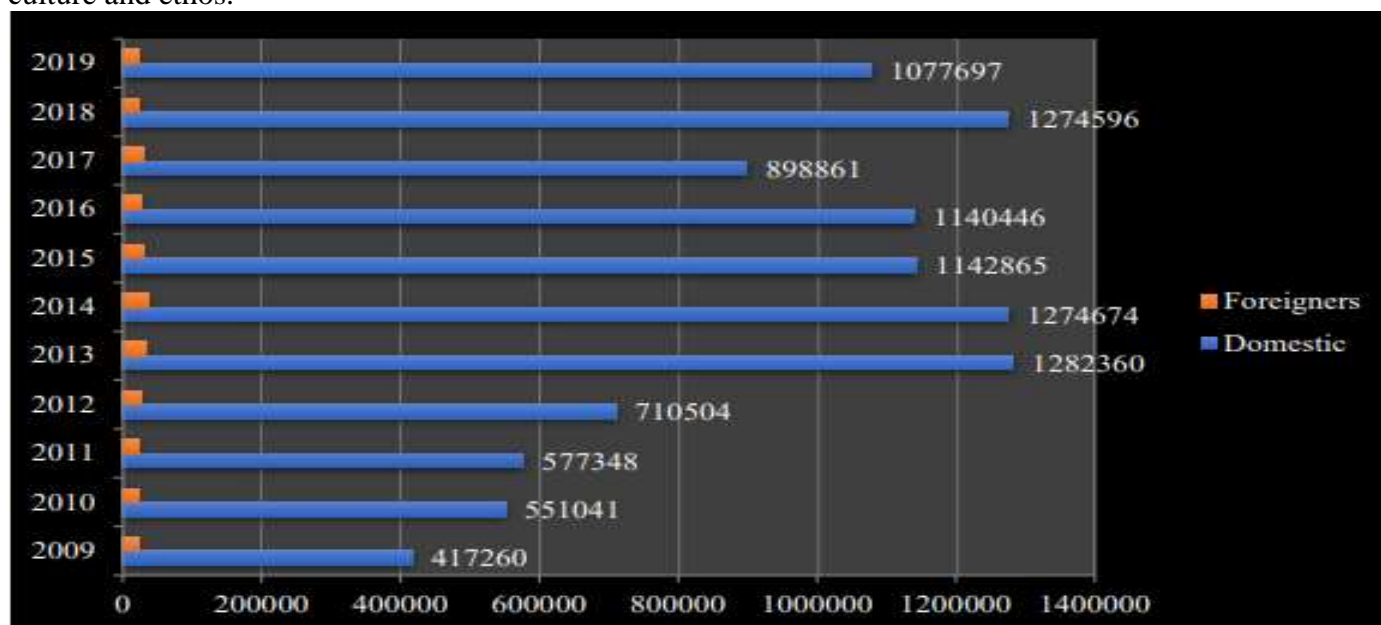
scale (strongly agree (5)–strongly disagree (1), extremely satisfied (5)–extremely dissatisfied (1)) was used to measure conference attendees’ perceptions about destination branding and the marketing activities that make the destination more distinctive and attractive. With New Orleans as an empirical case, the research adopted the city’s most recent destination branding campaign “One Time in New Orleans”. This branding campaign was launched only two weeks before the conference, so presumably not many attendees were aware of the new campaign. However, instead of using a destination branding phrase created only for this study, the actual campaign name as an example of the destination brand of New Orleans was used.

MICE Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir

MICE travel is the ideal approach to combine business and pleasure. Tourism for meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions (MICE) offers unique prospects for business growth, such as casual conversations with old partners, encounters with prospective investors, consumers, and suppliers, information exchange, and the introduction of new technology. The Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry is rapidly expanding and closely related with business travel. Kashmir is renowned around the world for its diverse array of goods. Apple, dry fruit, handicrafts, and other Kashmir valley items yearly draw a large number of business travelers from throughout the world. In Kashmir, the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) and Nageen Club were two significant MICE sites.

Kashmir was extremely popular with visitors until the late 1980s, and tourist arrivals continued to rise. Since the early 1990s, however, unrest has reduced the number of tourists visiting the valley; in 1993, no domestic tourists visited Kashmir (Sharma et al, 2012; Shah et al, 2013; Kumar & Dar, 2014; Dar, 2014). Thus according graph number 2, the number of tourists visiting Kashmir is on the rise again, with minor oscillations towards the end.

MICE Tourism in India Challenges and Opportunities: India has been downgraded to the 35th position. One of the most important features of the MICE business is that it is not sensitive to the seasonality factor. In that case, India needs to develop itself as one of the most lucrative destinations with its world heritage sites, culture and ethos.



Source: Ministry of Tourism government of Jammu and Kashmir (2020)

The MICE industry in India, though well equipped to take on its immediate neighbors and in certain cases the Global warhorses, has to trudge a long path before it comes up as a “Top of the mind” destination amongst global MICE organizers. As per ICCA, India occupies 35th position in the world, with a total of 116 Global conferences organized in the year 2014 -15. In this category the global leaders include USA (831 meetings), Germany (659 meetings), Spain (578 meetings), United Kingdom (543 meetings) and France (533 meetings). In terms of immediate neighbors, only China (332) leads at the world stage, other competitors like Taipei (145), Singapore (142), Malaysia (133) and Thailand (118) are within striking range.

Major Challenges: The challenges facing Jammu and Kashmir as a MICE destination are the same as the challenges facing India as a whole. Occurrences such as the recent global recession and the drop in the National Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have forced companies to cut down on extra costs, incurred through large size meetings and conferences. The result of this is companies hosting annual events in their respective campuses and not venturing out to look for meeting and conference venues. The impact of the recession and the drop in

the National GDP has also resulted in the increase of travel fares reducing inbound business travel from domestic and international destinations. This, in turn, has resulted in companies rethinking hosting or participating in large conferences in the city.

☒ On occasion, the Federal Ministry of Tourism undertook several steps to promote the tourism industry's expansion in Kashmir. Recently, the Ministry authorized the construction of Naggar Nagar to Watlab-Bandipora as a part of a massive tourism circuit. Source: Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of J&K. Infrastructure, such as lodging units and (2020). On occasion, the Union Ministry undertook several steps to promote the development of the tourism industry in Kashmir. Recently, the Union Ministry authorized the construction of Naggar Nagar to Watlab Bandipora as a part of a massive tourism circuit. In this circuit, infrastructure like accommodations and paved streets were created. The Indian institute of Skiing and Mountaineering receives funding from the central government for the improvement of the institution and the organization of further adventure activities, competitions, and equipment for arranging adventure activities. The Union Ministry of Tourism has created Hunar Se Rozgar Tak (HSRT), a programme for skill development. Under this programme, certificate courses in Tourism Facilitator, etc. are given to students so that they may assist and serve visitors in a professional manner.

Findings

After the peace process, the sector like tourism received great importance. Fortunately Kashmir is an area with great tourism potential & provides immense business opportunities for the Kashmir region. The growth rate in the tourist arrivals from 2007 to 2022 has recorded a highly fluctuated erratic trend. In the year 2012, 2013, 2014 there was a negative growth rate of (-) 92.37, (-) 54.16, (-) 165.35% respectively & thereafter there was significant increase in domestic as well as foreign tourists' arrivals in Kashmir. During 2018, the increase trend went down to a negative growth i.e.(-)40.13%. The reason was attacks on tourists in Kashmir valley.

Year	Domestic	Foreign	Total	%Age Over Years	Change Previous
2007	322	8198	8520		---
2008	375	9592	9967	14.51%	
2009	7027	9111	16131	38.21%	
2010	99636	10247	109883	85.31%	
2011	200162	17130	217292	49.43%	
2012	104337	7575	111912	-92.3%	
2013	66732	5859	72591	-54.16%	
2014	24670	2686	27356	-165.35%	
2015	182205	8959	191164	58.68%	
2016	358095	18234	376729	49.25%	
2017	585702	19680	605382	37.77%	
2018	412879	20009	432888	-39.84%	
2019	417264	24576	441840	2.026%	
2020	550100	22000	572100	22.76%	
2021	520454	20809	541253	-5.69%	
2022	698564	24376	722940	25.14%	

Table 1: Domestic & foreign tourists arrivals in Kashmir valley from 2007 to 2022

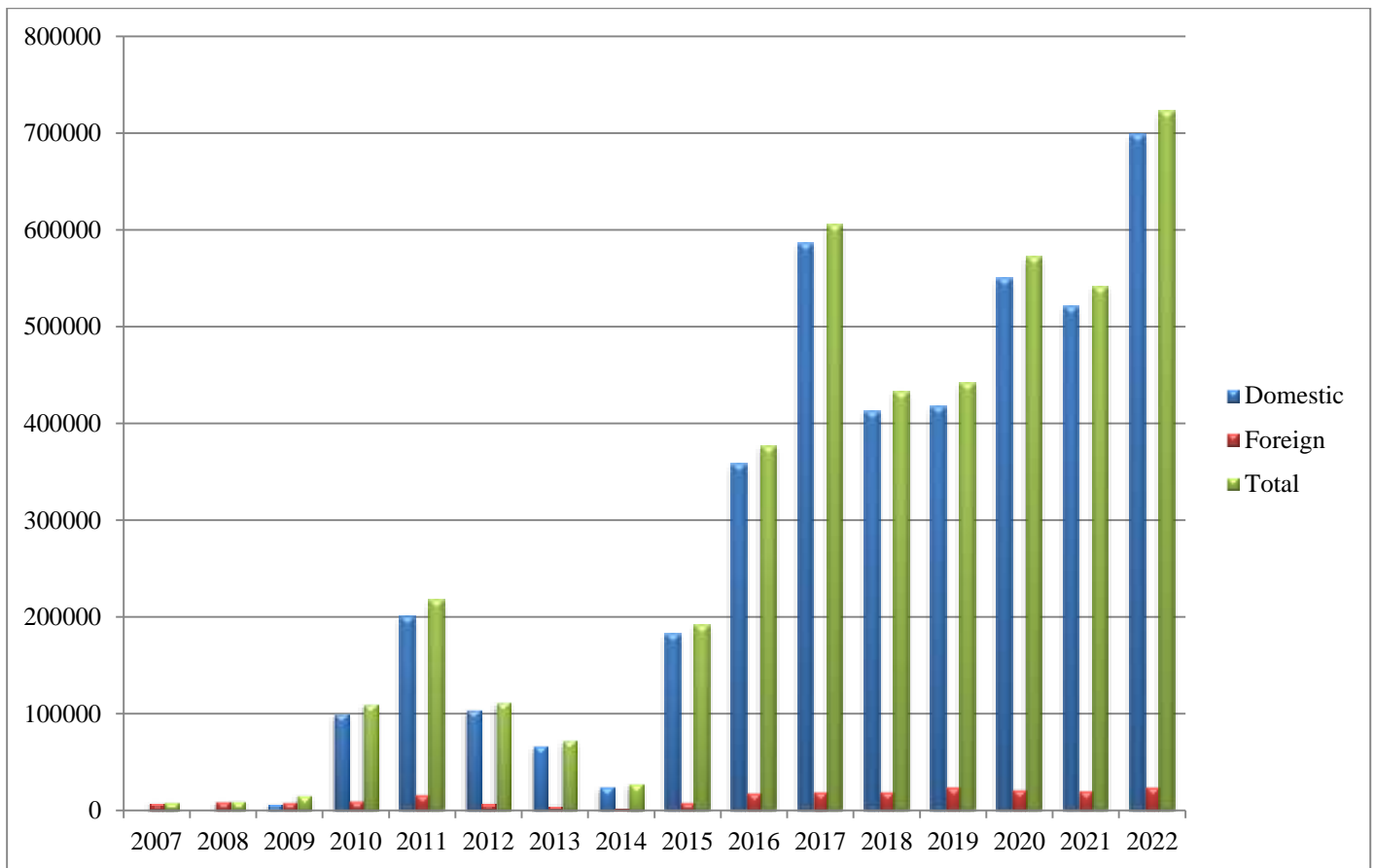
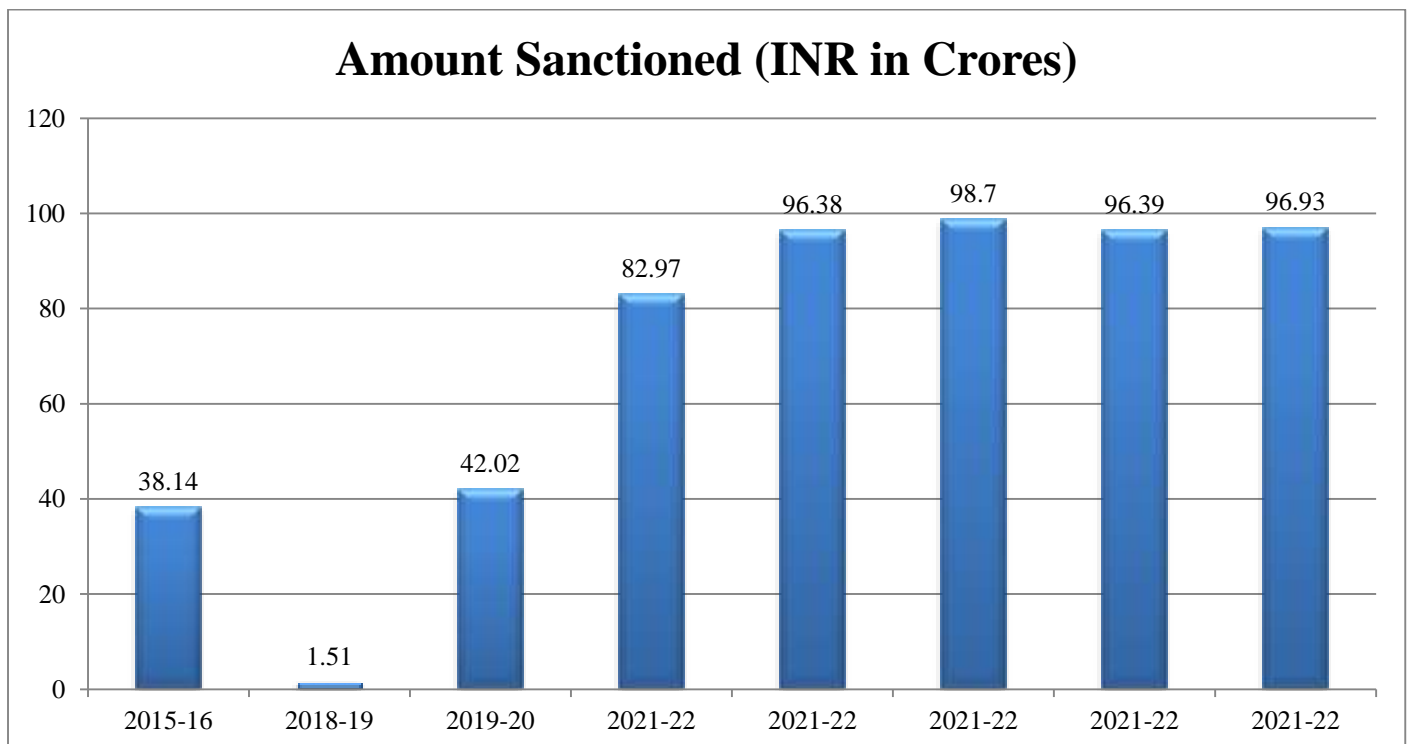


Table No. Central government initiatives for the development of tourism in Kashmir



Source: Ministry of Tourism government of Jammu and Kashmir (2022) (Note: 2021 data is provisional till Oct)

The Union Ministry of Tourism took various initiatives from time to time for the development of tourism in Kashmir. Recently the Union Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned the development of Naggar Nagar to Watlab Bandipora under a mega tourism circuit. Infrastructure, like accommodation units and organizing of more adventure activities, competitions and purchasing of equipment for organizing adventure activities. Another scheme launched by the Union Ministry of tourism is Hunar Se Rozgar Tak (HSRT), a skill development program. Under this program, certificate courses of Tourist Facilitator etc. are offered to students so that they would guide the tourists in the proper way and would serve them professionally.

Name of project	Year	Amount Sanctioned (INR in Crores)
Mega Tourist Circuit	2015-16	38.14
Development of Adventure tourism	2018-19	1.51
Prasad	2019-20	42.02
Integrated Development of Tourism Infrastructure Projects in the State	2021-22	82.97
Integrated Development of Tourist Facilities at Jammu- Rajouri- Shopian- Pulwama under Himalayan Circuit.	2021-22	96.38
Integrated Development of Tourist Facilities under PM Development Package	2021-22	98.7
Integrated Development of Tourist Facilities at Anantnag Kishtwar- Pahalgam –Daksum – Ranjit Sagar Dam under Himalayan Circuit.	2021-22	96.39
Integrated Development of Tourist Facilities at Gulmarg Baramulla- Kupwara- Leh Circuit under Himalayan Circuit Theme.	2021-22	96.93

Source: Ministry of Tourism Government of India (2021)

- ☒ Another effort to enhance pilgrimage sites is the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Enhancement Drive (PRASAD). Under PRASAD, Hazratbal and its neighboring regions in Srinagar, Kashmir, are undergoing renovation. The main components of the project include tensile structures for summer and rainy season prayers, four-laning of the Dargah opening, ritual cleansing spots, and dormitories for devotees from distant areas, re-designing the Dargah market, an Islamic Cultural Centre, and a unique Sewage Disposal Plant for the shrine complex. Under the Himalayan Circuit, the Union Ministry of Tourism has also begun integrated development of tourism amenities. Clearly and unequivocally the circuits are; Gulmarg-Baramulla-Kupwara-Leh, Anantnag-Pahalgam-Daksum-Ranjit Sagar Dam and Jammu-Rajouri-Shopian-Pulwama. It includes the creation of a floating café on Dal Lake, theme parks on the Golf Course, a cruise on the Jhelum River, a skating rink in Pahalgam, and border tourism in Suchegarh, Salamabad, and Uri. Jammu and Kashmir's Ministry of Tourism has prepared a tourism strategy to encourage and enhance the state's tourism. Certain places have been designated for the development of tourism throughout the Kashmir region and the state as a whole.
- ☒ To maintain the state's tourist resources, the tourism strategy involves the creation and promotion of new types of tourism and adherence to the sustainable tourism approach. In partnership with a number of other interested entities, the state administration is exerting great effort to promote ecotourism and unusual tourist sites. In addition, the policy includes the development of tourist infrastructure and human resources, the promotion of cultural tourism within the state, and the promotion of safety and security.

State Tourism Policy: The Ministry of Tourism government of Jammu and Kashmir has drafted a tourism policy to promote and develop tourism in the state. Certain areas have been identified under which tourism will be developed across the Kashmir region, the state in general. Tourism policy includes the development and promotion of new forms of tourism and abiding the sustainable tourism approach in order to protect the state tourism resources. The state government is working hard to promote eco-tourism and offbeat tourist destinations in collaboration with several other concerned bodies. In addition to this, the policy constitutes development of tourism infrastructure and human resources, ensuring safety and security, and encouraging tourism education within the state.

Table No. State government initiatives for the development of Tourism

Name of project	Year	Amount Sanctioned (INR in Crores)
Eco-Tourism	2015	2.5
Promotional Campaign	2021	3.90
Border Tourism	2022	600

Source: Different newspapers

Result Discussion

Kashmir is affected not only by violence & turmoil. There are still some constraints which lead to poor visitors' experience, slow growth of revenue. Tourism industry in

Kashmir is without its problems like Inadequate capacity, costly travel, poor organization i.e. fragmented market, lack of supportive infrastructure, lapses in security & safety, uneven progress & political instability. So, whatever is the problem, suggestions must be offered for overall improvement of tourism in Kashmir valley.

- Kashmir has an abundance of cultural and natural tourism resources.
- Religious tourism, Outdoor recreation, Wildlife tourism, Ecotourism, and MICE tourism are prominent tourism categories.
- Kashmir's tourism potential is not properly tapped.
- The government's planned tourism programme mentions product diversification depending on the profile of tourists.
- Due to militancy, the number of visitors visiting Kashmir has fluctuated throughout the years.
- Inadequate facilities and infrastructure, as well as a lack of comprehensive tourist planning, exist.
- The number of international visitors to Kashmir is quite low compared to domestic visitors.
- The state's tourism policy is not completely developed.
- The state administration works tirelessly to promote Kashmir as a safe, secure, and welcoming tourism destination.
- Emphasis must be placed on security of the interior tourism network, to make tourists feel secure & safe.
- Effective planning, development & marketing programmes should be resigned.
- Quality assurance is important to attract customers & encourage repeat visits.
- Eco tourism for sustainable livelihood must be encouraged.
- Stepping up investment & boosting infrastructure activities & enriching security should be on the top of agenda.
- Service quality i.e. in hotels, airports, railway stations etc. needed to be upgraded.
- Proper market segmentation should be done on the basis of criteria like demographic, socio economic & geographic variables.
- Education, research & training are crucial cogs in the wheel of tourism.

CONCLUSION

India in Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed a rapid growth in the MICE industry, especially after economic liberalization. World-class convention centers and hotels have been developed to host international meetings, conferences etc. This is an ideal way to not just show-case our infrastructure but also promote other types of tourism in India. Given the increasing popularity of the MICE industry in India, it is imperative that its role and contribution in the economy be assessed and quantified. This study, as part of another study "Second Tourism Satellite Account of India ", estimates the share of MICE tourism in overall tourism in the overall economy with respect to GDP and employment. The study reveals that the MICE industry contributes 0.12 per cent to GDP and 0.14 per cent to employment as its direct share. Including the indirect share (obtained using tourism output and employment multiplier), the MICE industry contributes 0.22 percent to GDP and 0.33 per cent to employment. Finally, Kashmir is an area with great tourism potential & is a leading edge of development. Kashmir is considered as the most elite destination in the world. Tourism is the main industry in the state. It is regarded as a multi-segmented industry therefore, provides different types of jobs like hotel managers, guides, travel agents and others. The enchanting geographical landscape & range of ecosystems leaves a lasting impression on the tourists in Kashmir. The Jammu and Kashmir area offers unique cultural and natural tourism resources that attract a large number of tourists from throughout the world. The number of tourists has fluctuated throughout the years for a variety of reasons. To keep tourists coming to Kashmir, the government has taken a number of steps, including the growth of tourism infrastructure, the creation of new tourist destinations, and the establishment of brand-new tourist circuits. In light of this, the state tourist agency has drafted a tourism policy. In addition, the state has devised an ecotourism strategy for the sole development, promotion, and protection of the Valley's ecotourism potentials.

- ☒ The state administrations should establish a robust network for the growth and marketing of Kashmir's tourist industry. In this view, it is necessary to hire qualified personnel and encourage locals to engage in the tourist industry.
- ☒ The government must also perform a continual evaluation of the tourist process to ensure its seamless operation in the region. On the premise of research findings, the following recommendations are made to Jammu and Kashmir tourism policymakers:
- ☒ A suitable state tourist policy is necessary for the successful operation of tourism.
- ☒ Kashmir requires the development of well-trained and professional tourism personnel in order to accommodate tourists.
- ☒ Kashmir should have a tourism brand ambassador.
- ☒ Timely implementation of tourism education and information campaigns for the general public is essential.
- ☒ Infrastructure development at off-the-beaten-path locations should be undertaken.
- ☒ The policy should assure future success and the participation of all tourist stakeholders.
- ☒ Local tourist businesses should get indirect and direct incentives to sustain their interest in the sector.
- ☒ Digital advertising should be among the primary objectives of state tourist promotion.

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