

The Role of Libraries in the Development of Cultural Tourism with Special Emphasis to Central Library, Srinagar

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Abstract

Tourism industry in general and cultural tourism in particular has grown rapidly in the past few decades as a result of more income, higher levels of education, globalization processes that make the world a smaller place, information and communication technology revolution, the effects of media and telecommunications. Libraries, as cultural institutions, may contribute significantly to the development of cultural tourism. One good example is the role of Central Library, Srinagar. Kashmir valley is one of the best tourist places in India in terms of scenic beauty and mesmerizing landscapes. But in addition it also provides a great scope for cultural tourism largely due to its diverse cultural heritage.

Key words: culture, cultural tourism, heritage, libraries, Central library.

1. Introduction

One of the most interesting sectors in the whole tourism industry is, without doubt, cultural tourism that is, according to Richards:

“all movements of persons, because they satisfy the human need for diversity, tending to raise the cultural level of the individual and giving rise to new knowledge, experience and encounters.” (Richards 1996).

Culture is a very important factor of economic development due to its links with lifestyle, geographic areas and close link between education and society (Shackely 2005). Bearing in mind the importance of the Kashmir cultural heritage, the state government supports a lot of projects. By digitalizing their working process, libraries have become one of the key factors behind the social development based on knowledge and run by digital technology. They have possibility to provide direct online access through personal computers, means for online studying, information important for e-commerce improvement and the like. Libraries can contribute to the development of local economies supporting local trade and tourism industry. This paper aims to briefly show the role of Central Library, Srinagar in the development of tourism based on cultural and artistic resources of a region.

2. Literature Review

In terms of cultural tourism, culture should be seen as part of tourism development. It means that culture, based on its links with lifestyle, geographic area and close link between education and society, is a necessary prerequisite for tourism development. Culture and tourism are in terms of their basic characteristics two complex and layered fields of the modern civilization, and they have a positive effect on the overall social development. Making culture less important in terms of tourism is neither logical nor justified, because culture is overall intellect of society, and tourism is a sum of all material and spiritual resources and lifestyle of a nation. There are several aspects for defining cultural tourism:

- From economic point of view, cultural tourism is the placement of culture on the market with cultural and artistic product, which has cultural and economic value.

- From organizational point of view, it is the integration between two sectors, culture and tourism, which should merge with a view to forming a mutual product.
- From cultural point of view, it is a promotion of revived cultural goods and the landscape of a town that will be etched on tourists' minds.
- From educational point of view, it is a journey full of longing to explore, get to know and learn something new about national and local cultural values of the region tourists are visiting.

The motives for traveling to and staying in cultural-social area contain aspiration for fulfilling a large number of deferent and vehement human needs and wishes. It can be a wish for gaining knowledge, discovering and getting to know various regions and civilizations, a visit to various cultural events, art, adventure, change, freedom, the change of the itinerary etc. Among the special ones are: a trip to the past, small town visits and other countries, a visit to natural and cultural areas, exploration trips, seminars, getting to know the life and work of an artist, and for the sake of rest, recreation as well as for health reasons and the like. By definition, cultural tourism enables the places that are not primarily tourism oriented and are not rich in tourist throughout a year to make a tourism offer owing to their cultural and artistic resources. Thus, the main aim of cultural tourism is to motivate people to travel and become acquainted with local cultural values in order to understand them and consequently respect those (Shackley 2003). Tourism is, in terms of the growth rate, the third fastest-growing field on the economic market with culture being the fourth. When these two get together, the result is cultural tourism. However, the terms cultural tourism and heritage tourism are not clearly defined. Hall and Zeppel (1990a: 87) realized the connection between cultural and heritage tourism, stating that the

cultural tourism is based on performing arts, visual arts and festivals while the heritage tourism is focused on visiting landscapes, historic sites, monuments and buildings. Some other scholars made a clear distinction between these two terms. Moscardo (2000), for example, argued that the heritage tourism was focusing on the past and cultural tourism on the present. Prentice (2004) said that heritage tourism was one of the fastest growing forms of cultural tourism (Stanley 2003).

3. Research Methodology

The study area for this paper is Central Library, Srinagar situated in SPS museum building Lal Mandi Srinagar. It is a public library looked after by department of libraries and research Govt. of J&K. It is one of the largest and oldest libraries in Srinagar. This library provides a complete cultural glimpse of the Kashmir valley. It provide sources of diverse Kashmir history and cultural heritage.

4. Discussion

The Central Library is the largest library in the Srinagar city. This library is closely linked to a "museum," or research institution. The Library's collection is very famous for providing a clear image of cultural heritage of Kashmir valley which in turn can be used as a tool of cultural tourism.

Today, Central University, Srinagar is a very important cultural and educational center. It contains:

- a library that can hold millions of books;
- a center for the Internet and its archive;
- specialized libraries for: audio-visual materials, the visually impaired, children, the young, microforms, rare books and special collection;

- museum for: antiquities, manuscripts, the history of Kashmir;
- permanent exhibitions;
- art galleries for temporary exhibitions;
- Research institutes.

With all its potentials, the Central library is a very important factor in the development of cultural tourism. The frequent new edition historical documents give a complete file about the Central library in order to inform the tourists about its developmental and cultural role as well as its possessions and various capabilities. The library pays special attention to tourist visits. The visits are organized by tourist guides who have received intensive training to lead an entertaining and an enlightening tour for the visitors. Tours with professional tourist guides are organized on frequent basis. During the tour, visitors are introduced to the historical background of the rich cultural heritage of Kashmir and importance of this library in promoting it.

The SPS Museum has got a very important role in stimulating public awareness about history and culture. It introduces programs on Kashmir heritage through media and electronic publications and promotes the historic role of Kashmir artists through its production of booklets, flyers and postcards.

5. Conclusion

Libraries may be a significant factor in the cultural tourism development of a region. There is increasing number of tourists who look up the information on a destination prior to the trip/journey, chiefly via the Internet. Libraries have a lot of material that can be presented through web sites. Although libraries has considerably provided the number of services that it offer to the public, business community and tourist, the role of the workers is still invaluable.

The educated and skilled staff is the key to providing quality service. In order to introduce all the

library services to tourists and the local community it is important to develop an excellent marketing strategy. It involves a well-designed and accessible web-presentation, since it can be accessed to from all over the world: the sending of e-mails to potential users; visiting travel agencies, educational institutions and companies; active part of the staff in the media; the printing and distribution of promotional leaflets, brochures as well as other methods.

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