



**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**PAYING GUEST TOURIST ACCOMMODATION - A NEW TREND TO BOON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
DEVELOPMENT IN KASHMIR**

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**ARTICLE INFO**

**Article History:**

Received 12<sup>th</sup>, July, 2014

Received in revised form 22<sup>th</sup>, July, 2014

Accepted 11<sup>th</sup>, August, 2014

Published online 28<sup>th</sup>, August, 2014

**Key words:**

Kashmir, Environmental Degradation, Tourist Infrastructure, Tourism Product, Resort Housing, Paying Guest.

**ABSTRACT**

The valley of Kashmir is dotted with places of great tourism potential. The development of tourist infrastructure in terms of accommodation facilities is bound to have severe environmental impacts in terms of deforestation, built-up expansion, waste generation and consequent degradation of the environment. However, substantial bed capacity can be created through linking private households with tourist demand for accommodation, thus bringing in the wake the concept of Paying Guest Accommodation (PGA). The present study was based on primary survey of PGA units and tourists at five tourist destinations of Kashmir offering such accommodation. The study revealed that 20 percent of the tourists prefer to stay as paying guests. However the spatial distribution of such units is limited to a few destinations. The PGA scheme has generated substantial employment opportunities with sufficient income generation. The move is expected to popularize sustainable tourism development by arresting resort housing and the consequent environmental degradation in the valley.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Desired worldwide for its potential to generate income and economic growth, tourism is expanding fast and is predicted to double in the next 15 years (WTTC, 2007). The number of international arrivals shows a breathtaking evolution from a mere 25 million in 1950 to 880 million in 2009, a 35-fold increase in the last 59 years (UNWTO, 2010). Tourism is one of the world's largest industries, employing approximately 235 million people globally and generating over 9.2 percent of world's gross domestic product (WTTC, 2010). It is expected to play a leading role in achieving the balance between economic development and environmental protection (Vu, 2004). Mountainous regions are the second most popular tourist destinations which attract more than 50 million people each year (Mountain Partnership, 2008), the first being the coastal regions (Mieczkowski, 1995). While tourism provides considerable economic benefits, its rapid expansion has also had detrimental environmental and socio-cultural impacts. Natural resource depletion, land cover change and environmental degradation associated with tourism are often serious problems in tourism-rich regions (Bhat *et al.*, 2007).

The fast pace of tourism development around the world is causing untold damage to some of the most endangered ecological systems (Blangy and Mehta, 2006). Present trends in tourism are oriented towards increasing tourist volume which threatens the sustainability of tourism, degrading the very basis on which tourism depends (Beaumont, 2001). As tourist practices become more widespread there tend to be marked changes in the environment (Husbands and Harrison, 1996), the capacity to absorb large numbers of people will be challenged (WTO, 1990) and environmental problems assume an increasing trend. Therefore, there is a greater need to regulate tourism and the environment, not only to preserve the

environment for future generations (WCED, 1987), but also in the interests of tourism businesses and the quality of life of local residents. Very few studies have been conducted to model the environmental impact of tourism because, initially, it was regarded as an industry that does not harm environment (UNEP, 1992). On the contrary, its components including transportation, accommodation, food services, and retail activities (Smith, 1989), and processes related to them may negatively impact the environment (Healy, 1994). Formal institutional recognition of the environmental threat posed by the growth of global tourism came in 1979 when the World Tourism Organization (WTO) established the Environment Committee to address the issue of conservation. In 1982, it adopted a set of principles known as "the Joint Declaration on Tourism and Environment" which was prepared in conjunction with the United Nations Environment Program (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996). However, it was probably the exhortations on sustainable development of the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) and "Agenda 21" (UN, 1993), that gave momentum to the specific emergence of sustainable tourism. In pursuit of sustainability goals, businesses (TOI, 2003), governmental and intergovernmental organizations (OECD, 2002; UNEP, 2005; European Environmental Agency, 2006) make commendable efforts to mitigate negative effects, while keeping or enhancing benefits from tourism.

The Himalayan region has for long been a popular destination for climbers, trekkers and culture tourists, and tourism represents an important source of income for the impoverished region. The valley of Kashmir popularly known as the "Paradise on Earth" has tremendous potential for tourism development. The famous tourist destinations of Pahalgam and Gulmarg were given the special status of urban places in

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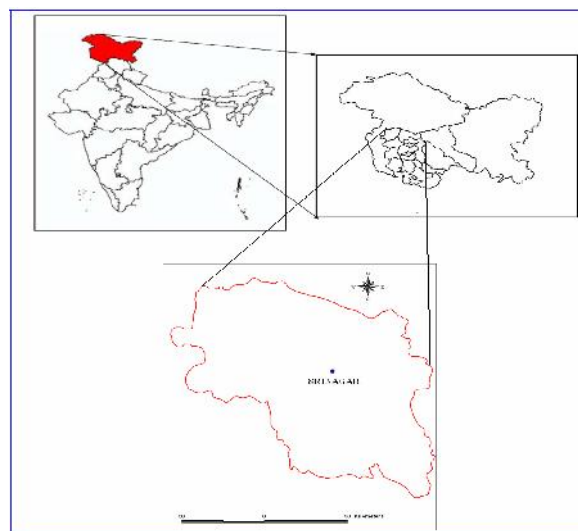
1961 only because of their tourism importance (Malik, 2012). However, jumbled tourism development has posed serious questions on its sustainability in the valley. The environmental impacts of tourism are highlighted in a number of studies focusing on individual tourist destinations of the valley. Unregulated tourism is resulting into unplanned land use change in Lidder valley (Bhat *et al.*, 2007; Malik *et al.* 2013), solid waste generation, deforestation (Malik *et al.* 2011), water quality degradation (Rashid and Romshoo, 2012) and other environmental problems. The increasing tourism activity and population growth is resulting into large quantities of solid waste generated in Srinagar city which is estimated at 370 metric tons/day (Wani and Shah, 2013) resulting into environmental degradation. The high concentration of air pollutants in summer months is directly attributed to tourism which corresponds with peak tourist activity in the valley (Jehangir *et al.*, 2011). The degradation of water bodies is also attributed to unplanned tourism in Kashmir; the worst affected being the famous Dal Lake in terms of shrinkage, sedimentation and pollution (Fazal and Amin, 2012).

In order to minimize the environmental impacts and maximize economic returns on the principles of sustainability, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir introduced the Paying Guest Accommodation (PGA) scheme. The paying guest accommodation is a novel idea to provide tourist stay within a residential house in one or two rooms on payment basis. This has the potential to facilitate a check on built-ups, encourage environment preservation, provide an alternative to meet the demand for tourist accommodation and ensure cultural exchange. The Government of J&K has encouraged the local unemployed educated youth to convert their residential houses into paying guest accommodation units. A subsidy up to 40 percent of the total cost of the project would be provided to house owners for conversion of their private houses into paying guest houses subject to a ceiling of rupees 2.00 lac in each case. The scheme is expected to provide direct employment for unemployed educated youth. As PGA generates good income with minimal investment, the government is continuing with the idea of increasing capacity for additional rooms. The present study investigates the potential of PGA scheme to develop tourism sustainably, promoting socio-economic development in the area while maintaining the environmental quality of the destination. The study argues that the promotion of sustainable tourism development is essential for maximizing its socio-economic benefits and minimizing its environmental impact.

**Study Area**

The valley of Kashmir, often been termed as the paradise on earth, has a unique geographical personality and is situated between 32°25` N - 34° 55` N and 73°45`E to 75°35` E (Fig.1). Nestled in north-western folds of the Himalayas, the valley is surrounded on almost all sides by mountain ranges characterized by snow covered lofty peaks. It covers an area of

15440 km<sup>2</sup>. The oval shaped valley is filled with thick deposits of alluvium, which has blanketed even the lower slopes of the surrounding ranges. It is drained by the Jhelum and its tributaries. The valley is about 130 km long and 40 km wide. On the basis of stratigraphy and altitude, the valley of Kashmir may be divided into four physiographic divisions, viz., Jhelum Valley Floor, Karewas, Side Valleys and the Greater Himalayan Range. Surrounded by the Himalayan ranges, the valley has a modified sub-tropical climate making it one of the famous tourist destinations of the world. The present study covers tourist places of Kashmir which offer paying guest type tourist accommodation. These are Srinagar, Gulmarg, Mansbal, Aharbal and Verinag.



**Figure 1** Location map of Kashmir valley

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The present study is based on both primary as well as secondary data. Primary data regarding socio-economic impact of PGA was generated with the help of a structured questionnaire. Random sampling of five sample tourist nodes (Table 1) offering PGA was carried out. An on-spot tourist survey was conducted to judge the perception and preference of tourists for PGA. The secondary data was obtained from various government departments, especially Department of Tourism, Jammu and Kashmir, various tourism development authorities and from other published sources.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*Tourist Flow to Kashmir Valley*

Kashmir valley is one of the most beautiful tourist destinations of the world. It used to attract enormous number of domestic and international tourists before 1989 (Farid, 2003). However, the political unrest in Kashmir discouraged the tourist and recreation-seeker visits to the Vale. The international tourist

**Table 1** Sample frame of the study

Tourist Node	Paying Guest Accommodation units	Sample units	Percentage of Sample to Total
Gulmarg	128	30	23.4
Srinagar	16	10	62.5
Aharbal	15	10	66.7
Verinag	76	20	26.3
Mansbal	99	30	30.3
Total	334	100	30.0

flow to Kashmir valley has promoted due to swift means of transport and communication. Expansion in tourism infrastructure, identification of new tourist spots, reorganization of tourism industry and new thrust on tourism management has heralded new era of tourism in the State. As a consequence of these measures there has been phenomenal increase in the tourist traffic to the State as is evident from Table 2 and Figure 2.

have been taken but much needs to be done to promote tourism in the valley.

**Source** Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Development Corporation Srinagar, 2010

In Srinagar there are hotels to suit every requirement in terms of price, location and facilities. Being centrally located and enjoying better transport and communication facilities, the city

**Table 2** Year wise tourist flow to Kashmir valley

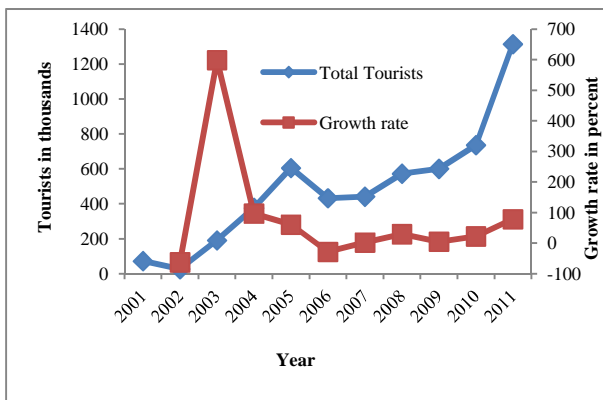
S. No	Year	Domestic	International	Total	Growth rate (percent)
1	2001	66732	5859	72591	-
2	2002	24670	2686	27356	-62.31
3	2003	182205	8959	191164	598.80
4	2004	358095	18634	376729	97.07
5	2005	585702	19680	605382	60.69
6	2006	412879	20009	432888	-28.49
7	2007	417264	24576	441840	2.07
8	2008	551041	21588	572629	29.60
9	2009	577348	23904	601252	5.00
10	2010	710504	25984	736488	22.49
11	2011	1282360	32110	1314470	78.48

**Source** Directorate of Tourism, Srinagar

**Directorate of Tourism, Srinagar**

The tourism industry has received a major setback in 1990-91 due to the political instability in Kashmir. This has affected the economic stability as well as employment generation for tourist dependent population. The tourist influx again picked up substantially after 1996 onwards achieving a significant growth rate of 58.53 percent and 628.31 percent in 1996 and 2001 respectively. Domestic tourist arrivals showed phenomenal increase as compared to foreign tourist arrivals. However, the year 2003 has recorded the highest tourist growth of 598.8 percent. The tourist arrivals to Kashmir valley again decreased in 2009 due to political unrest. During the last three years the tourist flow has again picked up with the total tourist flow of more than 13 lac in 2011.

has the highest number of accommodation units in the form of hotels, guest houses and house boats (Table 3). The city is the major tourist attractions in the valley and the tourist flow remains always high. It is followed by Pahalgam, the next major tourist spot with 133 accommodation units followed by Gulmarg where the total number of hotels is 24. In Sonamarg there are a few but comfortable private hotels along the roadside. In the newly discovered tourist places like Mansbal, Kangan and Naranag the accommodation facility in the form of hotels and guesthouses is not sufficient. However, the state tourism department has given incentives for local people for convergence of their private houses into PGA units. Expansion of infrastructure or its renovation would have an impact on valley’s environment which is deteriorating at an accelerated pace. Thus, a balance between development and depletion is to be maintained in order not only to provide adequate infrastructural facilities but also to ensure environmental quality at the same time.



**Figure 2** Tourist flow to Kashmir valley, 2001-2011

**Node Wise Existing Tourist Accommodation**

Accommodation is one of the basic requirements for promotion of tourism. The existing tourism infrastructure in the State of Jammu and Kashmir is not sufficient to cater to the needs of the tourists. Moreover the existing tourist accommodation is not sufficient to accommodate all the tourists especially the high-end tourists who invariably visit Kashmir in all seasons. During the peak season, the problem gets confounded. The available infrastructure requires up-gradation and more facilities need to be developed to cope up with the tourist rush in future. In this direction many steps

**Node Wise Distribution and Demand of PGA Units**

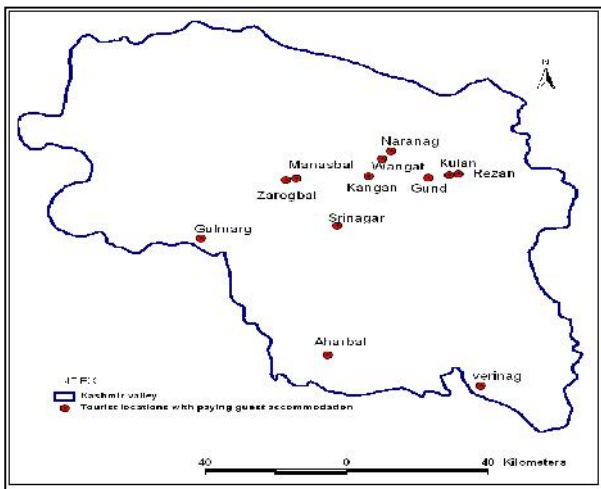
Paying Guest Accommodation is far more economical and pleasant than staying in state of the art hotels. It has been observed that 20 percent of the total tourists prefer to stay as paying guests. They get an opportunity to interact with the host-family, enjoy local culture and Kashmiri hospitality. To make their sojourn more pleasant they participate in daily household activities at the guest accommodation. However, the existing units of PGA are not sufficient to accommodate all the tourists who opt to stay as paying guests.

The total number of PGA units in Kashmir valley registered by the Department of Tourism is 390 (Table 4). The spatial distribution of PGA units is highly uneven (Fig. 3). During the year 2008-09, 128 PGA units for Gulmarg have been registered. This is because Gulmarg has always remained an ideal tourist spot of unparalleled beauty and the flow of tourists remains always high. But the available PGA is not sufficient to meet the tourist demand for accommodation. During the peak season the problem gets confounded. The study reveals that there is a demand for additional 300 PGA units at Gulmarg.

**Table 3** Existing tourist infrastructure in terms of accommodation

S.No	Tourist Node	Type of Accommodation	No. of Units	Total Rooms	Total Beds
1.	Srinagar	Hotels/Guest Houses/Houseboats	1369	17460	33874
2.	Gulmarg	Hotels/Guest Houses	24	362	787
3.	Pahalgam	Hotels/Huts/Guest Houses	133	2137	4178
4.	Aharbal	Hotel/ Guest House	2	20	36
5.	Verinag	Hotels/Guest House	4	52	102
6.	Sonamarg	Hotels/Guest Houses	7	134	264
7.	Mansbal	Guest Houses	2	19	34
8.	Wangat	Guest Houses/Huts	3	24	42
9.	Kangan	Rest Houses	2	18	34
10.	Gund	Guest House	2	12	16
11.	Naranag	Guest House	1	6	10

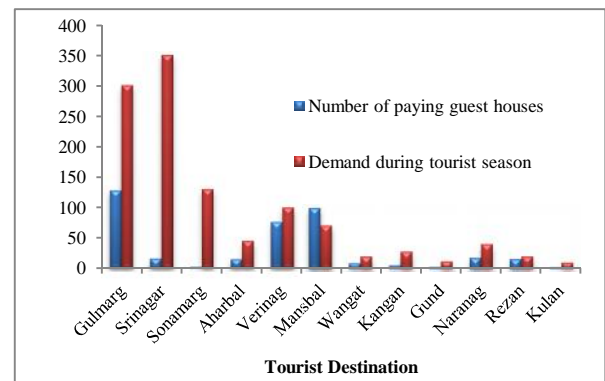
During the year 2009- 2010, the State Government has made significant contribution towards PGA as 118 cases have been registered by Department of Tourism, in which Mansbal has 76 units, Aharbal has 15 units and Rezan has 14 units (Table 4). However, in the year 2010- 2011, 79 cases have been registered (a decrease of about 40 percent from the previous year) only at three places of tourist attraction in which Verinag has highest number of 76 units followed by Srinagar with two units and Sonamarg with one unit only. Similarly in the year 2011- 2012 just 54 cases have been registered, an annual decrease of about 26 percent in which Mansbal has highest number of PGA units followed by Srinagar, Naranag and Wangat.



**Figure 3** Tourist nodes offering PGA in Kashmir valley.

The analysis reveals the fact that out of the total number of PGA units in Kashmir, the highest number, i.e., 155 cases have been registered only in District Ganderbal. Mansbal with

Analysis of Table 4 reveals that there is total demand of 1125 PGA units in the valley out of which the available units account for 390 resulting in a deficit of 735 units. Srinagar suffers the highest deficit followed by Gulmarg, Naranag and Verinag (Fig 4). At some destinations the local people have volunteered to convert their houses into PGA units. The analysis further shows that the number of PGA units is continuously decreasing since 2008. The government should make efforts to supplement additional PGA especially at tourist places affording least number of such units.



**Figure 4** Demand and availability of PGA in Kashmir Valley

**Economic Impact of PGA**

Tourism has become a priority in rural areas (Augustyn, 1998) which generates substantial household income (Fleischer and Tchetchik 2005, Wangchuck, 2009). Tourism has major economic significance visit their houses because travelers bring economic benefits to their community (Cole, 2007) while they still maintain their traditional for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Residents desire tourists to culture and heritage (Wang, 2007). It provides economic benefits to almost all segments of the society especially in remote and backward areas which otherwise have limited employment opportunities, particularly the unskilled and female workforce.

**Table 4** Availability and Demand of PGA units, 2008-2012

Tourist Place	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	Total no. of cases	Demand during tourist season
Gulmarg	128	0	0	0	128	300
Srinagar	0	2	2	12	16	350
Sonamarg	0	1	1	0	2	130
Aharbal	0	15	0	0	15	45
Verinag	0	0	76	0	76	100
Mansbal	0	76	0	23	99	70
Wangat	0	3	0	6	9	20
Kangan	0	6	0	0	6	28
Gund	0	0	0	3	3	12
Naranag	0	10	0	8	18	40
Rezan	0	14	0	2	16	20
Kulan	0	2	0	0	2	10
Total	128	118	79	54	390	1125

99 cases ranks first in the district. However, the total demand for additional 330 units of PGA is felt here.

The purchasing power and paying capacity of the tourists differs to a large extent depending on their income and willingness to spend. This has a bearing on the demand for accommodation.

The Ministry of Tourism has considered the significance of PGA as a focal point to raise the standard of living of local inhabitants. Residents of major tourist destinations have been encouraged in this regard. Presence of international tourists has generated substantial revenue in rural areas with multiplier effects, whereas domestic tourist arrivals have also stimulated the economic growth of these destinations.

PGA provides direct benefits to the residents of Kashmir valley by supplementing household income in over 390 households at as many as twelve places of tourist attraction where the scheme is currently operational. Increase of tourist arrivals at Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Srinagar, Mansbal, Verinag and Aharbal contributes substantial income for the paying guest entrepreneurs.

**Table 5** Monthly incomes of households offering PGA

S. No.	Tourist Place	Monthly Household Income (INR)	
		Before conversion	After conversion
1.	Srinagar	8000	15000
2.	Gulmarg	5000	11000
3.	Aharbal	6000	10000
4.	Mansbal	7000	12000
5.	Verinag	5000	10000

For example, the monthly income for one household in Srinagar which was around Rs. 8000 before conversion of their house into paying guest house has increased to Rs. 15000 after the implementation of the scheme (Table 5). Similarly, in Gulmarg the monthly income before the conversion was Rs. 5000 and after conversion the philip to household income has touched Rs. 11000. However, the generation of income from such units depends on the type of rooms and the services provided to the tourists.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The valley of Kashmir being one of the world famous tourist destinations is facing problems of environmental degradation due to huge tourist inflow beyond its carrying capacity. This calls for promotion of tourism on the principles of sustainability. PGA scheme in Kashmir has shown the evidence that the local dwellers have the potential to provide quality accommodation services while maintaining the environmental quality at the same time. This type of accommodation has continuously received the official standards certification from the government sector for many years which may imply its value of being a better alternative accommodation in Kashmir valley. It has fostered many benefits to the local economy, thus proving to be a valuable vehicle to bring rural stakeholders in touch with tourism sector to increase employment.

The scheme has created demand for local products like food and drinks, farm produce and, therefore, employment. The endorsement of this initiative will ensure the dispersal of tourists from the congested city to the villages and contribute in decentralization of tourism industry with an encouragement to rural tourism. Given incentives and hassle free registration procedures coupled with awareness programmes to popularize PGA by the government, the host-guest interaction will not only be socio-economically

fruitful but also environment friendly. This new trend has provided the basis and rationale for investment in infrastructure. It is noticeable that this novel venture of Kashmir tourism has been helpful in the overall facelift of rural tourism. Besides, it boosts sustainable tourism development on one hand and helps attract tourists on the other - the trickle down being pronounced with augmentation of amenities so that quality of life improves at local levels.

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