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## Pre- and Post-COVID-19 Impact on the Tourism Industry in Kashmir and Ladakh

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**Abstract:** Generally, Tourism includes all kinds of different activities which are associated with tourism industries like hotels and restaurants, tourist guides, transporters, shopkeeper etc on same way, it also include large number of small tourism related activities in different States and UTs because of their geographical areas like Ladakh and Kashmir region their mostly tourism activities are Houseboat, Shakara Safari, Gondola safari, horse riding, Trekking in mountain, Camel Safari, Jeep Safari etc. this type of tourism activities are mostly found in Ladakh and Kashmir region. Because of Barren Land and low agriculture productivity in these regions, mostly Ladakh 90% and Kashmir 60% depends on tourism industry. Tourism generates jobs income, employments; promote long-term growth, benefiting local economies in both the regions. Tourism is huge business in Ladakh and Kashmir regions. Tourism, the country's largest service industry, boosts the state's GDP, foreign exchange, employment, and tax revenue. The Ladakh and Kashmir regions are a popular tourist destination due to its successful development. Suddenly, the Covid-19 outbreak hit Ladakh and Kashmir regions just as tourist season was starting, dampening spirits. Travel and tourism have spread a novel corona virus that is highly infectious. This paper also discusses about the lockdown and has affected the tourism activities in these regions. The serious damaging effects of covid-19 are in 2020, resulting in reduced visitor numbers and travel restrictions, private employments, workers, etc in both the regions of Ladakh and Kashmir. Poorer people (tourist stakeholders) were also severely harmed; the findings show the covid-19 pandemic early effects on tourism and cost.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Tourism, GDP, Employment, Impact, Livelihood, Importance, Tourism Activities.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh are the three divisions under the state of Jammu and Kashmir until August 2019. After the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, the state is divided into two UTs, the Union Territory of J&K and the Union Territory of Ladakh, under Article 3 of the Indian Constitution. These three divisions have their own unique features, like geographical, cultural, language, and religion. In Kashmir division, about 96.41% are Muslims, followed by 2.45% Hindus, 0.81% Sikhs, and 0.33% others, and in addition to this, 98% are spoken in Kashmiri in the valley. The Kashmir region has a unique natural beauty and culture. Snowy glaciers, pristine lakes, picturesque mountains, dense forests, green meadows, and gushing rivers—everything about Kashmir is supremely beautiful. Similarly, in the Ladakh region, the main religious groups in the region are Muslims (46%), Buddhists (40%), and Hindus (12%), with the remaining 2% others. The mostly spoken languages in Ladakh are Ladakhi, Balti, and Urdu. Ladakh region is also a tourist's destination because snow-capped mountains, glaciers, and festivals are the major factors that attract people to visit Ladakh. Besides, tourists also visit the Gompas (Buddhist monasteries), where festivals like Losar, Hemis, and thiksey are celebrated by the people there.

Tourism generates income, creates employment, and promotes long-term growth, benefiting local economies in both regions. Tourism is huge business in the Ladakh and Kashmir regions. Tourism, the country's largest service industry, boosts the state's GDP, foreign exchange, employment, and tax revenue. These two regions, Kashmir and Ladakh, are attracting tourists because of their unique and special features. The majority of people in these regions directly or indirectly depend on tourism, and tourism is the backbone of the state economies of both regions.

Suddenly, in the last week of December 2019, the tedious coronavirus was quickly detected in the city of Wuhan, China. On 31st January 2020, the WHO conformed covid-19 as a Pandemic and 11th March 2020, it declared as global pandemic. The severity-wide spread of the coronavirus impacts the entire world for around eight months, resulting in a large number of losses of lives, loss of employment, loss of income, and destruction of the entire global economy. In India, the first case of the COVID-19 pandemic was reported on January 30, 2020. Over time, the pandemic reached several states and union territories, including Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

## **2. RELATED WORKS**

Many of the studies have examined the dynamics and repercussions of tourism in places like Kashmir and Ladakh. This region's highlighting economic dependence on the industry as well as the serious consequences of disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers have shown that tourism contributes significantly to regional GDP, foreign exchange earnings, tax revenues, direct employment, and commercial activity, all of which support local economies. Ladakh and Kashmir are ideal locations for a range of tourism activities, from adventure travel like hiking and jeep safaris to cultural experiences like visiting Buddhist temples and taking part in local festivals, due to their distinctive geographical and cultural features.

In this paper, the study shows a prominent difference in visitor numbers and patterns before and after the pandemic, which can be used to study the entrance of tourists into Kashmir and Ladakh before and after COVID-19. Before COVID-19, both areas had a high volume of visitors.

by their varied cultural activities and stunning natural surroundings. However, the pandemic's early 2020 start brought with it hitherto unheard-of difficulties. Travel bans, lockdowns, and unpredictability around the world caused a dramatic drop in the number of visitors, which had a disastrous effect on local companies and livelihoods that depended on tourism. The economic consequences were severe; research indicates that there was a discernible decline in employment and revenue from tourism in the Kashmir and Ladakh regions.

Empirical research demonstrates how susceptible the tourism industry is to worldwide disruptions, which helps to explain and evaluate the effects of COVID-19 on Kashmir's tourism industry. In addition to upsetting travel patterns, the pandemic brought attention to structural problems such as inadequate infrastructure and reliance on seasonal travel. Businesses that serve the tourism industry, such as lodging facilities, dining establishments, and transportation providers, experienced severe financial duress, and communities that depend on tourism in the informal economy also experienced difficulty. The urgency of developing resilient tourism policies that put sustainability and adaptation first in order to lessen future disruptions is highlighted by this analysis.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The basic methodology of this study was to collect primary data and secondary data from various sources that are associated with the tourism industry and use them as inputs to give information on tourism inflow, the COVID-19 impact of tourism, stakeholders, etc.

**Sampling Plan:** The selection of the regions was based on economic, social, cultural, political, geographical, and war factors. These two regions, Kashmir and Ladakh, are attracting tourists because of their unique and special features. Most of the people in these regions are directly or indirectly dependent on tourism, and tourism is the backbone of the state economies of both regions. Suddenly, COVID-19 hit tourism activities in these regions. The serious damaging effects of COVID-19 will occur in 2020, resulting in reduced visitor numbers, travel restrictions, private employment, workers, etc. in both the regions of Ladakh and Kashmir. Hence, the two regions, viz., Kashmir and Ladakh, were selected for undertaking the survey.

**Sampling Frame:** The sampling frame constituted the two regions, namely the Ladakh region and the Kashmir region, and various tourism activities that are directly or indirectly associated with the tourism industry in both regions.

**Data Collection:** Both primary and secondary data are collected from various stakeholders in both the regions.

Tools used for primary data collection through questionnaires or schedules from different tourism activities, like i) officials or staff of hotels and restaurants' other boarding and

lodging facilities like houseboats, huts, camps, etc. ii) Local inhabitants, shopkeepers, or tourist guides iii) Travel agents and tour operators; iv) Other related agencies and persons, etc.

Tools used for secondary data collection are: i) Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India; ii) Directorate of Tourism, Govt. of J & K; iii) Tourism Department Leh; iv) Newspapers and social media; v) Various published national and international journals, etc.

**Sample Units:** About 300 primary data from various tourism activities are collected from the regions, in which 200 data from Kashmir regions and 100 from Ladakh regions.

**Objectivities:**

- To analyze the tourist inflow of pre- and post-COVID-19 in Kashmir and Ladakh
- To explain and analyze the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector in Kashmir

**4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Influx of Tourists in Kashmir and Ladakh Regions: Pre and Post COVID-19**

The term "tourism influx" describes an interesting and frequently dramatic rise in the quantity of visitors to a certain location during a given time frame. A number of variables, such as enhanced infrastructure, marketing initiatives, seasonal attractions, or modifications to travel regulations, may have an impact on this phenomenon. When more money is spent on lodging, dining, and local attractions, a large influx of tourists can have a positive impact on the local economy. But there might also be drawbacks, such congestion and a burden on the available resources. One of the main aims of this study was to measure the tourist inflow in the region of Kashmir and Ladakh, pre- and post-COVID-19, and its dynamics in association with instability.

Table 1: Year wise tourist arrival trend in Ladakh and Kashmir

Year	Ladakh			Kashmir		
	Domestic	Foreign	Total	Domestic	Foreign	Total
2015	116887	29614	146501	898401	28954	927355
2016	197693	38005	235698	1274964	24516	1267474
2017	230662	46593	277255	1196941	31697	1228638
2018	277889	49477	327366	774729	56029	830758
2019	241285	38652	279937	531753	33779	565532
2020	6743	1126	7869	37368	3899	41267
2021	313023	1054	314077	664163	1614	665777
2022	510137	21259	531396	2653495	19947	2673442

Source: i) Tourism department, Leh  
ii) Department of Tourism, UT J&K

Figure 1: Yearly comparable of Tourist inflow to Kashmir and Ladakh regions during covid-19

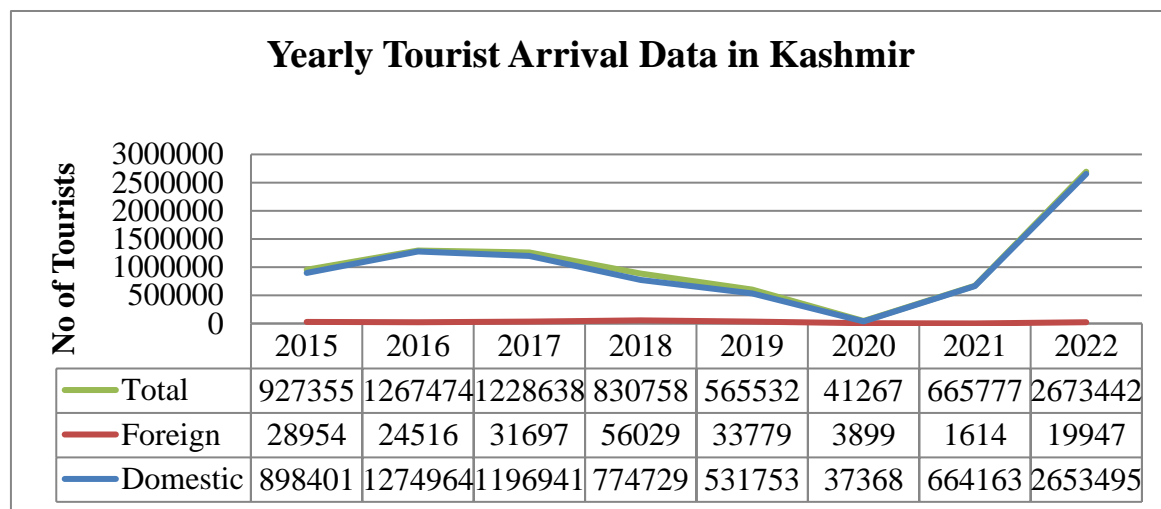
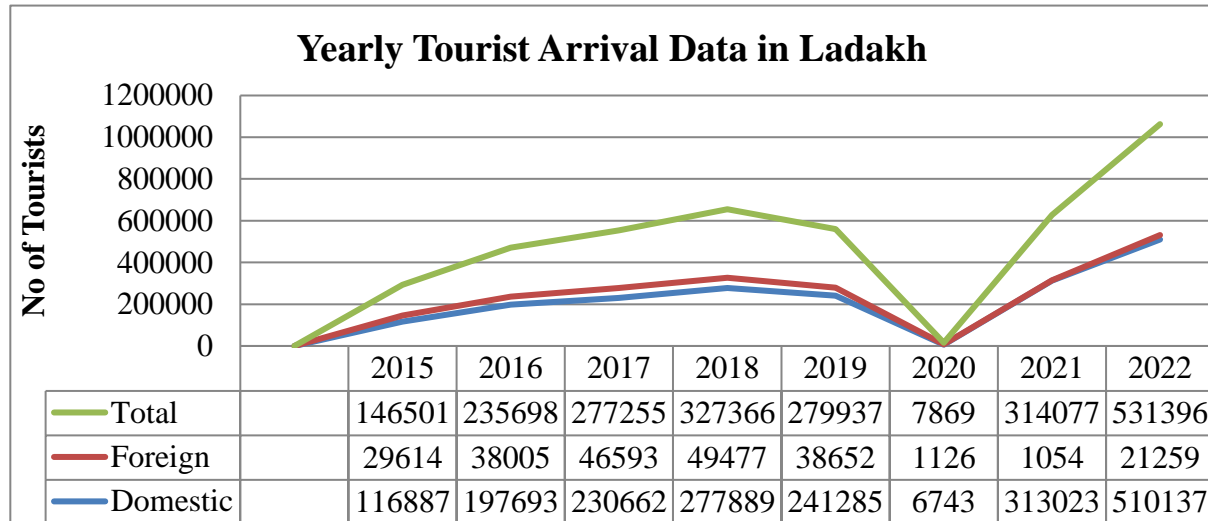


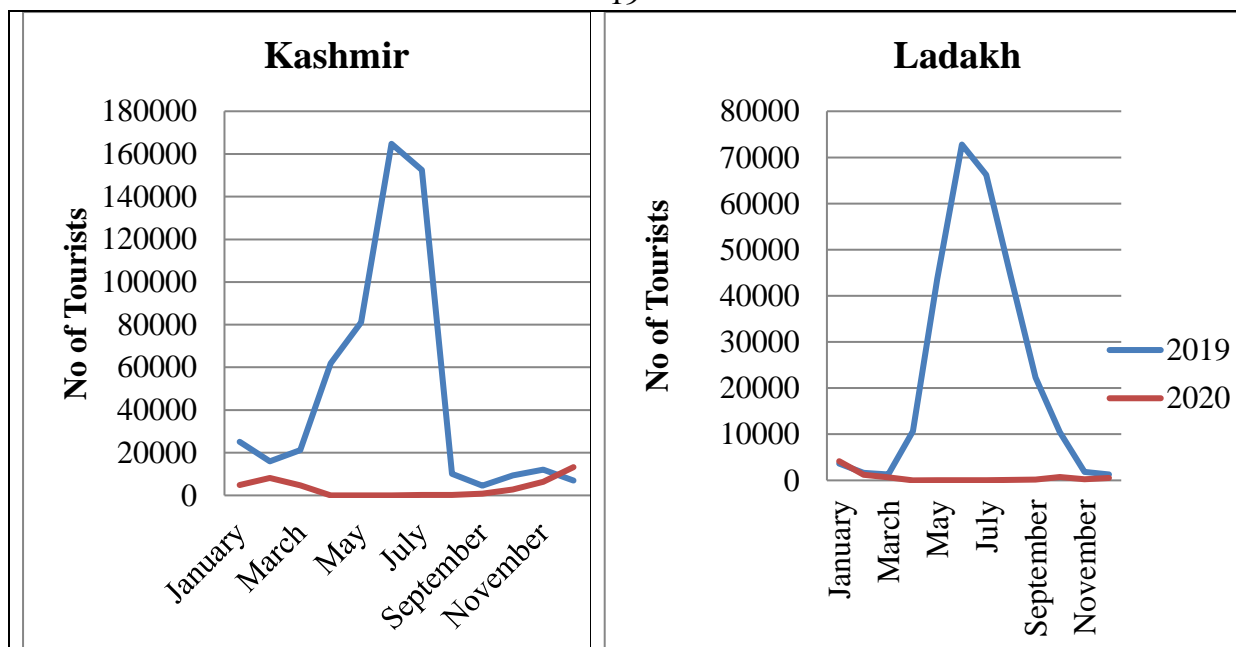
Table 2: Month wise tourist arrival trend in Ladakh and Kashmir

Months	Ladakh					Kashmir				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	5665	3647	4159	1438	1806	47509	25095	4863	19102	61468
February	1136	1597	1206	640	1239	28145	15903	8182	26182	100509
March	1298	1305	686	1778	4159	36452	21237	4643	48162	180171
April	11277	10623	0	4235	31668	53142	61815	0	32594	272377
May	44583	43672	4	1349	85922	10621	81139	0	1128	375021

						3				
June	77041	72795	24	20090	127136	120848	164759	0	15254	333589
July	70139	66237	17	71437	121707	122025	152525	186	48858	389876
August	53621	44107	109	71829	79257	85534	10130	284	48858	337419
September	38049	22339	195	94740	49906	103195	4562	848	61347	124562
October	20784	10461	712	32799	21121	55951	9327	2697	92769	183208
November	2416	1871	268	11359	4493	33720	12086	6327	127605	158778
December	1357	1283	489	2383	2982	38024	6954	13237	143057	156464
<b>Total</b>	<b>147180</b>	<b>139032</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>91527</b>	<b>248843</b>	<b>830758</b>	<b>565532</b>	<b>41267</b>	<b>665777</b>	<b>2673442</b>

Source: i) Tourism department, Leh  
 ii) Department of Tourism, UT J&K

Figure 2: Monthly comparable of Tourist inflow to Kashmir and Ladakh region during covid-19



Tables 1 and 2, show the pre- and post-COVID-19 tourism influx in both regions that I looked at for this article. Monthly and annual data from several secondary sources in both

regions were used in this investigation. The tables mentioned above are explained in detail below.

Table1 shows the arrival of tourists to Kashmir Valley from 2015 to 2022, revealing that the tourist flow of 927355 in 2015 increased to 1267474 in 2016, a positive growth rate of 36.67%. It is very interesting to note that the growth rate of the tourist flow in the Kashmir valley always fluctuated with ups and downs from time to time from 1990 to 2022 because of militancy, lockdown, natural disasters, the abrogation of Article 370, and COVID-19. One of the most severe impacts of tourism inflow in the Kashmir region is in the years 2019 and 2020. I called it as twin effect, a severe blow to tourism in the valley, which only received 565532 visitors in 2019 and 41267 visitors in 2020 compared to 2018, which had 830758 visitors.

However, comparing the tourist arrivals in 2019 and 2020 offers a disheartening picture. In January 2019, 25095 visitors to the valley were recorded, but only 4863 in the same period in 2020, with a negative growth rate of —80.62%. February saw 15,903 tourists in 2019 and only 8182 in 2020; similarly, in March 2019, tourist arrivals amounted to 21,237 but only 4643 in 2020. This was the month in which the Government of India (GoI) announced a total lockdown for the entire nation from March 22 onwards. This lockdown resulted in a zero inflow of tourists in the months of April, May, and June 2020 in (Table2) above. After that, the arrivals of tourists increased in June and July, but at a very low growth rate.

Similarly, August registered a mere 10,130 tourists due to the abrogation of Article 370. Thus, a decline of 93% was registered compared to July 2019 with 152,525 arrivals. In 2019, Kashmir Valley received 565,532 visitors, but only 25,922 from January to November 2020 (Directorate of Tourism, Kashmir, 2020). The tourism sector has been affected really hard by the abrogation of Article 370 and the COVID-19 pandemic (Table2).

### **Analysis of the Ladakh Region**

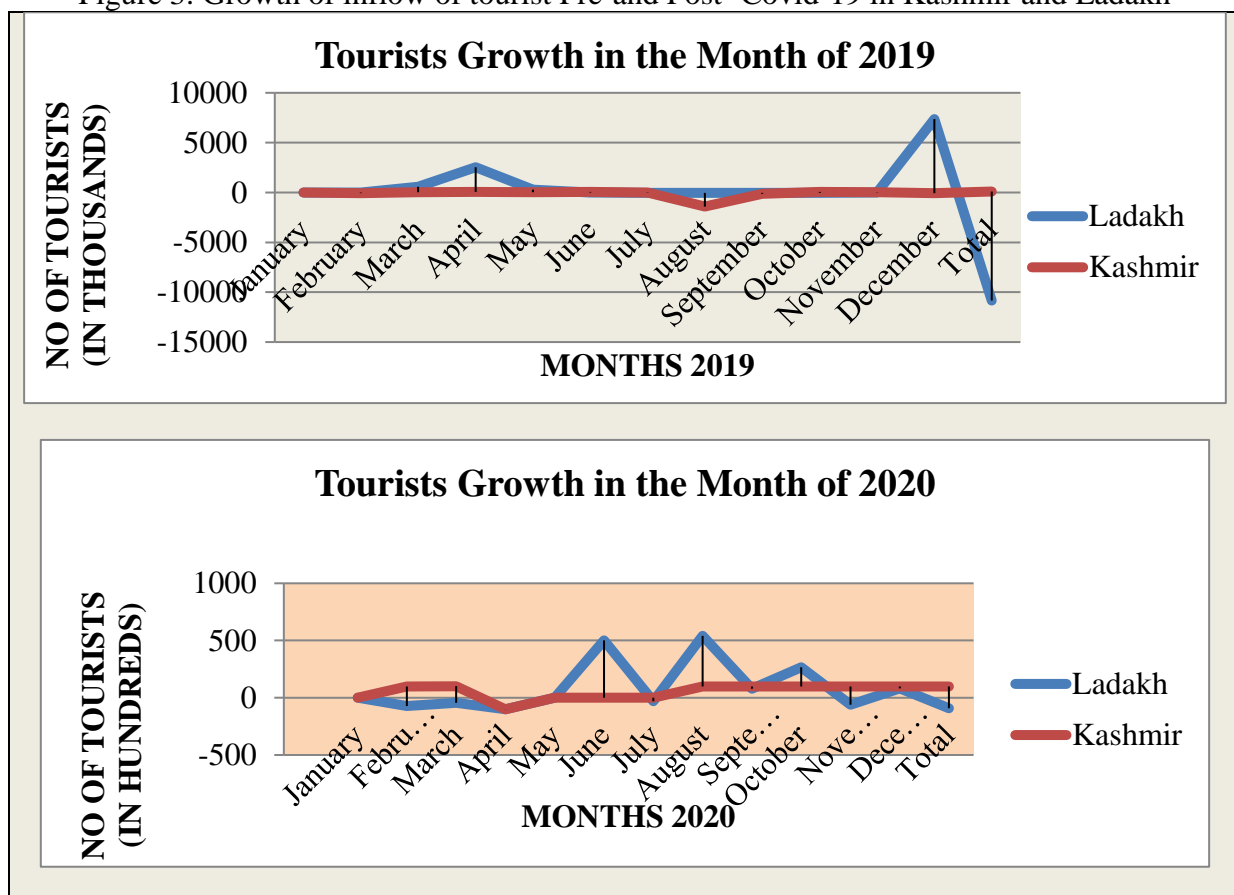
The most tourist arrivals in the Ladakh region are in the months of May to September. June and July see peak arrivals. The above table table1 shows the arrival of tourists to the Ladakh region from 2015 to 2022, revealing that the tourist flow of 146501 in 2015 increased to 1274964 in 2016, a positive growth rate of 60.88%. It is very interesting to note that the growth rate of the tourist flow in the Ladakh region always fluctuated with ups and downs from 1990 to 2022, and the reason was because of militancy in Kashmir, lockdown, natural disasters, abrogation of Article 370 and COVID-19, and a severe blow to tourism in the region, which only received 279937 visitors in 2019 and 7869 visitors in 2020 compared to 2018, which was 327366 visitors.

However, comparing the tourist arrivals in 2019 and 2020 offers a disheartening picture. In January 2019, 3647 visitors to the region, but it increase in 2020 which is 4159 visitors. The same period in 2020 had a positive growth rate of 14.03%, and February saw 1597 tourists in 2019 and only 1206 in 2020, which is a negative growth rate. Similarly, in March 2019, tourist arrivals amounted to 1305, but only 686 in 2020. This was the month in which the Government of India (GoI) announced a total lockdown for the entire nation from March 22 onwards. This lockdown resulted in a zero inflow of tourists in the months of April 2020

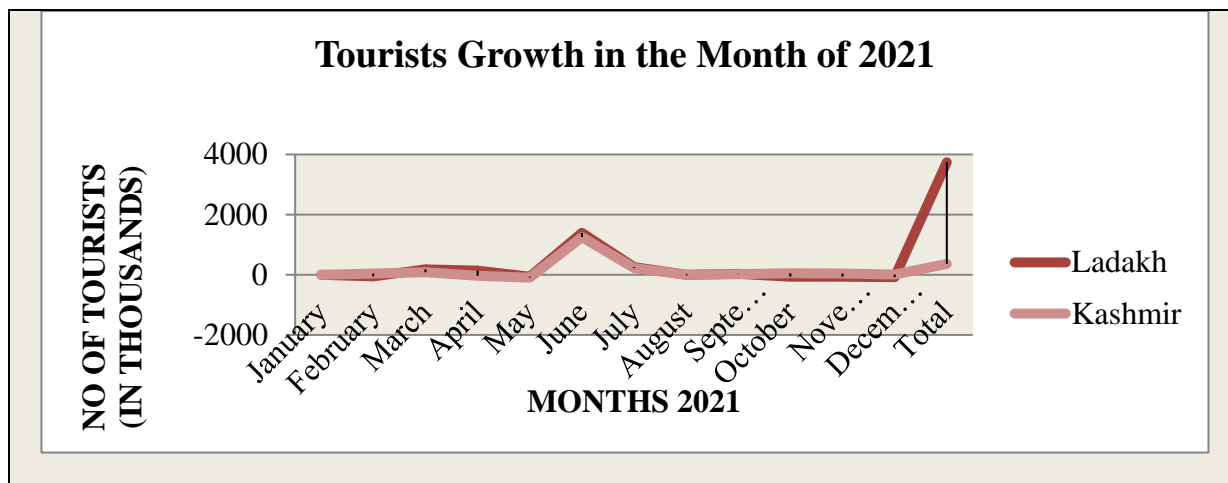
(Table2) above. After that, the arrivals of tourists increased in August and September, but at a very low growth rate.

It is concluded that the tourism sectors of both Kashmir and Ladakh have experienced notable fluctuations from 2015 to 2022, shaped by a complex interplay of factors including militancy, natural disasters, political changes such as the abrogation of Article 370, and the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Kashmir, tourist arrivals surged by 36.67% from 927,355 in 2015 to 1,267,474 in 2016, yet the region faced severe downturns in 2019 and 2020, dropping from 830,758 visitors in 2018 to 565,532 in 2019 and a mere 41,267 in 2020. The onset of COVID-19 exacerbated these challenges, leading to an 80.62% decline in tourist arrivals in early 2020 compared to the previous year's figures, with a complete halt in arrivals during the nationwide lockdown from March to June 2020. Ladakh, similarly, saw a growth rate of 60.88% from 146,501 tourists in 2015 to 1,274,964 in 2016, but faced a downturn from 327,366 visitors in 2018 to 279,937 in 2019 and a drastic decrease to 7,869 in 2020. Despite a brief uptick in early 2020, subsequent months saw minimal growth due to the pandemic's impact, with zero tourist inflows in April and marginal recovery thereafter. Both regions highlight the seasonal nature of tourism, particularly peaking from May to September, and underscore the urgent need for resilient tourism strategies to navigate and recover from these profound disruptions

Figure 3: Growth of inflow of tourist Pre-and Post- Covid-19 in Kashmir and Ladakh







The above figure 3 highlights the Growth of inflow of tourist Pre-and Post- Covid-19 in Kashmir and Ladakh regions. In this regions, tourism sectors experienced dramatic fluctuations from 2019 to 2021, heavily influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Ladakh, the total number of tourists in 2019 was 139,032. The impact of the pandemic was severe, with the number of tourists falling by 99.97% to just 41 tourists in 2020. This sharp decline was most apparent during key months like April, June, July, August, and September, which saw a near-complete halt in tourist activity. In 2021, Ladakh saw a significant recovery, with tourist numbers increasing to 91,527, a overwhelming growth rate of approximately 223,365% from the previous year, though still below pre-pandemic levels. Key months like April, May, June, July, August, and September showed gradual improvement, reflecting ongoing challenges but also a hard-wearing bounce back.

Similarly, Kashmir saw a steep decline in tourism, with 565,532 tourists recorded in 2019 dropping by 92.70% to 41,267 in 2020 due to the pandemic. The Months that were particularly hard-hit included April, May, June, July, August, and September, all recording significantly lower numbers compared to 2019. In 2021, Kashmir experienced a gradual recovery with tourist numbers increasing to 665,777, representing a growth rate of 1,514.93% from the previous year. Despite this recovery, the numbers in 2021 had not yet reached the levels seen in 2019, indicating continued challenges. Key months such as April, May, June, July, August, and September showed marked improvement, reflecting the region's efforts to revive its tourism industry amidst ongoing uncertainties.

These trends underscore the severe impact of COVID-19 on tourism in both Ladakh and Kashmir, highlighting the buoyancy and ongoing recovery efforts in these regions. The varying rates of recovery across different months and years point to the challenges and adaptability required in the face of global travel disruptions.

**Impact of Covid-19 on Tourism Activities in Both the Regions (Kashmir and Ladakh)**

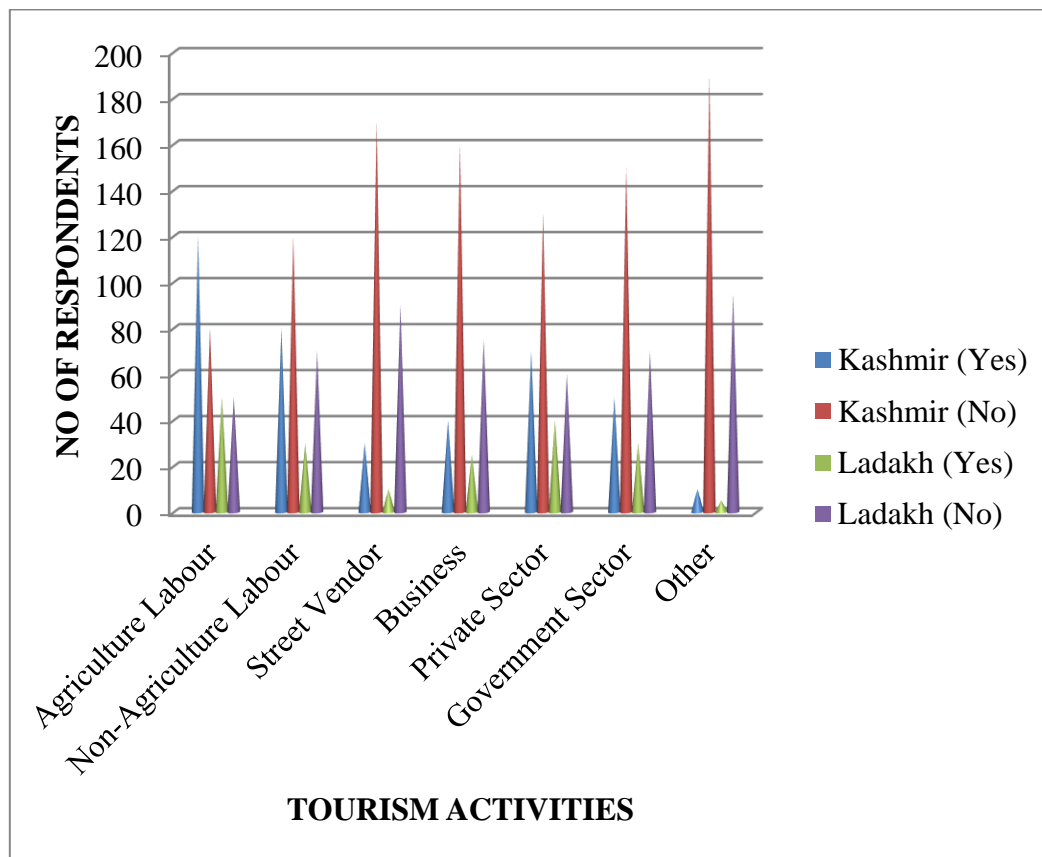
**Socioeconomic Profile of Respondents:**

**Occupational Distribution:** The respondents were categorized based on their occupation during the lockdown. The table below illustrates the distribution of respondents in Kashmir and Ladakh across different occupations.

Table 3: the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the various Tourism Activities

Occupation	Kashmir		Ladakh		X <sup>2</sup>	P
	Yes	No	Yes	No		
Agriculture Labour	120	80	50	50	2.71	0.09
Non-Agriculture Labour	80	120	30	70	2.87	0.090
Street Vendor	30	170	10	90	1.44	0.22
Business	40	160	25	75	0.98	0.32
Private Sector	70	130	40	60	0.71	0.39
Government Sector	50	150	30	70	0.85	0.35
Other	10	190	5	95	2.67	0.10

Source: Field Survey



The above table tells us, the respondents were categorized based on their occupation during the lockdown, and the distribution of respondents in Kashmir and Ladakh across different occupations was examined. The chi-squared ( $X^2$ ) test was applied to evaluate the significance of observed differences. The results are as follows:

**1. Agriculture Labour:**

- No statistically significant difference in the impact on the income of agriculture labor between Kashmir and Ladakh ( $X^2=2.71, p=0.09$ ).

**2. Non-Agriculture Labour:**

- No significant difference in the impact on the income of non-agriculture labour between Kashmir and Ladakh ( $X^2=2.87, p=0.09$ ).

**3. Street Vendor:**

- The income decline for street vendors is not significantly different between Ladakh and Kashmir ( $X^2=1.44, p=0.22$ ).

**4. Business Sector:**

- Similar impact on income in the business sector between Kashmir and Ladakh ( $X^2=0.98, p=0.32$ ).

**5. Private Sector:**

- No significant difference in the impact on income for private sector employees between Kashmir and Ladakh ( $X^2=0.71, p=0.39$ ).

**6. Government Sector:**

- No strong evidence supporting a substantial difference in the impact on income for government sector employees between Kashmir and Ladakh ( $X^2=0.85, p=0.35$ ).

**7. Other Occupations:**

- A trend suggests a potential decline in income for individuals in other occupations in Kashmir compared to Ladakh, but further investigation is needed ( $X^2=2.67, p=0.10$ ).

The study underscores the varied impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on different occupational groups within the tourism sector in Ladakh and Kashmir. While some trends are observed, the non-significant p-values highlight the complexity of the situation. Future research should delve into contextual factors, such as government interventions, regional policies, and the resilience of local economies.

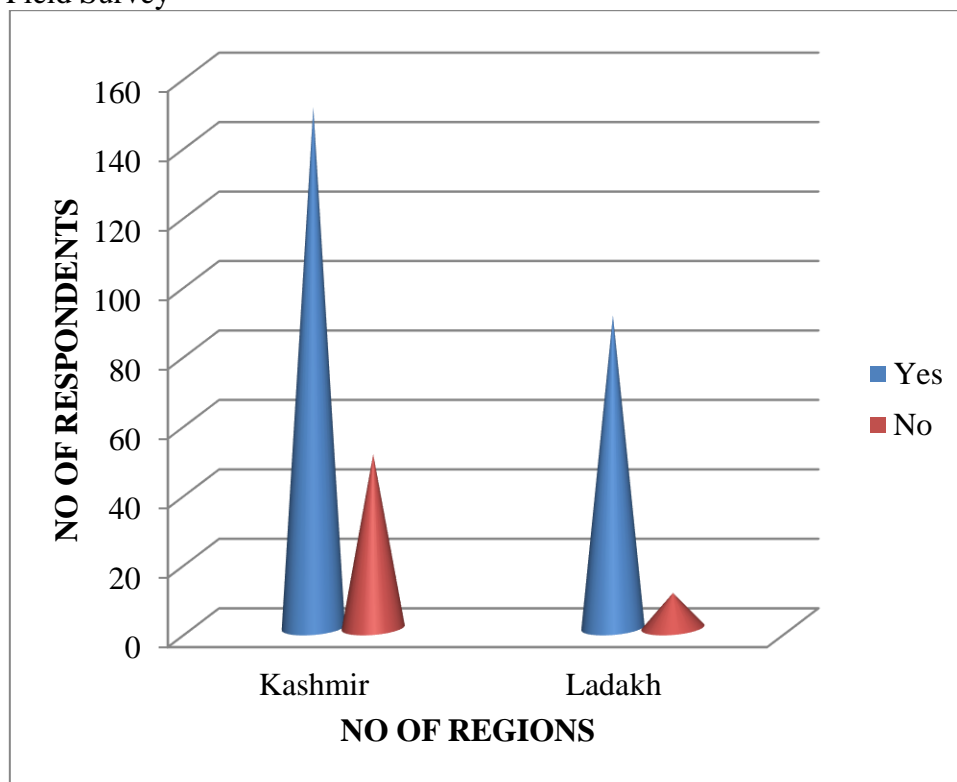
This analysis provides valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders in the tourism sector, offering a foundation for targeted interventions and adaptive strategies to revitalize the industry in the aftermath of the pandemic. Reference to the chi-squared test results ( $X^2$  and p-values) provides transparency and supports the credibility of the findings.

**Economic Impact:** Respondents were questioned about the effect of COVID-19 on their daily livelihood. The analysis explores how the pandemic has affected the economic well-being of individuals in both Kashmir and Ladakh.

Table 4: Effect of COVID-19 on Their Daily Livelihood

Impact on Livelihood	Kashmir	Ladakh
Yes	150	90
No	50	10
X <sup>2</sup>	9.375	
P	0.002199647	

Sources: Field Survey



The p-value of 0.002199647, which is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, indicates a significant association between COVID-19 and its economic impact on livelihood in both Kashmir and Ladakh.

This suggests that a higher proportion of respondents in both regions have experienced a noticeable economic impact on their daily livelihood due to the pandemic.

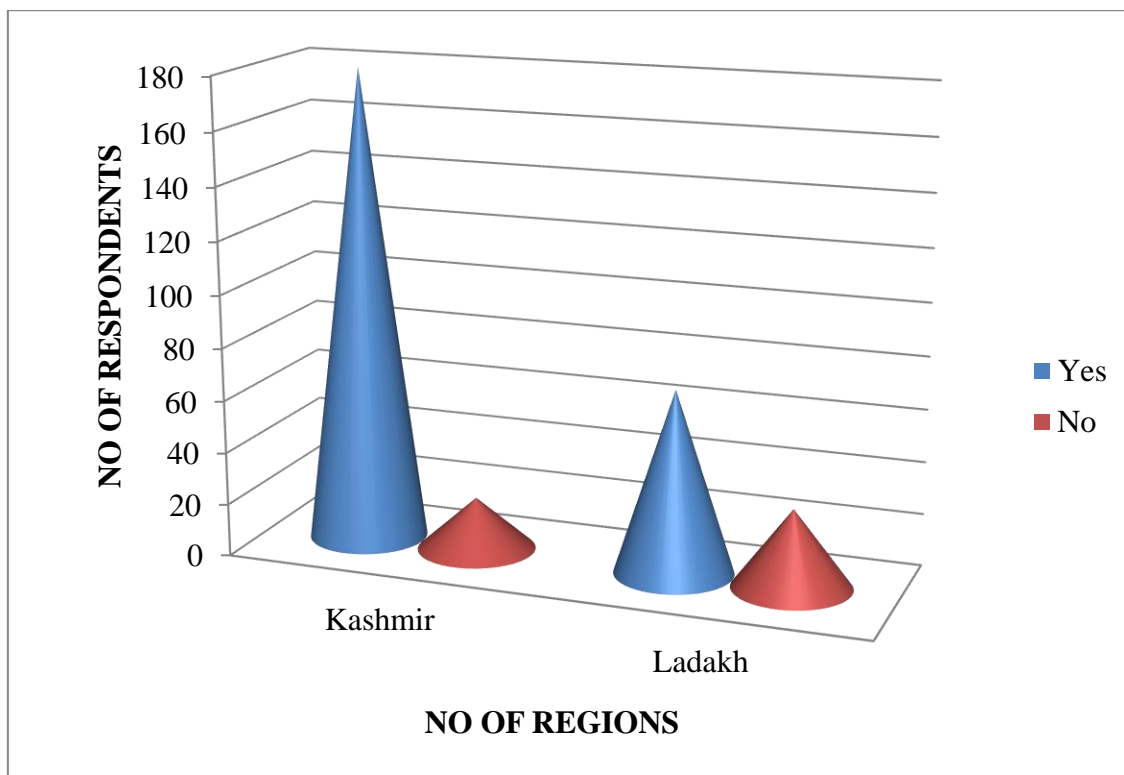
The findings underscore the substantial economic impact of COVID-19 on the livelihoods of individuals in both Kashmir and Ladakh. Policymakers should consider region-specific interventions to address the challenges posed by the pandemic, taking into account the nuances of each are

**Decline in Tourism Arrivals:** The study investigates the respondents' perception of the decline in tourism arrivals in Ladakh and Kashmir due to the pandemic.

Table 5: Perception of Respondents of decline Tourism Arrivals

Perception of Decline	Kashmir	Ladakh
Yes	180	70
No	20	30
$X^2$	19.2	
P	1.18	

Sources: Field Survey



The p-value of 1.18 exceeds the typical significance level of 0.05, indicating that there is no statistically significant association between respondents' perceptions of the decline in tourism arrivals and the regions of Ladakh and Kashmir.

The results suggest that the perception of a decline in tourism arrivals may not differ significantly between Ladakh and Kashmir.

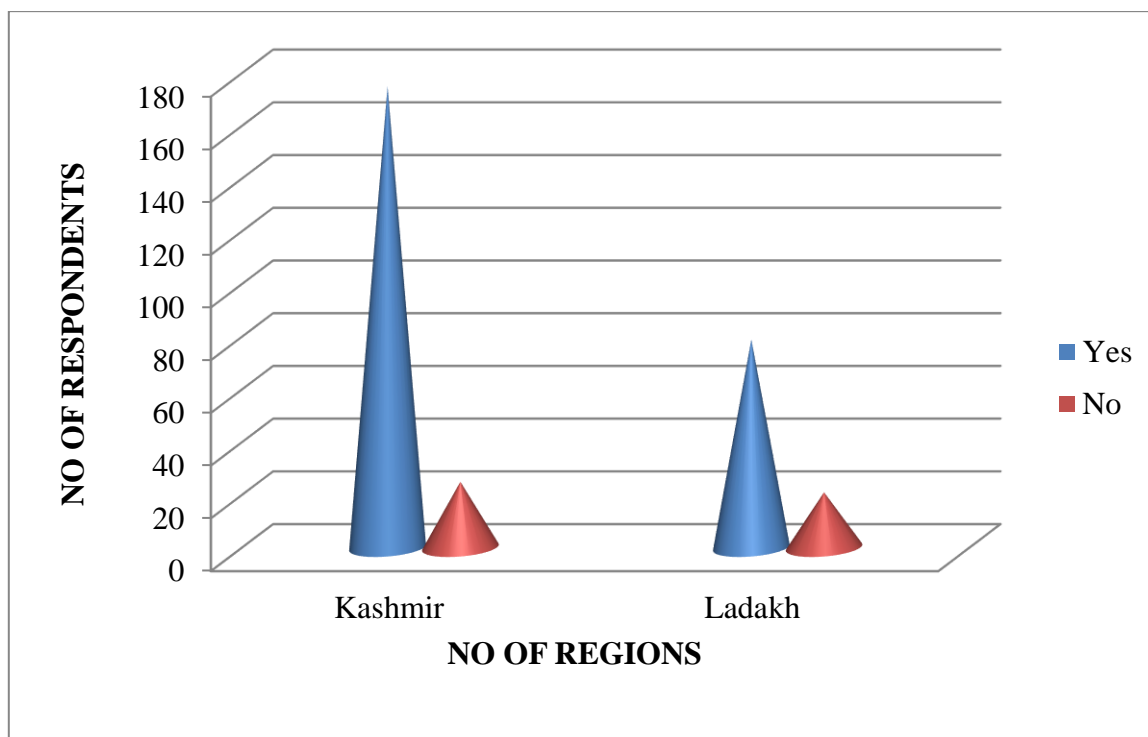
The chi-squared value of 19.2 indicates a moderate association, but the non-significant p-value suggests that this association may not be statistically meaningful.

**Impact on Job Profiles:** The analysis explores whether respondents experienced changes in their job profiles as a result of COVID-19.

Table 6: Effect of COVID-19 on Job Profiles

Job Profile Changes	Kashmir	Ladakh
Yes	175	79
No	25	21
Total	200	100
X <sup>2</sup>	3.71	
P	0.05	

Sources: Field Survey



The p-value of 0.05 is at the conventional significance level of 0.05.

This indicates a statistically significant association between respondents' experiences of changes in their job profiles and the regions of Ladakh and Kashmir.

The statistically significant association suggests that there are differences in the experiences of job profile changes between Ladakh and Kashmir.

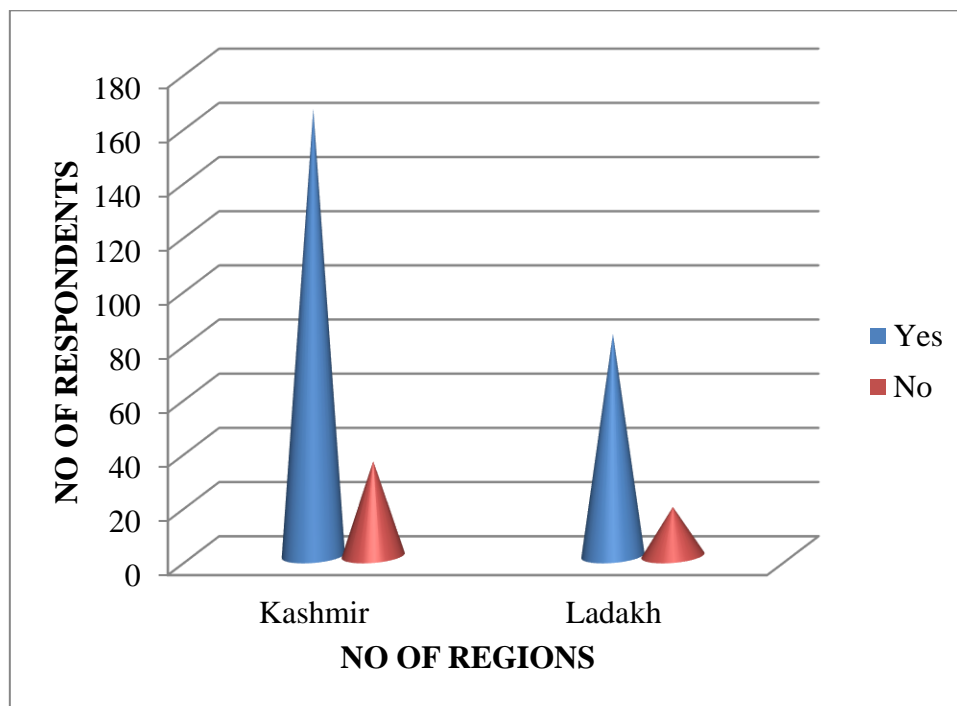
The analysis reveals a statistically significant association between respondents' experiences of job profile changes and the regions of Ladakh and Kashmir. This finding underscores the need for a more in-depth investigation into the nature of these changes and their implications for the workforce in each region.

**Reduction in Tourism Sector Growth:** The chapter investigates whether respondents believe that COVID-19 has led to a reduction in the growth of the tourism sector.

Table 7: Effect of COVID-19 on Reduction in Tourism Sector Growth

Reduction in Tourism Growth	Kashmir	Ladakh
Yes	165	82
No	35	18
Total	200	100
X <sup>2</sup>	0.01	
P	0.91	

Sources: Field Survey



The p-value of 0.91 is much higher than the conventional significance level of 0.05. This suggests that there is no statistically significant association between respondents' perception of a reduction in tourism sector growth and the regions of Ladakh and Kashmir. The analysis suggests that respondents' perceptions of a reduction in tourism sector growth do not show a statistically significant difference between Ladakh and Kashmir. However, it is essential to interpret these findings cautiously, considering the possibility of additional factors influencing respondents' perceptions.

### 5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, discuss about the Pre and post covid-19 impact on tourism industry in Kashmir Ladakh by using both primary and secondary data. In these regions, mostly people directly and indirectly, depends on tourism industry, and tourism created income, employment, infrastructure, development in this regions. Especially for this region tourism is backbone of state economy. In this paper, also discuss about the growth of tourists, in this region, before

and after covid-19 and also discuss about the impact of covid-19 on different type of tourism activities in this regions. The Ladakh and Kashmir regions are a popular tourist destination due to its successful development. Suddenly, the Covid-19 outbreak hit Ladakh and Kashmir regions just as tourist season was starting, dampening spirits. Travel and tourism have spread a novel corona virus that is highly infectious. This paper also discusses about the lockdown and has affected the tourism activities in these regions. The serious damaging effects of covid-19 are in 2020, resulting in reduced visitor numbers and travel restrictions, private employments, workers, etc in both the regions of Ladakh and Kashmir. Poorer people (tourist stakeholders) were also severely harmed; the findings show the covid-19 pandemic early effects on tourism and cost.

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