

Impact of Conflict on Tourist Flow and Spatial Distribution of Tourists in Kashmir Valley

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Abstract: Conflict and instability in Jammu and Kashmir have been a major hindrance to its development and progress levels. Tourism is identified as the engine of growth and Development of Jammu and Kashmir economy in general and Kashmir valley in particular. The development of tourist industry can have a significant impact on the overall growth of the state, because of its ability to create direct and indirect employment, as well as growth in allied industries. Tourism will likely contribute to the growth of secondary sectors such as handicrafts, which have historically benefitted from visitors to the state. As tourism is widely recognized as a major mechanism of employment generation, especially in the service sector, holds significant role for poverty alleviation and unemployment in the state. Kashmir being an important tourist destination in India has witnessed downfall because of the ongoing unrest especially during the last two decades which has hindered the smooth growth of tourism industry. The valley of Kashmir has been engulfed in a violent situation since 1989, which has threatened the sustainability of tourism industry. The political instability in turn has greatly altered the direction, flow, pattern and volume of tourists to the destination. The present paper investigates the temporal changes in the flow pattern of tourists to the valley and also analyses the tourist nodes of the state which have witnessed phenomenal increase in tourist arrivals during turmoil period.

Key words: Kashmir Valley • Instability • Destination • Tourist Arrivals • Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Perceptions of political instability and safety are a prerequisite for tourist visitation. Violent protests, social unrest, civil war, terrorist actions, the perceived violations of human rights, or even the mere threat of these activities can all serve to cause tourists to alter their travel behavior [1]. Tourism has emerged as one of the chief industries in the world economy over the last Decade. Its total contribution comprised 9% of global GDP (US \$6.6 trillion) and generated over 260 million jobs, 1 in 11 i.e. 10% of new job creation in the world's total job market. Tourism industry showed faster growth than other notable industries such as manufacturing, financial services and retail [2]. Tourism is one of the more sensitive industries, vulnerable to perceived political instability, lack of safety and other uncertainties [3]. Tourism is highly susceptible

to external shocks such as natural disasters, political instability and terrorism [4]. Destinations are less appealing to tourists if they are insecure or likely to experience serious conflict [5] war, political unrest, terrorism, violations of human rights or heavy crime – regardless of the abundance of scenic or cultural attractions [6-8].

Political instability related with tourism can have very negative effects on tourism destinations which will decline the number of tourists who visit the destinations and also will bring suffering to the tourism industry. The effects from political instability such as armed attacks, civil wars, bombings, attacks on tourists, wars, change in government, threat of war with another country, which will deter or obstruct the image of the destination through media reporting and government policies and even word of mouth reporting [9].

The hypothesis that political violence deters tourism is mainly based on case study evidence and a few quantitative studies confined to a small sample of countries. Two estimation techniques-a fixed-effects panel estimator with contemporaneous effects only and a dynamic generalized method of moment's estimator-are used to test the impact of various forms of political violence on tourism. Both models show strong evidence that human rights violations, conflict and other politically motivated violent events negatively affect tourist arrivals. In a dynamic model, even if autocratic regimes do not resort to violence, they have lower numbers of tourist arrivals than more democratic regimes. Results also show evidence for intra-regional, negative spillover and cross-regional substitution effects. Violent protests, social unrest, civil war, terrorist actions, the perceived violations of human rights, or even the mere threat of these activities can all serve to cause tourists to alter their travel behavior. Tourists are often regarded as longing for relaxing and unconcerned holiday making and therefore are sensitive to events of violence in holiday destinations. Ironically, for most of human history, traveling has been associated with risk and fear for the physical integrity and the belongings of the traveler. No doubt, there are adventure tourists who are not put off by conflict, war, terrorist threats, riots and other events of violence. Yet, tourists are only willing to travel to foreign places in mass numbers if their journey and their stay are safe and shielded from events that threaten a joyous holiday experience [1]. Faced with violent events in a country, potential tourists might fear for their lives or physical integrity, might simply anticipate becoming involved in stressful situations, or be unable to visit the places they wanted to visit according to schedule. Tourists might therefore choose an alternative destination with similar characteristics but in a more stable condition. If the violence becomes more widespread and prolonged, official authorities in the countries where tourists originate will start issuing advice against traveling to the destination. Safety and security has been identified as one of the five global forces that would drive the tourism industry in the new millennium. A proper coordination between departments like police and hotel association could ensure safety, security, management and enhancement of destination image [10]. Perceived risk related to safety and security levels are fundamental as they determine tourists' decisions [11, 12]. There is an ongoing need for communication management to limit, control and balance the negative information conveyed through the media before and during a crisis and throughout the crisis recovery

phase in troubled destination [2]. Political instability plays a significant role in determining pattern of tourist flow [13].

Tourism has served as a means of exploration, trade, pilgrimage, personal enrichment and encounters between people from different tribes, nations and cultures since prehistoric times. Kashmir is being referred as "paradise on the earth" which has rich, interesting and a great wealth of geographical diversity, historical and cultural tourist attractions. In fact, Kashmir is to Himalayas, what Switzerland is to Alps. Kashmir, despite of gaining popularity as a major tourist destination, the last two decades have hindered the smooth growth of tourism industry because of the spread of the militancy, which has discouraged travelers for visiting India's most beautiful tourist destination [14]. Yet Presences of huge army strength which are deployed for combating the infiltration and militancy for which some analysts have suggested that the number of Indian troops in Jammu and Kashmir is close to 600,000- 700,000 although estimates vary and the Indian government refuses to release official figures [15, 16] is another cause for the downfall of tourism in Kashmir. It again gives a picture which goes very negative for tourism industry of Kashmir. Conflict and instability in Jammu and Kashmir have been a major hindrance to the region's development and progress. "All the hotspots of Tourism in valleys like Glumarg, Phalgam, Sonamarg, Dal Lake and Mughal gardens, which used to witness thousands of tourists, all of a sudden turned into not less than any ghost places" (Ahmad and Hussain, 2011). The India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir is rooted in competing claims to the territory, which has been divided since 1948 by a military line of control separating India controlled Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan-controlled Azad Kashmir. The dispute is tied to the national identities of both countries.

The major focus of the paper is on to understand and analysis the apparent damage to tourism industry of Kashmir valley by the political turmoil.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. The data regarding the tourist flow was obtained from department of tourism Jammu and Kashmir. The data pertaining to fatalities were obtained from Ministry of Home Ministry Government of India. The data pertaining to the hotel room occupancy was obtained through primary survey. The data was subsequently analyzed with statistical techniques.

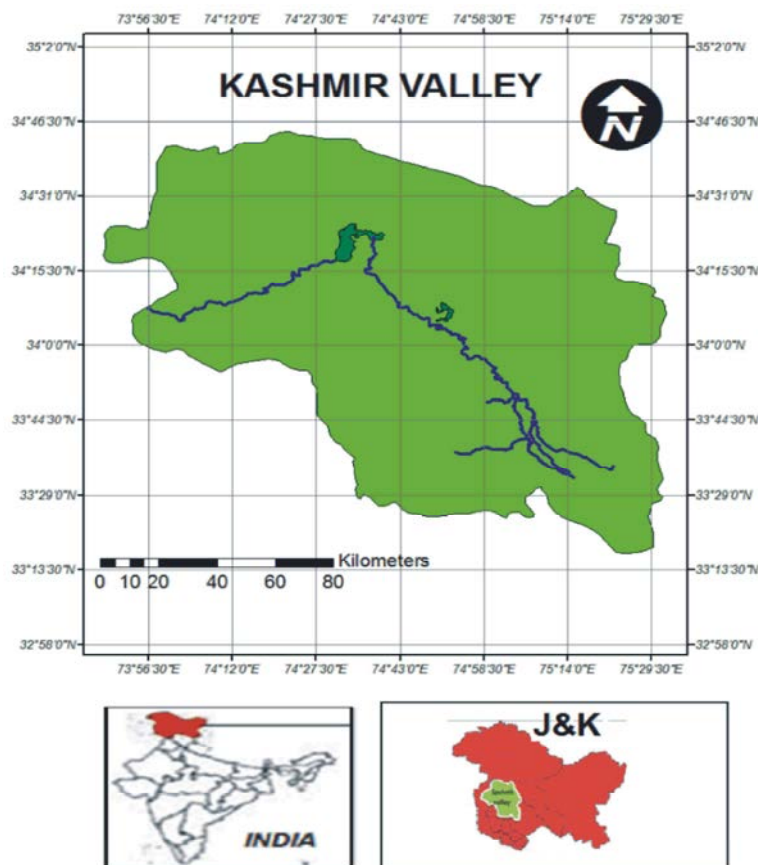


Fig. 1:

Study Area: Kashmir valley is nestled in North West folds of the Himalayas, a transverse valley surrounded from all sides by high mountain ranges, characterized by snow covered lofty peaks, scenic spots, beautiful valleys, rivers with ice-cold water, attractive lakes and springs and ever-green fields, dense forests and beautiful health resorts [17, 18]. Therefore, the state also earned names such as “the Switzerland of the East” and “Paradise on Earth” [19]. The tourism industry accounts for approximately 15 percent of the total Net Domestic state product [20] and is a main source of income to a large number of local Kashmiris [21-23]. Especially due to the industry’s service oriented nature it helps to fight against the state’s high unemployment rate [20]. Nevertheless, tourism has already dealt with many up and down swings caused by Jammu & Kashmir’s unstable situation [20].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Kashmir conflict continues to be unresolved after more than six decades, fuelling the conventional and nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan and

bleeding their economy. Both countries have gone to war on three occasions over Kashmir and the possibility of war between the two countries has become frightening given their nuclear weapon capability. After analyzing statistical data of violent incidents in Jammu and Kashmir, one can infer that due to insurgency Kashmir has developed a partial image of being an unsafe destination. There were 3437 militancy related incidents in 1997 which declined to 304 incidents in 2010. Although the number has declined but during the year 2008, 2009 and 2010, the nature of unrest shifted from militant incidents to civil unrest with the result three consequent tourist seasons were lost.

Pattern of Militancy Incidents and Tourist Flow in Kashmir Valley: Tourist flow to Kashmir valley has increased from 10579 in 1951 to more than 7.3 lakh in 2010 at an average rate of 8 percent per annum. However during the period 1989 to 1995 tourist influx registered a negative growth rate because of the political instability in the valley. The major set-back to the tourist flow has affected the economic stability of the state in general and

Table 1: Profile of Casualties in Jammu and Kashmir from 1997-2010

year	Militancy incidents	Civilians killed	Security forces killed	Militants killed
1990	3905	862	123	183
1991	3122	594	185	614
1992	4971	859	177	873
1993	4457	1023	216	1328
1994	4484	1012	236	1651
1995	4479	1161	297	1338
1996	4424	1333	376	1149
1997	3437	1030	355	1175
1998	2940	967	339	1045
1999	3073	937	555	1082
2000	3091	942	638	1520
2001	4536	1098	613	2020
2002	4038	1050	539	1707
2003	3401	836	384	1494
2004	2565	733	330	976
2005	1990	556	244	917
2006	1667	410	182	591
2007	1092	170	122	472
2008	708	91	79	369
2009	499	78	64	239
2010	488	47	69	232
2011	340	31	33	100

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs Govt. of India

Table 2: Pattern of Tourist flow to Kashmir Valley

Year	Home	Annual%age Change	Foreign	Annual%age Change	Total	Annual%age Change
1989	490212	-25.96	67762	13.05	557977	-22.72
1990	6095	-98.76	4627	-93.17	10722	-98.08
1991	1400	-77.03	4887	5.62	6287	-41.36
1992	1175	-16.07	9149	87.21	10324	64.21
1993	0	-100	8026	-12.27	8026	-22.26
1994	500		9314	16.05	9814	22.28
1995	322	-35.6	8198	-11.98	8520	-13.19
1996	375	16.46	9592	17	9967	16.98
1997	7027	1773.87	9111	-5.01	16131	61.84
1998	99636	1317.9	10247	12.47	109883	581.19
1999	200162	100.89	17130	67.17	217292	97.75
2000	104337	-47.87	7575	-55.78	111912	-48.5
2001	66732	-36.04	5859	-22.65	72591	-35.14
2002	24670	-63.03	2686	-54.16	27356	-62.31
2003	182205	638.57	8959	233.54	191164	598.8
2004	358095	96.53	18634	107.99	376729	97.07
2005	585702	63.56	19680	5.61	605382	60.69
2006	412879	-29.51	20009	1.67	432888	-28.49
2007	417264	1.06	24576	22.82	441840	2.07
2008	551041	32.06	21588	-12.15	572661	29.6
2009	577348	4.77	23904	9.6	601256	4.99
2010	710504	23.06	25984	8.7	736511	18.36

Source: Department of Tourism Government of Jammu and Kashmir

Table 3: Profile of TouristFlow and Major violent incidents in the Kashmir valley

Year	Tourist Arrivals	% age change	Major incidents of violence
1989	557977		Militancy started inKashmir valley, attacked on DIG's residence and Central Telegraph office in Srinagar.
1990	10722	-98.08	On 20 January, an estimated 100 civilians were killed when a large group of unarmed protesters are fired upon by the troops at the Gawakadal bridge.Molvie Mohammad Farooq, chief Muslim cleric of the Kashmir valley, is killed by unidentified gunmen. At least 50 people are killed when troops fire on mourners during a funeral procession.
1991	6287	-41.36	Six Israeli tourists were kidnapped in Srinagar, by armed separatist guerrillas of the JKLF, on July 26. In an attempted escape, one Israeli and one guerrilla died; the other five Israelis escaped.
1992	10324	64.21	A French engineer held by separatists in Kashmir escaped on January 13 after three months in captivity.
1993	8026	-22.26	More than 60 people in Sopore were killed when Indian Border Security Force (BSF) troops began shooting indiscriminately and setting fire to buildings in retaliation against an attack by Kashmiri militants.
1994	9814	22.28	Siege of Hazratbal shrine by forces.Al Hadid, a little known Kashmiri separatist group, kidnaps 4 British tourists
1995	8520	-13.19	Siege of Charar Sharif which resulted in burning down of the town and shrine of Nooruddin Wali in Charar Sharif. SixForeign tourists were kidnapped intourist resort of Phalgam.
1996	9967	16.98	Seven civilians were killed as troops and the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front clash outside the state's holiest shrine, the Hazratbal in Srinagar. Six Indian tourists are killed in the state (Reuters, 07/16/96).
1997	16131	61.84	Violent protest against custodial killing of Kashmiri youth.
1998	109883	581.19	India and Pakistan carried out nuclear tests which brought both the countries at brink of nuclear war.
1999	217292	97.75	Kargil war between India and Pakistan at peak tourist season
2000	111912	-48.5	Around the time of US President Clinton's visit to India, unidentified gunmen gun down 35 Sikhs at Chittisinghpura.
2001	72591	-35.14	Attack on Indian parliament created war like situation between indo-pak.
2002	27356	-62.31	Nine amaranth pilgrims and 29 injured in tourist town of Phalgam
2003	191164	598.8	Killing of 24 persons (Hindu minority) in a the village of Nadimarg in Pulwama District by militants on 23 March 2003
2004	376729	97.07	Four tourists, including a child, were killed and 18 injured on June12, 2004 in the resort town of Phalgam when unidentifiedterrorist tossed a grenade inside the restaurant by militants.
2005	605382	60.69	23 Dec, 2005 bomb blast at Srinagar airport
2006	432888	-28.49	On July 11, 2006 a campaign of grenade attacks in Srinagar claimedthe lives of six tourists and wounded forty. The targets included aTourist bus and the Tourist Reception Centre.
2007	441840	2.07	An explosion took place on July 29, 2007 in a tourist bus at Shalimar Gardens. Six tourists were killed and 21 wounded in that explosion.
2008	572661	29.6	Land row problem in Phalgam and Kashmir remained shut for three months.
2009	601256	4.99	Violent protests over gang rape death of two young women in Shopian
2010	736511	18.36	Civil uprising in entire Kashmir because of civilian killings

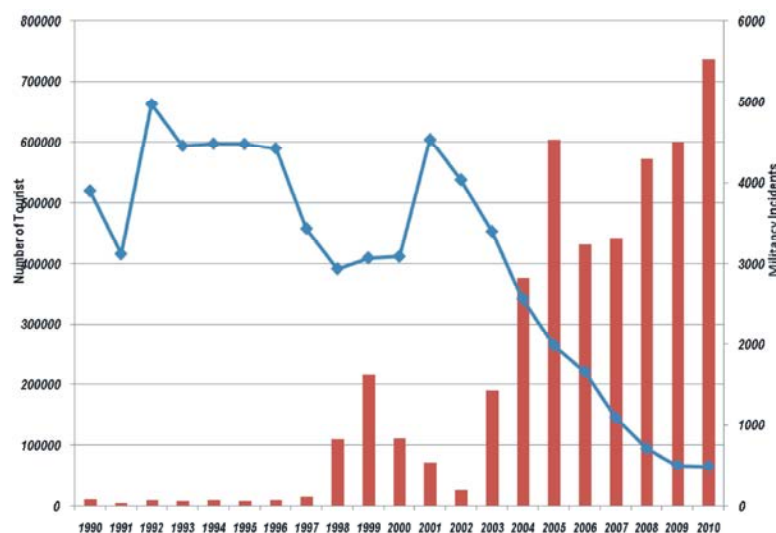


Fig. 2: Comparison between Militancy Incidents and Tourist Flow in Kashmir Vailey

Source: compiled from the data of Ministry of Home Affairs Govt. of India and Department of tourism Jammu and Kashmir

Table 4: Revenue Generation of Gulmarg Gondola Cable Car Project

Year	Revenue Earned (in Lakhs)
1998-1999	85.54
1999-2000	115.16
2000-2001	128.19
2001-2002	132.40
2002-2003	151.15
2003-2004	237.93
2004-2005	284.78
2005-2006	683.28
2006-2007	676.00
2007-2008	835.98
2008-2009	756.23
2009-2010	598.40

Source: Gulmarg Development Authority

Table 5: Tourist flow to ladakh region

Year	Foreigners	Home	Total
1974	500	27	527
1975	650	128	778
1976	1798	253	2051
1977	7126	266	7392
1978	8748	873	9621
1979	9213	621	9834
1980	13104	1013	14117
1981	14000	—	14000
1982	12786	—	12786
1983	12833	—	12833
1984	11785	—	11785
1985	12245	6666	18911
1986	12828	3683	16511
1987	13668	4114	17802
1988	16256	8608	24864
1989	16079	6669	22748
1990	6342	396	6738
1991	8014	1041	9055
1992	13580	2438	16018
1993	12401	2000	14401
1994	15369	2080	17449
1995	12391	5594	17985
1996	13036	3537	16573
1997	12810	3991	16801
1998	15238	6792	22030
1999	9669	1905	11574
2000	11825	6217	18042
2001	15439	4260	19699
2002	5120	2959	8079
2003	15371	13031	28402
2004	13483	21608	35091
2005	24665	13781	38446
2006	26078	17822	43900
2007	28178	22007	50185
2008	35311	39023	74334
2009	30570	48517	79087
2010	55685	22115	77800

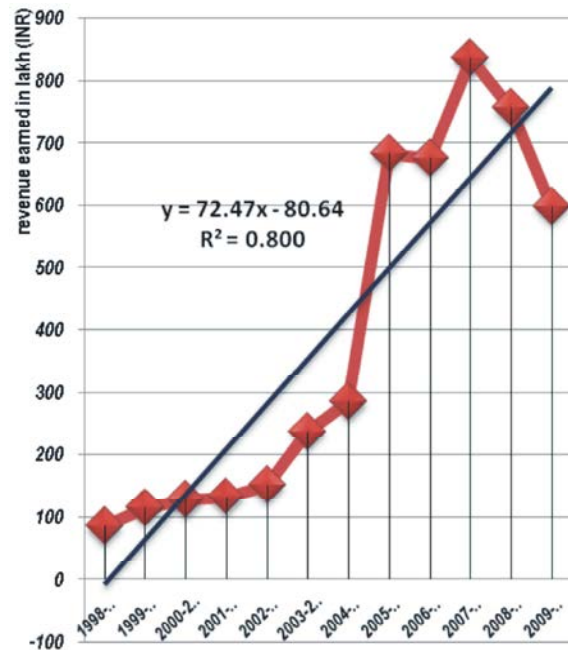


Fig. 3: Revenue Generation of Gulmarg Gondola Cable Car Project

Source: Gulmarg Development Authority

squeezed the employment opportunities. However there has been revival of the tourist inflow in 2003 onwards with significant growth rate. The growth is more prominent in the domestic tourist flow than in foreign tourists. The number of foreign tourist to Kashmir Valley has drastically decreased from 67762 during the years 1989 to 2686 in 2002.

Gulmarg is well known throughout the world for ice hockey, skiing, Golf course which is the highest of its kind and is having 18 holes. In the year 1998 commissioning of Gondola Cable Car has made the destination more attractive for the tourist especially for skiing and adventure tourism. Gulmarg Gondola Project generates a huge amount of revenue per year. Though there is continues rise in revenue generation up to 2007 but because of uprisings during 2008 in valley the revenue generation has shown down ward trend. The actual value of revenue generation at some stages is lower than the value of linear trend line, signifying that the revenue generation through gondola has not flourished during 2000 to 2005, because the actual revenue generation is much lower than trend values. Similarly the recent civil uprising during 2008 to 2010 has pushed the actual revenue downward and making this tourist destination victim of political instability which seemingly should have touched soaring heights.

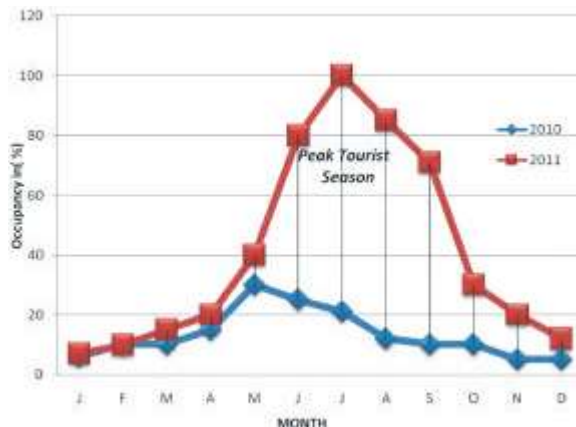


Fig. 4: Hotel Room Occupancy Levels during Peace and Turmoil Periods

Source: field survey

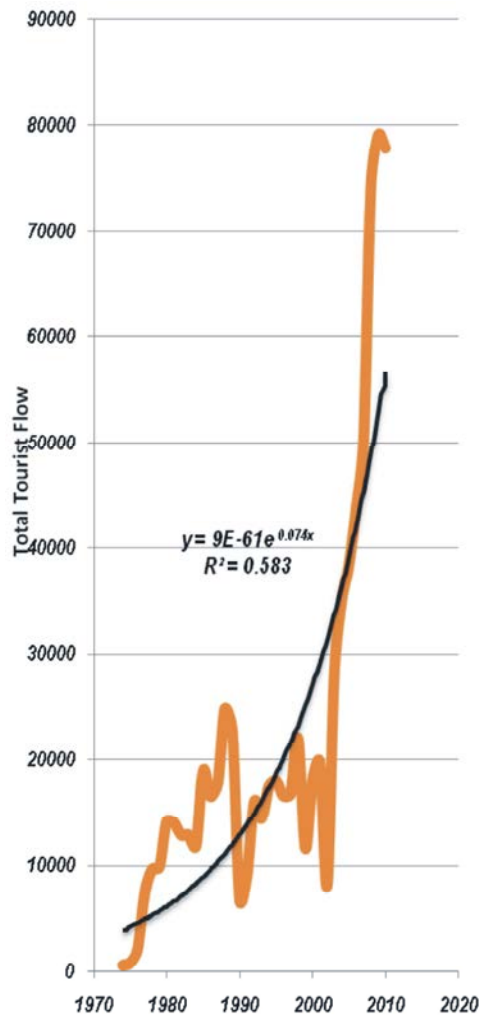


Fig. 5: Tourist flow to Ladakh Region

Source: Computed From Data of Department Of Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir, Srinagar

Occupancy levels of accommodation sector is an important indicator to measures the tourist demand to a particular destination at any time, that is why it is rightly called barometer of tourist demand. The room occupancy in 2010 remained generally at low ebb, because the year witnessed violent civil uprising. While in 2011 the occupancy level showed phenomenal improvement owing to peaceful situation with less number of violent incidents.

Ladakh is located in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, between the Karakoram Range in the North and the Himalayas in the South. The region is characterized by harsh terrain, limited accessibility and extreme climatic conditions, which in turn provide unique cultural and spiritual diversity that act as a Unique Selling Proposition for tourism. Ladakh officially opened for tourism in 1974 with 527 tourists visiting the region, since then the numbers of tourists have grown consistently, because the political instability of Kashmir valley have pave ways in disguise for tourism swell in Ladakh. Ladakh region India's only cold desert, is one of the preferred tourist destinations in the subcontinent today [24]. During the 1990s, tourism in leh (ladakh) started developing as an industry, with an increased level of organization [25]. However it was time when Kashmir valley was under severe political turmoil with remarkably high number of casualties. Though Ladakh being the part of Jammu and Kashmir State, but fortunate enough because of peace in the area and actually benefited by showing phenomenal increase in tourist arrivals with the onset of militancy in Kashmir valley. The tourist arrivals to Ladakh was 6738 in 1990 which increased to 150000 in 2011.

CONCLUSION

Tourist flows reflect the safety and peacefulness in the destination area. Tourists generally avoid areas infested with war, terrorism and political upheaval. Political stability at any destination is the key for promoting tourism. The turmoil in Kashmir badly hit all the components of tourism industry. Tourism cannot thrive in war and conflict, with the result new areas within the state with peaceful environment attracted tourists. Man-induced disasters of political instability and terrorism increase tourists' perception of travel risk and influence their travel decision. The occurrence of incidents of instability and insurgency in destinations like Kashmir valley, have direct bearing with tourist arrivals. Every violent incident has inverse relationship with number of tourist arrivals. The tourists are always at

receiving ends either by way of being kidnapped or harassed. The situation is worse when it is guerilla warfare and no defined rules are followed. The main outcome of this paper is that tourism industry of Kashmir valley has been continuously experiencing tragic incidents either at the onset or in the middle of tourist season with the result tourist arrivals decrease. The economy of the state has been badly effected with militancy because no foreign and private investment has taken place over the years. However there are strong evidences for future development of tourism in the valley reflected by the hotel room occupancy, provided congenial environment is developed for peace.

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