

Tourist Satisfaction, Environmental Concerns and Tourism in and Beyond Dal Lake, Kashmir

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Abstract

A survey was carried out from June to December 2013 on tourist perceptions and tourism in and around Dal lake (Srinagar, Kashmir). In this survey, the opinion of the tourists about satisfaction for visiting Dal lake was obtained. The opinion about availability of accommodation, perception about food quality and availability, transport availability, host behavior and other facilities was obtained from the tourists. It was found that most of the tourists were satisfied with the various facilities available at the moment, with moderate to fair perception about the quality of food available around the lake. Tourists were also asked about their opinion regarding improving of tourism in the lake, with most of the tourists suggesting proper disposal of the wastes and ban on the use of polythene. Most of the tourists appeared satisfied with the present level of tourism activities and condition of the lake. Some tourists, however, were not satisfied with the cleanliness of the lake and felt that proper cleanliness of the lake should be maintained to promote tourism in a broader way. All tourists expressed their positive feelings for revisiting the lake time and again.

Keywords: Tourist perception; Satisfaction; Facilities; Cleanliness; Feelings; Dal lake

Introduction

Tourism is the sum total of the phenomena and relationships arising from travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity [1]. It is acclaimed to be one of the world's biggest revenue generating industries accounting for billions of dollars and thousands of jobs. In over 150 countries, tourism is one of five top export earners, and in 60 countries it is the number one export. It is the main source of foreign exchange for one-third of developing countries and one-half of world's Least Developed Countries, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [2]. The United Nations World Tourism Organization forecasts that the number of international tourist visits will nearly double from 880 million in 2009 to 1.6 billion by 2020.

Increasing the involvement of local communities, especially the poor, in the tourism value chain (including the recruitment and training of local unskilled and semi-skilled staff, and purchasing directly from local businesses) can contribute to the development of local economy and poverty reduction. Making tourism more sustainable can create stronger linkages with the local economy, increasing local development potential [3,4].

The evaluations of both attractions and levels of service quality (supply side) are regarded as crucial in determining overall tourist satisfaction (demand side) [5]. The aims of the present study included:

1. Enquiring tourist satisfaction with the various facilities available within and around the lake.
2. Enquiring tourist perceptions regarding measures to be undertaken for improving the environmental quality of the lake.

Materials and Methods

Study area

Dal lake is a Himalayan urban valley lake in the north east of Srinagar – the summer capital of Jammu Kashmir. It is situated at an altitude of 1583 m above the mean sea level and lies between 34°51'-

34°9' north latitudes and 74°51'-74°53' east longitudes. The lake is having four basins- Hazratbal, Bod-dal, Gagribal and Nagin. The Hazratbal basin has an islet in the centre locally known as 'Rup lank or Char Chinari' and the Bod-dal basin also has an islet in the centre with plain trees and is known as 'Sona lank'. Presently, the lake is believed to have an area of 11.4 km² with a maximum depth of 5.4 m according to Lakes and Waterways Development Authority, Srinagar. But as per the recent estimates by Department of Ecology, Environment and Remote Sensing (Government of J&K), the open water area of the lake has been computed to be 21.5 km² using Quick Bird satellite images (Figures 1 and 2).

The lake is fed by a stream Telbal nalla from north which brings water from Dachigam National Park. It supplies about 80% of the water to the lake. A small canal "Nalla Amir Khan" connects the Dal with Anchar lake through Nagin and acts as an additional outflow channel. The total catchment area of Dal lake is about 317 km² and can be divided into 5 sub catchments. The major one is Dachigam-Telbal catchment which alone is spread over 228 km², constituting about 72% of the total area.

There are reportedly 775 houseboats and 328 boats 'shikaras' present in the lake (Figure 3). A houseboat provides the unique experience of living on the water. For nearly a century, houseboats floating on the Dal lake have drawn millions of visitors from across the world to Srinagar. These attractions and experiences within the lake are a source for drawing in large number of tourists.

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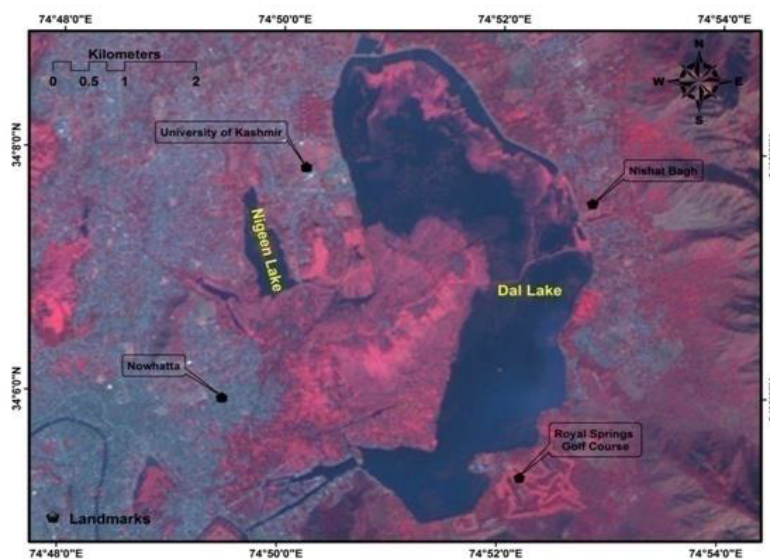


Figure 1: Satellite image of the study area – Dal lake.



Figure 2: Dal lake during summer and winter seasons.



Figure 3: View of Dal lake with 'shikaras' (tourist boats) in the foreground and row of Houseboats within the waterbody.

Methods

In order to acquire the objectives of the study, data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Literature was reviewed and relevant information pertaining to the study was extracted. The questionnaire was drafted which covered a range of questions relating to the nationality, gender profile of the interviewee, tourist satisfaction with the available facilities, and the general consciousness of environmental cleanliness. The questionnaires were filled on the spot. In addition, data regarding the tourist flow was acquired from Directorate of Tourism (Government of Jammu and Kashmir), Srinagar. The data collected through questionnaire and from secondary sources was analyzed and suitably interpreted.

Results

More than 100 respondents covering various demographic

profiles were interviewed using questionnaire survey. However, 82 questionnaires were found to be suitable for data analysis. The following observations are based on the primary data collected in the form of questionnaires.

Tourist profile

The background detail of the interviewed tourists is provided in Tables 1-8. After analyzing the data, it is found that only a small percentage of the tourists visiting Dal lake were foreigners. Out of 82 respondents, 59 (49%) were Indian, 6 (7%) were from developed countries and rest of the tourists were locals from distant places. Among the foreign tourists encountered during the study, 33% each were from Canada and Sweden, 17% each were from Russia and Japan. During the study, it was found that 62% of the respondents encountered were male individuals while as females constituted only 38%. The tourists visiting the lake were in the age group of 21-30 (48%) followed by age group of 31-40 (34%). The other tourists visiting the lake were in the age groups of 11-20 (5%), 41-50 (11%) and 51-60 (2%). Thus it can be observed that the people visiting the lake mostly comprised of individuals in the age class 21-40 years (82%). As far as their occupation is concerned, the tourists visiting the lake were mostly found to be employees (49%) while as businessmen constituted 22%. The other tourists (29%) visiting the lake were mostly students and other professionals. It was found that most of the people coming to Kashmir who visited the lake (comprising 90%) had come as tourists to enjoy the beauty of the valley. Only 4% and 6% of people respectively were visiting for the purpose of studies and other purposes including jobs, etc. Tourists visiting the lake had mostly come in groups with varying number of individuals in

Nationality	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Jammu and Kashmir *	17	13.94
India	59	48.38
Canada	2	1.64
Sweden	2	1.64
Russia	1	0.82
Japan	1	0.82

*Excluding local Kashmiri tourists. Administratively, J&K comprises of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh regions. The three regions have a distinct climate—Jammu region has predominantly a tropical type climate, Kashmir is a temperate region, and Ladakh is a cold desert.

Table 1: Nationality of Tourists.

State	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Delhi	19	11.21
Punjab	8	4.72
Karnataka	7	4.13
Haryana	5	2.95
Madhya Pradesh	5	2.95
Rajasthan	4	2.36
Maharashtra	4	2.36
West Bengal	3	1.77
Assam	1	0.59
Tamil Nadu	1	0.59
Andhra Pradesh	1	0.59
Gujarat	1	0.59

Table 2: State-wise composition of Indian tourists.

Gender	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Male	51	62
Female	31	38

Table3: Gender composition of interviewed tourists.

Age Group, years	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Up to 10	0	0
11-20	4	5
21-30	39	48
31-40	28	34
41-50	9	11
51-60	2	2
61-70	0	0
71-80	0	0
81-90	0	0
Above 91	0	0

Table 4: Age grouping of tourists.

Occupation	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Employees	40	49
Businessmen	18	22
Others	24	29

Table 5: Occupation of Tourists visiting Dal Lake.

Purpose	Number of Tourists	Percentage
As tourist	74	90
In connection with business	0	0
For studies	3	4
Other	5	6

Table 6: Purpose of tourists for visiting the Valley.

the group. Majority of the group sizes varied from 3 to 10 individuals. Tourists visiting the lake were mostly accompanied by their family members (71%). A small percentage of tourists had come with their

Relation	Number of Tourists	Percentage
Family	58	71
Friends	15	18
Colleagues	9	11

Table 7: Relationship with the accompanying personnel.

Group size	No. of tourists reporting	Percentage
3	18	22
4	17	21
5	12	15
6	16	20
7	12	15
8	2	2
9	2	2
10	1	1
14	1	1
26	1	1

Table 8: Group size of the tourists visiting Dal lake.

Preference/Perception	Number of Tourists reporting	Percentage
Mode of transport		
Personal transport	32	39
Local transport	50	61
Availability of transport		
Scarcely available	8	16
Easily available	42	84
Prices charged for transportation		
Low	1	2
Moderate	40	80
Too high	9	18
Accommodation preference		
Hotel	44	54
Houseboat	27	31
Other	11	13
Tourist perception about accommodation availability		
Scarcely available	14	17
Easily available	68	83
Prices charged for accommodation		
Low	1	1
Moderate	67	82
Too high	14	17

Table 9: Tourist perception and preferences for various facilities.

friends (18%) and colleagues (11%) to enjoy the trip.

Facilities available for tourists

Most of the tourists visiting the lake i.e., 61% availed local transportation to visit Dal lake and other places. A significant proportion of visiting tourists utilized personal transport (39%). 16% of tourists reported scarce availability of transportation while as 84% tourists reported that transportation was easily available. 2% of the tourists reported that the prices charged were low, while as 18% of tourists reported it as too high and for rest of the 80% tourists, the prices charged were moderate (Table 9).

83% of tourists reported that the accommodation was easily available; however, rest of the 17% tourists reported it as being scarcely available. It was found that most of the people visiting lake preferred to stay in hotels (54%) and houseboats (33%) (Figure 4). Only few among them (13%) preferred other places of stay. As far as prices charged for



Figure 4: Houseboats (left) in Dal lake serve as the prime attraction offering a heartfelt stay.

accommodation is concerned, it was found that only 1% of the tourists felt that the prices charged for accommodation were low, for 17% it was too high and for rest of the 82% tourists the prices charged were moderate.

Satisfaction of tourists with various facilities

When asked about satisfaction with the various facilities available at the tourist destination, it was found that 93% tourists were very satisfied while as 7% of tourists were not satisfied and desired improvements. For 39% tourists, the quality of food was average while as it was good for 47.56% and 12.19% of tourists felt that the quality of food was excellent. However, 1.21% of tourists believed that the quality of food was poor. Cleanliness of an area is believed to be important for tourism promotion. If an area is clean, it will attract tourists in huge numbers. During the survey it was found that 21% of tourists were unsatisfied with the cleanliness of the area and wanted efforts from people and authorities to improve the cleanliness. It was found that 66% of tourists were satisfied and 13% were very satisfied with the cleanliness and did not feel any need for improvements is required.

It was felt by 96% of the tourists that the host people were hospitable. However, 4% of interviewed tourists felt that people were inhospitable. Most of the tourists (84%) felt that the behavior of the host people was good. 12% felt it as moderate and only 4% of tourists felt that the host behavior was bad and desired host people to change their behavior (Table 10).

Tourist revisit intentions

From the survey it was found that 43 percent of interviewed tourists had visited the lake many times before and because of the beauty of the lake they were visiting the lake again. 57 percent of the tourists were visiting the lake for the first time and expressed their desire to visit the lake again in near future. On analyzing the data, it was found that 100% of the tourists had a desire to re-visit the Dal lake in near future (Table 11).

Analysis of the primary data collected during the survey revealed that:

- Most of the people were satisfied with the various facilities available at the present moment in terms of accommodation, transportation, food, etc.
- Although most of the tourists were found to be satisfied with the cleanliness but improvements in and around the Dal lake were deeply felt by some tourists for fully acquiring nature satisfaction and connectedness with the lake.
- All tourists expressed their positive feelings for visiting the lake time and again.

Suggestions put forward by tourists for improving cleanliness and tourism of the lake

In addition to enquiring about the perceptions and satisfaction

	No. of tourists reporting	Percentage
Satisfaction with various facilities		
Satisfied	76	93
Unsatisfied	6	7
Tourist perception about food quality		
Poor	1	1.21
Average	32	39
Good	39	48.75
Excellent	10	12.19
Cleanliness of the area		
Unsatisfied	17	21
Satisfied	54	66
Highly satisfied	11	13
Hospitability		
Hospitable	79	96
Inhospitable	3	4
Behavior		
Good	69	84
Moderate	10	12
Bad	3	4

Table 10: Satisfaction of tourists with various facilities.

	Number of tourists reporting	Percentage
Have you visited the lake before?		
Yes	35	43
No / First timer	47	57
Intention of revisiting the lake in future		
Yes	82	100
No	0	0

Table 11: Tourist revisit intentions.

of tourists with various facilities, they were also asked to give their valuable suggestions for improving tourism and cleanliness of the lake. 9% of the tourists, however, did not provide any response to this query. It was found that some of the tourists were satisfied with the present condition of the lake however some desired that the present condition should get improved so that it may attract large number of the tourists to the lake. The various suggestions put forward by tourists include:

- More garbage disposal units should be placed in the 'shikaras' (boats), houseboats and around the periphery of the lake so that the solid waste generated is disposed off properly and is not thrown in or around the lake. This will help in maintaining the beauty of the lake so that more of the people are attracted towards the lake.
- In order to improve cleanliness of the lake, some of the tourists opined that the number of tourists visiting the lake should be reduced.
- To counter the dominating weeds in the lake, machines should be used by the Lakes and Waterways Development Authority to reduce the abundance of weeds. This will add to the aesthetic value of the lake (Figure 5).
- People should behave responsibly and cooperate with the concerned authorities.
- The internal sections of the lake are unclean and should be properly cleaned because it affects the overall characteristics of the lake.

- Use of plastic bags should be strictly monitored. Instead of plastic bags, paper bags should be used.
- More recreational facilities should be provided to the tourists.
- Although the prices for transportation and accommodation (including for shikaras) has been fixed by the government but tourists complained of being over-charged because of lack of awareness. Strict measures should be taken on this issue (Figure 6).
- In addition to the above suggestions few of the tourists were also of the opinion that native people should change their behavior towards tourists so that they can feel homely environment and revisit the valley time and again. Educated people should act as guides for tourists.
- One of the suggestions put forward for improving tourism in the lake was stated as improving the safety of tourists by maintenance of peace in Jammu Kashmir so that more numbers of tourists can come for visiting the lake and enjoying its serene beauty.

Tourist inflow

In addition to primary data, secondary data regarding the inflow of tourists in the valley was obtained from the Department of Tourism (Government of JandK) from the year 2005 till November 2013 under RTI Act, 2005. From the data obtained, it was found that there has been a decrease in the arrival of tourists in the valley during 2005 to 2006 but there-after there was an increasing trend in the arrival of tourists upto

2011 with a slight dip in numbers in 2012 and 2013 compared to the year 2011 (Table 12).

Analysis of the monthly tourist arrival data over years reveals that tourist activity is mainly concentrated in the months of April to July indicating them as the peak tourist activity months (Tables 13-15).

Discussion

From the study it was apparent that the tourists mostly expressed their satisfaction with the various facilities they came across. The choice of destination and the decision to return is mainly influenced by the tourist satisfaction, forming an important component in the successful destination marketing [6], and therefore, should be one of the primary focus by tourism management authorities [7-9]. Quality in tourism industry is a global concept which has been applied to tourist destinations, regions or nations as well as individual enterprises like hotels, travel agents, etc. [10].

Maximum numbers of tourists were found satisfied with the transportation facilities of the area. It has been stated by Honey [11] that the ease and accessibility of transport has spurred the wide spread growth of tourism. Transportation links the various destinations.

To qualify as a tourist, according to World Tourism Organization, a tourist must spend at least one night in the destination visited, and thus the availability of some kind of accommodation plays a central role in satisfaction of a tourist to the destination. From the survey, it was found that tourists mostly preferred hotels and houseboats as a means of their accommodation and it was found that maximum numbers of tourists were satisfied with the accommodation (availability and rentals). According to Angappapalai and Shanmugasundram [12], the level of guest satisfaction achieved in an area with regard to its accommodation facilities will in large measure determine the total success of any tourism development programme.

Behavior of the host people was felt to be good and a good behavior and hospitality can have an impact on tourists visiting a destination. It has been found that residents may be instrumental in discouraging the industry by opposing it or exhibiting hostile behavior towards tourism advocates or tourists [13]. Also according to Adams [14], the satisfaction displayed by tourists depends on the extent to which a person feels they are treated fairly.

Most of the visitors expressed their satisfaction with the cleanliness of the lake excepting few of them who wanted improvements so that the destination will attract more number of tourists. Akin et al. [15] and Lalnunmawia [16] suggest that unclean environment would lure too many possible illnesses and less pleasant situations which could decrease the level of satisfaction. Authorities are supposed to improve the level

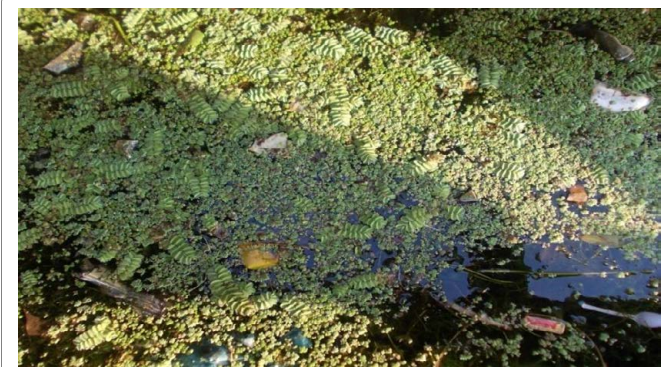


Figure 5: Massive proliferation of weeds leads to decreased aesthetic quality and depreciation of the lake.

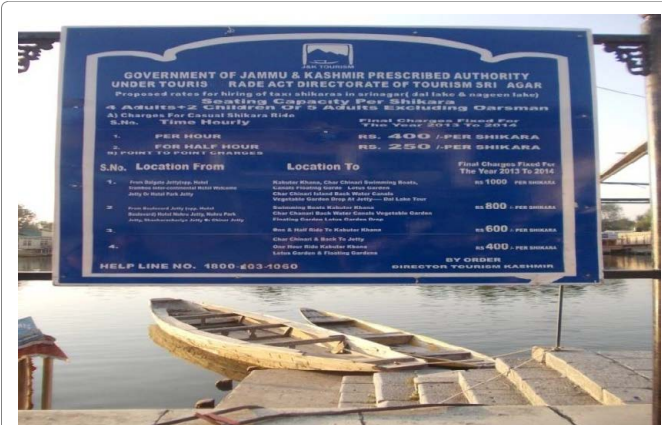


Figure 6: Rental charges for hiring of boats 'Shikaras' are fixed by the Government for the ease of tourists.

Year	Tourists from J&K & India	Tourists from other countries	Total
2005	585565	20344	605909
2006	412879	20009	432888
2007	417264	24576	441840
2008	551041	21588	572629
2009	577345	23905	601250
2010	710504	25984	736488
2011	1282360	32110	1314470
2012	1274674	37166	1311840
2013	1115110	26653	1141763

Source: Department of Tourism, Srinagar.
Table 12: Tourist inflow to Kashmir Valley from 2005 to 2013.

	2005			2006			2007		
Month	J&K & India	Other Countries	Total	J&K & India	Other Countries	Total	J&K & India	Other Countries	Total
January	14836	586	15422	7835	1150	8985	7693	1222	8915
February	4627	1395	6022	15000	1076	16076	7040	2210	9250
March	14157	1082	15239	21457	1515	22972	9263	1324	10587
April	50837	1320	52157	49468	1828	51296	27596	2069	29665
May	88014	1485	89499	104565	1583	106148	71743	1690	73433
June	107167	1714	108881	102394	1576	103970	81987	2090	84077
July	98387	2718	101105	51917	2023	53949	60493	2771	63264
August	42990	2746	45736	16029	2501	18530	37537	2927	40464
September	41046	2775	43821	10368	1427	11795	32406	1857	34263
October	54035	1821	55856	14039	1708	15747	30388	2153	32541
November	37652	1102	38754	10555	1379	11934	25824	1443	27267
December	31817	1600	33417	9252	2234	11486	25294	2820	28114
Total	585565	20344	605909	412879	20009	432888	417264	24576	441840

Table 13: Monthly inflow of tourists to Kashmir valley from 2005-2007.

	2008			2009			2010		
Month	J&K & India	Other Countries	Total	J&K & India	Other Countries	Total	J&K & India	Other Countries	Total
January	22503	1263	23766	5404	1313	6717	21759	2008	23767
February	24319	2024	26343	12673	1091	13764	21896	3201	25097
March	42515	2230	44745	23576	1348	24924	38950	2802	41752
April	52412	2425	54837	39897	1989	41886	82296	4098	86394
May	135503	1816	137319	79803	1789	81592	208434	2287	210721
June	195747	1852	197599	126568	1610	128178	198194	2659	200853
July	49076	3004	52080	86679	2444	89123	83431	2418	85849
August	7945	1678	9623	34623	2458	37081	8294	1532	9826
September	2543	1514	4057	32579	2023	34602	3588	555	4143
October	6957	1569	8526	55221	2418	57639	13027	1092	14119
November	6988	1022	8010	23431	2326	25757	13431	1169	14600
December	4533	1191	5724	56891	3096	59987	17204	2163	19367
Total	551041	21588	572629	577345	23905	601250	710504	25984	736488

Table 14: Tourist inflow to Kashmir during 2008-2010.

	2011			2012			2013		
Month	J&K & India	Other Countries	Total	J&K & India	Other Countries	Total	J&K & India	Other Countries	Total
January	8874	1595	10469	27586	2894	30480	68418	1608	70026
February	8541	2435	10976	23858	3067	26925	31612	3053	34665
March	32247	2264	34511	67468	3623	71091	47136	2662	49798
April	78334	3302	81636	147447	4395	151842	117120	3802	120922
May	151563	1985	153548	194906	2309	197215	155693	1971	157664
June	254695	2278	256973	242525	2489	245014	238617	1778	240395
July	370266	2968	373234	231889	3152	235041	236828	2256	239084
August	95155	2916	98071	56444	3320	59764	62774	3391	66165
September	68782	3022	71804	60221	2923	63144	51259	2371	53630
October	114616	2813	117429	66331	2864	69195	62277	1976	64253
November	54921	2551	57472	60547	2550	63097	43376	1785	45161
December	44366	3981	48347	95452	3580	99032	-	-	-
Total	1282360	32110	1314470	1274674	37166	1311840	1115110	26653	1141763
Total	551041	21588	572629	577345	23905	601250	710504	25984	736488

Table 15: Tourist inflow to Kashmir, 2011-2013.

of cleanliness and hygiene at the destination. It includes improvements in terms of existing drainage system and cleanliness of the area. Issues related to cleanliness and hygiene is certainly a common issue in most tourist destinations. Therefore, firm actions by the authorities need to be undertaken including the enforcement of laws and hefty fines to make sure all parties are concerned in keeping the destination clean and convenient for everybody.

The lake was found to witness tourists within its carrying capacity. This will prove beneficial in long run as large numbers of tourists can be

regulated to visit the lake. If proper management is done then it can help in creating a sustainable eco-industry. Creating a local tourism industry is not a daunting task, but making tourism really “fit” the community requires work. Creating a successful and sustainable tourism industry is like creating any successful and sustainable economic activity. It takes vision, planning, and work.

Suggestions

For improving tourism or enhancing ecotourism in the lake,



Figure 7: Wastewater effluent outfall from STP Hazratbal into Dal lake (see the massive growth of algae).

following suggestions are put forward for consideration by relevant stakeholders:

- Environmental cleanliness and proper disposal of the waste (solid as well as wastewater) should be the focus of the management authorities because deterioration (in the aesthetic quality as well as water quality) can lead to the depreciation of the lake and thus can strongly affect the livelihood of the people associated with the lake through tourism directly or indirectly.
- More waste disposal bins with on spot segregation possibility should be placed in the boats (shikaras), houseboats and around the periphery of the lake so that solid waste generated in and around the lake is properly disposed off. This will increase the aesthetic value of the lake environs and more people will be attracted towards the lake.
- Maintenance of service quality should be assured for development of trust amongst tourists so that they are attracted more towards the lake. This will in turn enhance the tourism of the lake.
- Infrastructure should be developed in an environmentally sensitive manner to cater to the tourist inflow. Globally approved and successful sustainability designs should be incorporated in the development of tourist service sector.
- Tourists should be encouraged to avail local transportation so that the local economy is boosted and more people are encouraged in investing in ecotourism service providing economy.
- Since more than 70% of tourist groups comprise of families, therefore, availability of substances of abuse like alcohol should be strictly banned, and also to show as a mark of respect for the

Muslim host locality. This will reduce any untoward potential incidents of hostility of host people towards tourists.

- About 40% of tourists feel that the quality of food is average (although 49% believe that quality is good), proper food quality should be ensured by the Health Department officials of Srinagar to raise the perception of the availability of good quality food to the tourists.
- The secondary data available with the Tourism Department casts some doubts about its genuineness because the supplied data shows increased tourism during the unrest or Kashmir uprising of 2008 and 2010 when the whole valley was under curfew continuously during tourist seasons. Therefore, proper data record keeping should be made possible by the J&K Tourism Department.
- Discharge of effluent wastewaters into the lake should be entirely stopped (Figure 7).

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