

Identification and Mapping of Religious Tourist Resources in Kashmir Valley

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Abstract Religious tourism is modern day format of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is an old practice of travelling to the sacred places such as temples, mosques, churches and shrines etc. Religious tourism mixes pilgrimage and features of tourism and is considered a tool for sustainability, change and peace building among communities. It is particularly important for India being the fastest growing segment of tourism and given the fact that the whole country is dotted with important religious sites and is known for largest congregation in the world as in the case of Mahakumbh. While each state of country has a unique mix of religious tourism but the state of Jammu and Kashmir have a wonderful mix of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh religions sites though it is known more for Vaishno Devi shrine and Amarnath yatra. Kashmir Valley in this state is popularly known for its natural beauty and leisure tourism than religious tourism despite the high resources for religious tourism. This study is an attempt to identify and map the religious tourist resources in Kashmir valley. The nature of the study is exploratory and to find answers to queries raised through objectives both primary and secondary data has been used. The mapping of the sites highlighted that Kashmir has a mixture of different religious attractions and some of these attractions are located in close vicinity to one another. Based on geographical proximity, these attractions have been divided in to six tourism clusters. The analysis of these clusters based on parameters of tourism potential revealed that four clusters are under developed. The promotion of these clusters will provide diversity to tourism basket of Kashmir valley. Moreover, the less development of these sites could be taken as opportunity to take cues from developed sites and these can be promoted in a sustainable manner based on community participation.

Keywords: Kashmir Tourism, Religious Tourism, Mapping Tourism, Tourism Clusters

INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism is very ancient phenomenon of travelling and has gained very significant attention both at academic and public end (Vembu et al., 2017 and Dhankhar and Singh 2016, UNWTO 2011). Nieminen (2012) argued that there is no precise definition of religious tourism and different authors have defined it differently and used it interchangeably with pilgrimage tourism, spiritual tourism and cultural tourism. Buzinde et al. (2014) described religion tourism as faith tourism in which people travel for pilgrimage, missionary and sometimes leisure purposes. The literature suggests that Religious tourism involves travel to the sacred places such as temples, mosques, churches and shrines etc. The motivations of religious travel can be many such as worship, celebrations,

charity, serving and attaining salvation and peace. Religious tourism is considered as a tool for sustainability, change, and peace building among communities (UNWTO, 2011 and Gupta, 2007). It is the fastest growing segment of tourism industry (Marla 2007). The volume of religious tourists is rising over the years with a share of 10 percent of the total tourist's arrivals of the world (UNWTO 2017).

Religious tourism is a widely acknowledged form of tourism in India because of genesis of many religions such as, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism. Domestic tourism in some Indian states is dominated by religious tourism such as visits to Tirupati, Golden temple, Ajmer, Vaishno Devi and Amarnath. As per estimates religious tourism has 60 percent share of the domestic travel in India (Hindu, 2018). Most of the religious travelers are Hindus

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followed by Muslims, Christians and Sikhs (Livemint, 2018). Millennial travelers are being attracted towards religious travel through yoga and ayurveda (Travel times, 2018). In order to boost religious tourism Government of India has identified religious circuits such as Sufi circuit, Spiritual circuit, Krishna circuit and Buddhist circuit under its swadesh darshan scheme. Government has also started development of 25 cities under the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation (PRASAD) scheme.

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For the purpose of this study literature on religious tourism in general and particularly in the context of Kashmir valley were identified using data bases of Google scholar, Science Direct, Research gate, Academia.edu, Elsevier and National Digital Library. Additionally literature was also reviewed for assessment of tourism potential. The following review of literature provides an understanding of dynamics of religious tourism. The review is arranged thematically and chronologically in a descending order.

RELIGIOUS TOURISM

The reviewed studies on religious tourism deal with concept, importance of this tourism and discuss the opinion of different stakeholders at different religious sites.

Albayrak et al. (2018) explored pilgrim's stimulus in Jerusalem over 848 Jewish, Christian and Muslim tourists. The study found that religious stimulus was multifaceted consisting of interactions, exploring new things, spiritual devotion, relaxing and peace finding. Further, these factors were found significantly affecting overall pilgrim's satisfaction.

Vembu et al. (2017) explored spiritual tourism and tourist satisfaction in Kachipuram Tamil Nadu. The study was conducted on a sample of 150 religious tourists and the

results suggested need for amenities and facilities such as neat and clean destination, trained guides, comfortable, waiting rooms, drinking and bathing facilities at reasonable prices. All these amenities were found to have significant relationship with satisfaction and revisit intentions of tourists.

Ashfaq and Parveen (2017, 2014) and Sharma and Kaur (2017) studied economic impacts of pilgrimage tourism in Jammu. The results of the studies showed that religious tourism to be the lifeline of Jammu having significant multiplier effect.

Dhankhar and Singh (2016) explored pilgrim's satisfaction over destination factors in Haridwar Uttarakhand with a review from 100 pilgrims. The study found destination attributes were significantly correlated with satisfaction and pilgrims were highly satisfied over destination factors.

Kumar and Rajaram (2016) studied the association between tourist's socio economic profile and pilgrimage tourism promotion in ten selected places of Tamil Nadu through a survey of 1100 tourists; 800 domestic and 300 foreigners. The study found significant association between socio economic profile of tourists and promotion of religious places and authors suggested that socio economic profile can be used for identification of pilgrimage circuits.

Research on motivation of pilgrims at Kumbh mela by (Buzinde et al., 2014) used focus group interviews for five groups at Allahabad ashrams during Kumbh mela 2013. The study found that pilgrims were motivated by spiritual devotion, serving self and others and gain spiritual knowledge from saints. The study also found that interpersonal encounters at religious sites assist in social cohesions.

Kumar and Singh (2014) investigated issues in sustainability of pilgrimage tourism in Kurukshetra by close observations method. The study identified hindering factors such as pollution, availability of beggars, over crowd, poor infrastructure and maintenance. Study recommended product diversification for sustainability of pilgrimage sites.

Philip (2013) explored Kashmiryat among residents of Jammu and Kashmir through 220 interviews in Delhi and Ladakh. The study showed that Kashmiryat is love, respect, tolerance and social cohesion among multiple faiths. Further, study found that Kashmiryat is outcome of encounters among Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir.

Singh (2011) studied politics and religious in north India case studies of Varanasi and Sarnath. Study disclosed that due to greed of power politicians and terrorists utilize religions however, they fail and there is no long lasting impact of violence on pilgrimage tourism.

TOURISM POTENTIALS ASSESSMENT

Vystoupil et al. (2017) assessed tourism potentials in ten regions of Czech Republic. The study showed natural sites were assessed by the conditions and activities offered. While the cultural and historical sites were assessed through levels of protection and tourists flow. Besides, study used parameters such as tourist's volume, beds available, overnight stays, jobs and income.

Nasa and Hassan (2016) analyzed tourism resources potentials in Buriram Thailand. Authors mentioned tourism potential assessment is evaluation of tourism resources capacity to support activities. The study classified tourism resources into four areas viz natural, historical, cultural and recreational. Study showed that potential assessment assists in development of weaker areas and promote them according to capacity.

Studies in Kashmir Valley

Ten studies could be identified on religious tourism in Kashmir valley and the review of these studies suggests that no comprehensive study has been made for the valley as a whole.

Ganai et al. (2018) explored the sustainability of pilgrimage tourism from pilgrims end. The study was conducted in Amarnath, Vaishno Devi and Hemis Gompa over a sample of 100 pilgrims. Findings disclosed that most of the tourists were interested in visiting sacred places beyond Amarnath and Vaishno Devi. Therefore, study recommended improvement and development of tourist facilities.

Terrorism impacts on pilgrimage tourism in Kashmir (Tabasum et al., 2017). Finding showed that terrorism is highly fluctuating tourist's volume. The authors suggested creation of awareness among locals.

Rather (2017) investigated tourist's behavior among 150 Amarnath yatris through interview schedule and close observations. Study revealed that negative portrays have been made regarding volatility in Kashmir but still tourists are visiting and were found satisfied. Further study disclosed that Amarnath yatra which is 40 days tirth is succeeding almost from two decades due to hospitality of locals. Furthermore, study showed whenever there was any misbehaving or attack over yatris it was condemned by locals as well as separatists. Author mentioned that there are some anti Muslim agents who spread rumors and link Kashmir issue with religion.

Mohd (2017) explored the potential of rural tourism through study of Martand sun temple. The study exposed that Martand is most remarkable and oldest temple in Kashmir. Further study discussed that temple has not received much attention from tourism department. Researcher mentioned that temple could be clustered with Chattabal an offbeat destination.

Potential of pilgrimage tourism in Jammu and Kashmir (Ganai, 2017) and (Bhat, 2013). The studies revealed that whole state has massive religious attractions. However, it was observed that potential in attractions is deficient. The studies suggested development of circuit tourism.

Bhat and Shyju (2015) studied the significance of religious tourism in Tulmulla Kashmir from 150 religious tourist perspectives at Kheer Bhawani mela. The results showed pilgrimage tourism is important for peace, social harmony, employment generation, destination rebuilding and sustainability. The researchers recommended marketing of religious events.

Dar (2007) investigated religious tourism in Kashmir. The study was conducted at 14 pilgrimage site over a sample 700 tourists. The study revealed destination selection was multipurpose such as, spiritual devotion, blessing, wishes, family influence, business and meetings. Further it showed inadequate facilities, beggars at shrines, unhygienic sites, cheating in shopping, less tourist information centers and signage's at pilgrimage spots. Author mention potential and prospect of pilgrimage tourism is high because presence of different religious attractions.

Gupta (2007) explored religious tourist's satisfaction through a survey of 200 pilgrims in Amarnath and Vishnu Devi. Findings disclosed that factors such as distance, costs, comfort, safety and security are distorting tourism but doesn't have any significant effect in pilgrimage tourism. Further it was found that both the motivation and satisfaction levels among pilgrimage tourists were very high.

Gupta et al. (2007) studied impacts of pilgrimage tourism with reference to Amarnath Kashmir. Study discussed that Amarnath pilgrimage has positive effect on the economy of the state. Further it discussed that yatra vanished the ecology of the area through excessive use non-biodegradable substances and large movements over fragile routes. In this regard authors suggested temporary accommodation and restrictions on number of devotees.

In all ten studies have been conducted on religious tourism in Kashmir valley and the brief of these are presented below.

Table 1: Brief of Studies

Author	Year	Objective	Source
Ganai et al.	2018	Pilgrims attitude towards religious tourism.	New Man Int. Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies Vol. 5, No. 3 (120-121).
Mohd	2017	Identifying the potential of Martand and Chatbal.	International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, Vol 7, Issue 7.
Ganai	2017	Potential, issues and challenges of pilgrimage tourism.	International Journal of Research in Social Sciences Vol. 7, No. 1 (265-280).
Tabasum et al.	2017	Impact of political instability on pilgrimage tourism.	Inter. Journal of Economic Research Vol. 14, No. 20.
Rather	2017	Attitude of locals from Amarnath pilgrim end.	Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 22, No. 11.
Bhat and Shjyu	2015	Significance of religious tourism from pilgrim perspective.	South Asian Journal of Tourism and Heritage vol. 8, No. 2.
Bhat	2013	Assess the impacts and challenges of religious tourism.	Inter. monthly referred Journal of Research in Mgt & Tech. Vol. 11.
Dar	2008	Tourists motivation towards visiting religious tourists sites in Kashmir.	National Digital Library of India.
Gupta	2007	Motivation among pilgrimage tourists.	Tourism development, impacts and strategies ISBN78-81-261-3207-2.
Gupta et al.	2007	Impact of pilgrimage tourism: A study of Amarnath cave.	Tourism development, impacts and strategies ISBN78-81-261-3207-2.

The above review of existing studies on Kashmir valley suggests that no study is available regarding identification of religious resources and mapping of these resources geographically or according to potential. In view of gap in the literature and personal interest of researchers on tourism in Kashmir, this study was undertaken.

OBJECTIVES

Following objectives are proposed for this study:

- Identification of religious tourism resources in Kashmir valley.
- Mapping and clustering of these religious tourism resources geographically.
- Identification of tourism potential of these religious tourism clusters.

METHODOLOGY

This study is exploratory. In order to find answers to queries raised through objectives both primary and secondary data has been used. The primary data was collected from locals and government official through Interviews. Total 15 interviews were conducted 5 face to face and 10 telephonic interviews. Audio recording was used during interviews. Secondary data was derived from books, research articles,

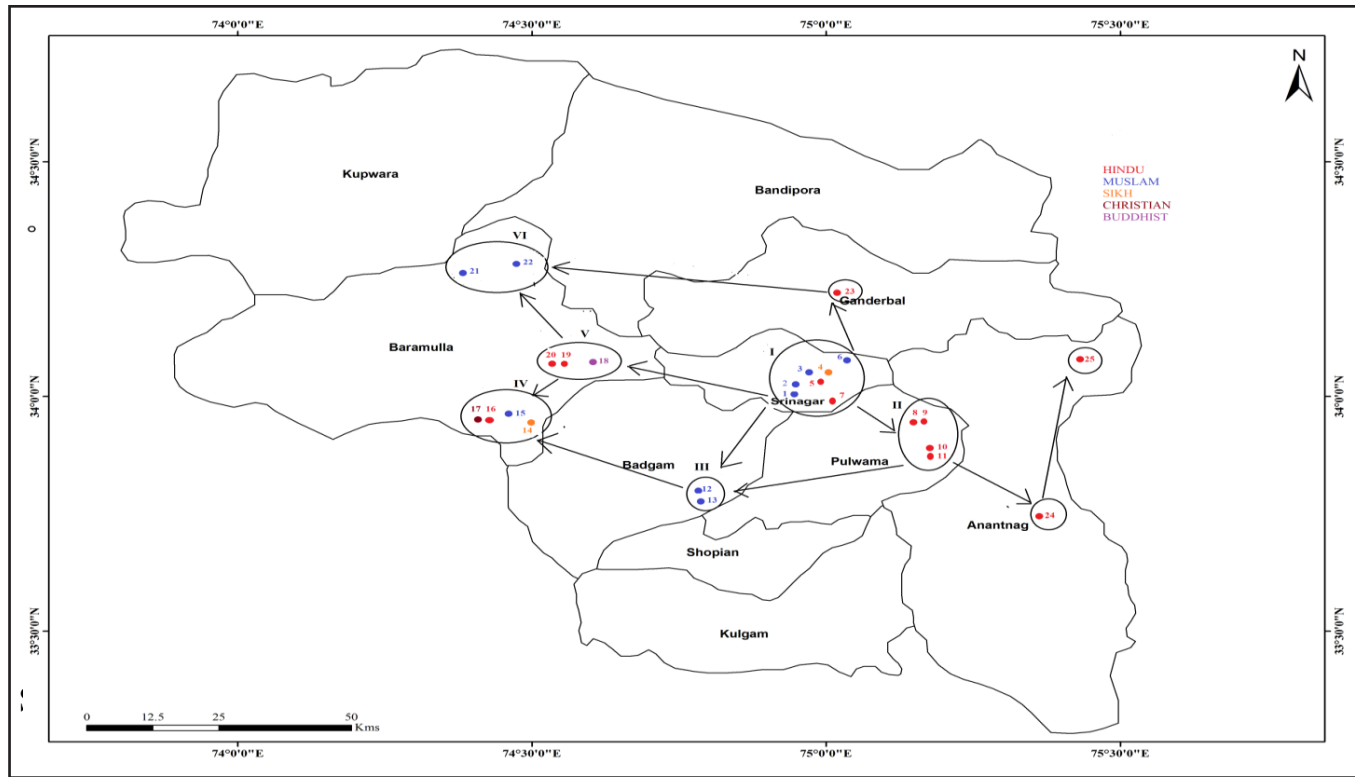
doctorial thesis, blogs, newspapers, government websites and reports.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Religious Tourism Resources in Kashmir Valley

Kashmir valley has a very interesting mix of religious affiliation in its population and the same can be seen in its religious sites. Early historical records suggest that in old times Kashmir valley has prevalence of Hindus and Buddhists (Philip 2013). Later, the valley turned to Islam and with the advent of Sufi and Rishi culture the valley was named as “*peer veer*” which means home of Sufis (Dar, 2008, Gupta, 2007 and Sikand 2000). The present culture of Kashmir valley is fusion of three faiths viz Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Followers of all the three sects have respects, tolerance and sympathy for each other and (Rather 2017) described it “Kashmirayat.” The cultural diversity of religion tourism resources is wide covering temples, mosques, churches and shrines.

The religious resources identified are listed in Table 1 and are grouped in to six tourism clusters based on their geographical proximity.



Source: Mapped by researchers

Fig. 1: Clustered Map

The map plotting attractions are given in Table 2. The map highlights that Kashmir has a mixture of different religion attractions and some attractions are in close vicinity to one another. Hence, the researchers have tried to group the attractions that fall in closeness to one another, so that

tourists can cover couple of attractions by visiting single cluster. The clusters too have been linked with each other for easy of tourists movements between clusters. The positions on map have been used to create clusters of attractions in geographic proximity and following clusters are identified.

Table 2: Tourism Clusters

S.No	Clusters	Sites
1.	Srinagar	Khan-e-Moula, Jama Masjid, Mukhdoom Sahib Shrine, Chati Padshahi, Shikara parbat, Dargah sharief, Shankar Acharay temple
2.	Pulwama	Khrew temple, Vishnu pad, Awantisvara temple, Awantiswami temple
3.	Budgam	Char-i-sharief, Pakharpora shrine
4.	Baramulla	Gurdwara sahib, Baba Reshi shrine, Shiv temple, Saint Marry church
5.	Baramulla	Parihaspora, Sugandesha temple, Shankargaurisvara temple
6.	Baramulla	Tujar sharief, Baba Shakoore-Ud-Din
	Others	Kheir bhawani, Sun temple, Amarnath cave

The details of these attractions are given in Table 3. As depicted in map cluster I cover seven sites in which two are associated with Hinduism, one with Sikhism and rest with Muslims. Cluster II probably unknown to many people falls in district Pulwama of central Kashmir houses four important religious sites that are linked with Hindus and can be visited from cluster I and vice versa. Cluster III is famous due to its apple and almond orchards and houses two important attractions namely Char-i-sharief and shrine

of syed Balkhi which attract different travelers because of their history and closeness to Sufism and can be accessed by tourists through cluster I and III. Cluster IV has great significance among travelers due to its location. The cluster includes Gurdwara sahib and Baba Reshi shrine at Tangmarg, saint marry church and shiv temple at Gulmarg and has been indirectly connected from Srinagar through cluster III and V. Parihaspora which houses the ruins of Buddhist monastery and stupa and is witness to fact that Kashmir was previously

home to Buddhists too and falls within cluster V which also house ruins of Hindu temples at Pattan. The cluster V falls at NH1A therefore it is directly linked with Srinagar. Cluster VI that falls on the Bandipur and Kupwara route holds two Sufi shrines namely Shrine of Mukhdoom sahib at Tujar and Shrine of Baba-Shakoor-Ud-Din shrine on the hill top

at watlab. The cluster has indirect access from Srinagar through district Baramulla and Ganderbal. However, there are some other important religious sites as shown in map and Table 2 that could not be clustered due to their distance but nonetheless are no less important.

Table 3: Tourist Resources of Kashmir Valley

Srinagar Cluster			
S.No.	Name of Site	Location	Significance
1	Khanqah-e-Moula	Srinagar	Khanqah-e-Moula oldest shrine in Kashmir. The mosque was built by emperor sikander in love of sufi saint Shah-e-Hamdan, spreader of Islam in Kashmir and delivered his first sermon from this Khanqah.
2	Jama Masjid	Srinagar	Largest mosque in valley built in 14 th century with Indo-Saracenic architecture. The mosque has 370 wooden pillars. Finest courtyard with chinar trees adds beauty to mosque.
3	Mukhdoom Sahib Shrine	Srinagar	Located close to hariparbat fort. The shrine is 1000 ft high and provides unobstructed view of the Srinagar. The site belongs to sheikh Mukhdoom sahib a great scholar, spiritual leader, poet and saint of Kashmir. It is believed that when one visits Mukhdoom sahib does not return empty handed.
4	Chati Padshahi	Srinagar	Largest pilgrimage site of Sikhs in Kashmir. In 1620 Hargobind sahib visited the place and gave darshan to women. Houses Adi granth sahib that is believed written by sixth guru himself. Annual fair celebration on the birthdays of Hargobind sahib and Guru Nanak Devji.
5	Shikara Devi	Srinagar	Located at Hari Parbat fort. Famous place of worship among Kashmiri Hindus. On the birthday of Shikara Bhagwati devotees offer <i>taher-charvan</i> a locally famous dish made with fried rice and liver of goat.
6	Dargah Sharif	Srinagar	Located on the bank of Dal lake and close to university of Kashmir. Completed in 1979 the mosque is visited by large number of devotees. The mosque houses the sacred hair " <i>Moi-e-Muqqadas</i> " of Prophet Muhammad PBUH that is displayed on some dates.
7	ShankarAcharay Temple	Srinagar	3 rd century ancient monument dedicated Lord shiva. Shiv Linga and Annual festival main are attraction.
Pulwama Cluster			
8	Khrew Temple	Pulwama	Located on the hilltop. Dedicated to Mata Jwala ji. Annual fair is held in which making of yellow rice main activity.
9	Vishnu pad	Pulwama	Close to Khrew temple, dedicated to Lord Bhairav.
10	Awantisvara temple	Pulwama	Built in 883 AD in Greek architecture by king Avantivarman. The temple is protected and restored by archaeological department.
11	Awantiswami	Pulwama	Close to Awantisvara temple. Dedicated to lord shiva. This temple too is built by emperor Avantivarman.
Budgam Cluster			
12	Charar-e-sharief	Budgam	Charar-e-sharief Shrine dedicated to great Kashmiri poet and Sufi leader Shiekh ul Alam (RA) named as Nund Reshi by Kashmiri pandits. The whole interiors of shrine are wooden with great calligraphy and houses some antiques.
13	Pakharpora Shrine	Budgam	Located in the apple and almond orchards. The shrine is dedicated to syed Balkhi of Afghanistan who was hard follower of Shiekh ul Alam (RA). Famous for annual Urs celebration.
Baramulla Cluster			
14	Gurdwara Sahib	Baramulla	Newly inaugurated Sikh temple at Tangmarg. Built by Ker Sewa people.
15	Baba Reshi shrine	Baramulla	The shrine of Baba Rashi is on the way to Gulmarg and is visited by gulmarg visitors. The architecture of monument is mixture of Persian and Mughal style.
16	St. Mary church	Baramulla	Located near gulf course. The whole church is made of grey stones.

S.No.	Name of Site	Location	Significance
17	Maharani Temple	Gulmarg	Dedicated to lord Shiva. The only temple at gulmarg with history dates back to dogra dynasty.
18	Parihaspora	Baramulla	The site with three Buddhist monuments viz Ancient stupa, monastery and Chaitya that were built by Lalitaditya. Large number of stones is found in the outer edges of the monuments. Therefore the place is called as <i>Kani Shahar</i> means stone city.
19	Sugandesha Temples	Baramulla	Built in 9 th century A.D. The temples are the outlook of huge rocks. According to locals the temples were built by Pandavs in single night.
20	Shankargaurisvara temple	Baramulla	Close to Sugandesha temple. Lord Shiva temple built by king Sankaravarman. Now an archaeological and famous excursion site on the NH 1A
21	Tujar Sharif	Baramulla	Birth place of Sufi saint Makhdoom Sahib. Every year the Urs is celebrated in the memory of Makhdoom Sahib.
22	Baba-Shakoor-Ud-Din shrine	Baramulla	The shrine is located on the hilltop. From the shrines one gets the panoramic view of Asia's largest lake, Wular.
Others			
23	Kheir-bhawani Temple	Ganderbal	Annual Fair that reconnects Kashmiri pundits with their roots. Houses 600 years old Rajnya Devi Stone image.
24	Sun temple	Anantnag	Temple with large area dedicated to lord Vishnu. The temple is visited by Amarnath yatis and other tourist. Temple provides accommodation to Kashmiri pandits who live outside and work in mattan. The temple is protected by locals and is fine example of Kashmirayat.
25	Amaranth cave	Anantnag	The cave holding icy linga of lord shiva and is famous for 40 days annual yatra.

Tourism Potential of Clusters and Resources Therein

According to the (Vystoupil et al., 2017) and (Nasa and Hassan 2016) location, accessibility, tourist flow,

accommodation units are parameters for the analysis of the tourism potentials. Therefore, the researchers used these tools for the analysis of tourism potentials of clusters. However the data on tourists was not available.

Table 4: Tourism Potential of Clusters

Cluster	Road/ Location	Accommodation Units	No of sites	Distance from airport in KMs	Distance from TRC Srinagar	Cluster Range in KMs	Ranking as per potential
I	Hazratbal and Boulevard	998	7	15	4	37	1
II	NH1A	-	4	30	18	17	4
III	Char-i-sharief	Dak Banglow	2	29	32	10	3
IV	Srinagar Gulmarg	33	4	47	41	10	2
V	NH1A	-	3	28	23	12	5
VI	Bandipur Kupwara	Tourist Rest House	2	62	67	17	6

Source: JKTDC & Google map

The Table 4 highlights the analysis of potentials of tourism clusters and their ranking. During analysis it was found that cluster I is having more tourism potentials in terms of number of sites, location, accessibility, accommodation units, and cluster distance from airport and tourist reception centre (TRC). Therefore, the cluster has given rank 1. The circuit II and V too were found rich in number of site, location and accessibility. But the unavailability of bedding facilities pulled their rank to number 4 and 5 respectively. Further, the cluster III, IV is given rank 3 and 2 according to the potentials therein. Furthermore the analysis showed that the circuit VI is far from airport and tourist reception centre. Followed by inadequate bedding facilities. Hence the cluster is given rank 6.

CONCLUSION

This study was an attempt to highlight the religious tourism segment of tourism in Kashmir valley that was previously Buddhist and Hindu dominant and later become Muslim majority. Due to its glorious religious history good number of sites were found belonging to different communities which were segmented in six tourism clusters based on geographical closeness. During the analysis of tourism clusters four clusters were identified less developed with reference to accommodation facilities, promotion and tourists flow. However these tourism clusters are opportunities for the development of religious tourism with community based approach. Development and promotion of these clusters will increase opportunities for all the stakeholders such as employment to locals, support to state economy and new experiences to tourists. This will immensely enrich tourism product basket of Kashmir valley.

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