



Research Article

Tourism and Culture: Role of Photographers in promoting and preserving Kashmiri Culture

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Abstract

The present study has been carried out at various tourist destinations of Srinagar city. Srinagar is the microcosm of the valley of Kashmir- the lush green Mughal Gardens, the sparkling waters of Dal Lake, the beautiful snow- capped mountains, the divinity of different shrines, all honor the city with the title of Paradise on earth. The costumes of Jammu and Kashmir are famous for embroidery and intricate designs, reflecting the richness of culture and landscape of the state. The traditional attire of Kashmir for both men and women is "Pheran" which is worn with a headgear (poots for women and a turban for men). The main focus of the study is to analyze the role of photographers in promoting Kashmiri culture. For study both tourists and photographers have been taken into consideration. Motivation and attraction of tourists towards the traditional Kashmiri dresses has been studied by the researcher. The photographers we come across at various gardens and sites play an important role in reviving and preserving the traditional Kashmiri culture by not only attracting the tourists but the locals as well. The study was conducted with 10 tourists and 10 photographers. Interview was used to collect data from the respondents and purposive sampling technique was utilized by the researcher.

Keywords: Photographers, culture, Srinagar, tourists, Pheran.

1. Introduction

1.1 Culture and Tourism

Culture is the most important asset for tourism development and one of the major beneficiaries of this development. It is that enticing thing which not only attracts the tourists but allures the residents as well. Tourism and culture were viewed as largely separate aspects of destinations during most of the 20th century. Cultural resources were seen as part of the cultural heritage of destinations, related to the education of the local population and the underpinning of local or national cultural identities. Tourism on the other hand was largely viewed as a leisure-related activity separate from everyday life and the culture of the local population. This gradually changed towards the end of the century, especially from 1980s, as the role of cultural assets in attracting tourists and distinguishing destinations from one another became more obvious. As a result, cultural tourism has been gaining pace and culture has been increasingly employed as an aspect of the tourism product and destination imaging strategies, and tourism has been integrated into cultural development strategies as a means of supporting cultural heritage and cultural production. This synergy between tourism and culture is seen as one of the most important reasons for encouraging a more direct relationship between these two elements:

While determining the meaning of the term culture we highlight one of the first scholars namely E. B Tylor who dealt with the identification of culture by providing a classic approach which is widely accepted in social science researchers. According to Tylor (1871) culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1871.) Cultural tourism is an interaction between the tourists and host society because of cultural pull forces at the destination i.e. culture and social values including tangible and intangible elements of culture. Ritchie and Zins have acknowledged the twelve cultural essentials which pull tourists at the destinations. In brief these elements are the historical monuments, the art, architecture, handicrafts, the traditions, the gastronomy, the leisure activities, and the dress. They also identified the educational system and the religions, faith, language, sculptures. In modern years there have been increases in domestic and international tourism for the purpose of expressing another type of culture. Thus, cultural tourism has become one of the basic elements that attract tourists to particular destinations. When starting with the definitions first we would like to mention the Dictionary of Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Terms published in 1996 according to

which "Cultural tourism: General term referring to leisure travel motivated by one or more aspects of the culture of a particular area." (' Dictionary of Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Terms', 1996). One of the most diverse and specific definitions from the 1990s is provided by ICOMOS (International Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism): "Cultural tourism can be defined as that activity which enables people to experience the different ways of life of other people, thereby gaining at first hand an understanding of their customs, traditions, the physical environment, the intellectual ideas and those places of architectural, historic, archaeological or other cultural significance which remain from earlier times. Cultural tourism differs from recreational tourism in that it seeks to gain an understanding or appreciation of the nature of the place being visited." (ICOMOS Charter for Cultural Tourism, Draft April 1997) . Therefore, a destination may have a certain attractiveness based on its inherited assets. Its ability, however, to compete with areas to attract tourists or investment may also vitally depend on its ability to transform the basic inherited factors into created assets with a higher symbolic or sign value which may then be translated into higher market values.

Jammu and Kashmir has the distinction of having variegated and unique cultural blend, which makes it different from the rest of the country. Not only culturally but geographically and demographically it is visualized as a separate entity. The contact of Kashmiri people with the Roman, Greek and Persian civilizations resulted into a fusion of cultures. Kashmir is rightly said to be Nature's grand finale of beauty. The Mughal emperor Jahangir when visited the valley in the seventeenth century was so spellbound by the beauty of Kashmir that he compared it with a paradise, and said that if ever paradise existed on earth, it is her, it is here, it is here. ("Gar firdaus, ruhezaminast, haminasto, haminasto, haminast.") In this masterpiece of earth's creation nature has left an indelible mark on the folk performances of Kashmir as they are intimately interlined with the moods and movements of the seasons.

The costumes of Jammu and Kashmir are famous for embroidery and intricate designs, reflecting the richness of culture and landscape of the state. The costumes of Jammu and Kashmir are famous for embroidery and intricate designs, reflecting the richness of culture and landscape of the state. Kashmiri Muslims are unrivaled craftsmen, known for their time-honored intricate and beautiful designs that they produce on papier-mâché, wood, silver and gold and dresses. Kashmiri women generally have a love for jewelry that their headgear, ears, necks and arms glisten with ornaments. The typical ornament that Hindu women wear is the Dejharoo, a pair of gold pendants, hanging on a silk thread or gold chain which passes through holes in the ears pierced at the top end of the lobes. The Dejharoo symbolizes that the

Kashmiri Pandit woman is married. Muslim women wear bunches of earrings, the weight of which is supported by a thick silver chain along with several bracelets and necklaces. The whole ensemble lends a most artistic effect to the appearance of Kashmiri women.

Kashmiri Muslims traditionally wear the Pheran, a long loose gown hanging down below the knees, a white turban tied on a skull cap, a close-fitting *shalwar* and lace less shoes called *gurgabi*. A white piece of material is hung on their shoulders like a stole. The less affluent Muslims wear skullcaps, and do not carry any shawl. Unlike a Hindu woman's *pheran*, which gives her a Roman look, the Muslim woman's *Pheran* is beautifully embroidered in front, it is knee-length, loose and embroidered in front and on the edges.

Muslim woman's headgear is called the *Kasaba*. It is red in color, tied turban-like and held tight by an abundance of silver pins and trinkets. It has an overhanging pin-scarf, which falls gracefully over the shoulders. A normal *shalwar* goes with it.

1.2 Tourism and Photography

Srinagar is the microcosm of the valley of Kashmir- the lush green Mughal Gardens, the sparkling waters of Dal Lake, the beautiful snow-capped mountains, the divinity of different shrines, all honor the city with the title of Paradise on earth. Srinagar is the summer capital of the state of J&K. It is the first place of attraction for the tourists visiting Kashmir via an airplane. Accommodation is provided mainly in the form of house boats parked in the Dal Lake. The Boulevard road along the lake provides for a pleasant walk in the evening in the sunset. Tourism in the Kashmir valley has rebounded in recent years and in 2009, the state became one of the top tourist destinations of India: Gulmarg one of the most popular resort destinations in India, is also home to the world's highest green golf course. It was reported that 7.36 lakh tourists visited Kashmir in 2010 including 23,000 foreigners. In 2011, the number of tourist arrivals in Kashmir touched the mark of 10 lac.

Photography and tourism are closely linked. Photographs play a crucial role in the promotion of tourism destinations, working through a range of media including brochures, television commercials, and picture postcards. Meanwhile the practice of photography is often held to be intimately related to the condition of being a tourist. Urry (1990) links these two phenomena, suggesting that they may constitute a self-reinforcing "closed circle of representation" in which tourist photographs both reflect and inform destination images. Apparently the photographs become somewhat more important than the experiences themselves, and one might say that people go on vacation to take photographs - the first thing you think about when seeing a famous image, is to reproduce it by taking a photograph. "A way of certifying experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it - by limiting experience to a search for the

photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir. Travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs” (Sontag 1979: 9) . Even the independent and exploring travelers who go off the beaten track, for example in South-East Asia, to have a pure experience, tend to bring their camera because they need to prove to their friends, and themselves, that they really had a pure experience. Or in the words of Sontag (1979: 162): “The urge to have new experiences is translated into the urge to take photographs”. The Japanese are well known for their “snapshot-holidays”. Sontag is explaining this with reference to the Japanese relation to their workplace. “Japanese, Americans and Germans all seem to “have” to take photographs and then to remember through these photographs - it is a kind of leisure equivalent of the distorting obligations of a strong workplace culture. (Urry 2002: 128).

When taking pictures while on a holiday, one mechanically reproduces the images seen, or the experiences had. Consequently the photograph (mechanical reproduction) functions to communicate the experience (the original), in the construction of the holiday narrative in the post-holiday phase. One needs not actively work through one’s memory to communicate the experiences to others or to oneself, if communication is done through photographs. The reproduction of the event is then closer to the original than the mechanically reproduced memory in form of a photograph, as this allows you to remember and communicate the true perception of the moment. Details of the moment may be forgotten, as the things you tend to remember are in some way the things that made the biggest impression, but if a photograph is used as a memory of an event, the details in the photograph may take attention away from the things that actually made the most impact. Photographs can answer questions about cultural phenomena and their content. Learning who made and possessed these photographic images can allow us glimpses into social structure and politics. Photographs are of greatest value to scholars when they exist in groups, for example, illustrating a particular society, a specific individual through time, a type of activity, or the oeuvre of a single photographer. Then they can serve as a valuable record, for example, to those investigating non- traditional subjects that are often poorly documented in early ethnographic sources, such as: the family; women's roles; children's position in society; popular culture at specific times and places (Peters and Mergen 1977:282) in comparison with elite values and social practices (Mejia 1987); the physical scale of an event, its spatial arrangement, and the degree of individual participation (Geary 1986:100); or settlement patterns and politics of use of building materials and forms, material culture, and culture change (Gidley 1985:44). Photographs are nontraditional but plentiful ethnographic records, and can be systematically tapped to increase our knowledge of cultural phenomena .

2. Methodology

The present study has been carried out at various tourist destinations of Srinagar city. Srinagar is the microcosm of the valley of Kashmir. The costumes of Jammu and Kashmir are famous for embroidery and intricate designs, reflecting the richness of culture and landscape of the state. The traditional attire of Kashmir for both men and women is “Pheran” which is worn with a headgear (poots for women and a turban for men). The main focus of the study is to analyze the role of photographers in promoting Kashmiri culture. For study both tourists and photographers have been taken into consideration. Motivation and attraction of tourists towards the traditional Kashmiri dresses has been studied by the researcher. Data was collected with the help of in-depth interview with 10 tourists and 10 photographers. Interviews were recorded with the help of a voice recorder. Following were the aspects on which opinion was sought from the respondents.

2.1 Aspects on which Opinion was sought from Photographers

1. Perception regarding the traditional dress of Kashmir.
2. Things used in photography and reasons for making their use.
3. Motivations used by the photographers to attract the tourists.
4. Response of locals.
5. How photography helped in preserving and promoting Kashmiri culture.

2.2 Aspects on which opinion was sought from Tourists

1. Perception/opinion regarding the culture of Kashmir.
2. Opinion regarding the traditional dress of Kashmir.
3. What motivated them to click photos wearing this dress.
4. How photographs through them play a role in promoting Kashmiri culture.

Opinion regarding the dress	Frequency	Percentage
Different (non-western)	10	100
Protection from cold	6	60
Symbolizes our religion	6	60

100 % of the respondents boasted of the traditional Pheran with the headgear as non-western, and very different from the whole world. 60 % of the respondents said that it left no part of body uncovered and thus symbolizes our religion that is Islam. 60 % of the respondents said that it protected the Kashmiri from the severe cold of winters and even after winters, as winter lasted for more than six months in Kashmir.

3.2 Motivations used by the Photographer to attract Tourists for Clicking Photos

Motivations used	Frequency	Percentage
Albums	10	100
Verbal motivation	10	100
Using colorful dress and things	4	40

All the photographers used the same kind of motivations. They made use of albums showing beautiful girls wearing those beautiful dresses vis-a-vis motivating them verbally. 40% of the respondents said that they make use of bright colored Pherans like dark pink, red, green, purple to attract the tourists.

3.3 Things used by Photographers in addition to Pheran while taking photographs

The photographers gave a list of things they make use of in photography. The things used by them were_ Pheran, headgear (*poots* and turban), *tumar*, *matka*, *kangri*, *hookah*. They also gave reasons for making use of such things, like the *pheran*, *kangir* protected us from cold. Every home in Kashmir would have a hookah. *Matka* depicted that water was to be carried from long distances.

3.4 Response of Locals

All the photographers that is 100% were of the opinion that tourists were more inclined to get photos clicked in the traditional Kashmiri attire. Almost 95 % of the response was from tourists and only 5% of the locals showed their interest in getting photos clicked that of their children too.

3.5 Role played by Photographers in Preserving and Promoting Kashmiri Culture

All the photographer respondents were of the opinion that our present Kashmiri generation knew very little regarding our traditional culture and traditional dress, the kind of jewelry traditional brides used, a *tumar* is hardly known nowadays, the turban and a skull cap which every Kashmiri used to wear. The silver jewelry is being replaced by gold and diamond jewelry. According to the respondents these things were and are being removed from our society due to the advent of modernization and westernization. Not only does the Kashmiri traditional dress and culture reach every corner of the world through these photographs but local people also come to know about those things of our culture while coming across these photographers at different picnic spots of Kashmir.

3.6 Opinion of Tourists regarding the Dress of Kashmir

Opinion regarding the dress	Frequency	Percentage
Beautiful/ colorful	7	70

found nowhere in India		
Suitable for the climate of Kashmir	7	70
Feeling of a princess	4	40

When asked about the traditional dress of Kashmir, that is the Pheran with the headgear, 70% of the respondents especially the females found the dress colorful and bright. One of the respondents even correlated the dress with Kashmir itself and said that it denotes how colorful and beautiful Kashmir is, 70% of the respondents were of the view that it suited the climate of Kashmir. 40% of the respondents felt like princesses in the dress.

3.8 Opinion of the Tourists regarding the Culture of Kashmir

Opinion regarding the culture	Frequency	Percentage
Hospitable people	7	70
Simple living	8	80
Delicious food	6	60

While interviewing the tourists, the researcher found that all the tourist respondents were ecstatic on visiting Kashmir. They all were of the view that they had seen such beautiful places in pictures and movies only. 70% of the respondents had found that people of Kashmir hospitable. 80% of them were of the view that there existed still simple living in Kashmir. 60% of them were impressed by the Wazwan of Kashmir.

3.9 Motivation of Tourists towards clicking photos wearing these Dresses

Type of motivations	Frequency	Percentage
Watched movies	8	80
Online images	5	50
Photos of friends and relatives	6	60

80% of the respondents had watched movies and seen actresses wearing those pretty dresses so they were inclined to wear those dresses and get a photo clicked. 50% of the respondents had seen online photos, 60% of them had seen photographs of friends and relatives and about 100% of them were drawn towards these dresses.

3.10 How Photographs play a role in promoting Kashmiri Traditional Dress and Culture

Mode of promotion	Frequency	Percentage
Show photos to their friends	8	80
Narrate the experience orally vis a vis showing photos	5	50
Posting on social media	9	90

The tourist respondents were eager to post these photos wearing the dresses on Facebook and Whatsapp. Nearly 90 % of the respondents said of posting photos on social media. 80% of them were eager to show them to their friends and relatives and 50% wanted to narrate the whole experience of Kashmir tour and boast of their visit to the paradise on earth vis a vis showing the photographs wearing those dresses.

6. Conclusions

Photographers play a crucial role in promoting our culture. From the above study we come to know that our traditional dress along with the traditional jewelry which is on the verge of its extinction is preserved in full form by these photographers we come across at various places of Kashmir. The tourists are attracted towards these bright colored dresses and click several photographs which they post on social media thus reaching every nook and corner of the world. Not only the tourists but the locals also come to know about their traditional dress with the help of these photographers. According to the photographers, the things they use while clicking photos depict what necessary things a Kashmiri used in earlier times, which have been and are being replaced by new things and gadgets. A *hookah* used to be in every Kashmiri household, a *kangri* to protect from cold, a *matka* used to be necessarily in every house because water as to be carried from long distances. Silver jewelry got replaced by gold and diamond. A *tumar* worn by brides on the head is nowhere to be found. Barring *Pheran* and *kangri* we hardly see the other things in today's Kashmir. Modernization and westernization has introduced modern clothes and gadgets in our society. According to the photographers they make use of such things to show what dress and what lifestyle a Kashmiri lived. They want to promote the traditional Kashmiri dress by their photos so that it reaches everywhere and tourism gets a boost in Kashmir.

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