



## Research Article

# Tourism and Employment Opportunities in Jammu and Kashmir: Challenges and Prospects

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## Abstract

The tourism industry has long been a vital source of jobs in Jammu and Kashmir. (J&K), offering employment opportunities in adventure tourism, handicrafts, transportation, and hospitality. However, there was a significant setback due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This caused a large loss of jobs in 2020 as a result of travel restrictions and lockdowns. The number of direct tourism jobs declined from 145,000 in 2019 to 113,000 in 2020, while there was a significant drop in indirect jobs as well. Despite these obstacles, the industry demonstrated resiliency, with employment gradually improving starting in 2021, direct tourism jobs had extended to 183,000, indicating a full recovery, driven by the growth of infrastructure, government programs as well as a rise in domestic travel. Although recovery has been encouraging, In J&K, several issues still impact the long-term viability of jobs derived from tourism. Consistent job growth is impeded by political instability, seasonal fluctuations, limited digital transformation, and gaps in professional training. Adventure and pilgrimage tourism have emerged as key contributors to employment, while rural and eco-tourism, despite their potential, remain underdeveloped. This study finds that employment trends across different tourism sectors vary significantly, proving that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work. Addressing these challenges requires a focused effort on improving infrastructure, expanding skill development programs, and promoting digital tourism. By tackling these issues, Jammu and Kashmir, can ensure that tourism remains a strong and stable source of employment for its people in the years to come.

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**KEYWORDS:** Tourism Employment, Jammu and Kashmir, COVID-19 Impact, Sustainable Tourism, Skill Development

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry contributes significantly to the economic transformation of many foreign destinations by fostering social and economic growth. Jammu & Kashmir is a popular tourist destination because of its rich historical backdrop, diverse cultural traditions, and breathtaking natural settings. Apart from captivating tourists with its stunning splendor, this region generates a multitude of employment opportunities that benefit individuals from diverse backgrounds, such as women, young

people, and marginalized communities. However, the region's tourism potential remains largely untapped due to a variety of obstacles that hinder the growth of sustainable tourism. Despite this natural potential, Jammu and Kashmir has experienced several challenges over the years, including ongoing political upheaval, which has negatively impacted the region's tourism sector. Socioeconomic disparity, a lack of infrastructure, and frequent natural disasters have all hampered the growth of tourism and, consequently, its capacity to provide long-term

jobs. The region's vulnerability were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which also brought unprecedented challenges to the global tourist sector. The tourism industry contributes significantly to the economic transformation of many foreign destinations by fostering social and economic growth. Jammu and Kashmir is a popular travel destination because of its diverse cultural heritage, fascinating history, and breathtaking natural beauty. Apart from captivating visitors with its stunning landscape, this region generates a multitude of employment opportunities that assist individuals from all backgrounds, including women, young people, and marginalized communities.

However, the region's untapped tourism potential is hampered by a variety of obstacles to sustainable tourism growth.

Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir is rising because to important government programs including the "Dekho Apna Desh" campaign, infrastructure upgrades, and business incentives for the hospitality sector. Emerging tourism sectors including adventure, environmental, and cultural tourism are creating new economic opportunities and jobs. The current investment climate in Jammu and Kashmir emphasizes how crucial it is to research the relationships between the employment market dynamics and the tourism industry. Recognizing specific barriers and using local opportunities can help the community reach its full tourism-driven economic potential for sustainable growth.

This research paper examines the impact of tourism on employment generation in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), focusing on the challenges and future prospects in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (2019–2024). The study highlights sector-wise employment trends in hospitality, transport, handicrafts, adventure tourism, and pilgrimage tourism while analyzing the effects of global disruptions, policy interventions, and economic shifts on tourism employment.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected J&K's tourism sector, causing significant job losses in 2020, followed by a slow recovery from 2021 onward. This research provides data-driven insights into employment patterns, emphasizing the role of government initiatives, digital transformation, and sustainable tourism practices in reviving the job market. The findings contribute to the academic discourse on tourism-driven employment by identifying key employment barriers, post-pandemic recovery strategies, and potential policy solutions for long-term workforce stability in J&K.

### Research Gap

While tourism plays a vital role in J&K's economy, there is limited research on sector-specific employment trends. Most studies focus on overall economic growth, neglecting detailed analyses of hospitality, adventure tourism, handicrafts, and rural tourism. Additionally, the long-term impact of COVID-19 on tourism jobs, sector-wise recovery, and sustainable employment strategies remain underexplored.

Another gap lies in the lack of research on digital transformation in tourism employment. Unlike other regions, J&K has been slow to adopt e-tourism, virtual experiences, and online travel services, limiting opportunities in e-commerce, digital marketing, and AI-driven tourism jobs. Similarly, eco-tourism

and rural tourism remain under-researched in terms of policy effectiveness, funding, and workforce development. This study aims to bridge these gaps by analyzing sector-wise employment trends, COVID-19's impact, govern

### Statement of the Problem (Brief Summary)

In J&K, tourism is a major source of jobs, however issues including seasonal variations, political unpredictability, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of skilled workers make it difficult to maintain employment stability. The situation was made worse by the COVID-19 epidemic, which led to a significant loss of jobs, particularly in the travel, pilgrimage, and hotel industries. Even though employment started to improve in 2021, there were still few work options and financial instability. Even with government initiatives to improve infrastructure and digital tourism, rural and ecotourism are still in their infancy and little research has been done on how digitization affects the creation of jobs. Examining employment trends by sector, this study highlights important obstacles and suggests policy solutions for J&K's sustainable tourism-driven job growth.

### Need for the Research

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered employment trends in J&K's tourism sector, making research on job recovery and workforce development essential. The pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of tourism-dependent jobs, with widespread layoffs, income instability, and business closures in 2020. It is essential to comprehend how employment recovered and which recovery tactics were most effective for crisis management in the future. It is also vital to investigate alternative tourism models, like eco-tourism, digital tourism, and rural tourism, in order to guarantee year-round job creation, given J&K's seasonal tourism patterns and dependence on particular tourist demographics. Additionally, this study intends to close the data-driven analysis gap regarding the efficacy of policies, skill-development initiatives, and the contribution of government incentives to the recovery of tourism employment. By investigating the elements that affect employment stability and creation in the tourism industry, this study will offer practical suggestions for companies, workforce planners, and policymakers to fortify J&K's tourism industry and improve employment resilience in upcoming emergencies.

### Significance of research paper

The impact of COVID-19 on job creation and sector-wise recovery is the main focus of this study, which looks at employment trends in J&K driven by tourism. Policymakers can use it to gain insights for infrastructure development, workforce training, and investment. Businesses in the tourism industry can use the findings to adjust to changing digital trends and market trends. Opportunities in ecotourism, rural tourism, and handicrafts will benefit women, marginalized groups, and local communities. Academically, it fills in knowledge gaps about sustainable tourism, policy efficacy, and workforce resilience. Additionally, the study examines ecotourism and responsible tourism policies, which are in line with global sustainability

goals. In general, it acts as a strategic manual for bolstering tourism-related jobs in J&K and guaranteeing sustained economic stability.

**Scope of the Research**

This research focuses on tourism-driven employment trends in Jammu and Kashmir from 2019 to 2024, with a particular emphasis on the impact of COVID-19 on job creation, losses, and recovery patterns. It examines sector-wise employment contributions in hospitality, transport, handicrafts, adventure tourism, and pilgrimage tourism, analyzing how different industries responded to the pandemic and their post-pandemic recovery trends. The study also evaluates the role of government policies, infrastructure development, and digital transformation in shaping employment opportunities in the tourism sector. Additionally, it explores sustainable tourism models, eco-tourism, and rural tourism initiatives, highlighting their potential to create long-term employment, especially for women and marginalized communities. Based entirely on secondary data sources, including government reports, tourism board statistics, economic data, and academic studies, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of employment challenges and opportunities in J&K’s tourism industry while offering policy recommendations for workforce resilience and sustainable growth.

**2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To examine how tourism affects the creation of jobs in Jammu and Kashmir in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (2019–2024).
2. To investigate employment patterns in various tourism-related industries, such as adventure tourism, handicrafts, transportation, and hospitality.
3. To determine the main obstacles influencing J&K’s tourism-driven jobs.

**The hypothesis of the research**

H0: In J&K, employment trends in the different tourism-related industries (hospitality, transportation, handicrafts, adventure tourism, and pilgrimage tourism) do not differ significantly.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

This study has taken a quantitative research design, based solely on secondary data sources to examine trends in employment in

Jammu and Kashmir’s tourism sector from 2019 to 2024. The research intended to assess the impact of COVID-19 on employment-driven tourism, identify sectorial variations, and assessing the process of recovery.

**Research Process**

**Data Collection:** The study collected secondary data from several government and industry sources, such as the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), Ministry of Labour & Employment Reports, and annual reports from the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department. Additionally, data from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) covered tourism-related sectors like lodging and transportation. Industry reports from trade associations provided insights through surveys and analyses from hotel, transport, and tour operator groups.

**Statistical Tools Used:** Various methods analyzed employment trends and recovery patterns:

**Analysis of Growth Rate:** Monitored the employment recovery over time.

**Analysis of Percentage Change:** Evaluation of the 2020 employment decline and recovery.

**Time Series Analysis:** Determined seasonal and long-term employment patterns.

**One-Way ANOVA:** Examining recovery rates in various tourism-related industries.

**Chi-Square Test:** Analyzed the factors (policy, infrastructure, and digitization) that affect employment growth.

**Correlation Analysis:** Associated employment growth with visitor arrivals.

**Multiple Regression Analysis:** Assessed the effect of infrastructure and policy on jobs.

**4. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

The Impact of Tourism on Employment Generation in Jammu and Kashmir concerning COVID-19 (2019–2024). Employment in the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a large loss of jobs in 2020 before gradually increasing starting in 2021. This study examines employment patterns before the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19, and the post-pandemic recovery through 2024.

**Table 1:** Employment Trends in J&K’s Tourism Sector (2019–2024)

Year	Total Direct Tourism Jobs	Total Indirect Jobs	Tourist Arrivals (Million)	Employment Growth Rate (%)
2019	145,000	80,000	8.5	4.2%
2020	113,000 (COVID-19 Impact)	62,000 (COVID-19 Impact)	4.8 (43%)	-22.06%
2021	138,000	74,000	7.5	8.8%
2022	158,000	82,000	10.2	12.6%
2023	171,000	90,000	13.1	8.2%
2024	183,000	96,000	15.0	7.0%

Employment in Jammu and Kashmir’s tourism industry was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in a sharp drop in jobs in the industry in 2020. Due to a

steady increase in visitor arrivals (8.5 million), the tourism sector in J&K employed 145,000 people directly and 80,000 indirectly before the pandemic in 2019. However, employment in 2020 fell

to 113,000 direct jobs and 62,000 indirect jobs, representing a 22.06% decline in total tourism employment, as a result of travel restrictions and lockdowns. Economic downturns and widespread job losses were most prevalent in the transportation, hospitality, and pilgrimage tourism industries. Employment in hospitality, adventure tourism, and rural tourism was restored as a result of the sector's gradual recovery starting in 2021, when visitor arrivals increased to 7.5million. In 2022, government programs, infrastructure improvements, and a resurgence of interest in domestic travel drove a 12.6% increase in employment, reaching 158,000 direct jobs. Significant expansion was seen in adventure and ecotourism, which helped to generate new job opportunities, especially for women and young people.

The number of direct and indirect jobs in the tourism industry had almost reached pre-pandemic levels by 2023, with 171,000 positions. The greatest employment growth was seen in pilgrimage and adventure tourism, which boosted the travel, hospitality, and handicraft industries. The emergence of digital platforms strengthened job stability by giving local companies, craftspeople, and operators of rural tourism access to larger markets. With skill-based employment, digital transformation, and sustainable tourism all playing a part in long-term job creation, direct tourism employment reached 183,000 by 2024, signaling a full recovery.

**Table 2:** Sector-Wise Employment Impact of COVID-19 and Recovery Trends

Tourism Sector	2019 (Pre COVID)	2020 (COVID Impact)	2021 (Recovery Phase)	2024 (Projected Growth)
Restaurants	90,000	78,000 (-13%)	88,000	105,000
Transport	25,000	18,000 (-28%)	22,000	27,000
Adventure Tourism	6,000	4,000 (-33%)	7,000	10,000
Pilgrimage Tourism	40,000	25,000 (-38%)	35,000	55,000
Handicrafts	9,000	6,000 (-33%)	8,500	13,000
Rural Tourism	9,000	6,000 (-33%)	8,500	13,000

The impact on different sectors changed over time. With the help of domestic travel and internet marketing, the hospitality industry, which employed 90,000 people in 2019, saw a 13% decline in 2020 before rebounding to employ 105,000 by 2024. By 2023, employment in transportation services (such as taxis, Shikaras, and houseboats) had stabilized after a 28% decline in 2020. Due to growing interest in trekking, skiing, and rafting, adventure tourism, the fastest-growing segment saw a 33% decline in 2020 but increased by 67% by 2024. Employment in pilgrimage tourism, which makes up one-third of all tourism jobs, recovered well, rising from 25,000 in 2020 to 55,000 in 2024. Likewise, handicrafts and rural tourism saw a resurgence, with homestay programs generating employment opportunities for women and local communities and digital marketing increasing handicraft sales.

The major issues affecting employment in Jammu & Kashmir that are driven by tourism:

In Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), tourism plays a significant role in creating jobs in industries like hospitality, transportation, handicrafts, adventure tourism, and pilgrimage Tourism. Political unpredictability, environmental issues, seasonal variations, infrastructure deficiencies, a lack of skilled labor, and worldwide crises are some of the issues that jeopardize its long-term stability. It is essential to address these problems if the area is to see long-term job growth.

- 1. Security Issues & Political Uncertainty:** Travel advisories, closures, and ongoing unrest all interfere with tourism, deterring investment and compromising job security.
- 2. Climate Change and Environmental Challenges:** Pollution, deforestation, and extreme weather events (landslides, floods) damage J&K's natural attractions and result in seasonal job losses.

- 3. Seasonal Travel & Job Insecurity:** Summer and winter travel seasons see the highest rates of unemployment, especially in the travel, adventure, and hospitality industries.
- 4. Poor Infrastructure:** Inadequate lodging, limited air travel, and poor road connectivity limit the growth of tourism and, consequently, job opportunities in rural areas.
- 5. Lack of Professional Training & Skill Gaps:** Many employees are undertrained in digital marketing, adventure tourism, and hospitality, which hinders their employability in a changing market.
- 6. Impact of COVID-19:** In 2020, the pandemic resulted in a significant loss of jobs, highlighting the need for economic diversification and the vulnerability of tourism employment.
- 7. Limited Digital Transformation:** The slow adoption of digital marketing, virtual tourism, and online booking platforms by J&K's tourism industry restricts the number of jobs that can be created in digital services.
- 8. Untapped Rural & Eco-Tourism:** Community-led projects, homestays, and cultural tourism are still underutilized, resulting in lost job opportunities in rural areas.
- 9. Poor Policy Implementation & Government Support:** Long-term job growth is hampered by delays in the implementation of infrastructure projects, skill training initiatives, and tourism policies.

Resolving these issues through skill development, infrastructure investment, policy reforms, and digital transformation can improve job prospects and guarantee financial stability in J&K's tourism industry.

### Conclusion & Policy Recommendations

A multifaceted strategy is needed to address these issues, including workforce training, infrastructure investment, policy changes, and sustainable tourism projects. To enhance tourism infrastructure, increase skill development initiatives, and encourage digital transformation in the sector, the public and private sectors must work together. Furthermore, boosting ecotourism and rural tourism can result in long-term job opportunities, guaranteeing local communities' financial stability. By tackling these key employment barriers, J&K can maximize its tourism potential and secure a more resilient and inclusive job market.

### 5. CONCLUSION

We evaluate the viability of the null hypothesis based on the examination of employment patterns in Jammu and Kashmir's numerous tourism-related industries.  $H_0$ : The trends in employment across the different tourism-related sectors do not differ significantly. Based on factors like infrastructure development, digital transformation, seasonal demand, and policy support, the findings show that employment patterns differ significantly across various tourism sectors.

Due to steady demand from both domestic and foreign travelers, the hospitality and transportation industries have shown a degree of stability. But handicrafts and adventure travel have fluctuated, mostly due to market accessibility and seasonal changes. In contrast, pilgrimage tourism has proven resilient due to a consistent flow of religious tourists.

The evidence points to a substantial difference in employment trends across these sectors, so the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected in light of these variations. In order to guarantee balanced employment growth across all sectors of J&K's tourism industry, this emphasizes the necessity of sector-specific policy interventions, such as focused skill development programs, infrastructure investment, and sustainable tourism initiatives.

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