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IDENTIFICATION AND POTENTIAL OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF PATNITOP AREA OF UDHAMPUR DISTRICT, JAMMU & KASHMIR

Tajinder Kour , Khalid Hussain

Research Scholars, Department of Geography, University of Jammu, Jammu

Abstract: Jammu and Kashmir State is a hilly state of the country. It occupies an apex seat in the beautiful destinations of the world. Deprived from other natural resources, the state has opted tourism as a means of its development. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been an unending attraction of visitors down the ages. J&K has kept many things in her lap to bestow on the lover of natural beauty and its rich cultural heritage is attracting thousand and lakh of people from different part of the country and even from the world .Besides, cultural heritage, the state also occupies a unique geographical position. The state has exceptionally varied climate, ranging from the extreme cold in high altitudes to the hot summer in the plains. The wealth of cultural traditions extending over thousands of years, the natural surroundings the architectural master pieces, the Music, dances, Painting, customs and languages. In this paper, an attempt has been made to study the tourist destinations in Patnitop area of Udhampur District of Jammu & Kashmir state.

Keyword: Destinations, Attraction, Cultural Heritage, Geographical, Tourists.

INTRODUCTION

Jammu and Kashmir is the northern most state of India, situated mostly in the Himalayan Mountains. The state is rightly called the crown of India because of its glorious location. Tourism is the main economic activity in the state. The Jammu and Kashmir state is quite rich in natural resources such as water, forests and scenic beauty. Its lush green forests, rich wild life, snow-clad peaks, mountains, gorges, giant glaciers, rich fishing grounds, lofty skiing grounds, perennial rivers, floating gardens in Dal lake, cool breeze, shimmering lakes, invigorating climate etc. attract a huge number of tourists from all across the world. Patnitop is one of the most important tourist destinations in Udhampur District of Jammu & Kashmir State. Patnitop is a hill –station with unmatched beauty and adventure, is located in the Shivalik belt of Himalayas. Patnitop lies at an altitude of 2024 meters with all its natural beauty. This charming plateau is surrounded by dense woods and lush greenery of pines and is considered one of the best-developed tourist sports in the Udhampur district. It is situated about 112kms from Jammu. River Chenab flow in close proximity to the location. In ancient times, there was a pond “Patan Da Talab” (Meaning pond of the princess) where the princesses used to take bath. The town as called 'Patnitop' in the British era because of this pond.

STUDY AREA:

The area to be developed by the Patnitop Development Authority broadly covers 265 sq km, spreading over the Udhampur District of Jammu & Kashmir. This area extends from the tehsil headquarter of Chineni from the South to the administrative town of Batote to its north. This area includes places that have gained a considerable level of

development viz, the hill resort of Patnitop and its nearby places of Sanasar, Kud and Batote. Development has primarily taken place owing to their location alongside Jammu Srinagar Highway (NH 1A). The entire area is predominantly rural in character except Batote, a class VI town .Cheneni; another class VI town is situated at a strategic location on the foot hills side of the NH from Jammu and is just outside the Patnitop circuit Area.

OBJECTIVES:

The main objectives of the study are:-

To study the master plan of Patnitop Development Authority.
To study the Tourism Potential in the study area.
To analyze the role of Patnitop Development Authority in the development of the region.

Sources of Data:

The present study is mainly based on primary and secondary data. The primary data have been collected through personal interviews of various officers of Patnitop Development Authority. Secondary data has been collected from the published record of various departments and other sources. These include:

Tourism Office Residency Road Jammu
Data collected from PDA office Kud.

Sub circuits of Patnitop Development Authority:

The entire area under Patnitop Development Authority (henceforth to be referred as Patnitop Circuit) has been divided into three broad zones (or sub-circuits) based on physical proximity, accessibility and prevalent trends of tourism in order to achieve an effective and phased

development of the plan. These sub-circuits area:

Sub-Circuit “A” (includes Kud-Patnitop-Sansar):

Largely accessible by the NH1-A (except for Sansar which is 19Km from the NH-1A) and being at a higher altitude (average 2000mts above mean sea level) this circuit is already popular as a summer hill resort. Attractive sunny slopes, full grown Chir and Deodar forests, existing urban infrastructure and high degree of accessibility etc. Winter sports activities are gradually becoming popular too. The two major nodal centers in this region are Batote and Kud with an estimated population of 3105 and 2123 respectively in 1991.

Sub-Circuit “B” (includes Gorikund –Sudh Mahadev-Devak-Mantalai): These are places of high religious significance viz, Gorikund and Sudh Mahadev where a large number of pilgrimage tourists come in particular seasons of the year. Devak is yet another important pilgrim place. Tourists, both domestic and international, are attracted by the cultural activities in the Aparna Ashram at Mantalai. It has a 30 room hotel, a restaurant, besides the attractions of a small zoo, nicely laid out gardens etc.

Sub-Circuit “C” (including Dhuna/Lati-Dudu-Bhaderwah):

Located at the Southern end of the circuit in the region away from the NH I-A, these places are presently not well accessible by vehicles. The only road that connects chineni with these places and goes further ahead to link Dudu is narrow and unsurfaced. The road is not maintained well with a few sites endangered by landslides. Basantgarh can be presently being approached through the tehsil-headquarter of Ramnagar. The road connection between Dudu and Basantgarh is presently ineffective due to the lack of vehicular link over river Tawi. However, the focus of the Development Plan of PDA is primarily on the major nodes.

Demographic Characteristics of Patnitop Circuit:

Size of settlements: The towns of chineni, Batote are the urban settlements in the region in that order with estimated population of 1327 and 3251 (1994) respectively. Amongst the villages, Sana Latti and Kud are the major settlements with an estimated population of 3772, 2578, and 2309 respectively in 1994. Kud however is a major node in Sub circuit A with a present population of 2309 and with larger urban facilities. The settlements in Sub circuit B are generally found to be larger in size with Sudh Mahadev and Mantalai as important settlements. The villages of Dhuna –Latti, fairly large in population size, show significant potential for development in the Sub-circuit C.

Rate of Growth: When one considers the growth pattern of population for different settlements, there is a wide variation in trend though it is only for the decade 1971-81. The following observations are made regarding the sub circuits. The Sub-circuit A (Kud to Patnitop), comprising important villages of kud, Batote, karlah, Chakwah, Kothari, Pichote, Tringla show a more or less uniform decadal rate of growth of population around 30%. It is observed that smaller settlements show a higher growth rate viz. Chakwah (82.53) and Kothari (35.23) while the larger ones show a moderate rate of growth the lowest being 28.29% at Kud. The high rate

of growth of population in this circuit appears to be mainly due to rises in tourism activities in recent years. The villages in Sub Circuit B shown a widely varying rate of growth of population fluctuating between moderate to high. The growth is higher especially at village Kutwala (51.74%) and Mantalai (57.28%). The later attributed to the development of Aparna Ashram. The villages further from the national highway (in Sub Circuit C) show very low rate of growth of population except in Lati (41.02%). The settlements along river Tawi show a moderate rate of growth at jakhed. Chapeer and Dudu other settlements in the sub-Circuit show negative trends indicating out migration from the region.

Economic Base:

Patnitop circuit with its identified settlements is a typical hill area with untapped natural resources, on the one hand and problems of inaccessibility and economic backwardness of the people on the other. The topography is characterized by rugged and mountainous terrain. The altitude of the area varies between 1500 meters to 2200 meters. The per capita income of the local population is very low leading to poor socio-economic condition. However, with proper planning, optimum allocation of resources can be achieved and the existing poverty can be alleviated.

Tourism Potential in Patnitop Circuit:

The Patnitop Circuit despite its high potential for tourism activities and for the development of horticulture, floriculture etc. has not yet received enough attention for integrated development. The establishment of PDA has been the major step to develop the circuit. Proximity from Jammu (2 and half hour drive) provides the area easy accessibility. The decline in the tourism activity in the Kashmir valley in recent years also has established the priority for quick appropriate exploitation of the existing tourism potential of the Patnitop circuit. This is especially considered necessary in order to trigger off the much needed economic development in the region by suitably absorbing the surplus labor available in the primary sector. Occurrence of places of excellent scenic beauty as well as of high religious importance makes this place adequately suitable for a wide variety of tourism activities, viz, leisure tourism, adventure tourism, holiday tourism, pilgrim tourism and social and cultural tourism as well as for specialized facilities namely high quality residential schools, specialized hospitals, nursing homes, cultural institutions, service training institutions etc. For tourism development efficient publicity and vigorous promotion campaign is called for. So, planning for integrated development of the settlement in the circuit needs a complete understanding of the various aspects of tourism.

Places for Tourism: The existing potential tourist spots can be classified within the three Sub Circuit areas as already mentioned. However, a detailed analysis of the development potential of exiting centers of tourism given below:

Sub Circuit “A”: It has been observed that the tourists visiting Sub circuit “A” for the leisure form the major part (63 percent) of the total tourists visiting the circuit annually.

As this region has a unique potential in its excellent climate, splendors and bounties of the nature in the shape of wide diversity of beautiful natural sites and other elements of nature like fascinating mountains, forests, groves, lush green meadows, pastures, streams, scenic grandeur, valleys with fantastic panoramas, low clouds hugging mountain peaks and saddles and other beautiful natural manifestations. Infact, Patnitop can be developed as an equally important tourist destination area as the Kashmir valley.

Sanasar and Patnitop

These are the existing popular hill resorts. Today, the catchment area of tourists is limited mainly to the plain of Jammu and Pathankot. However, a small proportion of the tourists who come to visit Vaishno Devi (1.2%) also visit the circuit. Patnitop area is accessible from the National Highway. Sanasar is now approachable by a 19 km motor able road from the NH which remains closed for four months due to snow. Patnitop now mainly promotes leisure and holiday tourism. Situated on a meadow, largely sunny rolling slopes, rich Chir and Deodar groves and forest land on its northern side and the commanding view of Himalayas give this place the much needed quality of the resort. Sanasar is a lovely destination spot developed around a small meadow with a lake surrounded by pine forests. A cafeteria and a couple of tourist huts are existing. A plan has been drawn up to improve the environmental conditions of the Sanasar Lake.

Batote and surrounding settlements

Batote is the only Class VI town just adjacent to the PDA area and is an administrative centre. It provides alternative accommodation facilities during peak season when there is a high rush of tourists. It also acts as an important tourist centre by itself especially catering to business tourism. There is a 1 km long shopping complex in Batote. The Jawahar Institute of Mountaineering and Winter Sports are located here (recently shifted from Aru, North West of Pahalgam). This institute is one of the three national institutes, the other two being at Darjeeling & Uttar Kashi. This institute offers training programmes in trekking, rock climbing, winter sports etc.

Natha Top

It is located 8 km from Patnitop on the way to Sanasar, accessible by the Patnitop-Sanasar road. Natha top presently has an army base located at a higher altitude in the region Natha top is a beautiful view point and a picnic spot. Presently, tourists normally stop over here for rest on their way to Sanasar. Paragliding is one of the main activities of tourist interest here. However, this area is strategically important from defense point of view.

a) It is situated on national highway NH 1A, 4 km from Batote. Here we have a small garden with a spring which has the potential of being developed into a beautiful picnic and recreational spot.

b) Poonch House Area, Pichote

It is located along the national highway in between Kud and Patnitop in the village Pichote. The Poonch House was once

the residence of Maharajah of Poonch. It gives a commanding view of the Pichote valley along with takeoff points for some major trekking routes to Sanasar, Natha top and Batote. Presently there is no development in this region except a small hotel. There is a great demand for development of hotels in this area.

Sub Circuit "B":

Sudhmahadev and Gorikund

These are pilgrimage spots in a valley surrounded by ranges similar to Kashmir valley. Pilgrims from various parts of the State visit Sudhmahadev in a religious fair where 30,000 – 40,000 pilgrims assemble for 3 days in the month of June. The annual fair of Panch Tirthi comprise of 5 spots in the sub circuit ending with a holy bath at Binni Sangam. Sudhmahadev is a fairly developed small tourist centre with a newly constructed cafeteria and tourist complex and some dormitory type accommodation facilities. Sudhmahadev also has a natural scenic beauty, snowcapped peaks, salubrious climate and a history to feel proud of, an ancient temple associated with Lord Shiva and Parvathi, distinct culture and a simple hospitable population. Gorikund is famous for its Parvati temple. But it is inaccessible by a motor able road. One has to trek for a distance for 1 km to reach this place. Around 500 pilgrims now visit the temple of Gorikund every year. A lot more would come if the accessibility is improved and the facilities are provided. Good potential for development as attractive spots exists around the major hill streams in the region, (locally called Nallah) viz, Gorikund Nallah, Devak Nallah and Sudhmahadev Nallah. Excellent crystal clear water, moderate slopes and commanding views are the major attractions of these spots.

Mantalai

Tourists of a special category visit the Aparna Ashram at Mantalai developed by Late Swami Dharendra Brahmachari. Around 500 tourists have been visiting Aparna Ashram every year comprising of both foreign and domestic tourists. The main attractions here are yoga, Meditation, religious discourses and relaxed environment. The site provides a commanding view of the Tawi valley and the confluence of Jhan Khed Nallah with Tawi. Good infrastructure is already in place at Mantalai comprising of a star category hotel, recreational facilities, restaurant, meditation halls, swimming pool, places of religious importance are nearby viz, Naina Devi and Binni Sangam which are accessible by motor able road from Mantalai.

Sub circuit "C":

Settlements in the sub-circuit have a very beautiful scenic beauty and also a high potential for tourism.

Dudu

This village is located along the upper course of river Tawi and is a place of high scenic value. Being situated on table land it has large tracts of land with gentle slope which are very suitable for development. Also Kirchi, a small village nearby is located between the Kirchi Nallah and river Tawi is found to be a good potential place for tourism.

Basantgarh

Located near the fort of Raja Basantdev. It has the best scenic views among all the settlements in the circuit. The area is accessible now from Ramgarh till Tringulia. From Dudu side accessibility is broken by lack of a bridge across Tawi. For the development of Basantgarh it is essential that the bridge over Tawi is constructed as a priority task.

Purpose of Visit of Tourist:

Generally, the purpose of visit of the tourists to any specific settlement depends on the type of tourism potential provided by that settlement. This also depends on the various tourist infrastructure services and facilities provided accordingly. The type of tourism in different settlements varies according to the type of activities provided by the settlement whether it is recreational/religious/historical etc. The types of tourism observed in the various identified settlements of the circuit are given below (Fig. 1.4.1.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| a) Leisure Tourism - | Patnitop & Sanasar |
| b) Holiday Tourism - | Patnitop, Sanasar & Kud |
| c) Adventure Touris - | Lati, Dudu, Basantgarh, Patnitop
And Sanasar |
| d) Pilgrim Tourism - | Sudhmahadev, Mantalai &
Gorikund |
| e) Cultural Tourism - | Patnitop, Sanasar, kud, Batote,
Mantalai, Sud Mahadev, Gorikund
Lati, Dudu and Basantgarh. |

For instance, the type of tourists visiting the 'Sub circuit A' (Patnitop Sanasar, Batote and Kud) are mostly holiday and leisure tourists. Hence, the type of infrastructure required would be for tourists who go for mainly enjoyment. Hence, apart from the viewing beauty, different types of recreational facilities should be provided to the tourists viz, horse riding indoor and outdoor club activities, amusement park, paragliding, cable car ride, botanical garden, boating, fishing and other such activities. In winter, provisions for skiing, skating area etc. also need to be provided.

In 'Sub circuit B' the purpose of visit of tourists is mainly pilgrimage, there are various religious spots in this circuit e.g. Shiv Kund Temple at Mantalai, Gogan temple and Sudhi Budh temple on Devak Nallah, Naina Devi near Mantalai, Sudh Mahadev temple and Gori kund temple. Some tourists visiting 'Sub circuit A' could also be motivated to visit Mantalai, Gorikund and Sudh Mahadev. Hence, the type of infrastructure to be provided in this circuit are mainly the support services, infrastructure accommodation especially for the tourists during the religious festival, Certain camping site could be identified for the three days of festival at Sudhmahadev. In this sub circuit, the present tourist arrival is very small compared to the potential. Some tourists visit this Sub circuit for the purpose of trekking also. There are various trekking routes around this area which need to be developed in an integrated way.

Tourist Arrivals: The number of tourists in Patnitop area in 2005 was 2, 08,174. Out of the total annual tourists, 75% visits the Sub circuit "A" during the peak months of May, June and July. Hence, the main pressure on accommodation and other infrastructural facilities is during these months. During the rest of the months the occupancy

generally varies between 20-50% with the least in winter. The arrival number of tourists in sub circuit B is very small. These are generally in the nature of pilgrim tourists. Around 30,000 – 40,000 pilgrims visit Sudhmahadev during the month of June for a religious fair. Apart from this around 5000 tourists visit the whole of 'Sub circuit B' in the peak season (April – July). The tourist visiting the 'Sub circuit B' during the peak season.

Problems of Patnitop Area: The main problems of Patnitop area include supply of water, sewerage problem, solid waste management etc.

***Water Supply:** Development activities and modernization procedures in hill areas require increased water harvesting for irrigation, drinking water supply, and water for commercial and other activities. But the relationship of hydrological cycle to vegetation, soil and other geo-physical parameters is crucial and to be understood from ecological and environmental concerns. While thick forest and vegetal cover allow for more precipitation, recharge of underground source and control of soil erosion, depletion of such forest and vegetal cover has just the opposite consequences. This is exactly the situation in many hill areas. Increased population pressures and incentive developmental activities invariably contribute to negative consequences. Fortunately in the PDA area damages of this type is marginal. All new development in the area therefore should be sensitive to the terrain and surface vegetal cover. Presently Kud is being fed by the water supply system at Patnitop. Due to increase in number of tourists in both Kud and Patnitop, separate water supply system is proposed to be augmented. The existing water supply system at Kud is old, which is not sufficient to meet the present demand. The source for existing water supply system is Shivgarh-I in Shivgarh Nallah and other sources are Swami Ki Bowli and Bowli in Bazar. After augmentation of water supply system at Kud, Shivgarh Source I shall be completely utilized for Patnitop. To meet the additional requirement. Shivgarh Source II is being proposed to tap for Kud which is approximately 12 Km away from Kud.

***Sewerage:** The most common form of sewage disposal found in the Patnitop Circuit Area has been the septic tank system. This system of sanitation is seen in the JKTDC tourist complex, in the private hotels and also in few private Bungalows. It is observed during field survey that there is no planned sewerage disposal system in Patnitop Circuit Area. At present people in small remote villages are defecating in the open area and hardly there are any sort of sanitary system. Further, at many places the effluent from the septic tank is directly discharged to the nearby Nallah. This should be immediately stopped and soak pits should be constructed in order to achieve safe discharge of water. At present, there are no treatment facilities of the raw sewage as such. The septic tank system in most of the cases is not operating efficiently because of faulty design. The effluent from the septic tank as said earlier is directly disposed to the nearby Nallah or open lands. Thus the Nallah carry the effluent from septic tank containing lot of undigested organic matter with high BOD content and the effluent ultimately flows into the streams and

pollute the main source of water in the region. The Consultants, after having reviewed the situation carefully on ground, have proposed appropriate means of disposal of the waste water from the septic tanks.

* **Solid Waste Management:** At present there is no provision for solid waste management in the Patnitop Circuit Area. Due to small size of population, present solid waste generation in every village is low. But, places of high tourism activity are the main generation points of solid waste every day during the peak tourists visit period. It has been observed during the field visit, there is no disposal system of the solid waste. Generally, solid wastes are disposed at the backside of the hotels, restaurant etc. Such disposal points are sources of serious health hazard and also are aesthetically displeasing. There is no agency or institutional body operating in the sub-circuit to monitor the solid waste management system. PDA should take this task as an important one and must also make it mandatory for the producers to collect and dispose their solid wastes in a proper manner.

* **Power:**

The existing peak demand as collected from site is tabulated below:

S.No	Name of the village	Peak Demand (KVA)
1	Chineni	550
2	Kud	650
3	Gorikund	100
4	Mantalai	450
5	Sudhmahadev	125
6	Latti	25
7	Dudu	50
8	Basantgarh	100
9	Dhuna	100

CONCLUSION:

The master plan of Patnitop development authority is a comprehensive plan which deals with the provision of all other concerned plans, related to the development of Tourism Industry. The various plans which are under the broad domain of "a master plan of development authority" are:-

Demographic Plan, Economic Base Plan, Infrastructure Development Plan, Solid-Waste Management Plan, Ecology-Conservation Plan, Power Plan, Water Supply & Sewerage Plans etc.

In this research work an in-depth studies made about:-

(A) The tourist sub-circuits such as

(I) Circuit-A- (Kud-Patnitop-Sanasar.) the circuit A is the most popular as well as the most preferred tourist circuit. About the 75% of the tourist visiting Patnitop follow this Tourist circuit. The intervening tourist spots such as the Kud, the Patnitop and the Sanasar in this circuit are the well known tourist places in J&K with respect to leisure, health, pleasure, recreational, sporting and the adventure tourism. The physiographic features, the fauna and the flora, the climate and the scenic beauty of the intervening tourist spots in circuit A or remarkable. The infrastructure is also good. A lot of hotels, motels, dhabas and the restaurants are available the national highway NH-1A connects the tourist spots that are included in circuit A. Moreover, the residents are hospitable & warm welcome to the tourists. The water

supply, the sewerage disposal system and the PDA is also working properly as per the needs of the tourists that is why the circuit A is the major circuit in this area attracting 75% of the total tourist visiting Patnitop.

(ii) Circuit-B (Gouri Kund-Sudh Mahadev-Devak-Mantali). The circuit B attracts 15% of the total tourists, visiting Patnitop. The most peculiar characteristic of this circuit is that, all the places intervening this circuit are the renowned and holly places from the religious point of view. The pilgrimage tourism is therefore famous in circuit B. Places falling under Circuit B like Sudhmahadev etc. are the most popular religious places all over the country. This circuit B has a lot of potential to attract the tourist but due to negligibility of the attitude of J&K tourism department and lack of adequate funding by the central govt. The tourism is still suffering a lot in this circuit.

(iii) Circuit C (Dhuna/Lati-Dudu-Basantgarh.) The circuit C is also neglected one as far as the development of infrastructure is concerned. The government authorities are not paying sufficient attention towards the development and promotion of tourism at the places comprising circuit C, that is reflected vary aptly by the share of Circuit C to total tourists visiting Patnitop area. Only 10% tourists prefer to visit via this circuit, whenever they go to Patnitop. This circuit has the places like Lati, Basantgarh etc. which are very well in potential for the adventure and sporting tourism but unfortunately we are not getting the desired benefit mainly because of the shortsightedness of our government policies.

The developmental steps employed by the PDA at present are not sufficient to pace up the changing trends and the resultant increment in the number of tourist visiting the place. The government of J&K in general and the tourist department in particular need to expedite the developmental steps in the form of infrastructure and development in other aspects so as to fulfill the increasing demand of the tourist from all across the globe.

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