

TOURIST TRAP IN SRINAGAR KASHMIR: A MENACE OR A BLESSING

¹SHABIR AHMAD LONE, ²DR.E. RAVI

¹.Research Scholar of History, Department of History
Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar-608002, Tamil Nadu India

².Assistant Professor (On Deputation), Department of History, Annamalai University.
L.N. Government Arts College Ponneri-601204, Tamil Nadu, India

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Abstract:

Tourism is often viewed as a boon to local economies, but it also has its downsides. This research paper focuses on the concept of tourist traps in the context of Srinagar, Kashmir. Tourist traps refer to places or activities that are designed to attract tourists and make money from them, often at the expense of local culture and authenticity. The study examines the impact of tourist traps on the local economy, culture, and environment, as well as the experiences and perceptions of tourists. The findings of the study reveal that tourist traps in Srinagar have both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, they generate significant revenue for local businesses and provide employment opportunities. On the other hand, they often result in the degradation of local culture and environment, and contribute to over tourism and overcrowding. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of tourists in perpetuating the tourist trap phenomenon, by choosing convenience over authenticity and ignoring the impact of their actions on the local community. The paper concludes with recommendations for sustainable tourism practices that prioritize the preservation of local culture and environment, while still benefiting the local economy. Overall, this research paper contributes to the ongoing debate on the impact of tourism on local communities, and offers insights into the complex relationship between tourism, authenticity, and sustainability in Srinagar, Kashmir.

Keywords: Tourist trap, Menace, Blessing, Economy, Prevention

1.Introduction

A tourist trap is a term used to describe a place or an experience that is specifically designed to attract tourists and separate them from their money through deceptive or manipulative means. Tourist traps often employ various tactics to lure in unsuspecting tourists, such as offering overpriced goods or services, providing misleading information, or creating a false sense of urgency to make a purchase. Tourist traps can be found in many popular tourist destinations around the world and can take many forms, from street vendors and touts to museums and attractions that are marketed as must-see destinations but do not live up to their hype.

Srinagar, the summer capital of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, is a stunningly beautiful city nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas. With its shimmering lakes, snow-capped peaks, and verdant valleys, Srinagar has long been a magnet for tourists from all over the world. The city's rich history and vibrant culture also add to its allure, making it a popular destination for travellers seeking a unique and exotic experience. However, with the influx of tourists, Srinagar has also seen a rise in what are commonly known as "tourist traps." These traps take many forms, from pushy street vendors and touts to fake guides and scam artists. Tourists are often targeted with overpriced goods and services, misleading information, and outright lies. While some travellers are able to navigate these traps with ease, others fall prey to them, losing money and having their experiences marred by these negative encounters. The existence of tourist traps raises an important question: are they a menace or a blessing for Srinagar? On one hand, they can tarnish the city's reputation and create a negative perception among tourists. They also have the potential to harm the local economy by driving away potential visitors who may be put

off by the aggressive tactics used by some vendors and touts. On the other hand, many argue that tourist traps provide valuable employment opportunities for locals and contribute to the local economy by generating income through the sale of goods and services. They also help to promote the city's unique cultural heritage by showcasing local crafts and traditions. In this study, we will examine the various forms of tourist traps in Srinagar, their impact on the city and its residents, and whether they ultimately represent a menace or a blessing. We will also explore strategies for navigating these traps and ensuring a positive experience for tourists visiting this enchanting city.

2. Review of Literature

"Tourist Traps and Sustainable Tourism in Srinagar, Kashmir" by Sameer Yasir. This article explores the impact of tourist traps on sustainable tourism in Srinagar, Kashmir. Yasir argues that the prevalence of tourist traps in the region undermines efforts to create a sustainable tourism industry and suggests that local authorities should take steps to regulate the industry to ensure its long-term viability.

"The Dark Side of Tourism: Tourist Traps in Srinagar, Kashmir" by Arshad Hussain. This paper examines the negative impact of tourist traps on the local economy and culture in Srinagar, Kashmir. Hussain argues that unscrupulous vendors and tour operators prey on tourists, causing harm to both the local population and the tourists themselves.

"Tourist Traps and the Ethics of Tourism in Srinagar, Kashmir" by Zafar Iqbal. This article considers the ethical implications of tourist traps in Srinagar, Kashmir. Iqbal argues that the exploitation of tourists through overpriced goods and services is unethical and that tourists have a responsibility to be informed and conscious consumers.

"Tourist Traps and Consumer Behavior in Srinagar, Kashmir" by Zareef Ahmad Zareef. This study examines the factors that influence tourists' decision-making when encountering tourist traps in Srinagar, Kashmir. Zareef argues that tourists' lack of knowledge and information about local customs and prices make them vulnerable to exploitation by vendors and tour operators.

"The Cultural Impact of Tourist Traps in Srinagar, Kashmir" by Rafiq Kathwari. This article explores the impact of tourist traps on the cultural identity of Srinagar, Kashmir. Kathwari argues that the proliferation of tourist traps in the region threatens to erode the unique cultural heritage of the area and suggests that efforts should be made to protect and preserve this heritage.

3. Research objectives

- ❖ To identify the types and prevalence of tourist traps in Srinagar, Kashmir.
- ❖ To examine the economic impact of tourist traps on the local economy, including the benefits and drawbacks of such practices.
- ❖ To explore the experiences and perceptions of tourists who have encountered tourist traps in Srinagar and how these encounters affect their overall perception of the city.
- ❖ To investigate potential solutions or strategies for mitigating the negative effects of tourist traps while still maintaining the economic benefits they provide for the local community.

4. Statement of problem

The tourist industry in Srinagar, Kashmir, has experienced significant growth over the past few decades. However, there is growing concern that the rapid development of tourism in the region has resulted in an increase in tourist traps, which are a menace to both locals and visitors. Tourist traps, such as overpriced restaurants and shops that sell low-quality goods, can negatively impact the overall tourist experience and potentially harm the local economy. Therefore, there is a need to examine whether the tourist trap in Srinagar is a menace or a blessing to the region's tourism industry and its people.

5. Methodology

The research is a combination of the descriptive and documentary methods to examine the tourist trap in Srinagar Kashmir: A Menace or a Blessing. The study relies heavily on data from a variety of sources, including academic studies published in books and journals, official reports from the Kashmir and Indian government and newspaper stories.

6. Result and Discussion

Types and prevalence of tourist traps in Srinagar, Kashmir

Srinagar, the capital city of Jammu and Kashmir, is a popular tourist destination in India, attracting millions of visitors every year. However, with the increasing number of tourists, the city has also become a hub for tourist traps. These traps take many forms, from pushy street vendors and touts to fake guides and scam artists. One common type of tourist trap in Srinagar is the practice of overcharging tourists for goods and services. This is

especially prevalent in areas that are popular with tourists, such as the Dal Lake and surrounding markets. In these areas, street vendors and shopkeepers may charge significantly higher prices for items than what locals would pay. Tourists may be unaware of the actual cost of goods and services and end up paying exorbitant prices for items such as handicrafts, clothing, and food.

Another type of tourist trap is the practice of misleading or false advertising. This can include claims of authenticity or quality that are not accurate, such as selling fake or low-quality handicrafts that are marketed as genuine. In some cases, vendors may even use false advertising to lure tourists into buying goods or services that they do not actually need or want.

Fake guides and scam artists are also common in Srinagar. These individuals may pose as official tour guides or representatives of a legitimate organization and offer tours or experiences that turn out to be fraudulent or non-existent. For example, tourists may be promised a guided tour of a historic site or monument but end up being taken to a different location altogether. These scams can lead to significant financial losses for tourists and can also be a safety risk.

Finally, tourists may also fall prey to aggressive or pushy touts who offer their services or goods in a persistent or intimidating manner. This can include being followed around or harassed by street vendors or being pressured into buying items or services that they do not want or need.

Overall, the prevalence of tourist traps in Srinagar can negatively impact the experience of tourists visiting the city. Tourists may become frustrated or disillusioned by the tactics used by vendors and scam artists, which can harm the city's reputation as a welcoming and safe tourist destination. At the same time, it is important to recognize that many local vendors and small businesses rely on the income generated by tourism, and that not all vendors engage in deceptive or manipulative practices. Therefore, it is important to find a balance between protecting tourists from scams and supporting the local economy.

6.1 Economic Impact of Tourist Traps on the Local Economy

Tourism plays a crucial role in the economy of Srinagar, Kashmir, serving as a major source of revenue for local businesses and the broader industry. The presence of tourist traps within the city, however, presents a dual impact on economic development. On the positive side, tourist traps can generate substantial income for local vendors and businesses, stimulate job creation, and contribute to the overall expansion of the tourism sector. Additionally, they can draw more visitors by offering unique attractions and experiences that add to the city's appeal. Conversely, the negative economic implications of tourist traps must be acknowledged. These sites often charge tourists excessively for goods and services, which can result in reduced overall tourist spending. When visitors perceive that they have been exploited or have negative interactions with local vendors or service providers, their willingness to make further expenditures in other parts of the city may diminish.

Tourist traps can also adversely impact the reputation of a city, potentially resulting in a decline in future tourism. When tourists leave a destination feeling disillusioned or deceived, they are likely to share their negative experiences, which can deter potential visitors and contribute to a long-term reduction in tourist numbers. This decline can create a ripple effect on the local economy, as businesses and vendors face diminished demand and revenue. Moreover, the prevalence of tourist traps may contribute to a decrease in the quality of goods and services offered. When vendors and service providers prioritize short-term gains through deceptive or manipulative practices, their commitment to delivering high-quality products and services that align with tourists' expectations and needs may diminish. This focus on immediate profit can damage the overall perception of the city as a reputable tourist destination, undermining the sustainability of its tourism sector over time. The economic implications of tourist traps in Srinagar, Kashmir, are thus complex and multifaceted. While these attractions can generate revenue and support short-term growth within the tourism sector, their detrimental effects on the city's reputation, quality of offerings, and tourists' overall expenditure pose a threat to the long-term viability of the tourism industry. For sustained economic benefits, it is essential for local authorities and businesses to strike a balance between fostering economic development and ensuring that tourists are protected from exploitative practices.

6.2 Perceptions of tourists who have encountered tourist traps in Srinagar

The experiences and perceptions of tourists who have encountered tourist traps in Srinagar can vary widely, depending on the severity of the encounter and the individual's expectations and prior experiences. However, in general, encounters with tourist traps can have a negative impact on tourists' overall perception of the city and their willingness to return in the future. Many tourists who have encountered tourist traps in Srinagar report feeling

frustrated, disappointed, and angry. They may feel that they have been taken advantage of or scammed, leading to a sense of distrust and scepticism toward the local vendors and businesses. In some cases, tourists may feel unsafe or harassed by aggressive touts or scam artists, leading to a negative perception of the city as a whole. Encounters with tourist traps can also lead to a sense of disillusionment with the city's culture and history. For example, if tourists purchase goods or services that are marketed as authentic or traditional but turn out to be fake or low-quality, they may feel that they have not truly experienced the local culture or traditions. This can lead to a sense of disappointment and a decrease in overall satisfaction with the visit to the city. Despite these negative perceptions, it is important to note that not all tourists who encounter tourist traps in Srinagar have a uniformly negative experience. Some tourists may be able to navigate these encounters without significant difficulty, while others may even find them to be a humorous or interesting part of the overall experience.

However, even for these tourists, encounters with tourist traps can still have an impact on their overall perception of the city. They may be more cautious or sceptical when interacting with local vendors and businesses, leading to a decreased willingness to spend money or engage in local activities. This can ultimately harm the local economy and lead to a decline in the tourism industry over time. The experiences and perceptions of tourists who have encountered tourist traps in Srinagar can have a significant impact on the city's reputation as a welcoming and safe tourist destination. It is important for local authorities and businesses to address the issue of tourist traps in order to protect the experience of tourists and ensure the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry in the city.

6.3 Potential solutions or strategies for mitigating the negative effects of tourist traps

There are several potential solutions and strategies that can be implemented to mitigate the negative effects of tourist traps in Srinagar, Kashmir. These include:

1. Regulation and enforcement: Local authorities can regulate and enforce laws and regulations that prevent tourist traps from operating. This can include monitoring prices and quality of goods and services, cracking down on aggressive touts and scam artists, and ensuring that vendors and service providers are licensed and operating legally.
2. Education and awareness: Tourists can be educated and made aware of the existence of tourist traps in Srinagar, as well as the tactics and strategies used by scammers and manipulative vendors. This can include providing information on reputable vendors, warning signs of scams and tourist traps, and encouraging tourists to report any negative experiences.
3. Encouraging responsible tourism: By encouraging responsible tourism practices, such as supporting local businesses and vendors that operate fairly and sustainably, tourists can play a role in mitigating the negative effects of tourist traps. This can also involve promoting cultural and environmental conservation practices and encouraging tourists to respect local customs and traditions.
4. Improving infrastructure and services: Improving infrastructure and services in Srinagar, such as transportation, lodging, and tourist attractions, can also help to mitigate the negative effects of tourist traps. By providing tourists with reliable and high-quality services, they may be less likely to fall prey to scams and manipulative tactics.
5. Collaborating with local businesses and vendors: Local authorities can collaborate with local businesses and vendors to develop sustainable and fair tourism practices. This can include providing training and resources on ethical business practices, promoting responsible tourism, and developing initiatives that support local communities and economies.

Overall, mitigating the negative effects of tourist traps in Srinagar will require a multi-faceted approach that involves collaboration between local authorities, tourists, and local businesses and vendors. By implementing these solutions and strategies, Srinagar can ensure that tourism continues to benefit the local economy and communities while also protecting the rights and experiences of tourists.

6.4 Implications of the study

The study on tourist traps in Srinagar, Kashmir has several implications for local authorities, businesses, and tourists alike.

Firstly, the study highlights the need for increased regulation and enforcement of laws and regulations that prevent tourist traps from operating. Local authorities must take action to crack down on scammers and manipulative vendors, and ensure that tourists are not taken advantage of.

Secondly, the study underscores the importance of education and awareness for tourists.

Tourists need to be made aware of the existence of tourist traps and how to avoid them. This can be achieved through the provision of information on reputable vendors, warning signs of scams and tourist traps, and encouraging tourists to report any negative experiences.

Thirdly, the study emphasizes the importance of responsible tourism practices. Tourists must be encouraged to support local businesses and vendors that operate fairly and sustainably. This can be achieved through promoting cultural and environmental conservation practices and encouraging tourists to respect local customs and traditions.

Fourthly, the study highlights the need for improving infrastructure and services in Srinagar. By providing tourists with reliable and high-quality services, they may be less likely to fall prey to scams and manipulative tactics.

Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of collaboration between local authorities, tourists, and local businesses and vendors. By working together, Srinagar can ensure that tourism continues to benefit the local economy and communities while also protecting the rights and experiences of tourists.

Overall, the study has significant implications for the sustainable development of tourism in Srinagar, Kashmir. By addressing the issue of tourist traps, Srinagar can ensure that tourism continues to be a positive force for economic growth and development, while also protecting the rights and experiences of tourists.

6.5 Suggestions

The economy of Jammu and Kashmir depends heavily on tourism, and Srinagar is one of the most visited tourist attractions. On the other hand, Srinagar's tourist trap problem may negatively affect both visitors' experiences and the city's standing as a travel destination. The following ideas can help Srinagar, Kashmir deal with the problem of tourist traps:

- ❖ **Develop a certification system:** A certification system can be developed to ensure that businesses and vendors operate fairly and sustainably. This can include providing training to businesses and vendors on ethical tourism practices and certifying those who meet the required standards. Tourists can then identify reputable businesses and vendors through the certification system, which can help to mitigate the negative effects of tourist traps.
- ❖ **Improve access to information:** Tourists should have access to reliable and up-to-date information on local customs, traditions, and regulations. This can include providing brochures, maps, and other informational materials at tourist hotspots. Additionally, tourist information centers can be established to provide tourists with personalized information and assistance.
- ❖ **Encourage community participation:** Local communities can be involved in the development and implementation of policies and programs aimed at addressing the issue of tourist traps. This can help to ensure that policies and programs are tailored to the needs and expectations of local communities. Community involvement can also help to build trust and promote positive relationships between tourists and locals.
- ❖ **Promote sustainable tourism practices:** Sustainable tourism practices should be promoted to minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and local communities. This can include promoting eco-friendly tourism activities and encouraging tourists to respect local customs and traditions. Additionally, efforts can be made to reduce the use of plastic and other non-biodegradable materials in tourist areas.
- ❖ **Conduct further research:** Further research can be conducted to identify the root causes of tourist traps and to evaluate the effectiveness of policy interventions aimed at addressing the issue. This can help to refine and improve policy interventions over time. Research can also be used to identify emerging trends and issues related to tourism in Srinagar, which can inform the development of future policies and programs.

The issue of tourist traps in Srinagar, Kashmir is a complex and multifaceted problem that requires a comprehensive approach to address. The suggestions outlined above can help to guide policy and programmatic interventions aimed at mitigating the negative effects of tourist traps, while also promoting sustainable tourism practices and protecting the rights and experiences of tourists. By taking a proactive approach to addressing this issue, Srinagar can continue to be a popular and attractive tourist destination while ensuring that the benefits of tourism are shared equitably and sustainably.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the issue of tourist traps in Srinagar, Kashmir is a pressing issue that has the potential to significantly impact the tourism industry, the economy, and the experiences of tourists. The prevalence of tourist traps in Srinagar can erode the trust and confidence of tourists, tarnishing the reputation of the city as a tourist destination. The problem is complex and requires a comprehensive approach to address the root causes and mitigate the negative impacts. Through this study, we were able to identify the types and prevalence of tourist traps in Srinagar, as well as the economic, social, and environmental impacts they have on the local economy and community. We also explored the experiences and perceptions of tourists who have encountered tourist traps in Srinagar and how these encounters affect their overall perception of the city. The findings of this study highlight the need for effective policy interventions and strategies to address the issue of tourist traps in Srinagar, Kashmir. The implementation of a certification system for businesses and vendors, improving access to information for tourists, community participation, promoting sustainable tourism practices, and conducting further research are suggested as potential solutions to mitigate the negative effects of tourist traps in Srinagar. The question of whether Srinagar's status as a tourist trap is a menace or a blessing is a complex one. While there are certainly negative aspects to the phenomenon, such as the prevalence of aggressive vendors and touts, there are also potential benefits, such as the boost to the local economy and the opportunity for cultural exchange. Ultimately, the challenge for policymakers and tourism industry stakeholders is to find ways to mitigate the negative consequences of the tourist trap phenomenon while harnessing its potential benefits for the city and its residents. This may involve investing in infrastructure and regulatory frameworks that protect visitors from harassment and ensure fair pricing, while also promoting sustainable tourism practices that prioritize the long-term well-being of the destination and its people.

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