

Human Resources In Tourism Industry: The Real Game Changers

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Abstract: Tourism, nowadays is one of the most preferred and popular way of spending free 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. It is one of the largest and fastest growing economic activities, directly concerned with generating services, products, employment and investments. It is a dynamic and competitive industry which constantly needs to adapt to the changing needs and desires of its customers. Tourism being a service industry is largely driven by its human resources, wherein they play a very crucial role in its growth and development. It is such a resource of an organization which appreciates and advances with time and supports the organization in executing its policies, programmes and strategies. Tourists visit a particular destination because of its inherent natural or cultural value, historical significance, natural beauty, offering leisure, adventure and amusement and all such things, as a gift of nature can't be found at one place in the whole world, but in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, known for its scenic beauty and fascinating climate. Tourism is one of the most fascinating industries of J&K economy wherein the role of its human resources is quite promising and of utmost importance. This paper is an endeavor to highlight the role and significance of human resources in the growth and development of tourism industry and the role they play in promoting tourism with special reference to J&K state.

Keywords: Growth & Development, Human Resources, J&K, Tourism

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I. Introduction

Travel and tourism is not something new but have been important social activities of human beings from ancient times. Tourism is one of the rapidly growing industries in the world which accounts for more than 10% of total international trade and almost half of total trade in services and can be considered as one of the world's largest export earners representing 7% of world's exports in goods and services (WTO, 2016). There is not only the direct impact of tourism sector on the growth of economy but it also stimulates the growth of other sectors through backward and forward linkages and increases the income of local people as well as effective demand (Gokovali & Bahar, 2006). At international level, tourist arrivals have elevated from 25 million in 1950 to 1235 million in 2016 and international tourism receipts earned by destinations worldwide have increased from US\$ 2 billion in 1950 to 1220 billion in 2016 (WTO, 2016). According to World Travel and Tourism Council, India is the world's 7th largest tourism economy in terms of GDP and India's travel and tourism sector generated US\$ 208.9 billion in 2016 which is equivalent to 9.8% of India's GDP (WTTC, 2016). Tourism sector of J&K has been an important source of economic development over the past several decades (Mir, 2014) and is regarded as the backbone of state economy. Being labour intensive industry, it has a vast potential to provide employment to large number of people including both skilled and unskilled ones (Mukhtar, 2013) All these achievements are the result of dedication, commitment, effectiveness and competence of the most vital asset of tourism industry i.e. human resources. It is because of the services provided by its human resources working at different levels and positions that have enabled the industry to achieve such great heights. Thus it would not be wrong to say that 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 has become stronger as a result of globalization and removal of communication barriers by technological advances. The consumption demand emanating from tourist expenditures induces more employment which leads to 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 being a service based industry is characterized by high levels of human involvement for its survival and 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 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 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 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.

II. Objectives Of The Study

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

1. To study the present status of tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir.
2. To study the role of human resources in the growth and development of 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.

III. Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive method and is based on secondary data which was collected from various sources including research publications, relevant books, survey reports, brochures, booklets, data from Central and State Departments of Tourism, Tourism Development Corporation, and Tourism literature published by Government and Non Government organizations, annual reports, human resource publications, relevant websites, magazines etc.

IV. 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 view point 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 working in an organization to. Human resources are multidimensional in nature who engage themselves to fulfill their needs as well as the needs and objectives of the organization. It is the human resources who make use of other resources of an organization and thus enable the organization to accomplish its goals. In a service industry especially tourism, human resource constitutes the core element, in absence of which there is no existence of this industry.

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) states 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." 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 a period of not less than 24 hours or one night for a purpose other than the exercise of a remunerated activity in the place visited."(World Tourism Organization). 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 on 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 large number of people as well as generates revenue for the nations.

V. Jammu And Kashmir Tourism Scenario

Jammu and Kashmir is the northern most state of 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 state has a geographical area of 222236 sq.km comprising 6.93% of the total Indian Territory. It comprises of three distinct regions viz Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh and all three regions have immense potential for tourism from both domestic as well as international tourists. The state provides 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 and Unjum, 2016). “The tourism sector accounts for around 6.98% of State’s GDP. However, it is not among the top ten domestic destinations in the country on the basis of number of tourist arrivals” (Economic Survey, 2016-17). The department of tourism J&K is the main regulatory authority of tourism in the state 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 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 creation of 15 new Development Authorities for major tourist destinations. Subsequently 5 more Development Authorities were established raising their total strength to 20. For operating and development of all these newly created development authorities as well as tourism industry as a whole, the industry requires well skilled, committed and professional human resources.

The state has huge sources and triggers for attracting tourists and has an immense potential for the sustenance of tourism industry. It provides direct employment to various service providers such as Tourist Guides, Ponywallas, 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 state 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. In fact 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 the foreign tourists and is famous for adventure tourism. The state represents 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, the tourist brochures assure world-class hotel facilities, transportation, communication and site-seeing arrangements. There are number of locations which 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 development of tourism industry (Bhat, 2013). The table below (Table 1) shows the number of tourists that visited the state during the past 6 years including both domestic and foreign tourists.

Table 1: Tourist arrivals during last 6 Years (ending October 2017)

Year	Kashmir Valley		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: 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 killing of Hizbul Mujahidin commander Burhan Wani. As of now the situation in the state has improved and tourists are coming in good numbers and rejoicing themselves with the scenic beauty and picturesque landscape of the valley. During the last few years, both the central government as well as state government of J&K have launched various schemes and have taken 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 best out of these schemes, the human resource of tourism industry plays a very crucial role. Therefore, to attract and encourage more people to visit different tourist destinations of state, there is a need for professional human resources who are equipped with required knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary to satisfy the tourists and develop a good guest-host relationship.

VI. 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 department of tourism, people and institutions associated with tourism, the state government and the local residents of state. All the 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 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 in order to provide the high quality services to tourists visiting the state. The department is also concerned with 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 the purpose of 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 construction of accommodation facilities, running of cafeterias, restaurants and organization of food festivals, tour and travel activities in and outside the State. Besides these, Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC), 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 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 population is directly involved with tourism in the state. This emphasizes the need to involve more and more people with this industry in order 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 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 in order to provide high quality services thereby leading to tourist satisfaction as well as development of tourism industry as a whole.

The State Government

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir is one of the important stakeholders of 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 improvement of tourist destinations at 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 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 tourist destinations in order to attract more and more tourists to the state. In order to carry out all these activities, the state government requires the highly effective and competent human resources for the better utilization of its resources thereby leading to development of the tourism industry of the state.

The local residents of Jammu and Kashmir

The local residents of a particular area are one of the core elements and an integral part of tourism industry and therefore their participation in tourism related activities is very essential for sustainable development of tourism. Local population want to be part of tourism development programmes and policies in order to ensure that their needs are incorporated and to enable the policy makers 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 valley, thus, leading to socio economic development as well as growth of the tourism industry.

The following figure portrays the human resources that are associated with tourism industry of the valley, who by one way or the other contribute to its promotion and development.

VII. Human Resources And Tourism Development

The biggest challenge in today's complex and competitive business world any organization irrespective of its size, nature of ownership and control faces is in regard to 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 which acts as the base for competitive advantage (Armstrong, 2014). It is the human element of an organization that can generate ideas and convert them into action. Professional workforce with sufficient knowledge, skills, right attitudes and experience is the need of hour for organizations to utilize their resources efficiently and effectively. They are the real wealth of an organization which 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 are able to motivate, develop and retain their best employees, will survive, compete and sustain for long in the present globalised 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 tourism industry which requires high human involvement in the development and delivery of its services (Baum, 2012). Similarly, 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 complex and competitive environment, it is very essential to first of all 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 important to mention here that human capital which comprises of employee knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, experience, internal and external relationships are essential for creating organization specific advantages (Kusluvan, 2010). Therefore, for the sustainable development of tourism industry, the development of its human resources is inevitable. Human resources in the said industry are involved in every kind of activity whether economic or non economic, small tasks or big projects. It is the human resource which 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 in an efficient and effective way. 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 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 development of human resources and thereby the development of the industry as a whole. 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, thereby increasing the tourist inflow which in turn promotes the growth of tourism industry.

It is worth mentioning that God has made our valley a 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 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 the 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 tourism industry have a bearing on 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.

VIII. 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 state of Jammu and Kashmir. The paper presented an overview of the concept of human resource and tourism as well as a brief snapshot of J&K tourism. A brief discussion on stakeholders of J&K tourism and their role in the growth and development of tourism industry of state was also addressed. Furthermore, the relationship between human resources and tourism development was discussed in the present study. The findings of this study revealed that there exists a positive and coherent relationship between human resources and development of tourism industry. Being a service based industry, one can't think of tourism industry without the involvement of human resources. In fact, human resources are the life and blood of tourism and form the base of the said industry. The human resources of J&K tourism industry as constituted by administrators from Department of Tourism, people from J&K Government, people concerned with hotels, restaurants, house boats, tour and travel agents, tourist guides, pony wallas etc play a pivotal role in promoting, developing and sustaining this industry. Participation of local people in tourism related activities also provides impetus to the growth of tourism industry of 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 the dedicated, committed and competent human resource for satisfying the tourists visiting the state from different parts of the world and that will build the positive image about the tourism of state. This will ultimately lead to the growth of tourism industry of Jammu and Kashmir.

IX. Suggestions And Recommendations

Tourism being 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 best quality services to tourists, a need for professional human resources arise which will strengthen the guest-host relationship and improve the social and economic benefits as well as tourist satisfaction. Human resources being the core element and growth engine of tourism industry require a great deal of attention by the industry for their personal as well as professional development. Addressing the needs and aspirations of its personnel and aligning its objectives with the interests of its people will give birth to a committed, satisfied, motivated and competent human resource vital for its growth and development. In order 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 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 competence based approach to identify the gaps between the competences required and the competences actually present in the industry and to address such gaps for achieving better results in terms of tourist arrivals.
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 the tight and effective security measures.
6. The Government with the support of public should explore and develop new tourist destinations for attracting more tourists to the valley.
7. Department of Tourism should sponsor studies and surveys to get important inputs for formulation of policies and programmes for the development of tourism in the state.
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 their positive role by motivating and encouraging the potential tourists to visit 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 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 state economy especially in the generation of huge employment avenues to the hard core unemployed youth of the state besides generating whopping revenues to the state.

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