

## Media Framing And Tourism Reporting In Jammu And Kashmir: A Content Analysis Of Newspaper Coverage

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### Abstract

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the reporting on tourism topics in the Greater Kashmir and Daily Excelsior newspapers over a five-month period, guided by media framing theory to understand how different aspects of tourism are highlighted or modulated in media reports and their impact on public perception. A total of 926 articles were analysed using content analysis, categorized into ten major topics awards, individual personality, event or activity promotion, economic development, tourism authorities, economic indicators, health and safety, government policy, law and order, and statistics. The findings reveal a significant focus on health and safety (55.61%) and law and order (31.53%), reflecting the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and security concerns in J&K, while event and activity promotion received minimal coverage (6.69%), indicating a missed opportunity for positive tourism marketing. The monthly distribution of stories showed that May had the highest number of articles (217), while June had the fewest (151). Addressing the research gap in understanding how newspapers in J&K report on tourism-related topics, this study highlights the predominance of negative frames which can deter potential tourists, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that includes more positive stories about tourism activities, cultural events, and government initiatives. The implications of this study are significant for tourism authorities, media outlets, and policymakers, as understanding the media's role in shaping public perception can help stakeholders develop strategies to enhance the region's tourism appeal and address imbalances in coverage. Recommendations include increasing the coverage of event and activity promotion, striving for balanced reporting, collaborating with tourism authorities, and providing training for journalists in tourism reporting. In conclusion, this study contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between media coverage and tourism development in politically and socially complex regions like Jammu and Kashmir.

**Keywords:** Tourism Reporting, Media Framing, Jammu and Kashmir, Content Analysis, Public Perception

### Introduction

Tourism is a cornerstone of economic development, particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). As one of the largest industries globally, tourism significantly contributes to employment and revenue (WTTC, 2022). However, the industry faced a severe setback due to the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing a loss of nearly US\$4.5 trillion and a 49.1% GDP drop compared to 2019, highlighting its vulnerability and the need for robust marketing and promotional strategies (WTTC, 2022).

In India, tourism is a critical economic pillar, ranked 7th in terms of GDP contribution in 2020 and the 3rd major contributor to foreign exchange (Invest India, n.d.). Jammu and Kashmir, now a Union Territory, has immense potential as a global tourist destination. Despite political instability and security concerns, tourism remains the second most significant source of income and employment in the region, with about 50% of families dependent on tourist inflow (Paul, 2018).

The region comprises three distinct areas: Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, each known for its unique attractions. Jammu is famed for its temples, while Kashmir is renowned for its lakes and gardens (Paul, 2018). Historically, Kashmir was a prime location for Bollywood films, but security issues have curtailed such activities. Promoting cultural and sporting events, as well as industrial awards, can significantly boost tourism by generating public interest and providing social and economic benefits (IBEF, n.d.).

Marketing and promotion are critical to the growth of the travel and tourism industry (Holloway & Plant, 1992). However, negative aspects like crime and violence are often underreported due to perceived marketing disadvantages (Ryan, 1993). Health and safety issues are essential for building the public image of the industry, particularly in regions like J&K where security concerns are prevalent (Wilks & Pendergast, 1996).

Despite the importance of media in shaping public perception, there is a research gap in understanding how newspapers in J&K report on tourism-related topics. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing newspaper coverage of tourism in J&K, focusing on the themes and narratives presented in the reports. The study employs content analysis, following the coding scheme developed by Wilks and Pendergast (1996), to categorize stories into ten major topics, including event promotion, economic development, and health and safety. The theoretical framework for this study is based on media framing theory, which examines how media coverage shapes public perception by highlighting certain aspects of an issue while downplaying others.

### **Methodology**

This research adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing content analysis to examine the coverage of tourism-related topics in the Greater Kashmir and Daily Excelsior newspapers over a five-month period from April to August 2021. Content analysis is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena. The study focuses on front-page stories, as these are typically deemed the most significant and are likely to have the greatest impact on public perception.

### **Data Collection**

Copies of the newspapers were obtained from their official online e-paper services. A total of 926 articles were collected and analyzed. Each article was coded based on the coding scheme developed by Wilks and Pendergast (1996), which categorizes stories into ten major topics: awards, individual personality, event or activity promotion, economic development, tourism authorities, economic indicators, health and safety, government policy, law and order, and statistics.

### **Data Analysis**

The coding process involved reading each article and assigning it to one of the ten categories. The articles were then cross-checked twice to eliminate any replications and errors. The analysis focused on the frequency of each topic, the monthly distribution of articles, and the comparative analysis between the two newspapers.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in media framing theory, which posits that the way media presents and emphasizes certain aspects of a story can significantly influence public perception (Entman, 1993). By highlighting specific themes and narratives, newspapers can shape how readers understand and understand information about tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. The framing of topics such as health and safety, law and order, and event promotion can either enhance or detract from the region's appeal as a tourist destination.

### **Media Framing Theory**

Media framing theory examines the selection and salience of certain aspects of reality within media content. According to this theory, media frames are used to construct social reality by promoting particular interpretations and evaluations over others (Goffman, 1974). In the context of tourism, the way newspapers frame tourism-related topics can impact public perception and influence tourist behavior.

### **Research Gap**

Despite the critical role of media in shaping public perception and promoting tourism, there is a notable gap in research specifically focused on newspaper coverage of tourism topics in Jammu and Kashmir. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of marketing and promotion in tourism (Holloway & Plant, 1992), but there is limited understanding of how local newspapers in J&K report on tourism-related issues. Furthermore, while studies have explored the media's role in portraying health and safety issues (Wilks & Pendergast, 1996), there is a lack of research on how these narratives affect the tourism industry in politically sensitive regions like J&K.

This study addresses these gaps by providing a detailed analysis of tourism reporting in J&K's major newspapers. It offers insights into the dominant themes, the distribution of coverage over time, and the potential impact on public perception. By focusing on the specific context of J&K, this research contributes to a better understanding of the interplay between media coverage and tourism development in politically and socially complex regions.

### **Objectives**

1. To analyze the coverage of tourism topics in Greater Kashmir and Daily Excelsior newspapers over a five-month period.
2. To identify the dominant themes and topics reported in relation to tourism in Jammu and Kashmir.
3. To evaluate the impact of newspaper reporting on public perception of the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir.

**Results**

**Overview of Newspaper Coverage**

This section provides an analysis of tourism-related stories published in Greater Kashmir and Daily Excelsior, along with their search volumes in 2021 (Chauhan, 2019).

Table. 1 Newspaper stories analysed along with search volume/ by google

Newspaper	No of stories analysed	Average monthly search
Greater Kashmir	502	100k-1M
Daily excelsior	424	10k – 100k

A total of 372 newspapers are published in J&K, with 201 from Jammu and 171 from Kashmir (Chauhan, 2019). Daily Excelsior is the largest circulated newspaper in the UT with a circulation of nearly 3.75 lakh, and it also has a readership in neighbouring states. Greater Kashmir has the most readers in the Kashmir division (Chauhan, 2019). Greater Kashmir published more stories related to tourism (502) compared to Daily Excelsior (424).

Table 2; Topic areas of tourism stories analysed in total along with percentage

Topic area	No. of stories coded	% Of stories
Event or activity promotion	62	6.69
Economic development	18	1.94
Tourism authorities	5	0.005
Government policy	8	0.8
Economic indicators	17	1.83
Individual personality	5	0.53
Awards	0	0
Health and safety	515	55.61
Statistics	4	0.431
Law and order	292	31.53
Total	926	

Health and safety issues received the highest coverage (55.61%), mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Stories about health and safety, including pandemic-related risks and accidents, were published almost daily to inform the public about current risk situations in the UT.

Law and order was the second most reported theme (31.53%), reflecting ongoing security concerns. This included reports of crimes and encounters. Event and activity promotion, critical for tourism marketing, received only 6.69% coverage. This is significantly less than other studies, such as Wilks and Pendergast (1996), which found 48.6% coverage for event activity and promotion in Queensland newspapers. No award stories were published, which is concerning as awards play a crucial role in tourism promotion.



**Monthly Distribution of Stories**

Figure 1: Monthly Distribution of Tourism Topics (April to August 2021)

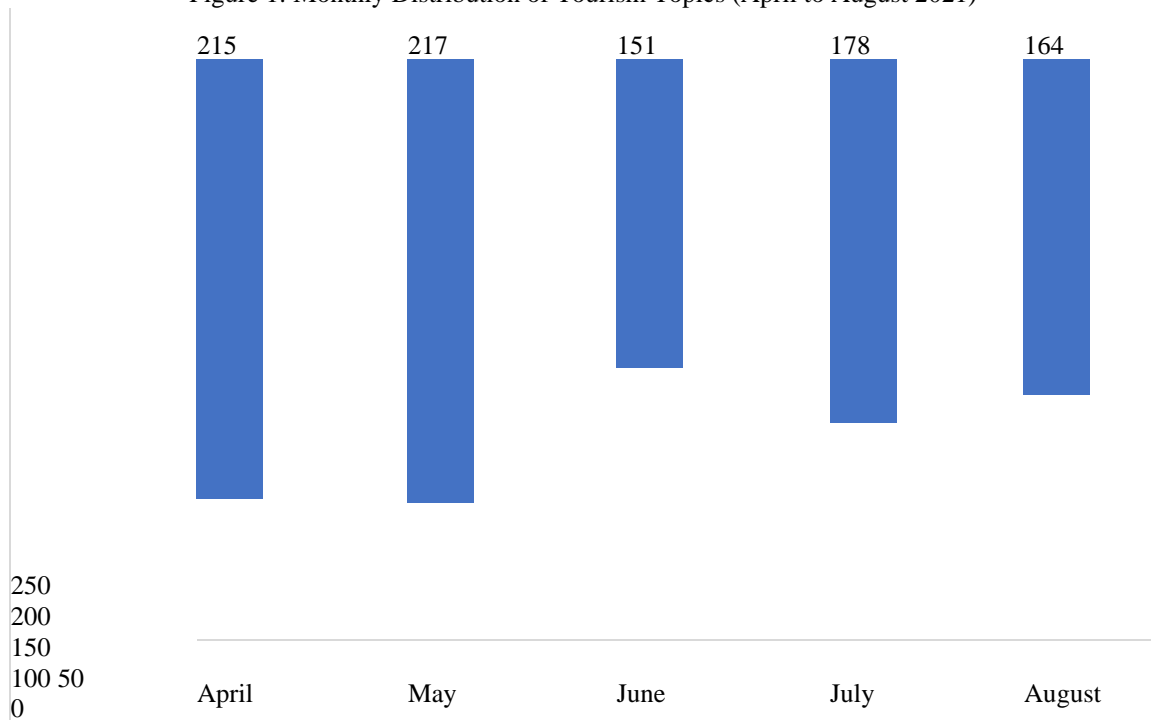


Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of stories over the five months from April to August 2021. The highest number of stories was published in May, with 217 articles, while the fewest stories were published in June, with only 151 out of the total 926 analysed.

Table 3: Monthly Reporting of Themes by Greater Kashmir and Daily Excelsior

Topics Area	April	May	June	July	August
Event or activity promotion	14	3	9	20	16
Economic Development	8	1	3	2	4
Tourism authorities	1	1	2	0	1
Government policy	8	0	0	0	0
Economic Indicators	9	1	1	1	5
Individual personality	1	0	0	3	1
Awards	0	0	0	0	0
Health and safety	137	180	86	62	50
Statistics	1	2	0	0	1
Law and order	36	27	50	91	88

Table 3 showcases the monthly distribution of reported themes. In May, health and safety topics dominated with 180 stories, followed by a decline in subsequent months with 80, 62, and 50 stories, respectively. Event and activity promotion

peaked in July with 20 stories but had the lowest coverage in May with just 3 stories. Economic development had the most coverage in April with 8 stories, dropping to only one in May. There were no stories about tourism authorities in July, with the highest coverage being two stories in June. Similarly, themes like law and order, government policy, statistics, and awards received limited coverage. Government policy was only reported in April, and statistics had no coverage in June and July, with the highest being two stories in May. Law and order saw an upward trend, starting from 36 stories in April to 91 in July and 88 in August.

Comparative Analysis Between Newspapers

Figure 2: Comparative Analysis of Tourism Topics by Greater Kashmir and Daily Excelsior

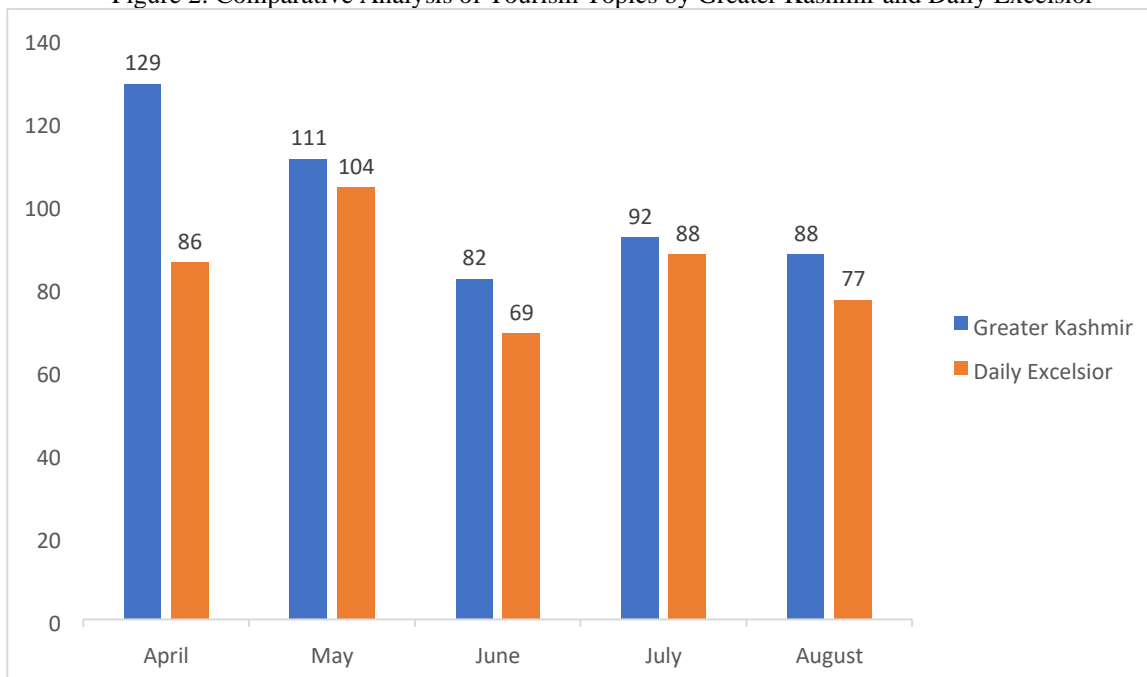


Figure 2 presents a comparative analysis of tourism-related topics covered by Greater Kashmir and Daily Excelsior. The data shows that Greater Kashmir consistently published more stories on travel and tourism than Daily Excelsior. The highest number of stories in Greater Kashmir was in April, with 129 articles. In contrast, Daily Excelsior's peak coverage was in May, with 104 stories. The month with the least coverage for Greater Kashmir was June, with 82 stories, while Daily Excelsior had the lowest coverage in June as well, with only 69 stories.

Table 4: Monthly Analysis of Stories in Greater Kashmir

Topic areas	April	May	June	July	August
Event or activity promotion	5	1	2	14	7
Economic Development	3	0	0	2	2
Tourism Authorities	1	0	0	0	1
Government policy	5	0	0	0	0
Economic indicators	2	0	0	0	4
Individual personality	1	0	0	2	0

	97	96	46	25	30
Awards Health and safety					
Statistics	1	2		1	
Law and order	14	12	34	48	44

Table 4 presents a month-wise analysis of stories published in Greater Kashmir, categorized by themes. The highest number of event or activity promotion stories was 14 in July, with only one story in May. Health and safety topics received extensive coverage in April and May, with 97 and 96 stories, respectively. Law and order were also frequently covered, especially in July and August, with 48 and 44 stories. However, this extensive coverage may negatively impact the tourism industry's image due to the focus on negative events. Law and order issues were a significant concern for Greater Kashmir. The newspaper also published four stories on statistics, one each in April and August, and two in May. Government policy was reported only in April, with five stories. There was one tourism industry story each in April and August. Economic development was covered with two stories each in July and August, and three stories in April, the highest for this theme. One story on an individual personality was published in April, and two in July.

### Discussion

This study sought to analyze the coverage of tourism topics in Greater Kashmir and Daily Excelsior newspapers over a five-month period, identify the dominant themes and topics reported, and evaluate the impact of newspaper reporting on public perception of the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir. By utilizing content analysis and framing theory, this research provides valuable insights into how media coverage can influence tourism dynamics in a politically sensitive region.

### Coverage Analysis

The findings reveal a significant emphasis on health and safety topics, which constituted 55.61% of the analyzed stories. This overwhelming focus can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, which dominated global headlines during the study period. The high frequency of health and safety stories underscores the media's role in informing the public about risks and safety measures, which is crucial during a health crisis. However, the predominance of such themes can also create a negative perception of the region as a tourism destination, potentially deterring visitors.

Law and order emerged as the second most reported theme, accounting for 31.53% of the stories. This coverage reflects ongoing security concerns in J&K, a region historically affected by political instability and violence. While it is essential for newspapers to report on such issues, the extensive focus on law and order could contribute to a negative image of the region, overshadowing its tourism potential.

Event and activity promotion, which is vital for attracting tourists, received only 6.69% coverage. This is significantly lower compared to other studies, such as Wilks and Pendergast (1996), which found that event activity and promotion constituted 48.6% of tourism coverage in Queensland newspapers. The lack of emphasis on promoting tourism events and activities in J&K suggests a missed opportunity for enhancing the region's tourism appeal.

### Monthly Distribution and Trends

The monthly distribution of stories showed that May had the highest number of articles (217), primarily driven by health and safety concerns. June had the lowest number of stories (151), indicating a potential lull in newsworthy events or a shift in editorial focus. The data also showed that event and activity promotion peaked in July with 20 stories, coinciding with the summer tourist season when various cultural and sporting events are typically held.

The comparative analysis between Greater Kashmir and Daily Excelsior highlighted that Greater Kashmir consistently published more tourism-related stories, with the highest number in April (129). In contrast, Daily Excelsior's peak coverage was in May (104). This difference could be due to the newspapers' editorial policies, target audiences, or resources allocated for tourism reporting.

### Impact on Public Perception

According to framing theory, the way media frames issues can significantly influence public perception (Entman, 1993). In this study, the predominant frames were health and safety, and law and order. By focusing heavily on these themes, newspapers may inadvertently perpetuate a perception of J&K as a high-risk destination. While it is crucial to report on

safety issues, balanced coverage that includes positive stories about tourism activities, cultural events, and government initiatives could help mitigate negative perceptions and promote the region as a desirable tourist destination.

The minimal coverage of government policy (0.86%) and economic development (1.94%) indicates that these areas are not prioritized in tourism reporting. This lack of focus could mean that important information about policy changes, infrastructure development, and investment opportunities is not reaching potential tourists and stakeholders, thereby impacting informed decision-making.

### Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of how tourism topics are reported in the Greater Kashmir and Daily Excelsior newspapers. By examining the coverage over a five-month period, the study sheds light on the dominant themes, their monthly distribution, and the potential impact on public perception. The analysis was guided by media framing theory, which helped to understand how different aspects of tourism are highlighted or downplayed in media reports.

The study successfully analyzed 926 articles from Greater Kashmir and Daily Excelsior, revealing a significant focus on health and safety (55.61%) and law and order (31.53%). This analysis highlights how newspapers prioritize these themes, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing security concerns in J&K. The findings align with the objective of understanding the extent and nature of tourism coverage in these newspapers. Through content analysis, the study identified the dominant themes reported in relation to tourism in J&K. Besides health and safety and law and order, the study found minimal coverage of event and activity promotion (6.69%), economic development (1.94%), and government policy (0.86%). These findings provide a clear picture of the thematic focus in tourism reporting, fulfilling the objective of identifying the main topics covered.

The application of media framing theory allowed the study to evaluate how the coverage of certain themes might influence public perception. The predominant focus on health and safety and law and order can create a negative image of J&K as a tourism destination, potentially deterring visitors. Conversely, the lack of emphasis on positive aspects like event promotion and economic development suggests missed opportunities for enhancing the region's tourism appeal. These insights fulfill the objective of evaluating the impact of newspaper reporting on public perception.

### Recommendations

To address the imbalances in coverage and enhance the promotion of tourism in J&K, several recommendations can be made

#### 1. Increase Coverage of Event and Activity Promotion

- Newspapers should allocate more space to stories that highlight tourism events, cultural activities, and attractions. This can help create a positive image and attract more visitors.

#### 2. Balanced Reporting

- While it is important to report on health and safety and law and order, newspapers should strive for a balanced approach that also showcases the positive aspects of J&K as a tourist destination.

#### 3. Collaborate with Tourism Authorities

- Media outlets should work closely with tourism authorities to ensure accurate and comprehensive reporting on government policies, economic developments, and promotional events.

#### 4. Training for Journalists

- Training programs can be conducted for journalists to enhance their skills in tourism reporting, focusing on framing stories that can positively influence public perception.

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