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## Religious Tourism Growth: A Case Study of Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine (J&K)

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### ABSTRACT

The present study focuses on analysis of pilgrimage annual growth in Vaishno Devi Shrine and also studied what were the causes behind negative growth in a respective year; the study also correlated the impact of growth of pilgrimage tourism on the income of the shrine and growth and development of infrastructure and services in respective area. For this purpose study used secondary data. The research analysis shows that pilgrimage tourist number is increasing year by year but sometimes there comes a negative growth due to socio-political and adverse climatic condition.

Keywords: *Growth, Income, Pilgrimage, Religious Tourism.*

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### 1. Introduction

Religious tourism is based on faith, trust and belief. Unlike other types of tourism attraction like scenic beauty, climate, accessibility, high class accommodations, and security are the prime factors that affect tourist in an area. But all these factors are less effective in case of pilgrim tourism. In other types of tourism recreation and attraction is the motivation factor whereas in religious tourism spiritual motivation is the main attraction force (Raj and Morpeth 2007). It is one of the oldest forms of tourism and has been classified into sub forms like, small religious trips, international religious tour, religious festivals and religious conferences (Rinschede 1992). Even not all religious places are equally attracted by the pilgrim tourist; there are some attraction points that attract tourist that have historical religious background, religious importance according to their sacred wholly book etc. For example bathing in Ganga River is more important for a Hindu to get rid from the sin, pilgrimage to Mecca for a Muslim once in a life is very important. Some religious places attract secular tourist also and some only follower of its own religion (Nolan and Nolan 1992). Worldwide approximately 240 million people go on pilgrimage on every year. Traditionally pilgrim tourism was considered as a "Physical journey" in search of truth. The religious tourism from the last few decades' word wide has been increasing rapidly (Olsen and Timothy 2006). With the increased pilgrims has led to generate immense opportunities for generation of income (Gupta and Raina 2008). In the present paper to find out the answer of research question that whether pilgrimage tourism has increased or decreased in Vaishno Devi shrine this research has been conducted.

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### 2. Methodology

There are number of important religious sites in Jammu and Kashmir which are famous all over the world and Vaishno Devi Shrine is one among them. The shrine is located at Katra town in the Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir, relatively located on 45 Km away by road distance from Jammu city. For the present paper data on pilgrim tourist arrival in the shrine has been collected from the official Website of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, Katra besides it various secondary sources has been used to draw the meaningful information regarding the research theme.

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### 3. Growth of Religious tourism in Vaishno Devi Shrine

The pilgrim tourist in the shrine from the last three decades has been increasing with great speed, in 1986 there were only 13.86 lakhs pilgrim tourist came in the shrine, after two and half decade it rose to 101.15 lakhs.

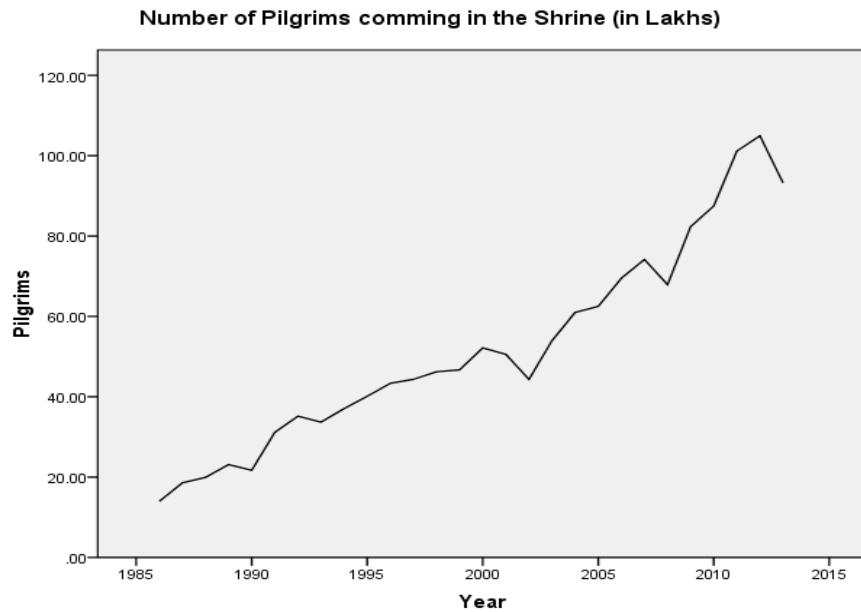
**Table 1-Year Wise Growth of Religious Tourists in the Shrine**

Year	NO. of Pilgrims (in Lakhs)	Growth per year
1986	13.96	
1987	18.58	4.62
1988	19.92	1.34
1989	23.12	3.2
1990	21.69	-1.43
1991	31.15	9.46
1992	35.16	4.01
1993	33.69	-1.47
1994	37.05	3.36
1995	40.11	3.06
1996	43.35	3.24
1997	44.34	0.99
1998	46.22	1.88
1999	46.70	0.48
2000	52.17	5.47
2001	50.57	-1.6
2002	44.32	-6.25
2003	54.00	9.68
2004	61.00	7
2005	62.52	1.52
2006	69.50	6.98
2007	74.17	4.67
2008	67.92	-6.25
2009	82.35	14.43
2010	87.49	5.14
2011	101.15	13.66
2012	104.95	3.8
2013	93.24	-11.71

*Source: Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, Katra*

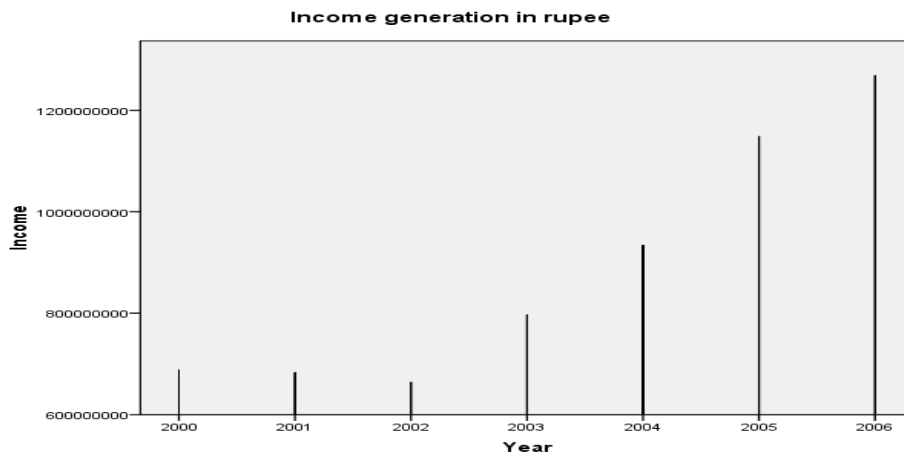
The year wise data shows that since 1986 the pilgrims' number has been increased although there comes a fluctuation in the growth rate due to some socio-political and adverse weather conditions to some extent. Year 1991 and 2003 marked a tremendous growth in pilgrim tourists; near about 10 per cent increase has been recorded. Whereas, year 2009 become the most successfully year for the growth in this year 14.43 per cent tourist growth has been seen followed by 13.66 per cent in 2011. For the growth point of view 2013 become the most worst year for the decline of growth, in this year growth declined to -11.71 per cent this was due to Uttarakhand flood tragedy in June has created a fear among the tourists regarding mountainous areas, beside it Kishtwar violence in August 2013, militant attack at Hiranagar and Samba and imbalance condition at LOC were the chief factor for this decline in growth rate in 2013. Where as much decline in the pilgrim tourist can also be seen in the year 2008, this year pilgrim tourist growth declined to -6.25 per cent, the factor responsible for this decline was tense condition in the state due to protest on transfer of forest land to Amarnath shrine board during this year May, June, July and August become the most worse months for the Katra town. Two time attacks in 2002 on Rangunath temple in March and November which

killed 25 pilgrim tourists and injured 65. Kaluchak massacre in May 2002, militant attacked on tourist bus and military quarters in Jammu killed 31 people. Qasim Nagar massacre in July 2002, where 24 Hindu were killed and 30 were injured in Jammu by the militants and after that Jammu region were closed for many days. Year 1990 also marked a negative growth in the arrival of pilgrim tourist in Jammu because of the turmoil in the valley and killing of Kashmiri pandits by the militants about 219 persons were killed. Other natural calamities also affected the pilgrim tourist in the shrine for instance slow growth can be observed in the year 2005 because of earthquake in the region.



#### 4. Revenue Generated

Income generation from different year depends upon the number of factor like number of tourist come in a year; ratio of tourist. From 2000 to 2006 there can be seen in the trend of rise in income generation. The major sources of income are income generated through rentable accommodation, accommodation unit of J&K Tourism Development Corporation (JKTDC), income and employment generation from Transport sector, income generated from helicopter Service.



Source: Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, Katra & JKTDC

## 5-Pilgrimage Tourism Arrival in Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine

In this table analysis of local and non-local tourists has been done.

**Table 2- Tourist Arrival in the Shrine**

Year	Local Tourists	Non-Locals Tourists	Ratio
2000	700240	4491675	13:87
2001	N.A.	N.A.	13:87
2002	N.A.	N.A.	13:87
2003	682277	4718019	13:87
2004	798206	5311689	13:87
2005	797295	5454703	13:87
2006	804648	6145925	12:88

Source: Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, Katra & JKTDC

The shrine attract the pilgrim throughout the country from the data it is clear that 87 per cent of the pilgrims are come from the different parts of the country and world whereas about 13 per cent tourist are local that is they are from within the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is mainly from outside pilgrim tourism that development of Katra town is take place rapidly, since they spend more money as compared to local tourist for example outside tourist stay for a long time as compare to local tourist, outside tourist spends lots on leisure, they spend on hotel, restaurant whereas, local tourist are from surrounding areas like Udhampur, Jammu, Reasi, Kathua comes in the town only for one day trip without staying at hotel next day they leave for their home. Thus the outside tourist affects can be seen on the infrastructure of the town, the town has five star hotel like The White Hotel, four star hotel like Hotel Asia, Hotel Devi Grand, Hotel Rani Maa, Hotel Shri Hari Niwas, Hotel KC Residency and 32 three star hotel and 48 two star. Besides there are thousands of small and big shops, tour and travel agencies, Banks, ATM, Cinema hall.

## 6-Conclusion

From the data analysis it is found that pilgrim numbers in the shrine has been increased year by year the factor responsible for the growth of tourist in the area are good road connectivity provided through NH 44 and NH 144A besides it the area is also connected through railway line and daily train services to many parts of the country provide ease to the tourists. Apart from good connectivity, the accommodation quality and quantity has also been improved, the hotels, restaurants and shops numbers has also been increased, other facility such as ATM, Helicopter service, Health care facility, better security. Better pilgrim routes from Katra town to Bhawan and various kinds of facilities on this route such as electric auto-rickshaw service, ponis, pithoos, palkis services provide more comfort and convenience to tourists. There is also negative growth has been recorded many times the main reason behind the declining growth are environment of terror due to terrorist attack in the particular areas and its adjoining areas, ethnic conflict, incident of extreme weather conditions such as flood, landslides, cloudburst and major earthquake were the reasons behind experiencing low growth rate during some particular years. It is also found that outsider tourist numbers are higher than local tourists which resulted the rapid growth and development of Katra town. For instance Parmandal a religious site in Samba district with great religious value attract local tourist but not the outsider which results low development in that religious site. Thus Outside tourists have the great potential to spend as compare to the local tourist and generation of revenue took place.

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