

# Impacts of Insurgency and Sensationalism on Eco-tourist Decision Making (TDM)

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## ABSTRACT

The research questions of this qualitative study focuses on learning about the impacts of insurgency and sensationalism on Eco-TDM in the Kashmir valley. Thematic Analysis and Content analysis research techniques were adopted to conduct this study. It is evident from the findings that insurgency and sensationalism have negative impacts on Eco-TDM. (Rajgarhya, 2020). Studies clarified that Sensationalism does have influence on Eco-TDM more than insurgency (Frye, William, 2005). According to results, the existence of insurgency and sensationalism in the Valley has changed the perception of eco-tourists critically concerning the image of Kashmir as a safe tourist destination. Sensationalism nullifies the positive thoughts, images, and feelings of tourists and compels them to reconsider their decision towards the destination visit.

*Key words* : Eco-tourist decision making, Kashmir Tourism, Sensationalism, Insurgency, Media.

## Introduction

Insurgency is the unlawful activity against the authority by the group of insurgents who oppose the rule of law, framed by the constituted authority of the state (Akani, 2019). Literature is evident that many times, insurgency is fueled by the sensationalism. Yellow Journalism or Sensationalism refers creation of fake news, showing past incidents as latest, associating appalling incidents from other places with a particular destination, it has very negative impacts on the destination footfall. Whatever it is aimed at, it hampers tourism environment at a place. Eco-tourism and Conservation Eco-tourism is a type of tourism that is primarily inspired by a region's natural history, particularly its indigenous cultures. In the spirit of appreciation, participation,

and sensitivity, the eco-tourist explores relatively untouched areas. The eco-tourist uses wildlife and natural resources in a quasi-manner and contributes to the visited region through work or financial means, with the goal of directly helping the site's conservation and the economic well-being of local residents (Ziffer, 1989).

## Relationship between Eco-tourism and Tourist decision making (TDM)

Before selecting a destination to visit, eco-tourists who are travelling for the first time go through all stages of the decision-making process and conduct considerable research (Ezebilo and Eugene, 2014). Eco-tourists who have already visited the place go through only a few of the steps and conduct a limited search for information. Family, friends, societal

values, preferences, safety, and promotions relating to the destination can influence eco-tourists' choice of an ecotourism destination. The decision to return to an ecotourism location is based on the level of satisfaction the eco-tourist had on his or her initial visit to the destination. When eco-tourists are satisfied with their initial visit to an ecotourism destination, they are more willing to revisit but those who are not satisfied they are not willing to revisit (Ezebilo & Eugene, 2014). Therefore it is evident from the studies that eco-tourism is directly proportional to eco-tourist decision making of tourists.

Eco-Tourist Decision Making is linked with Insurgency as eco-tourists fear with insurgency contents (violence, riots, killings, atrocities, kidnapping, terrorism etc.) because they are peace lovers and conflict avoiders (Shah and Wani, 2013). Eco-TDM is more of linked with sensationalism as eco-tourists decide about destination's visit based on the media inputs. The information with regard to law and order, host community behavior, climate etc. has a lot of affinity towards decision making. Media adopts sensationalistic approach in case of Kashmir that created negative destination image of Kashmir and negative tourist perception. Based on the above deliberations, it is revealed that both insurgency and sensationalism have separately adverse impressions on Eco-TDM as more incidents of insurgency results low tourism influx (Itoo, 2013; Baker, 2014).

### Kashmir Eco-tourism

Kashmir Valley is bestowed with number of touristic avenues ranging from adventure to eco-tourism, since decades Kashmir remained dream destination of many people from different walks of life. Its fame across the globe has attracted the hearts of its visitors. To harness the benefits of these activities, there is need of safe and secure environment, but ongoing conflict has hampered its pattern (Najar and Saini, 2018). The destination faced dark years of militancy due to which its tourist arrivals touch the surface in early 90s (Fig. 1).

Average tourism influx from 1980 to 1989 in Kashmir was 5.60431 lakhs per year which reduced to 0.40499 lakhs per year during 1990 to 1999 due to military and insurgency activities. Later on, arrival of tourists increased slowly in the past two decades by adopting number of confidence building measures (Najar & Saini, 2018).

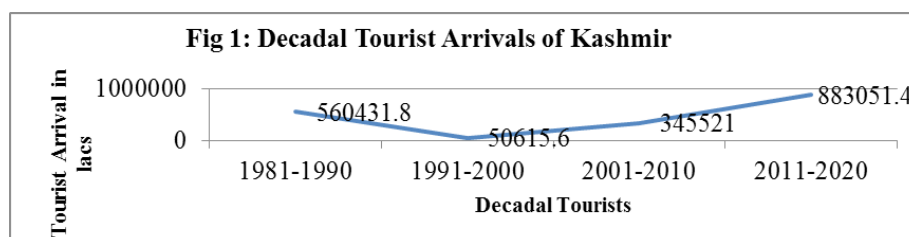
### Environmental Friendly practices adopted in Kashmir

Environmental friendly practices means the responsible environmental practices that are specific to natural destinations for its conservation. Kashmir Valley is eco-tourism destination wherein different environmental friendly practices viz, green travel, oppose plastic water bottles, Support sustainability practices, Stop using plastic toothbrushes, Recycle everywhere and anywhere you go, and research sustainability efforts for future accommodations etc. are adopted (Wani, 2020). All such environmental friendly practices conserve the natural environment and save its sanctity for future generations but the activities of insurgency and sensationalism impact their practicability and implementation. Eventually, it is here important to state that environmental friendly practices are negatively impacted by the terrorism, atrocities, riots, and yellowness of media etc. because such menaces create frustrations, disappointments among the stakeholders of environment conservators at destinations like Kashmir (Shah & Wani, 2014).

### Review of Literature

#### Insurgency and Eco-Tourism

The nature of insurgencies is different in terms of their objectives as social, religious, cultural, political, or a combination of them etc. (Dodwell, 2016; Nweze, 2012). It involves atrocities, kidnapping, killing, terror attacks, and attacks on infrastructure and so on (Dodwell, 2016). Insurgency makes the performance of eco-tourism difficult and inadequate by



Source: Directorate of Tourism, Govt. of J & K, vide/2019, (Itoo, M. A., 2013)

disappointing the eco-tourists. Association of Insurgency with eco-tourism is very complex and is having many different aspects due to mysterious and compelling phenomenon of terrorism and insurgency (Baker, 2014) so the signal of positivity is impossible in the TDM due to its complexity link with insurgency (Seabra *et al.*, 2019).

Insurgency is inversely proportional to eco-tourism potential as the literature stated that when the tourism destination is hit by conflict, the performance of tourism industry is disturbed by limited flow of tourism (Alola *et al.*, 2019). Thus insurgency and eco-tourism nexus is confirmed to be negative from the relevant studies (Alola *et al.*, 2019). Insurgency blasphemes the image of destination horribly when eco-tourists are targeted at short range by the terrorists (Baker, 2014).

### **Sensationalism and Eco-Tourism Development**

The rise of journalism increased the competition among news agencies and reporters for fame and TRP which gave birth to the new phenomenon of news called Sensationalism. The stature of sensationalist reporting is supposed to be during the 1890s, and from that point forward, sensationalist reporting has extended as innovative pushes ahead and pressurized the society in different aspects. For example when sensationalism is availed by anti-social elements in Kashmir to prick the youth and divert their attention from reality, societies of Kashmir are degraded by existence of havoc over here. This defaming of Kashmir valley by sensationalism impacts its eco-tourism. Hence when the image of Kashmir lost its sanctity either by sensationalism or insurgency, it proves failure in decision making of eco-tourists. If news is sensationalized then eco-tourist decision making is defective in nature.

### **Tourist Decision Making towards Environmental preservation**

Tourists seek destinations with untouched nature or at the very least a maintained and highly valued environment, thus the fact that ecotourism is growing, particularly in preserved regions for the enjoyment of nature, is not surprising. Eco-potential tourism's negative effects on the environment are reflected in worldwide demands on natural resources, pollution emissions, waste generation, and climate change. The main focus of this paper is to describe the current state and quality of natural resources in Kashmir Valley, as well as the climate fea-

tures of the studied area, as a requirement for continuing the growth of eco-tourism (Awaritefe, 2004). To select the destination for recreation, eco-tourist grasp the knowledge and information from different platforms viz, news channels, newspapers, magazines, advertisers internet, airlines, tour operators and other associated stakeholders (Smallman and Moore, 2010). Ranga and Pradhan, (2014) revealed that eco-tourism leads to gross domestic product growth of nation but terrorism halts the eco-tourism growth. Hence eco-tourist decision making is the sensitive and complex process where minor features of the destination are sometimes very crucial and important for final outcome of visiting the destination. In addition, the willingness of eco-tourists towards their objective is main component of Eco-TDM (Awaritefe, 2004).

### **Research Methodology**

The study aims to understand the role of sensationalism and insurgency on eco-tourism decision making in Kashmir valley. Mostly, eco-tourists believe in what print and electronic media are presenting about any destination (Rather, and Najar; Jaziri, 2020). Therefore, to work on this problem, Thematic Analysis and the content analysis, research techniques were separately adopted. Data have been collected from both primary as well as secondary means through interviews and various journals, newspapers, theses, dissertations, books, government, non-government reports, periodicals, websites and unpublished documents. At first, the keywords or categories of contents related to Insurgency like atrocities, riots, violence, terrorism, kidnapping etc., Sensationalism like online sensationalism, offline sensationalism, fake news, fake visuals, eye catching videos, fake cosmic strips etc., and Eco-TDM like ideas, decision frames, thoughtful decisions, extensive decision making etc. were selected to examine the published literature through the Google scholar, Scopus and web of science. Next, the theory of saturation was applied in order to ascertain the sample size for the thematic analysis. The data was collected from the respondents with the help of in depth interview technique using interview checklist. After applying open coding and counting, the themes were achieved during the analysis through Inductive analysis. The final outcome of the study is presented into main broad three themes, with the development of conceptual frame-

work supported by the different theories of the field.

### Analysis and Interpretation

#### Contextualizing Insurgency, Sensationalism and Eco-Tourist Decision Making

Insurgency and Sensationalism are two parallel variables that impact the eco-tourist decision making negatively by their activities. Sensationalism is more harmful than insurgency because the activities of sensationalism means the communication of exaggerated news is broadcasted and circulated in less span of time across the globe, that spread the rumors quickly (Hunt, 2014) but the activities of insurgency are limited to the societies where they exist and their impact is restricted to its vicinity till it is circulated either by any news channel or print media. It has been endorsed by one of the respondent;

*The tourism business in the Kashmir valley has been highly impacted in terms of bookings, sale of tourism products during the turmoil, the tourism players has a very bad tourism years especially 2016 and 2019. The dissipation of information across quarters is spreading like fire, which has very negative impacts on the tourism business.*

#### Insurgency at National level-Kashmir, India

During past one decade, 2010 to 2020 AD, several minor and major violent and terror incidents (Table 1) happened in the Valley. Several militant attacks happened on the security forces and governmental establishments which resulted in number of deaths and protests on roads as well as disappointment among locals and tourists.

#### Sensationalism in Kashmir

Sensationalism in Kashmir is editorial tactic in na-

ture and emotionally loaded impressions of events are framed in order to manipulate the truth and exaggerate the mobs. This type of Sensationalism results the distortion among the people, particularly news readers and tourists, all are being misled by such exaggerated messages. Much news has been interlinked with the Kashmir by international media as summarized below. No doubt there was disturbance in peace in the Valley due to some occasional unsolicited incidents but media make a mountain out of a molehill the news at national level. This is further stated by one of the respondent during interview that;

*Fake reporting is being done by the media personals. Sometimes old videos of the Valley or from other places are showed and associated to Kashmir as a part yellow journalism by several media houses e.g., 2014 flood images were shown in 2018 rains. Though the condition in Kashmir is peaceful but sensationalism has created fearful and negative image of Kashmir among tourists.*

### Discussion

Insurgency and sensationalism are two parallel variables that affect eco-tourist decision making undesirably. In Kashmir Valley, dominance and competence of national news agency is mostly grabbed by sensationalism. This impacts domestic eco-tourism negatively because of miss-trust, disappointments and avoidance is generated in the minds of eco-tourists, apathy stuck in their heart and outcome emerges as *de-facto* decision making of eco-tourists. In Kashmir destination, majority of insurgency incidents happen in remote areas but unfortunately sensationalized media wrongly targets whole Kashmir for their self-interest and defames the image of Kashmir. Such misled, fake and false information

**Table 1.** Terror and Insurgency incidents in Kashmir'

Year	Incidents
2010	Civil riots in Kashmir against innocents civilian killings.
2011	Total 12 militants and army officer killed in Bandipora near LOC on August 20.
2012	5 militants killed by security personals on 01/10/2012
2013	On 13 March 2013 attack on CRPF camp at Bemina.
2014	Multiple attacks on 5 December 2014 in the Kashmir division.
2016	The 2016 unrest in whole Kashmir over killing of Burhan Rebellion.
2017	On 10 July 2017, eight Amarnath pilgrims got killed.
2018	Sunjwani Attack 4 soldiers killed and 4 terrorist neutralized.
2019	On 14 February 2019 major attack of army convoy at Pulwama where 44 soldiers killed.
6/2020	Out of 24 militants killed in Kashmir, 21 were local.

**Sources:** Directorate of Tourism Kashmir, 2020; Shah and Wani, 2013; Ganie, 2018.

has been observed by many news facilitators and freelance journalists as observed by *Quint Webqoof team* after abrogation of article 370. At the end in-depth interviews and reviewed studies pointed out that both sensationalism and Insurgency spoil Kashmir destination image and Eco-TDM gravely.

## Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, the fact that the eco-tourists visiting Kashmir, perceived risk before their arrivals, at the destination and that risk is contributed by the sensationalism and insurgency activities at a destination. Furthermore, it has been proved, in view of Eco-TDM that the risks of insurgency and sensationalism activities has resulted a very negative impacts on it. Insurgency at destination like Kashmir Valley de-means its safe eco-tourism and creates fear, disappointments among eco-tourists, and impacts their decision making drastically. Similarly, sensationalism being a curse in the prevailing societies hampers the ground reality of Kashmir with its activities as media misled and exaggerated the information continuously for maximizing their financial strength, TRP and circulation of newspapers, magazines etc. Thus affecting the eco-tourist's perceptions on various dimensions of risk, can further decrease the tourist arrivals at conflict sensitive destinations. With this framework, it is obvious that insurgency and sensationalism is having the supportive cooperation towards the negative impact on the Kashmir tourism in the form of social instability, and wrong decision making.

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