



TOURISM IN LADAKH: TRENDS AND COMPOSITION

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Abstract: The present study aims to provide a detail analysis of tourism trends and composition in Ladakh. This study comprises of two parts, first part deal with tourists' trend in Ladakh based on secondary data; the percentage change over previous year of foreign and domestic tourists since 1985 to 2019, major shift in tourism in Ladakh, month-wise percentage change in tourist arrivals, percentage arrival through three main routes and percentage tourist arrivals in Kargil district. The second part gives the detail accounts of tourism composition; accommodations and accessibilities.

Keywords: Tourism, Trends, Economy, Opportunities, Foreign Tourists, Domestic Tourists, Arrivals.

-----1.1 Introduction

The Government of India has acknowledged that tourism is one of the important means to develop a backward region, Ladakh being one of the isolated and backward having rich cultural heritage, thrown open for the foreign tourists in 1974. Since then there have been a numerous changes in the socio-cultural and economic setup, especially during the last two decades due to increased influx of domestic tourists in the region. However, tourists from across the world are attracted towards its unique culture and heritage, monasteries, scenic beauty, adventure activities like; river rafting, biking, trekking and many more. During the initial phase, foreign tourist arrivals were in domination with the European countries as a major source of tourism in Ladakh.

However, in the present scenario the area has seen major influx of domestic tourists, especially during the last two decades, which gave boost to the economy of the region. The economy of Ladakh during the mid-20th century, was based on agriculture and allied sectors and subsequently, with the opening up of government departments after independence, people of the

area started absorbing in these departments as well as in arm forces. Whereas in present scenario, tourism and related sectors emerged as major source of income and employment for the region; the local youths have engaged in hotel industry, travel agencies, as a tourist guides and other related sectors. Hence, every household has gained some direct or indirect benefits of tourism development in the region.

In the initial phase, foreign tourists were attracted to the preserved Ladakhi Buddhist culture, its religion, unexplored traditional life style, cultural heritage and adventure activities. Many of them took interest in Buddhist way of life and the way of presuming things, that is based on Lord Buddha's teaching, especially the love and compassion toward all living beings. However, Ladakh in this context seems to be one of the destinations where tourist can lead different life style than any other hill destinations. Furthermore, In September 1980, Zaskar, the most remote area of the region thrown opened for tourism and with the opening up of many more unexplored tourist areas including trekking routes like Zasker to Manali or Leh to Lamayuru have attracted more tourist especially the foreigners (Jina 1994).

2.1 Tourist Trends

Foreign and domestic tourist arrivals and percentage changed over previous year is depicted in table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Percentage Change of Foreign and Domestic tourist arrival from 1985-2019

Year	Foreign Tourist	Domestic Tourist	Total	%change in Foreign Tourist	% Change in Domestic Tourist	% Total Change
1985	12245	6666	18911	-	-	-
1986	12828	3683	16511	5%	-45%	-13%
1987	13668	4114	17782	7%	12%	8%
1988	16256	8608	24864	19%	109%	40%
1989	16079	6669	22748	-1%	-23%	-9%
1990	6342	395	6737	-61%	-94%	-70%
1991	8014	1041	9055	26%	164%	34%
1992	13580	2438	16018	69%	134%	77%
1993	12401	2000	14401	-9%	-18%	-10%
1994	14369	2080	16449	16%	4%	14%
1995	12391	5594	17985	-14%	169%	9%
1996	13036	3537	16573	5%	-37%	-8%
1997	12810	3991	16801	-2%	13%	1%
1998	15229	6767	21996	19%	70%	31%

1999	10234	2110	12344	-33%	-69%	-44%
2000	11828	6227	18055	16%	195%	46%
2001	15439	4260	19699	31%	-32%	9%
2002	5120	2959	8079	-67%	-31%	-59%
2003	15362	13031	28393	200%	340%	251%
2004	21608	13483	35091	41%	3%	24%
2005	24536	13444	37980	14%	0%	8%
2006	26114	17707	43821	6%	32%	15%
2007	28178	26168	54346	8%	48%	24%
2008	35311	39023	74334	25%	49%	37%
2009	30570	48517	79087	-13%	24%	6%
2010	22115	55685	77800	-28%	15%	-2%
2011	36662	142829	179491	66%	156%	131%
2012	38510	140460	178970	5%	-2%	0%
2013	31143	106559	137702	-19%	-24%	-23%
2014	59305	121996	181301	90%	14%	32%
2015	29614	116887	146501	-50%	-4%	-19%
2016	38005	197693	235698	28%	69%	61%
2017	46593	230662	277255	23%	17%	18%
2018	49477	277889	327366	6%	20%	18%
2019	38652	241285	279937	-22%	-13%	-14%

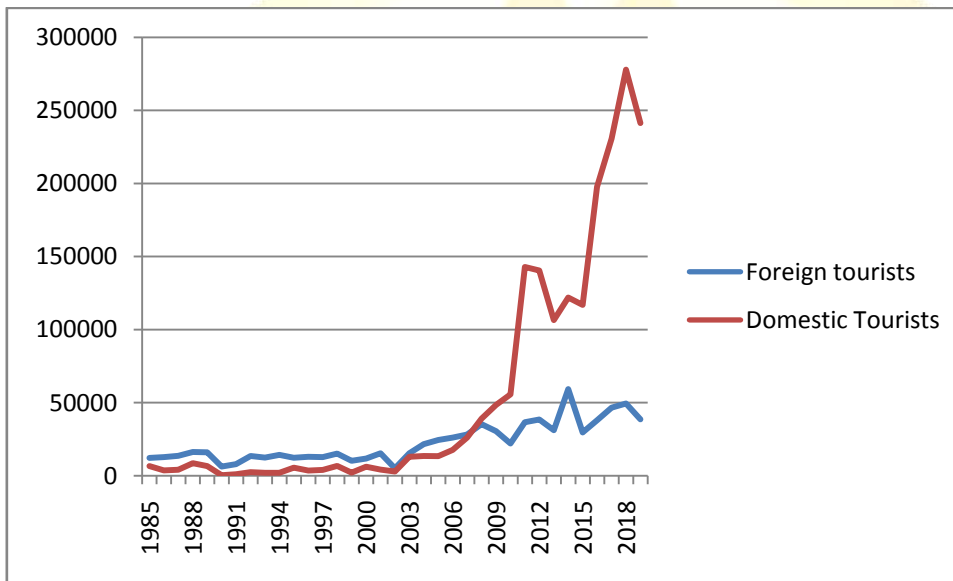
Source: Tourism Department Leh.

The total tourist arrivals include both foreign and domestic tourists who visited to any districts or its sub divisions. Tourism in Ladakh has increased manifold since 1974, the total number of tourists who visited in the first round was 527 out of which 500 was foreigners, which has increased to 18911 in 1985 out of which 12,245 was foreigners. Further, in the year 1995 it has increased to 17985 and in 2005 it further raised to 37980, still dominated by foreigner for the third consecutive decades. In the year 2008 for the first-time domestic tourists exceeded foreigners and since then the domination of domestic tourist persist which seems to be the near future trend.

The year 2011 was considered as a year of major shift as the Tourist arrivals in Ladakh first touched the six-figure mark, when 1, 79,491 tourists including 36,662 foreigners

visited the region. The zenith was achieved a year after sudden flash floods occurred in August 2010 which caused heavy damage to the town and nearby villages. Again In 2018, 3.27 lakh tourists, including 49.47 thousand foreigners have visited Ladakh, marking an increase of 18 percent for the two consecutive years and it crossed 3 lakh marks for the first time, which cited a new record. However, this year total tourist's inflow has decreased by 14 per cent as compared to last year. Figure below depicted the changing trends of domestic and foreign tourists since 1985:

Figur 2.1: Year Wise Foreign and Domestic Tourist Arrivals



Source: Department of tourism, Leh

The above figure revealed that the tourist arrivals from the year 1985 to 2001 which oscillates on an approximately average of seventeen thousand annually, with a maximum of 24,868 tourist inflow during the year 1988 and minimum of 6,737 tourists in the year 1990. As in the year 1988 HH the Dalai Lama conferred a Kalachakra initiation in Leh Ladakh and 1990, 70% fall in arrival was due to the political agitation in Ladakh for UT status for the region.

From 2003 onward, there was a constant upward trend in total tourist arrivals up to the year 2011, with domestic tourists as a driving force and in 2008, domestic arrivals exceeded foreign tourist arrivals for the first time in Ladakh. The year 2011 shows a strong result of 131% increases in total arrivals, the second-best year since 1985, the first major shift was in 2003. The details of major shift in tourism sector in Ladakh with reason are given in table 2.2;

Table 2.2: Major Shift in Tourism Sector in Ladakh

Years	Change in Arrival (in thousands)	% Changes	Reasons
1989	22.74 to 6.73	-70%	Political agitation in Leh/militancy in Kashmir.
1999	21.99 to 12.34	-44%	India-Pakistan war or (Kargil war)
2002	19.69 to 8.07	-59%	India Parliament terrorist attack (Dec 2001) and US terrorist attack (Sep 2001)
2003	8.07 to 28.39	+251%	Negative inflow in 2002
2010	79.08 to 77.80	2% (28% fall in foreign tourists)	Western economic slowdown/flash flood in Ladakh (Aug 2010)
2011	77.80 to 179.49	+131%	Negative inflow in 2010 and publicity of area through movie '3 idiots' in 2009.
2013	79.08 to 77.80	-23%	News spread about Chinese incursion
2015	181.30 to 146.50	-19%	Cloudburst in July/Sept Kashmir flood
2019	327.36 to 279.93	-14%	Curtil of low-cost flight/Kashmir shutdown/late opening of Leh-Manali road

Source: Tourism Department Leh

The above table depicts the in between shocks in tourism sectors with main reasons for the given years. Tourism in Ladakh shows sensitivity toward the unstable situation caused by political, natural calamities or national and international reasons as mentioned in table 2.2.

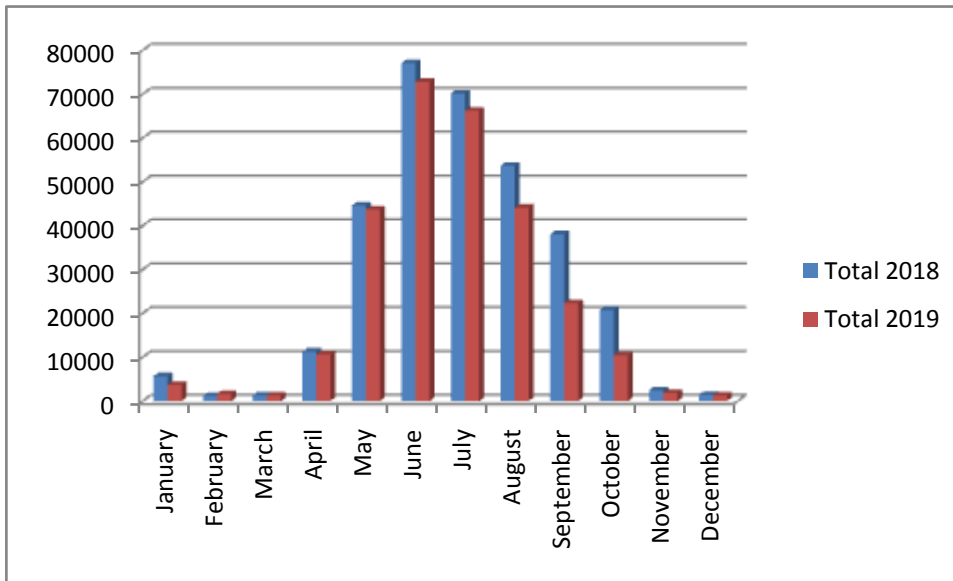
It has received additional boost, with the opening of Leh-Manali road and increased frequency of flights from Delhi.

The modern trends of tourism is predominated by domestic tourists mainly encouraged from scenic beauty of the area, boost by few popular Bollywood movies being shot in Ladakh, e.g. DilSe, LOCKargil, Lakshay, 3 Idiots, Jab Tak Hai Jaan etc. Since then Ladakh as a tourist destination became famous among the domestic tourists. Ladakh Marathon being organized since 2011, has also attracted adventure tourism in good number. With the introduction of more adventure activities like Chader trek and winter ice sport flow of winter tourists have increased over a year, supporting details with figures have shown as under in month- wise arrival record (table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Month-Wise Tourist Arrival Records of Foreign and Domestic Tourist

Year	Total Arrival in 2018	Total Arrival in 2019
January	5665	3647
February	1136	1597
March	1298	1305
April	11277	10623
May	44583	43672
June	77041	72795
July	70139	66237
August	53621	44107
September	38049	22339
October	20784	10461
November	2416	1871
December	1357	1283
Total	327366	279937

Source: Tourism Department Leh

Figure2.2: Month-wise Tourist Arrivals Record for the Year 2019

The above table also depicts the tourist arrivals, usually remain restricted between the month of April and October, due to which around five months of the year records a very low turnout to the tourist related business. With the reopening of Leh-Srinagar and Leh-Manali highway after a 6-7 month of blockages due to heavy snowfall on Zojila and Rotanglapasses, in the month of April or May, flow of tourist increased as usual shown in (table 2.3). Connectivity during winter being the main concern of tourists as well as locals. Keeping in view the harsh climate condition of Ladakh and in order to tackle the major hardships during winter to reach their destinations, the Central government had last year approved the construction of 14.2-km long tunnel project-Asia's longest bi-directional Zojila Pass tunnel at an estimated cost of ₹6,089 crore. It will provide all-weather connectivity between Kashmir to Leh which may further give a boost to the tourism sector in the region once completed (2,march 2019 Economic Times). According to the border road organization (BRO) official, the region will also be accessible in all-weather condition by a double –lane motor able road from Manali through Zanskar (27 Nov,2018Greater Kashmir). Besides, the Indian railways have also planned to connect Ladakh region through the world’s highest railways line to give all weather access which will again boost tourism in the region (18 oct,2018, India Today).

Furthermore, the Airport Authority of India has planned a new terminal building at Leh airport with 18,000sq m of built up area, the annual capacity of terminal will be 1.6 million per annum with a project costof Rs. 480 crores. (3 Sep,2019Hindustan Times). Although

the region has three main routes viz 1. Air route to leh, 2. Leh- Manali and 3. Leh- Kashmir highway. Below table mentioned the percentage tourist arrivals through these three main routes to reach Ladakh.

Table 2.4: Percentage Tourists Arrival by Three main Routes

Year	Percentage Tourist Arrival by Air	Percentage Arrival via Kashmir	Percentage Arrival via Manali
2013	42%	35%	23%
2014	40%	27%	33%
2016	67%	25%	8%
2017	55%	37%	9%
2018	63%	31%	6%
2019	61%	28%	11%

Source: Tourism Department Leh

Above table gives a brief idea of connectivity and tourist arrivals rate through the three main routes, as maximum tourist visits Ladakh by air route followed by Kashmir and Manali route. The main reasons being that by air is all weather accessible route to Ladakh and Kashmir highway reopens much earlier than the Manali route, therefore the arrival rate through Kashmir route shows little higher than the Manali route.

All those visitors who came by air were registered at Leh airport, those who visits via Manali are registered at Upshi police check post and visitors who came via Kashmir were registered at Minamarg, tourist registration centre or these entire tourists who came via Kashmir route are considered as total arrival to the Kargil district. The table below shows percentage share of visitor in Kargil district.

Table 2.5: Percentage Tourist Arrivals in Kargil District

Year	Arrival in Kargil District	Total Arrival	Percentage Arrival in Kargil
2008	17191	74334	23%
2009	20147	79087	25%
2010	28756	77800	37%
2011	57089	179491	32%

2012	60758	178970	34%
2013	48248	137702	35%
2014	49378	181301	27%
2015	62183	146501	42%
2016	63928	235698	27%
2017	101924	277255	37%
2018	100543	327366	31%
2019	77119	279937	28%

Source: Tourism Department Kargil

The above table depicts the percentage share of tourist arrivals in Kargil district, which shows comparatively less 25% in 2009, which has increased to 42% in 2015 but over a year its share falls and reach to 28% in 2019.

3. Tourism Compositions

3.2 Accessibilities

a) Air Services

In winter season, the only route accessible to Ladakh is the air services, Air India, Spices Jet, Go Air and Vistara operates daily flight services from Leh to Delhi and return. Besides, Air India operates twice in a week, direct air services to and from Leh-chandigarh and Leh-Srinagar and three days in a week to and from Leh to Jammu. The per day, number of flight of different air Service Company is depends on the season or demand for number of seats. There are two Airports in Leh district namely KushokBakulaRimpochee Airport at Leh and army Airport at ThoiseNubra(which is especially meant for army). Leh airport connects the area with Delhi, Chandigarh, Jammu and Srinagar. The airlines companies operate direct flights as well as indirect flight or connecting flights between the destinations, however connecting flight may involve more travel time, but they are usually cost lesser than direct flights.

b) Road Connectivity

Ladakh is connected through two main roads namely Leh-Srinagar national highway and Leh-Manali highways. These two roads remain open only during summer months and during the winter for around 6 months from November-December to April-May due to heavy snowfall on two main passes Zojila and Rotang Pass, the region remain cut off from rest of the country through road connectivity. Over and above, some of roads to the block

head quarter like Durbuk block, Nubra Block and Zaskar Block remains frequently closed in winter months due to the avalanches and snowfall on the passes ChanglaPass, Khardong-la andpenzi-la respectively.Khardong-la, popularly known as the highest motor able roads in the world which attracts many adventure tourist from across the globe .

The road transport is considered as the main mode of mobility of goods and services to ladakh from other regions. It plays crucial role in economic development of all section of the region. The Border Road Organization (Project Himank) is contributing a lot by constructing and maintaining the major highways and in connecting the border areas. Public Works Department has also constructed and maintained much road network within the region. However, Due to hard terrain; it is very difficult to provide road facilities in each area. Nevertheless, JKSRTC provides services from Srinagar to Leh (434Kms) which takes two days and HRTC provides services from Manali to Leh (474Kms) which takes about 20hours. Private taxies and tempo traveler services are also operating between Leh-Srinagar and Leh-Manali on daily basis.

3.3Accommodations

Accommodation is an importantand major segment of tourism industry without which tourism cannot develop. During 1980s, there were only 15 hotels out of these only one hotel was run by local, 10 hotels run by the management, while the remaining four were run by the private sector. With the increasing inflow of tourist in the region, state government also took interest and grants 50percent subsidies to the locals' entrepreneurs, for the construction of hotels in the initial phase and subsequently, 30 lakh subsidies to hotels and 2lakh subsidies for the construction of guesthouse. All these initiatives undertaken by central, state and local government gave enough boost to the sector and presently there are variety of accommodation in Ladakh such as 3 star, A+class, A class, B class,C class and D class hotels, beside upper class ,medium class ,economy class guesthouses, home stays and camp facilities .Following table shows the further details:

Table 2.6: Number of Hotels and Guesthouses in Leh District 2019

Categories	Numbers	Total Beds
3 stars	02	172
A+ class hotel	23	973
A class hotel	117	4080
B class hotel	70	1967

C class hotel	42	832
D class	20	406
total	274	8430
Upper class guest house	131	1684
Medium class guest house	106	1032
Economy class guest house	365	3569
Home stay	123	958
Total guest houses	725	7243

Source: Tourism Department, Leh

Figure 2.3: Number of Hotels in Leh District during 2019

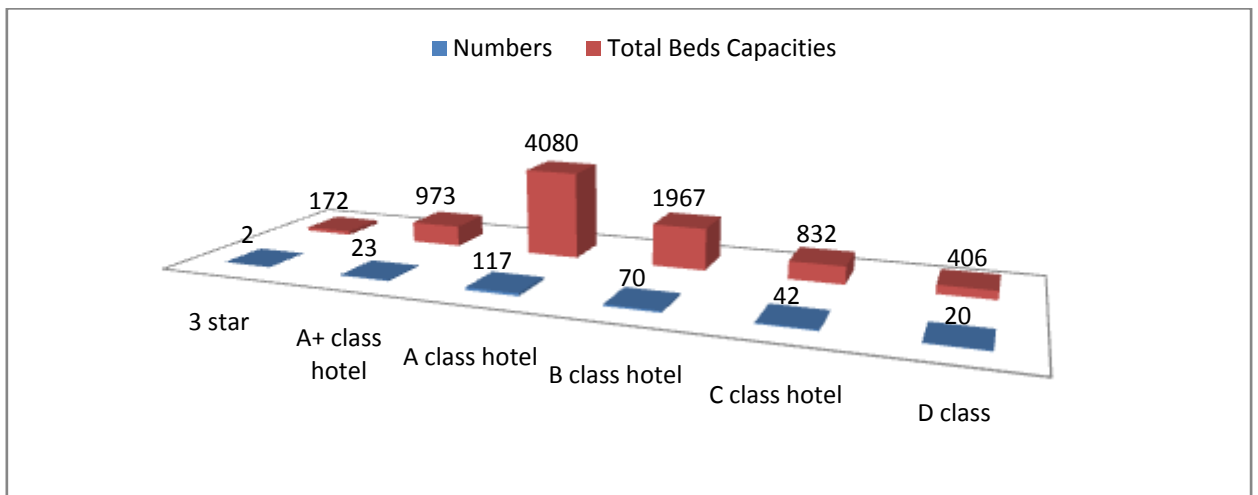
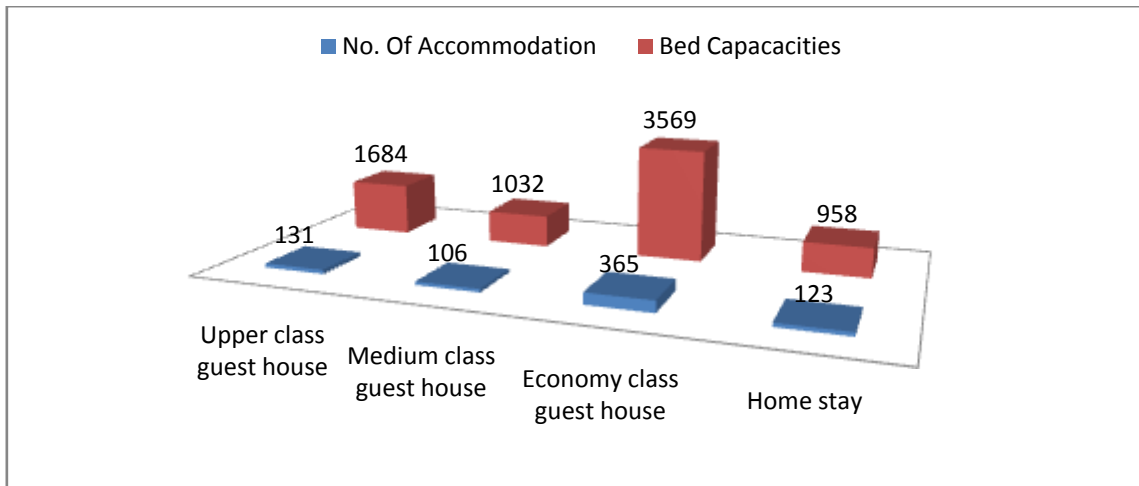


Figure 2.4: Number of Guesthouse and Bed Capacities in Leh District During 2019



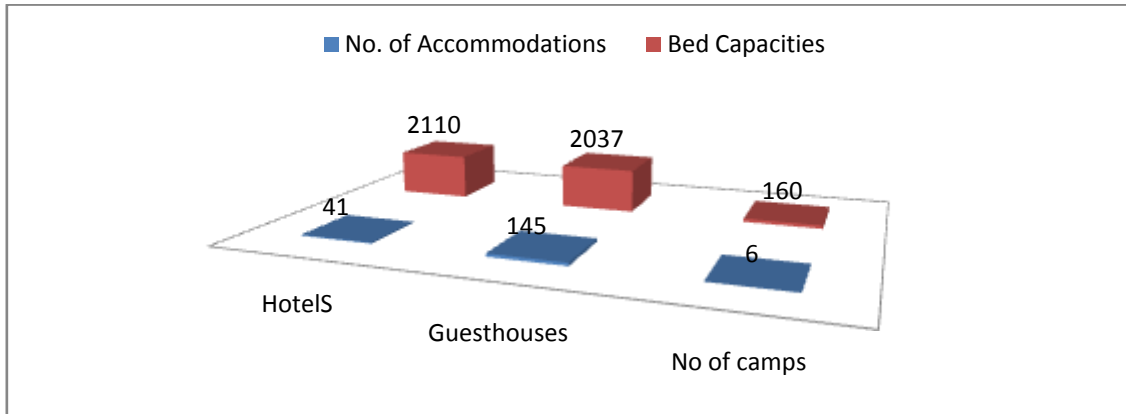
The above table and figures mentioned that the number of hotels, guesthouses and home stays during 2019 in Leh district. There are 274 numbers of hotels in total under various categories, followed by 725 guesthouses in different categories. With the increase in number of tourists' inflow into the region, tourist infrastructures such as hotels, guesthouses, home stays, travel agents and restaurants have also been increased many folds in both the districts. Below table mentioned the number of hotel and guesthouses in Kargil district.

Table 2.7 Number of Hotels and Guesthouses in Kargil District in 2019

Hotel and Guesthouses	In 2019	Bed Capacity
3- Star	Nil	2110
A Class	13	
B Class	8	
C class	9	
Economy class	11	
Total	41	
Guest houses	145	3720
Travel agents	103	
Restaurant	21	
No of camps	6	160
Total		3720

Source: Tourism Department, Kargil

Figure 2.5 Numbers of Hotels and Guesthouses with bed Capacities in Kargil District in 2019



The above numerically study shows that there are 41 numbers of hotels in Kargil district under different categories and 145 numbers of guesthouses, 103 travel agents, 21 restaurants and 6 camp facilities. The tourist infrastructure facilities in Kargil district is comparatively less than the Leh district as depicted in the above table. On the other hand, tourism arrival is also comparatively less. Altogether, the tourist arrival trends show, the increased size of tourist's inflow with the passage of time and the increased infrastructure reveals tourism contribution to the economy of the region.

Conclusion: In 1974 Ladakh was thrown open for the outer world and the percentage share of foreign tourist was 95% against 5% domestic tourist in 1974. However with the increased influx of tourists with the passage of time has totally changed the trend as in 2019 foreign tourist comprised of 14% and domestic tourist 86%. There has been a major shift in tourism inflow in Ladakh due to both internal and external factors like economic, political and natural factors. In month-wise tourist arrival analyses it is found that, the maximum tourist visited the area in the month of June for the fourth consecutive year. Out of total tourist inflow, 61% tourists visited the area by air route, followed by 28% via Kashmir route and 11% via Manali route in the year 2019. Tourist arrivals to Kargil district was 23% in 2008 which has increased to 28% of total tourist arrivals in Ladakh for the year 2019. Ladakh has numerous sources of attractions like Monasteries, Monuments, diverse culture, Festivals, Adventures, Beautiful landscape etc. District Leh has 274 numbers of hotels and 725 guesthouses with bed capacities of 8430 and 7243 respectively. Whereas Kargil district has 41 hotels and 145 guesthouses with bed capacities of 2110 and 3720 respectively.

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