

IMPACT OF DIRECT TRAIN TO SHRI MATA VAISHNO DEVI ON EN-ROUTE PLACE – A CASE OF MATA KOL KANDOLI TEMPLE

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Abstract

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is an immensely beautiful destination offering a variety of attractions worth experienced. Though known for pilgrimage tourism, Jammu region of the state is vested with the potential of tourism of many types. The various little known and unexplored places of the region provide a large scope to at least domestic tourism to mushroom up, while the local tourism is supplemented by small places of excursion. The region has a number of tourist spots which fall enroute to the famous attractions and serve as picnic and excursion spots to the locals. The undertaken study is a research work done in case of one such tourist place, Kol Kandoli. Enroute Jammu to Katra (Shri Mata Vaishno Devi), this tourist spot of town Nagrota, which is famous for Kol Kandoli Temple was visited by locals as well as domestic tourists who used to go to Mata Viashno Devi pilgrimage. The temple holds the mythological significance of first halt for Mat Vaishno Devi Pilgrimage. But recently, the direct train to Katra (base camp of Mata Vaishno Devi Pilgrimage) excludes Jammu and thus Kol Kandoli from the way. Before the direct train operated, Jammu city was the nearest railway station to Katra and the pilgrims from across the county used to land in Jammu, the go by road to Katra and also took halt at Kolkandoli, Nagrota. There spending at the locals shops in Nagrota supported the economy of the town, This empirical study tends to explore the perception of the local residents of Nagrota about the impact of direct train to Katra. Techniques

including Mean, Standard Deviation, t- test and ANOVA have been used to analyse the results of the study..

Keywords: Perception, Locals, En-route Destinations, Nagrota etc.

Introduction

Jammu and Kashmir lying in the northern most part of the country is known for its scenic landscape all over the world. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has immense potential for tourism from both domestic as well as international point of view. There are numerous locations which are unexploited and can be developed as popular tourist destinations. The vast range of attractions varying from delighting hill stations, landscapes, beautiful valleys, lakes, snow capped mountains to varying climate, skiing, trekking, fishing opportunities, introducing golf courses and historical monuments, forts, place of religious importance etc. add to the grandeur of the state. Tourism forms an integral part of the state's economy (Bhat & Iqbal, 2013). Tourism industry has given jobs to a very large number of people and has generated economic activities in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in the state, which owes dependence to a large extent to this industry. From tourism perspective, Jammu and Kashmir has always been one among the favourite places to visit not only for the domestic tourists

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but for the foreign tourists as well. The lush green forests, sweets springs, perennial rivers, picturesque alpine scenery and pleasant climate of Kashmir valley has remained an internationally acclaimed tourist destination, where as Jammu region is attracting a large number of pilgrim tourists especially those visiting Shree Mata Vaishno Devi shrine at Katra. Visitors spending generate income for both public and private sectors beside effective wages and employment opportunities. There has been an upward trend in terms of the number of tourists visiting the state since last five years and the trend is expected to continue to boost the economy of the state. The tourist inflow of the last few years is presented in the table below:

Table 1: Tourist Inflow in Jammu and Kashmir

| Year | Tourist Inflow in Lakh |
|------|------------------------|
| 2004 | 72.36 |
| 2005 | 77.66 |
| 2006 | 83.36 |
| 2007 | 89.48 |
| 2008 | 96.06 |
| 2009 | 103.13 |
| 2010 | 110.73 |
| 2011 | 118.91 |
| 2012 | 127.70 |
| 2013 | 109.5 |
| 2014 | 95.3 |
| 2015 | 92 |
| 2016 | 84.4 |
| 2017 | 73.1 |

Source: Department of Tourism, J&K

Though J&K has witnessed militancy for years and is considered a politically and socially disturbed state, the number of tourists visiting the state per year is increasing. Being in particular to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, it is the second most visited Hindu Shrine in India and attracts about one Crore pilgrims every year contributing a major portion in tourism of Jammu and Kashmir. The pilgrims reach Jammu, the winter capital of the state and then move to Katra by road, the base town of Mata Vaishno Devi pilgrimage. There are various local attractions and destinations en-route Jammu - Katra, but now with the launch of direct train to Katra, these attractions and

destinations have got cut-off from the route and as a result, they do not witness too many pilgrims or tourists. This sudden deduction in the number of visitors to these enroute destinations can bring some kind of impact on the local communities. This study undertakes one such local place, “Kolkandoli”, which is known for an ancient temple of goddess Durga. This temple has been worshipped since times immemorial and holds the mythological status of first and compulsory darshan (halt) for Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. It falls in Nagrota town and since the operation of the direct train, the number of tourists visiting Kolkandoli has decreased steeply. The study aims to investigate the perception of local residents of Nagrota about the impact of direct train to Katra. The locals of Nagrota were chosen randomly to provide first hand data for this empirical research. The research was done with the help of a structured questionnaire and the data was analyzed using mean, ANOVA, and t-test.

Impact of Direct Train to Katra Upon the En-Route Destinations

The destination of Jammu is blessed with small tourist spots around it. These tourist spots are potential enough to attract local as well as the outside tourists to spend quality time there. Various such tourist spots/destinations fall in the way from Jammu to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. These en-route destinations feed the interests of the tourists of having leisure. On their way to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, tourist take halt, eat, click photographs and relax at these destinations. The short time spent by the tourists or the travelling locals at these destinations is a way of income to many at the community level. These short halts also are a source of cultural and social interaction between the local residents and the tourists. As travelling brings people into contact with each other and has an educational element, it can foster understanding between people that can provide cultural exchange between hosts and guests. This enhances the chances for people to develop mutual sympathy and understanding and to reduce their prejudices (IIPT, 2000). Now, after the direct train from Jammu to Katra has started operating, these small en-route destinations have fallen apart from the way and are not witnessing tourism any more. This can make a considerable effect upon the socio economic trend of the destination.

Kol Kandoli: An En-Route Pilgrimage Destination

Kol Kandoli is the first shrine stoppage for Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Yatra, 13 km from Jammu in Nagrota town. Kol Kandoli is a historic temple and is as old as Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine itself. According to different myths published, the Goddess stayed here for quite some time to complete her tapasya (spiritual discipline) in the form of a small girl, by performing all the required rituals and fulfilling all the necessary virtues as has been described in the scriptures. The town of Nagrota used to be an en-route station for the tourists and the locals travelling the Jammu Srinagar Highway (NH1A), especially for the pilgrims of Mata Vaishno Devi. The pilgrims used to stop here to Visit Kol Kandoli Temple. They used to buy Prasad and Souvenirs from the shops and stalls around the temple and used to buy eatables and drinks from Nagrota Market. As of 2011, Nagrota had a population of 19,998. A considerable section of the town owns shops and business. These shops and business of Nagrota were supplemented by tourism but now after the direct train from Jammu to Katra has started; the pilgrims have stopped visiting this place. Since it has been just a couple of months that the train has started running, it has yet not made a considerable or measurable impact on the town, but its residents have started expecting and predicting the impacts that can occur after two or three years.

Review of Literature & Hypothesis Development

Tourism has been a supporting factor to infinite developing destinations. It brings with itself people, money and culture. Any active tourism destination will fetch social as well as monetary benefits. There are various other impacts of the activity which have been observed and studied upon for years. Pizam (1978) studied the social impact on tourism upon the destination. The Economic impact of Tourism was studied by Archer and Fletcher (1996) in a special case study of Seychelle Island. The impacts of tourism can either be positive and beneficial, or negative and detrimental to the local community. The economic impacts of tourism are the most widely researched impacts of tourism on community (Mason, 2003).

Many community attractions and tourism offerings have a reliance on the natural and man-made resources (Starr, 2002). The environmental impacts of tourism on community can take the form of both the quality of the physical environment and access to these resources in which positive environmental impacts of tourism on a community (Liu et al., 1987; Mason, 2003). On one hand, tourism provides a reason to preserve natural as well as man-made attractions (Cohen, 1978) on the other hand, it produces negative impacts including, waste production, littering, overcrowding, traffic congestion as well as pollution of water and soil along with the deterioration of natural resources etc. (Liu et al., 1987; Mason, 2003). Whether it is the beginning of tourism activity or its end, it takes a long period to make a real impact on the destination. Until the real impact is made, the perceived impact of the stakeholders has proved to be helpful for research purposes. Perception is a person's primary form of cognitive contact with the world around him (Efron, 1969). A number of previous studies have investigated the perception of local residents on the tourism development. Andereck, Valentine & Knopf (2005) concluded that the residents appreciate the positive impacts of tourism in terms of economy, society and culture but also acknowledge its negative attributes such as crowd and crime. Lepp (2007) explored the attitudes of residents of a village in Uganda with regard to tourism and found that locals considered tourism as one of key means for their community development and generation of income, while boosting agricultural markets. Aref, Redzuan and Gill (2009) while examining the community leaders of Shiraz city of Iran found that they perceived environmental impact of tourism the most favourable and next to social impact. Some problems related to culture were also highlighted in their study. The study by Abdollahzadeh and Sharifzadeh (2012) indicated that positive attitudes were connected with the belief that tourism creates more jobs and opportunities for earning income, increases demand for local products, promotes agricultural markets and improves rural services and makes chance to have more welfare.

Demographics is one such character which has been consistently taken into consideration while studying human behaviour, especially in social sciences and management. This character holds a key place in impact perception studies as well, confining the review to the impact of tourism; various studies have taken up

demographic characters of the respondents as an indicator of their perception. Different perceptions from different residents can provide insight into the nature and degree of tourism impacts towards the respective tourist destination. The community perceptions on tourism impacts are likely to be an important planning for successful community development (Ko & Stewart, 2002). Most recently Nejadi, Mohamed and Omar (2014) included Gender, Age, Education, Marital status and Race in understanding and comparing the perception of the local people about the impact of tourism in Perhentian Island and Redang Island, Malaysia. Other studies taken up the demographic profile of the respondents in studying their impact regarding tourism are Siti Abas, Hafiz and Hanafiah (2014); Sharma and Dyer (2009); Williams and Lawson (2001). As, the above review has supported that getting tourism makes an impact on a destination or community, similarly, it can be hypnotised that losing tourism also makes an impact on the destination and community. Thus, taking in account the three individual concept of demographics, perception, and impact of tourism, a hypothesis developed for this study is as:

H1: The local's perception about the impact of direct train to Katra varies with their demographics.

H1(a): The local's perception about the impact of direct train to Katra differ with their gender.

H1(b): The local's perception about the impact of direct train to Katra changes with their occupation.

Objectives

This research is carried upon one of the en-route destinations from Jammu to Katra. The aim of the research project is:

- To study the local's perception about the impact of direct train to Katra.
- To know if the perception on the locals is affected by their demographic background.

Research Methodology

This is an empirical study which randomly targets the residents of Nagrota town. As per census 2011, the total population of Nagrota town was 1998. And thus according to Krejcie and Morgan 1970, the sample size

at 95 % confidence level and 5% margin of error comes out to be 322. Thus, 325 questionnaires were distributed among the participants, out of which 261 were found usable, leading to a response rate of approximately 81%. The instrument used was titled as “Local's perception about impact of direct train to Shree Mata Vaishno Devi on en-route places - A case of Mata Kol Kandoli temple” and was adopted from Gabriel Brida, Osti and Faccioli (2011). The questionnaire consisted of two sections A & B and an open-ended section of suggestions. The statistical tools used in the study included Mean, Standard deviation, t test and ANOVA.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 3: Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Demographics | | Number, N= 261 | Percentage |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 156 | 59.77 |
| | Female | 105 | 40.23 |
| Age | Below 20 | 39 | 14.94 |
| | 20-40 | 129 | 49.43 |
| | 40-60 | 73 | 27.96 |
| | Above 60 | 20 | 7.67 |
| Educational Status | Undergraduate | 135 | 51.72 |
| | Graduate | 50 | 19.16 |
| | Post Graduate | 19 | 7.28 |
| | Professional | 23 | 8.81 |
| | Others | 34 | 13.03 |
| Occupation | Student | 44 | 16.85 |
| | Shopkeeper | 76 | 29.12 |
| | Koisk Vendor | 14 | 5.36 |
| | Others | 127 | 48.67 |

Table 3 shows, the demographic profile of the respondents. It is found that approx. 59.77% of respondents are males and the rest 40.23% are females. Almost 14.94% of respondents were below the age of 20 years, while approx. 49.43% were from the age group 20-40 years and 27.96% and 7.67% from age group 40-60 years and above 60 years respectively. Approx. 51.72% of the respondents were undergraduate and 19.16% were graduate, 7.28% were post graduate, 8.81 were professionals and 13.03% were the others. Shopkeepers count 29.12% along with 5.36%

Koisk vendor, the students were also interested with 16.85% and rest having other occupations were 48.67%.

Reliability of the Questionnaire

By using Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient, the internal

reliability for all items was calculated. The value of Cronbach’s Alpha for “impact of direct train” is 0.707 (No. of items = 11). This shows that all items measure the respective construct, since Cronbach’s Alpha value of .7 or above is the ideal value that is considered reliable.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Impact of Direct Train

| Sr. No | Variables | Mean | S.D. |
|--------|---|-------|-------|
| 1. | Tourism Causes an increase in life standards. | 3.839 | 1.142 |
| 2. | You think starting of train has negatively affected employment opportunity. | 3.919 | 1.023 |
| 3. | Your monthly income has been negatively affected after the starting of train. | 3.533 | 1.062 |
| 4. | Do you think that the overall business is negatively affected due to direct train to katra. | 3.701 | 1.028 |
| 5. | Do you think that people skip their visit to Kol Kandoli due to direct train link. | 4.337 | 0.589 |
| 6. | Do you think direct train link will boost the tourism in Katra. | 4.677 | 0.599 |
| 7. | Do you think government should develop an alternate circuit for enroute destinations to Katra. | 4.065 | 0.841 |
| 8. | Do you feel that train link to Katra has an effect on the pilgrimage of Kol Kandoli and nearby destinations. | 3.988 | 0.722 |
| 9. | You think that infrastructural development in Jammu and adjoining area has been neglected due to direct train link. | 3.969 | 0.730 |
| 10 | Do you think that there is negative effect on tourist interest in local culture after the direct rail network to Katra. | 3.900 | 0.778 |
| 11. | Tourism incentives will support the restoration of Kol Kandoli temple. | 4.569 | 0.595 |

According to the mean score of the statements, the tourist agree to the impacts undertaken in the study. They believe that tourists skip their visit to Kol Kandoli temple due to the direct train link (4.337). They perceive that though the direct train link will boost the tourism in Katra (4.677), a considerable level that infrastructural development in Jammu and adjoining area has been neglected due to the direct train link (3.969). They also highly believed that tourism incentives support the restoration of Kol Kandoli temple (4.596). The perception of the employment opportunities being negatively affected is also strongly perceived by the locals (3.898).

Table 5: t-Test for Gender

| Perception | Gender | | t-Test |
|------------|--------|--------|---------|
| | Male | Female | |
| | 3.508 | 3.597 | - 1.994 |

Table 5 represents the t-test for gender of the respondents. Since the calculated value of t (0.1994) for gender at t = 0.05 is less than the table value (1.96), the hypothesis that

there is a significant difference in the perception of locals about the impact of direct train to Katra on the basis of their gender is accepted.

Table 6: ANOVA Represents Significant Difference in Occupation

| Source of Variation | Sum of Square | Degree of Freedom | Mean Sequence | F-Value |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|---------|
| Between groups | 0.144 | 1 | 0.144 | 4.353 |
| Within groups | 0.066 | 2 | 0.033 | |
| Total | 0.211 | 3 | | |

Conclusion & Discussion

The undertaken research is a study about the perception of the local residents of Nagrota town of Jammu region. Nagrota is a small town famous as an en-route tourism destination from Jammu to Katra, for its ages old Kol Kandoli temple. Before the running of the direct train, the pilgrims of Shree Mata Vaishno Devi shrine used to

pay their first visit to Kol Kandoli temple. Now, as the town has been cut off from the circuit, the number of pilgrims visiting Kol Kandoli temple has dropped down rapidly. Consequently, the socio-economic aspect of the whole town has started changing. It has been about 8 months that the train has started running and it has started making an economic impact upon the destination. This impact is being perceived and realized by the locals of Nagrota town. They perceive certain negative impacts of the direct train. These impacts include employment opportunities, drop of the monthly income of the locals, and that upon the overall businesses of the town. They also perceive that tourism provides positive attributes to the destination. The study finds that though the locals have a concrete perception about the impact of losing tourism as a result of direct train link to Katra, their perception changes with their gender and occupation. This may be because the locals who are running shops at Nagrota town, especially the ones depending more upon the outsiders and tourist perceive the impact to be higher than those doing other jobs. As the direct train is perceived to leave impact on the pilgrimage of Kol Kandoli and nearby destinations, development of an alternate circuit for en-route destinations to Katra is suggested as per the study.

Limitations of the Study

Though the research was carried out with fullest of the efforts, but it had few limitations its own, for instance:

- The research is limited to a particular destination catering a particular set of tourists, i.e. pilgrim tourists hosted by a community in particular. Results may vary at other destinations with other of local community of a different profile.
- As it is a pioneer study about the tourism impact at this destination, not too many dimensions were considered. In future more dimensions can be incorporated to diversify the study.
- This research focuses upon the local residents. In the future, the perception of the tourists upon the same issue can also be recorded, rather compared with that of the residents.

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