

Role of Human Resources in the Tourism Industry with Special Reference to Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the most preferred and well-accepted ways of spending leisure time. The natural urge and appetite of every human being for gaining new experiences and eagerness to get entertained and educated are the main drivers of tourism. Tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world which is directly concerned with generating services, products, employment, and investments. Being a service-based and relationship rich industry, the competitiveness of tourism industry is largely determined by its human resource which is regarded as the most vital asset and the chief source of sustainable competitive advantage. Therefore, the present study intends to summarize the role and significance of human resources in the tourism industry with special reference to Jammu and Kashmir primarily through the use of secondary data. The study established that there exists a positive and coherent association between human resources and the development of the tourism industry. It is such a resource of the tourism industry that appreciates and advances with time and supports the organization in crafting and executing its policies and strategies. It also play a very crucial role in the promotion, growth and sustainable development of the industry. The study is believed to serve as a valuable tool for researchers to understand the importance of human resources in tourism and take this research area forward. It is equally important for the tourism administration and policymakers to formulate strategies for professional management and development of human resources. Moreover, the study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the area of tourism management.

Keywords: *Growth and Development, Human Resources, Jammu and Kashmir, Tourism*

Introduction

Tourism is not something new but has been an important social activity of human beings from ancient times. It is considered one of the world's largest export earners representing 7% of the world's exports in goods and services as per World Tourism Organization (WTO) report 2018. There is not only the direct impact of the tourism sector on the growth of the economy but it also stimulates the growth of other sectors through backward and forward linkages and

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increases the income of local people as well as effective demand (Gokovali, Bahar, 2006). At the international level, tourist arrivals have elevated from 25 million in 1950 to 1407.4 million in 2018 and international tourism receipts earned by destinations worldwide have increased from US\$ 2 billion in 1950 to 1461.6 billion in 2018 (WTO, 2018). According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), India is the world's 3rd largest tourism economy in terms of GDP and India's travel and tourism sector generated US\$ 247 billion in 2018 which is equivalent to 9.2% of India's GDP and contributed 8% to total employment in the country (WTTC, 2018). The tourism sector of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been an important source of economic development over the past several decades (Mir, 2014) and is regarded as the economic backbone of the erstwhile state. Being a labour-intensive industry, it has a vast potential to employ a large number of people including both skilled and unskilled (Mukhtar, 2013). To succeed and gain a competitive advantage in today's dynamic and highly competitive environment, the industry must be equipped with dedicated, committed, effective, and competent human capital, which is regarded as the most vital asset of the tourism industry. It is because of the services provided by its human resources working at different levels and positions that have enabled the industry to achieve greater heights. Thus, it would not be wrong to say that the tourism industry without human resources is like a zoo without animals.

The inquisitiveness and thirst of human beings for gaining new experiences, knowledge and exploring new destinations have become stronger as a result of globalization and the removal of communication barriers by technological advances. The consumption demand emanating from tourist expenditures induces more employment which leads to the socio-economic development of the local populace at large. During the past few years, a great deal of attention has been paid towards the need and importance of human resources in the tourism industry across the globe. Lots of debates and discussions have been held to highlight the role and significance of human resources in this industry. Tourism industry is characterized by high levels of human involvement for its survival, growth and development and delivery of its services (Baum, 2007). Human resource is the most important asset and is regarded as the life and blood of the tourism industry. Behind every activity that takes place throughout the industry, it is the human resource that plays a very crucial role, from its planning to its execution. Realizing the importance of human resources in the tourism industry, this study is a noble attempt to highlight this issue. The paper commences with a brief description of the concept of Human resources and Tourism. It then continues with a brief summary of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. This is followed by a precise description of different stakeholders of the tourism industry of J&K. It further describes the role of human resources towards the development and promotion of J&K tourism and its products and services. The paper ends with the conclusion and valuable recommendations & suggestions.

Objectives of the Study

The present study was carried out keeping in view the following objectives:

1. To study the present status of the Jammu and Kashmir tourism industry.
2. To study the role of human resources in the growth and development of the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir.
3. To propose feasible suggestions and recommendations based on the study towards accelerated and sustainable development of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Methodology

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the researcher conducted an extensive literature survey on the role of human resources in tourism spread over some journals from different academic databases. Besides, data were collected from relevant books, survey reports, data from the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation, Tourism literature published by Government and Non-Government organizations, human resource publications and relevant websites.

Concept and Meaning of Human Resource and Tourism

The term 'Human Resource' in a general sense refers to the people engaged in various organizational activities at different levels. According to Megginson, "From the national point of view, human resources may be defined as the knowledge, skills, creative abilities, talents and aptitudes obtained in the population; whereas from the viewpoint of individual enterprise, they represent the total of the inherent abilities, acquired knowledge and skills as exemplified in the talents and aptitudes of its employees" (Chhabra 2005; Prasad 2005). Management thinkers across the globe have used different terms to represent human resources such as 'Personnel', 'People at work', 'Manpower', 'Employees', 'Human assets' etc. Sumantra Ghoshal who is regarded as management guru has used the term 'human capital' to represent human resources and has classified it into three categories as intellectual capital, social capital and emotional capital (Prasad, 2005). Thus, human resources represent all the people from managers to labourers employed by the organization. They are regarded as the most vital asset and a key to achieving high performance by business practitioners and academicians all over the globe (Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Brewer, Seldom, 2000). Human resources constitute an essential strategic component of an organization aspiring to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Wright, McMahan, McWilliams, 1994). According to resource based view, a resource is said to be strategic if it is valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). Notably, employees by virtue are inherited with all these characteristics and therefore, act as the chief source of competitive advantage as well as the principal drivers of improved organizational performance. In a service based industry, especially, tourism, human resources constitute the most fundamental element, in the absence of which there is no existence of the industry. It is the people who with their knowledge, skills and expertise effectively bring into use other resources of an organization like technology, capital, building and machinery and lead the organization to new pinnacles of success.

The term 'Tourism' has been assigned different definitions by researchers, government agencies, tourism associations and individual businesses based on their perceptions and interests. Some have used the word "tourism" as being synonymous with the actions and impacts of tourists. Others use the term to refer to a course of study and body of research. Still, others apply the term to a broad, conceptual system of people, places, businesses, and activities. Matheson and Wall (1982) state that "Tourism is the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence, the activities undertaken during their stay in those destinations, and the facilities created to cater to their needs." According to WTO, a 'Tourist' is defined as, "Any person residing within a country, irrespective of nationality, traveling to a place within his country other than his usual place of residence for not less than 24 hours or one night for a purpose other than the exercise of a remunerated

activity in the place visited.” It was recognized in the Manila Declaration on world tourism of 1980 as, “an activity essential to the life of the nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational and economic sectors of national societies and their international relations”. Tourism can be both domestic as well as international and it plays an important role in the socio-economic development of the given place. It creates employment opportunities for a large number of people as well as generates revenue for the nations.

Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Scenario

The erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir comprising of three distinct regions i.e. Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, was in August 2019 bifurcated into two union territories i.e. a union territory of Jammu and Kashmir and a union territory of Ladakh. It is the northernmost territory occupied by India, often denoted by the acronym J&K. It is bounded by China in the North-East, Afghanistan in the North-West and Pakistan in the West. The states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh border it in the South. The erstwhile state has a geographical area of 222236 sq.km comprising 6.93% of the total Indian Territory. All three regions have immense potential for tourism from both domestic as well as international tourists. It offers various types of tourism to its tourists including Health tourism, Adventure tourism, Ecotourism, Pilgrim tourism, Wildlife tourism, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, rural tourism, leisure tourism and golf tourism (Singh, Unjum, 2016). The department of tourism J&K is the main regulatory authority of tourism in the region which carries out all the tasks related to planning, promotion, publicity and marketing, regulation of travel trade in terms of J&K registration of Tourist Trade Act, 1978/82. All the commercial activities of the tourism industry are entrusted to Jammu Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC). Over the years, the organizational structure of the department has undergone a drastic change. The major restructuring included the creation of 15 new Development Authorities for major tourist destinations. Subsequently, 5 more Development Authorities were established raising their total strength to 20. For proper functioning and development of all these newly created development authorities as well as the tourism industry as a whole, the industry requires well-skilled, committed and professional human resources.

The territory has huge sources and triggers for attracting tourists and has immense potential for the sustenance of the tourism industry. It provides direct employment to various service providers such as Tourist Guides, Travel agents, Jobs in Hotels/Houseboats, etc. It also provides impetus to allied sectors like Handicrafts, Handlooms, and Transport, etc. The lush green forests, sweet springs, perennial rivers, picturesque alpine scenery and pleasant climate of Kashmir valley, has remained an internationally acclaimed tourist destination. The tourism tag has always placed the territory in the limelight at the national as well as international levels. Its tourism products are well known all over the globe. Set like a gleaming diamond, Kashmir is a multi-faceted tourist destination. It has been rightly said about Kashmir that:

“Agar Firdaus Bar roo-e Zameen Ast, Hameen Ast-o, Hameen Ast-o, Hameen Ast”
“If there is a paradise over on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here.”

Jammu region, the land of temples is attracting a large number of pilgrim tourists and the important destination has been Shri Mata Vaishno Devi (Sharma et al., 2012). Ladakh region, the moon land has been the attraction, especially for foreign tourists and is famous for adventure tourism. The erstwhile state represents the century’s old heritage of culture, religion, language, traditions, architecture and art forms. All these provide immense potential for developing a fabulous variety of tourist attractions. Overall the photographic and verbal stimuli in

promotions amplify the geography, nature, culture, life and historical importance of the place. Moreover, tourist brochures assure world-class hotel facilities, transportation, communication, and site-seeing arrangements. Several locations are still untapped and can be developed as major tourist destinations, having all the natural as well as cultural resources for attracting tourists, leading to socio-economic development as well as the development of the tourism industry (Bhat, 2013). Table 1 shows the number of tourists that visited the erstwhile state from 2012 to ending October 2017 including both domestic and foreign tourists.

Table 1. *Tourist arrivals (ending October 2017)*

Year	Kashmir		Jammu	Ladakh	Total Tourists
	Amarnathji	Domestic/ Foreign	Mata Vaishno Devi Ji	Domestic/Foreign	
2012	621000	1308765	10394000	178750	12502515
2013	353969	1171130	9287871	137650	10950620
2014	372909	1167618	7803193	181301	9525021
2015	352771	927815	7776604	146501	9203691
2016	220490	1211230	6823540	179142	8434402
2017 (end Oct.)	260003	1050480	5739632	259170	7309285

Source: J&K Economic Survey (2017)

The year 2016 witnessed the lowest number of tourists in the state compared to previous years owing to the unrest in the valley as a result of the killing of Hizbul Mujahidin (an indigenous militant organization) commander Burhan Wani. Before it could fully emerge from post Burhan Wani crisis, it had to witness the worst ever lockdown in 2019 post abrogation of Article 370 and 35A unconstitutionally by the Government of India. For around seven months there was a complete lock jam of the economy which inflicted huge losses across all sectors of the economy especially tourism.

During the last few years, both the central government as well as the state government of J&K have launched various schemes and have taken a lot of initiatives for growth and development of tourism in the state viz, SWADESH Darshan scheme, Rural Tourism Scheme, Incentive Scheme, Opening up of new destinations having high tourism potential, etc. For the proper implementation and getting the best out of these schemes, the human resource of the tourism industry plays a very crucial role. Therefore, to attract and encourage more people to visit different tourist destinations of the state, there is a need for professional human resources who are equipped with the required knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to satisfy the tourists and develop a good guest-host relationship.

Stakeholders of Jammu and Kashmir Tourism

Freeman (1984), states that a stakeholder is any person or a group of persons directly or indirectly associated with a particular industry and who influence or are influenced by the fulfillment of objectives of a given industry. So far as the tourism industry of J&K is concerned, the stakeholders have been broadly divided into four categories. They include the department of tourism, people and institutions associated with tourism, the state government and the residents of the state. All four categories are constituted by human resources who work tirelessly for the growth and development of tourism in the state.

The Department of Tourism

The department of tourism is the principal body of the J&K Government which is concerned with the development, promotion, and regulation of tourism services in the state. It plays a very crucial role in the planning and execution of various schemes for the development and up-gradation of infrastructure at different places in the state. It is because of the presence of its human resources that enables it to develop effective and efficient plans and execute the same to provide high-quality services to tourists visiting the state. The department is also concerned with the promotion and marketing of different tourist destinations of the valley as well as regulation of tourist trade by enforcing special legislation titled the “Jammu and Kashmir Registration of Tourist Trade Act, 1978/1982”. For planning, marketing and executing, the department has a planning wing, publicity wing, and engineering wing respectively as well as enforcement wing for safeguarding the interests of tourists. All these agencies of the tourism department can perform their duties successfully only if they have committed professional and competent human resources at their disposal. Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation (J&KTDC), the executive wing of the department, looks after the commercial activities of the department such as the construction of accommodation facilities, running of cafeterias, restaurants, and organization of food festivals, tour and travel activities in and outside the State. Besides these, Kashmir International Conference Centre, J&K State Cable Car Corporation (JKCCC), Royal Springs Golf Course Srinagar and Jawahar Institute of Mountaineering and water sports are functioning for the promotion of tourism in the state. It would not be wrong to say that all the activities undertaken by the department and its related agencies are possible only through its human resources who are competent enough to perform their roles effectively and efficiently. Without their support, it will not be possible to perform even a single activity in the said industry, thus, necessitating the professional development of human resources which in turn will lead to the development of the industry as a whole.

People and institutions associated with tourism

Like other tourist destinations in the country, people of J&K are also directly or indirectly associated with tourism for earning their livelihood. But the research suggests that not more than one percent of the population is directly involved with tourism in the state. This emphasizes the need to involve more and more people with this industry to generate more employment opportunities as well as help the industry to achieve new heights. While inviting people towards the industry it is imperative to train, educate and develop the required skills in them for their effective performance. The people who are directly associated with the tourism industry include tour and travel operators, hotel associations, restaurant associations, pony wallas, etc. These people directly deal with tourists visiting the valley and therefore their attitude, behaviour, and skills will determine the quality of service received by tourists. Hence, these people need to be managed and developed effectively to provide high-quality services thereby leading to tourist satisfaction as well as the development of the tourism industry as a whole.

The State Government

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir is one of the important stakeholders of the tourism industry. It facilitates the growth and development of tourism in the state through its different agencies and organizations. It provides the necessary support and funds for infrastructure

development as well as the improvement of tourist destinations in different places. Through its human resources, it plans and executes the important projects necessary for tourism development in the state. The state government provides all the support aimed at the safe and secure visit of tourists as well as safeguarding the interests of visitors. Due to heavy tourist flow and increasing competition from the neighboring states of India as well as abroad, it is imperative to upgrade the infrastructure at tourist destinations and develop new tourism destinations to attract more and more tourists to the state. To carry out all these activities, the state government requires highly effective and competent human resources for the better utilization of its resources thereby leading to the development of the tourism industry of the state.

The residents of Jammu and Kashmir

The residents of a particular area are one of the core elements and an integral part of the tourism industry and therefore their participation in tourism-related activities is very essential for the sustainable development of tourism. The local population wants to be part of tourism development programmes and policies to ensure that their needs are incorporated and to enable the policymakers to take into consideration the stakeholders' concerns while framing such policies (Muganda et al., 2013). Also, it becomes the responsibility of local people to preserve the beauty and aesthetic value of their respective tourist places and at the same time promote the tourism industry as someone has rightly said that 'Charity begins at home.' Therefore, every citizen residing in J&K whether men or women, young or old should learn about their duties and responsibilities aimed at protection and efficient utilization of natural resources and at the same time promoting and developing the tourism sector of the state. People of Kashmir are known for their hospitality all over the globe which develops a sense of love and belongingness among tourists and compelling them to come again and again to enjoy the beauty of the valley, thus, leading to socio-economic development as well as the growth of the tourism industry.

Human Resources and Tourism Development

The biggest challenge in today's complex and highly competitive business world any organization irrespective of its size, nature of ownership and control faces, is regarding procurement, development, utilization, and retention of the single largest resource at its disposal i.e. human resource. It is the most important and valuable asset of an organization and a key source of sustainable competitive advantage (Armstrong, 2014). It is the human element of an organization that can generate ideas and convert them into actions. Professional workforce with sufficient knowledge, skills, right attitudes, and experience is the need of the hour for organizations to utilize their resources efficiently and effectively. It is the human resource that can make or break the organization. The meaningful and promising future of an organization is determined by the efficiency, effectiveness, and competence of its employees. Thus, employees of an organization play a very crucial role in its success and prosperity. Organizations that can motivate, develop and retain their best employees, will survive, compete and sustain for long in the present globalized world. The successful corporate leaders around the world advocate that in today's service and knowledge-based business environment, the competitive edge is the result of their competitive people working in their organizations. Furthermore, human resources are regarded as the most vital element of the tourism industry which requires high human involvement in the development and delivery of its services (Baum, 2012). Similarly, the human element in tourism organizations is critical for service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty, competitive advantage,

and organizational performance (Kusluvan et al., 2010). According to Pfeffer, "Success comes from successfully implementing strategy, not just from having one. This implementation capability derives, in large measure, from the organization's people, how they are treated, their skills and competencies, and their efforts on behalf of the organization"(Pfeffer, 1998).

For an organization to succeed, prosper and compete in today's highly competitive environment, it is very essential to procure, develop, manage and nurture its basic constituent elements and in case of tourism, which is a service-based industry, its human resources constitute that basic and core element. It is noteworthy to mention that human capital which includes employee knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, experience, and internal and external relationships are essential for creating organization-specific advantages (Kusulvan, 2010). Therefore, for the sustainable development of the tourism industry, the development of its human resources is inevitable. Human resources in tourism industry are involved in every kind of activity whether economic or non-economic, small tasks or big projects. It is the human resource that formulates plans, policies, programmes, and strategies for its proper functioning, prosperity and growth and development. The most important functions such as workforce planning, procurement, training, performance management, etc are performed by its human resources to enable the industry to achieve its goals and objectives efficiently and effectively. All the decisions in an industry whether related to people, investments, services, etc are taken by its human resources. Therefore, an organization with a committed, competent and satisfied pool of human resources will be in a better position to make proper utilization of its resources, thereby, enabling the organization to improve its performance. Keeping in view the competition and complexity of the environment surrounding the industry, it calls for the deployment of best human resource management practices leading to the development of human resources and thereby, the development of the industry as a whole. Moreover, human resources play a very crucial role in promoting and sustaining the tourism industry by organizing conferences, workshops, symposiums, etc. at local, national as well as at the international levels. Advertisement and marketing of tourism products and services as performed by the human resources, encourages and motivates more and more people, which in turn increases the tourist inflow and eventually enhances the growth of the tourism industry.

It is worth mentioning that God has made our valley the real heaven on earth and it becomes the responsibility of all people residing here to preserve this piece of heaven in its original form to help the potential tourists to fully enjoy this God-given treasure so that they return with a good impression and propagate the same like our own ambassadors of tourism.

The erstwhile state is famous for the hospitality of its people (especially Kashmir valley) all over the world. But being good hosts is not the only requirement for the tourism industry to flourish. The facilities and services provided through its employees play a very crucial role in its development. The attitude and behavior of people directly dealing with tourists is of utmost importance. The tourists coming for the first time besides being welcomed should also get a feeling of being in a very friendly atmosphere. The services provided by front line employees of different agencies of the tourism industry have a bearing on the satisfaction of tourists and thus such employees need to be very professional in their dealings with the tourists. Professionals and experts within the tourism industry like planning experts, marketing and publicity experts and other professionals have to play a very crucial role in the promotion and development of this important industry.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Tourism is a people rich service industry, its products and services are promoted through word of mouth, advertising, travel markets, etc to attract tourists from across the globe in great numbers. To provide the best quality services to tourists, the industry must be equipped with a strong base of professional and competent human resources, who are vital to strengthen the guest-host relationship, improve the social and economic benefits as well as tourist satisfaction. To make Jammu and Kashmir the best tourist destination in the world, the Government of J&K along with other agencies connected with tourism should adopt several measures such as:

1. Establishment of Human Resource Development Institute for training the people engaged with the tourism industry so that they become better adapted to changing needs of the tourism sector.
2. Tourist friendly attitude and behavior have to be developed at all levels apart from the specialized training which may be required by various players involved in looking after the guests in different areas.
3. Adoption of a competence-based approach to identify the gaps between the competencies required and the competencies present among employees and to address such gaps for achieving better results in terms of tourist satisfaction.
4. The government and other agencies connected with tourism should take special care in developing infrastructure facilities on modern lines. In the development of infrastructure, private sector participation should be encouraged.
5. Utmost importance should be given to tight and effective security measures.
6. The Government with the support of the public should explore and develop new tourist destinations for attracting more tourists to the region.
7. Department of Tourism should sponsor studies and surveys to get important inputs for the formulation of policies and programmes for the development of tourism in the territory.
8. Organization of special fairs and festivals, effective publicity measures, etc. should be undertaken for promoting tourism of the state.
9. The state, as well as the national media, should play its positive role by motivating and encouraging the potential tourists to visit Jammu and Kashmir by removing the fear from their minds that prevent them from visiting this beautiful place.

Therefore, it becomes all the more necessary that government in collaboration with the department concerned and with NGO's take up certain corrective measures for the development of its human as well as other resources to boost this industry which otherwise is fraught with lot more potential and act as a real backbone to the economy of the region, especially, in the generation of huge employment avenues to the hardcore unemployed youth of the region besides generating whopping revenues to the territory.

Conclusion

The basic purpose of this paper was to highlight and exemplify the need and role of human resources in the tourism industry with special reference to Jammu and Kashmir. It was found that human resources are the life and blood of the tourism industry and form the cornerstone of the said industry. Being a service-based industry, one can't think of the tourism industry without the involvement of human resources. The human resources of the J&K tourism industry as constituted by administrators from the Department of Tourism, people from J&K Government, people concerned with hotels, restaurants, houseboats, tour and travel agents, tourist guides, etc play a pivotal role in promoting, developing and sustaining this industry. The participation of local people in tourism-related activities also provides an impetus to the growth of the tourism industry of the state. Since customer satisfaction is the ultimate goal of every service-based industry, the same is true for tourism. Therefore, the tourism industry of J&K requires dedicated, committed and competent human resources for satisfying the tourists visiting the state from different parts of the world. This will ultimately lead to the growth of the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir.

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