

# Mass Media and Film Induced Tourism in Leh District, Jammu and Kashmir, India

Tsetan Angmo<sup>1</sup> and Konchok Dolma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Delhi School of Economics, D.U

<sup>2</sup>Department of Environment Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

**Abstract:** *The mid 1970s' were beginning of tourism sector in Ladakh when it was partially opened for tourism in 1974. Major pull factors were adventure tourism, buddhist culture and research significance, mostly cultural research, especially among international visitors before the advent of bollywood film induced, meteoric domestic tourism rise. This phenomenon is bringing long term prosperity and improving the destination image among nationals. The breakthrough was success of bollywood film '3 idiots' which highlighted natural beauty and serenity of the place through its storyline, eventually surpassing the number of Indian tourists manifold in comparison to foreigners which dominated in earlier decades.*

**Keywords:** tourism, pull factors, bollywood, adventure, culture.

## 1. Introduction

Travel and tourism industry is a fast growing industry which contributes immensely in a region's growth and overall economy. In the northernmost district of India, Leh, tourism has evolved as a major contributor for income generation and employment to the local economy. Since, recent years, *film induced tourism*, a phenomenon which boosts tourism industry of a place portrayed in a movie is conspicuous here too. In this pattern, a film based or set in a particular region offers an opportunity to relive or experience, see and learn novelties through entertainment and pleasure for the film tourist (Gjorgievski and Trpkova, 2011). Many films, documentaries and various advertisement films were filmed in Ladakh from a long time earlier but only in 2010, after the release of „3 idiots“ bollywood movie in December 2009, the recent phenomenon of *film induced tourism* can be conclusively derived here due to huge commercial success of this particular film. As per a study conducted in London, when people are seeking sights seen on screen, they are film induced tourists (Busby and Klug, 2001). In case of Ladakh recent spurt in tourist visitations, especially in two cult areas from aforesaid movie which are Pangong lake and Rancho's school, definitely complies to this phenomenon.

Leh is the district headquarter and only township in the district and the relief ranges from 3250m (amsl) lowest to highest 4500m (amsl) with a population of 1,47,104 (Census.,2011). Ladakh is a cold desert which was partially opened to tourism in year 1974 and tourism is expanding very rapidly ever since. Ladakh has a unique strategic location and touches international borders of Pakistan, China and Afghanistan (Fig.1).

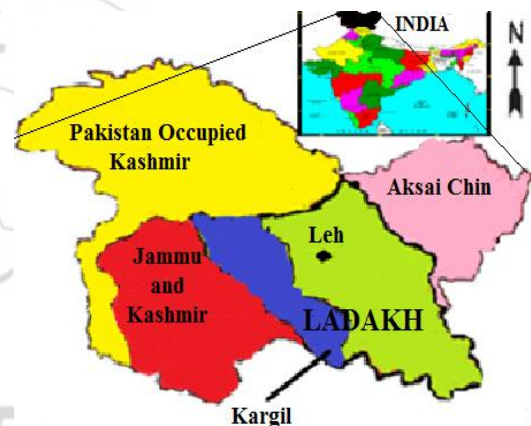


Figure 1: Location map of the study area

This region boasts of varied tourism options available for tourists whether it is adventure, cultural and particularly religious tourism, since the region possesses a massive wealth of historical monasteries, palaces along with high peaks and high valleys apt for trekking, mountaineering, rafting and other related activities. With recent surge of popularity of the region in media through films, news, national and international events table.1 being organized in this place of scenic beauty, the region has been declared a must see destination on every traveler list.

Table 1: List of events held in Ladakh

Event	Year of Origin	Theme
Ladakh Festival	-	Promote Ladakhi culture.
World Music Festival	2004 only	Ladakh region as a universal destination for music lovers.
Sindhu Darshan	2007	Indus river as an icon of unity of India.
Ladakh International Film Festival (LIFF)	2012	Local wildlife conservation.

## 2. Research Significance

One of the leading countries carrying out in depth researches and offering recommendations at state level concerning film induced tourism is the United Kingdom (Olsberg, 2007). The long standing pervasiveness and power of Hollywood as a source of global imagery, therefore is generally unchallenged in much of the work carried out on screen-tourism (Kim et al., 2009). The Malta Tourism Authority, for example, offers a cash incentive, as well as logistical support to film and television productions that depicts Malta as Malta (Hudson, 2011).

Major part of the state Jammu and Kashmir is hilly, so industrial development in other sectors are not much developed, thus industry related to tourism is considered with much seriousness by state government (Gupta and Raina, 2008). Also, due to small size of land holdings agriculture is unable to meet the expectations of state economy, tourism is considered to be an economic bonanza especially for people employed in this sector due to labour intensive aspect (Sharma et al., 2012). A multi pronged strategy has to be undertaken to market brand J&K in the global as well as national arena (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India). Ladakh was partially opened to tourism in year 1974 when it recorded 527 tourists which increased to a record breaking of 1,79,491 tourists in 2011 (Fig.2.)

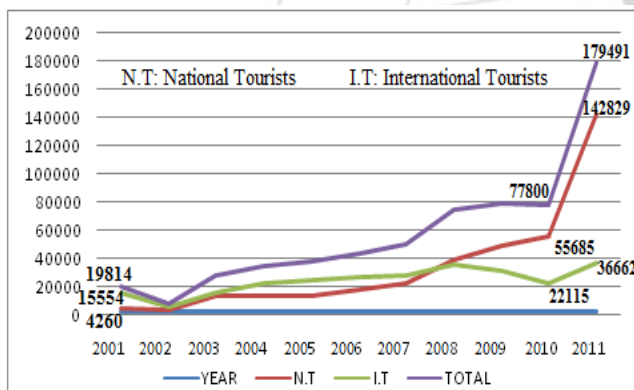


Figure 2: Tourist arrivals in Leh from (2001-2011)

## 3. Tourism and Bollywood

Ladakh since inception of tourism in year 1974 has been favoured by foreign nationals but at turn of 2008 there is a reverse trend of more national tourist arrivals which can be attributed to various factors like economic downturn in European and American markets, Ladakh's building up image through bollywood shootings, advertisement campaigns and increase in social media exposure and lastly an increasing disposable income among national tourists. One striking trend to be noted is a sharp increase of national tourists in year 2011, in this region, triggered by the movie "3 idiots" which portrayed a positive picture of this region and The movie "3 idiots" was released in December 2009 and as per above study, 2010 should be a year of large tourists inflow but due to August, 2010 flash floods, annual tourist inflow was less than 2009 and percent surge in domestic tourism was pegged at 14.7% (Fig.3.). If we take the surge in domestic tourist influx in year 2011, taking 2009 as base year

then we notice 194.38 % increase in domestic tourist arrival numbers at the end of 2011.

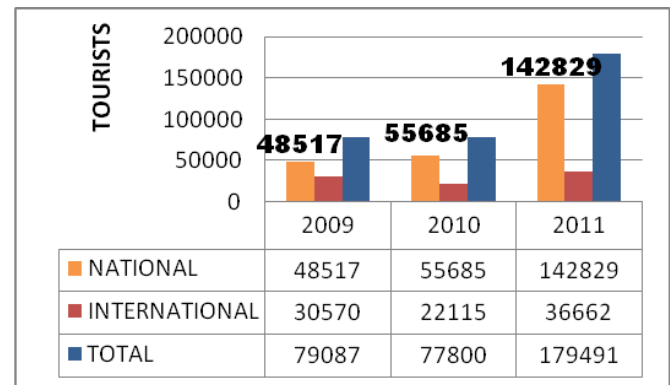


Figure 3: Domestic tourist arrivals (2009-2011).

Eventually not just presence but a positive image of the region portrayed through mainstream cinema, commercial advertisements, print and social media presence can be attributed to rising tourist arrivals in the area. Even though bollywood films were shot as far as 1964 but majority of them projected Ladakh with an image of war, terrorism and disturbance (Table.2.). Till the movie "3 idiots" which was released in December 2009, Ladakh was just another entity of Kashmir down in insurgency for most film makers and even name of this region did not featured in any of the movies filmed there except depicting war situation with China or Pakistan in films like Haqqeqat, Lakshya or LoC.

With Indian cinema, a significant number of International feature films along with many regional cinemas like Punjabi, South Indian and Manipuri film scenes and songs were being shot in Ladakh during recent times but bollywood films have maximum reach among its audiences all over globe. Hence bollywood films have wide distribution and most significant impact on tourist arrivals in this Himalayan region.

### 3.1 Flip side of media on the tourism industry

As media is a boon for local tourism industry of the region, on flip side it can also become the very reason of decrease in tourist influx volumes. During Ladakh International Film Festival 2013, then Minister of Tourism for Jammu and Kashmir stated that Ladakh is a difficult terrain where only one crop grows and main source of income after Indian army is tourism. He further added that the movie "3 idiots" which gave a boost to tourism industry until Chinese incursion incident which happened in April 2013 and was over highlighted in Arnab Goswami debate show Newshour on Times Now thus ultimately the tourists number dwindled (Sharma, 2013). Even during 2014, Chinese incursion stint in Demchok area of Ladakh, Subramaniam Swamy, a leader of Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) stated that incursions are a routine affair and empathized with locals due to troubles caused to them (Aneja, 2014). Incursions which takes place in fringes of Ladakh region by the Chinese army is a long tussle of power politics which has been going on for a long time and in no way civilian population which resides several kilometers away has been affected in any way. The Daulat Beg Oldi airport which is near Line of Actual Control (LAC)



between India and China where minor skirmishes occur is nearly 285 km from Leh airport. Therefore regular life goes on peacefully but shows like Newshour debate exaggerates the real situation exponentially. In current times of enormous tourist destination options available for any tourist and in an age when rest of destinations carry out robust marketing, the number of tourists are bound to dwindle in Ladakh if any disturbance rumor spreads in the area.

### 3.2 Efforts by district administration for improvement of tourism infrastructure

With evolving tourism industry of Ladakh, the administration is working on ground level for improving general topography of region especially in and around Leh town. This can be seen very well in form of new pavement work being undertaken in main market area in fig .4 and various sign boards of hotels and guest houses which Municipal Commission, Leh has put at junction points in fig. 5. The threat of groundwater pollution from soak pits in the wake of absence of a sewerage network and treatment facility is there in Leh town and in some areas like Chubi can already be seen due to shallow aquifers (Dolma et al,2015).



**Figure 4:** Leh beautification poster

**Table 2:** Bollywood films filmed in Ladakh

Feature Film	Year of Release	Concept of Ladakh in the movie
Haqeeqat	1964	War backdrop of China and India
Joshilay	1989	Nil
Dil Se	1998	Terrorism backdrop
Lakshay	2003	War themed of Pakistan and India
LOC Kargil	2003	War based of Pakistan and India
Tashan	2008	Nil
3 Idiots	2009	Scenic beauty of Ladakh depicted
Jab Tak hai Jaan	2012	Terrorism backdrop with scenery
Bagh Milkha Baagh	2013	Nil
Fugly	2014	Scenic backdrop



**Figure 5:** Hotels direction signs installed by Leh Municipal Committee

### 3.3 Road ahead for boosting domestic tourism numbers in Ladakh:

Tourism infrastructure improvement is definitely a welcome step to increase growth of tourism industry in general. After having several open ended questionnaire sessions with various domestic tourists who have already visited the region and also undergoing through review of literature about tourism in Ladakh, certain conclusions can be derived which are enlisted below:

- The foremost step in promoting tourism especially, domestic tourism, needs to have a robust marketing proposition. Here establishing a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) encompassing all stakeholders is need of hour which will streamline the image improvement process of this area thus highlighting uniqueness of this region.
- Further there is requirement of promoting detail research and projects related to study tourism induced by films in Ladakh. This can help in chalking out an effective marketing strategy for tourism promotion especially film based marketing which is cost effective.
- Along with existing promotion of the region through annual Ladakh festival, a place meant for showcasing Ladakhi culture and tradition through food, clothing and handicraft stalls can be a viable option. Tourism products in the region can be improved accordingly through such culture themed areas. As per a recent report by Tourism Minstry, Government of India, the duration of Indian tourists stay in Ladakh is 3-7 days while international tourists stay quite longer, so building such a cultural microcosm will be a good option in promoting short stay based national tourism.
- Improving basic sanitation facilities around the marketplace and processing solid waste by not landfill method only which acts as ugly spots on the general topography.
- More training for local youths in tourism development skills and expert exposure of finest trainers.
- Building a website which caters to tourism industry, products and services separately will definitely help in

promoting tourism here. The information already available on official LAHDC (Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council) website is brief and generalist in nature thus an elaborate description is needed.

### 3.4 Marketing Ladakh tourism image through media medium:

- More resources and funds needs to be allocated in tourism promotion especially responsible tourism which is in-sync with nature and accommodates all strata of the Ladakhi society.
- Building a favourable image of the destination and having a pro-active damage control mode, in case of any ill fated incident which maligns the image of area. For instance the incidents of Chinese incursions in far off areas of Ladakh when tourism dwindled to scaremongering.
- Deploying a tourism brand ambassador is a viable option if adequate funds are at disposal. Also, special consideration or interactive sessions with local media can be organized with coordination of district administration when any well know personality arrives in Ladakh.
- Funding book writing projects is another option in popularizing the area and through this medium certain areas etches in minds of people. For instance, in the popular book Shantaram by Gregory David Roberts through which Leopold café in Mumbai became an iconic and must visit junction for the tourists.
- Films which portray Ladakh in a brighter perspective should be promoted or well assisted during production phase. Also low budget cost-effective feature films, documentaries which highlight uniqueness of the area can be funded by administration or partially funded.
- Providing special assistance and full cooperation to the organizers of events like Ladakh International Film Festival (LIFF) which is held annually in summer months in this region. Such events help in direct marketing of the area in print and electronic media without the administration needing to shell any capital.
- Developing movie maps which trace various film locations of Bollywood and other regional nature which were filmed can become another effective product in attracting domestic Indian tourists.

### 4. Conclusion

Ladakh region lies in Trans Himalayas and is one of the remote and harsh areas as compared to rest of India, which is majorly a plain country. Thus, any major industry to develop in the area is not cost-effective and tourism gives a welcome respite for locals to improve their income. Recent spurt in domestic tourists made this industry sustainable especially after the downturn of European and American markets. While there is another school of thought which held domestic tourism number increase as cause for reduction in number of international tourists visitations due to overall degradation of the place ecologically and environmentally. This reason can be true to an extent but downturn of European and American markets should also be considered, rather than blaming the increase in domestic tourists solely. Also with increase in disposable incomes of Indian population and surge in film

induced popularity of this area among them are other significant reasons for increase in more Indians over international tourists.

Tourism should definitely be promoted keeping the pro-environment attribute, along with developing adequate infrastructure of this place which caters to needs and requirements of all kinds of ethical tourism whether national or international. Here film induced tourism if tapped properly can boost the tourism industry along with sustaining long term growth for the economy of this region.

### References

- [1] Aneja A (2014) Chinese Withdrew After Flag Meeting, Says Home Minister. *The Hindu*.
- [2] <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/chinese-withdrew-after-flag-meeting-says-home-minister/article6259212.ece>. (Accessed 2 June 2015).
- [3] Anonymous Final Report on 20 Year Perspective Plan for Sustainable Development of Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. *Ministry of Tourism, Government of India*, Unpub. Report: 1-466.
- [4] <http://dev01.incredibleindia.org/images/docs/trade-pdf/surveys-and-studies/perspective-plans-of-states-UTs/jammu%20kashmir.pdf>
- [5] Anonymous (2010-11) Statistical Hand Book issued by District Statistics and Evaluation Office. *Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh*. Unpub. Report: 1-156.
- [6] <http://leh.nic.in/pages/handbook.pdf>. (Accessed 5 December 2014).
- [7] Busby G, and Klug J (2001) Movie-Induced Tourism: The Challenge of Measurement and Other Issues. *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 7(4): 316-332.
- [8] Dolma K, Rishi M.S, and Lata R (2015) An Appraisal of Centralized Waste Water Treatment Plant with Respect to Leh Town. *International Journal of Science and Research* 4(5): 754-759.
- [9] Dolma K, Rishi M.S, and Lata R (2015) Evaluation of Groundwater Quality and its Suitability for Drinking Purposes-A Case of Leh Town, Ladakh (J&K), India. *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research* 6(5): 576-590.
- [10] Gjorgievski M, and Sinolicha M.T (2012) Movie Induced Tourism: A New Tourism Phenomenon. *UTMS Journal of Economics* 3(1): 97-104.
- [11] Gupta S.K, and Raina Rajesh (2008) Economic Impact of Vaishno Devi Pilgrimage: An Analytical Study. *International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Systems* 1(1): 52-64.
- [12] Hudson S (2011) Working Together to Leverage Film Tourism: Collaboration Between the Film and Tourism Industries. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes* 3(2): 165-172.
- [13] Kim S, Long P, and Robinson M (2009) Small Screen, Big Tourism: The Role of Popular Korean Television Dramas in South Korean Tourism. *Tourism Geographies: An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment* 11(3): 308-333.

- [14] LAHDC Leh Official Website of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Leh (2013). [www.leh.nic.in](http://www.leh.nic.in)
- [15] Olsberg (2007) How Film and Television Programmes Promote Tourism in the U.K. *Stately Attraction*: 1-121.
- [16] Pellicardi V (2010) Tourism Traffic Volumes in Leh District: An Overview. *International Association for Ladakh Studies* 26: 14-23.
- [17] Riley R, Baker, Dwayne, and Doren C.S.V (1998) Movie Induced Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 25(4): 919-935.
- [18] Sharma R, Sharma V.K, and Waris V.S (2012) Impact of Peace and Disturbances on Tourism and Horticulture in Jammu and Kashmir. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* 2(6): 1-7.
- [19] Sharma S (2013) Ladakh Film Fest Kicks Off on Stuttering Note. *Asian Age*.
- [20] <http://www.asianage.com/movie-reviews/ladakh-film-fest-kicks-stuttering-note-438>. (Accessed 12 May 2015).

