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Abstract

Pakistan's tourism sector has enormous potential. It has some of the world's highest mountains, lakes, and natural sceneries and is a popular destination for adventurers from inside and outside the country. Pakistan is a developing nation where tourism has recently been pushed to promote economic growth and improve the quality of life for its citizens. Pakistan is now seeing the fastest growth rates in tourist arrivals globally, and it is stated that tourism should be considered a vital part of Pakistan's growth strategy. Findings of the study reveal that lack of awareness among tourists about tourism in Pakistan is considered as a barrier. Secondly, the terrorist attacks are the root cause of diminishing tourism industry. Pakistan has the resources to promote tourism both in its own country and around the world. However, there are a number of problems, such as a language barrier, the threat of terrorism, and a lack of built infrastructure, that are preventing the expansion of the tourism industry within the country. In addition, Pakistan's natural beauty and historical landmarks have the potential to entice visitors from all over the world. Finally, the findings demonstrate that digital marketing can assist the nation in enhancing its online visibility and gaining favorable feedback from foreign tourists. At the national level, efforts must be made. The available resources can be utilised in a way that will encourage domestic tourism, but it will take years of planning.

Keywords: Tourism potential, Terrorism impact, Digital marketing

1. Introduction

Pakistan has four seasons and different types of land, such as mountains, rivers, and deserts. Furthermore, the country's cultural, historical, and religious landmarks, as well as a plethora of other attractions, demonstrate its potential as a tourist destination. The country has been mostly undiscovered despite its many tourist attractions. This is due to a number of systemic challenges, including security concerns, political unpredictability, inadequate facilities, and a general lack of publicity about Pakistan as a tourism destination. Nonetheless, the last few years have seen major shifts as the government has taken action to boost tourism from both domestic and foreign sources. Over the years, the idea of tourism changed, which led to the creation of many different kinds of tourism, such as cultural, religious, food, leisure, landscape, and many others (Kirilenko & Stepchenkova, 2018). In addition, Godovykh and Tasci (2020) defined tourism as a method of recreation that involves breaking from daily routine and visiting new places.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Effects of Tourism in the Country

Every economy has a tourism industry that has a lot of potential and whose contribution to the economy grows every year. It has been observed that emerging countries, in addition to developed ones, are taking the required efforts to encourage the growth and spread of tourism within the country. According to the findings of research that was carried out by Streimikiene, Svagzdiene, Jasinskas, and Simanavicius (2021), it is suggested that there are a number of obstacles that exist in each country that prevent the expansion of tourism. They also said that because the tourism industry depends on many other industries, countries that depend on tourism have seen growth in other industries as well. On the other hand, a number of academics have pointed out the detrimental effects that tourism can have on the lives of residents of the area (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Audi & Ali, 2023).

In addition, Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) mentioned that when people from various cultures often move into a country, it has an effect on the mindsets of the people who were born and raised in that country. Additionally, an increase in tourism leads to an increase in the development of infrastructure, which propels the country toward an increase in its rate of urbanization. Additionally, the expansion of both transportation and infrastructure development causes an increase in the number of problems that affect the environment. This demonstrates that although tourism is beneficial to the development and progress of the country, it also has a negative impact on the environment of that country (Iqbal, 2014; Ren, et al. 2019; Farhadi & Zaho, 2024).

2.2. The Role of Tourism in the Country

Tourism can be found in every region of the world; however, the resources and potential of each nation determine the kinds of tourism that can be developed within its borders (Streimikiene, et al., 2021). Academics and industry professionals have been motivated to investigate tourism from a variety of perspectives because of the significant impact it has on economies and societies. There are many countries across the globe whose economies are thriving as a direct result of tourism because it is the industry that contributes the most to their economy (Fletcher, 2011; Ullah & Ali, 2024). In addition, scholars have found that the growth of tourism in a country and the stability of tourism within that country not only contribute to the growth of tourism itself, but also contribute to the growth and expansion of a wide variety of other businesses (Hampton, Jeyacheya, & Long, 2018). The dependence of economies throughout the world on tourism for economic growth and expansion is a direct result of the correlation that exists between tourism and economic expansion (Hampton, et al., 2018).

The researchers looked at the tourist industry primarily through the lens of its contribution to GDP growth (Suhel & Bashir, 2018). Suhel and Bashir (2018) found that tourism is a broad sector. It indirectly helps other businesses produce and manage resources. The influx of immigrants and the increased need for places to stay, modes of transportation, food, clothing, and places of worship

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both contribute to the development of the infrastructure necessary to serve the growing population (Zeng et al., 2021; Roussel & Audi, 2024). Also, Santos and Khan (2018) found that tourism helps create jobs in the country. The researchers came to the conclusion that countries with fewer job opportunities tend to promote tourism within the country. Fahimi et al., (2018) did the research to find out what role tourism plays in the development of human capital. They found that tourism, along with the growth of different sectors and its contribution to the GDP has a big effect on the development of human capital. It helps by bringing in new industries, new skills, and new languages. It also helps by lowering cultural boundaries and increasing cultural exchange between people who come from a variety of backgrounds. This contributes to the expansion of the nation's human capital by enhancing its citizens' skills, abilities, and competencies (Suhel & Bashir, 2018; Fahimi, et al., 2018; Tawari, 2024). However, a recent paper published by Tervo-Kankare (2019) found that the tourism industry's operations shifted in response to expanding environmental changes and their impact on the country's ecosystem.

2.3. Tourism Potential in Pakistan

The tourist business is a cultural phenomenon that has been discovered to have a substantial impact on economies all around the world (Curry et al., 2016). It has been shown that different nations have varying degrees of influence on economic activity, and this can be attributed to the growth and potential of their respective economies. Nevertheless, not every country puts as much effort into developing its tourism industry as others do because of differences in how their governments organize their policies. One of these countries is Pakistan, which has both natural and cultural resources and a lot of potential to attract tourists (Khan, 2013). Pakistan has the resources to promote tourism both in its own country and around the world. However, there are a number of problems, such as a language barrier, the threat of terrorism, and a lack of built infrastructure, that are preventing the expansion of the tourism industry within the country. The lack of domestic tourism is leading to a waste of the numerous resources that the country possesses, which could make a significant contribution to the nation's overall GDP if more people visited the country (GDP).

According to Meo et al., (2018), the geographical location of Pakistan confers an advantage on the nation in terms of increasing the number of tourists who visit the country. In addition, Pakistan's natural beauty and historical landmarks have the potential to entice visitors from all over the world. On the other hand, they came to the conclusion that there are not enough actions being taken at all levels to market these locations and boost the amount of tourists within the country. Arshad, Iqbal, and Shahbaz (2018) stated in the context of tourism and revealed that while Pakistan enjoys the privilege of various tourism-attractive opportunities, on the other hand, terrorism has hindered the opportunity for the country. In other words, terrorism has made it more difficult for Pakistan to take advantage of the opportunity. They also noted that the country's increasing terrorist activity has a chilling effect on visitor numbers. According to Arshad et al. (2018), in Pakistan, there are natural resources, cultural treasures, and wonders spread across 80 percent of the country's geography. On the other hand, Haq (2009) stated that in Pakistan, differences that exist within the growth of health, education, social, and economic development are also one of the elements that are negatively affecting the growth of tourism inside the country. In terms of tourism, Pakistan is not yet a fully developed country; however, residents are actively participating in the construction of infrastructure at regional levels to assist tourist-related endeavours. The diversity of Pakistan's landscapes is one of the country's greatest assets. The tourism industry reported contributing USD 9170 billion in 2019, however that number dropped to USD 4671 billion in 2020 due to COVID-19 and changes in activities occurring all over the world (WTTC, 2021). Even though this drop means that travelling activities all over the world are coming to an end, Pakistan's primary issue is that tourists do not have enough information about the options that are accessible to visit the country. The problem is that the country needs to figure out what is stopping international tourism from growing (WTTC, 2021). Researchers in the past have brought attention to the detrimental effect that terrorism has had on the expansion of the tourism industry in Pakistan. Pakistan's social, economic, and environmental difficulties have worsened during the last two decades due to the country's never-ending war on terrorism (Michael, 2007). Also, Rehman, Ma, and Irfan et al. (2020) found that in the past, Pakistani administrations did not make tourism a priority, which led to a lack of tourist development within the country. This is the reason that Pakistani governments did not experience a similar level of privilege while having the potential and chance to witness economic growth. Lack of proper planning, according to Shahbaz et al., (2017), is a major problem for tourism marketing in Pakistan. For this very reason, business in the country is not fulfilling its potential.

2.4. Tourism and Role of Natural Reservoirs

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that the tourism sector has a major role in fostering overall economic development, increased output, and expanded employment opportunities. However, Kocak et al., (2020) stated that despite the tourist potential for any country, the influence of tourism on the environment could not be overlooked. This was stated despite the fact that tourism might potentially benefit the country. For instance, the usage of fossil fuels for purposes such as transportation and hoteling has a detrimental effect on the ecosystem of the nation. In this connection, Bano et al. (2021) emphasized that nations who are already confronting difficulties and problems related to economic stability cannot turn toward the ways in which they could confront challenges from the environmental viewpoints. Tsai, Lin, Hwang, and Huang (2014) emphasized that from the environmental perspective, the growth in environmental issues can have an influence on the health and well-being of the people. This was said from the standpoint of the environment. As a result, in order for the country to see an increase in tourism, it is necessary to locate safe, renewable, or less destructive sources of energy in order to keep up with the rising demand of the population. In such a scenario, Pakistan is in a favorable position because it possesses a vast variety of natural resources, any one of which the population may contemplate using in order to provide a source of energy that does not deplete the earth's supply (Khan & Arshad, 2014; Rehman & Ahmad, 2024). As a result of this, the rise and expansion of tourism in Pakistan would not result in the creation of any detrimental impacts on the environment of the country. There are many various kinds of natural resources in Pakistan, each one of which might be considered for the purpose of satisfying the rising demand for tourism within the country (Khan & Arshad, 2014).

2.5. Opportunities to Grow Tourism in Pakistan

The early stage of development of the tourism industry does not need for a significant financial commitment from the government. By preserving their natural and cultural heritage, countries are extending a warm welcome to tourists from their own country as well as from around the world. In the same way, Pakistan has a lot of opportunities where tourism can grow without the country having to spend a lot of money (Manzoor et al., 2019). According to the findings of one of the research projects carried out by Bano et al., (2021), tourism is seen as an indicator that has the potential to boost economic growth, promote the effective usage of energy, and solve environmental problems. Manzoor et al. (2019) also argued that the growing trend of sustainable tourism is also beneficial for Pakistan because by preserving the natural resources, the country can enjoy the privilege of international tourists and offer a life that is different from the traditional city life to the people. In other words, sustainable tourism is beneficial for Pakistan because it allows the country to enjoy the privilege of international tourists. Academics have been studying the expansion of tourism over the past few years using data collected from active projects. One study of this kind was carried out by Baig et al., (2020). They investigated the possibilities for tourism resulting from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and they came to the conclusion that the projects that are anticipated to be developed as a result of CPEC will assist in increasing the amount of tourists who visit the country. In a study quite similar to this one, Manzoor and Wei (2018) found that CPEC is expected to bring a large increase in tourism to Pakistan. They added that the anticipated infrastructure development within Pakistan will help in easing the access of tourists to various far-flung areas of Pakistan that are expected to attract tourists, such as Azad Jammu Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and numerous other projects that are currently in the works.

In addition, the expansion of commercial operations and interaction across international borders as a result of the construction of CPEC roads would contribute to the promotion of the development of hotels and other similar types of infrastructure in the regions. According to Rehman et al., (2020), tourism can bring significant economic growth to Pakistan. They disclosed that by inviting visitors from other countries to visit Pakistan, the country can also highlight its natural riches; as a result, investors who put their money into this sector stand a good chance of seeing a healthy return on their investments. One of these resources is the natural mineral that may be found in Pakistan, as well as ancient stones. In a manner comparable to this, Pakistan is home to a plethora of other riches that may be displayed to the rest of the globe. Additionally, increasing tourism in Pakistan has the potential to generate a considerable increase in the amount of economic activity there (Rehma et al., 2020). One of these resources is the natural minerals and old stones of Pakistan. In the same way, Pakistan has a lot of other resources that could be shown to the rest of the world. Promoting tourism in Pakistan could create a lot of economic activity (Rehma et al., 2020).

2.6. Challenges and Barriers to Growth Tourism in Pakistan

Pakistan has a large tourism potential, according to literature and facts. No matter how gorgeous the country, international tourists cannot visit without accommodations. Although Pakistan is rich in natural resources, Arshad et al. (2018) stated that the country lacks the infrastructure to handle the influx of visitors who are sure to come to see those resources. They also said that the lack of infrastructure makes things hard for the people who live there. Also, Baig et al. (2020) said that while CPEC is thought to help tourism grow, it is also thought to hurt small and medium-sized enterprises. They said that the agreements between the two governments will make it more expensive for local people to do things in the CPEC area, which will hurt Pakistan's small-scale industry. Since it has been demonstrated in previous research that tourism plays an important role in the expansion of small and medium-sized businesses, it is reasonable to anticipate that the CPEC will impede the expansion of tourism SMEs. One of the major future tourism potentials for Pakistan is projected to come from the country's coastline region. Askari, Tahir, and Shaheen (2020) found that the southern part of Pakistan has the potential to boost maritime tourism in the region. On the other hand, the difficulty is that the region of Balochistan is already seeing violence at the neighbourhood level. The government has implemented stringent new policies in an effort to improve the lives of the people living in the region. As a result of the political tensions, a large number of problems and occurrences have been documented in the region to this day. Because of this, the absence of peace and stability in certain regions of Pakistan is one of the most significant obstacles to the development and promotion of tourism within the country (Askari, et al. 2020). Also, another research article was published by Sayira et al., (2021), who discovered that in Pakistan, gender discrimination is one of the reasons that are preventing the expansion of the tourism industry. It has been shown that women confront a significant number of obstacles when they are directed toward the establishment of a business in order to promote and play their role in the expansion of tourism within the region. On the other hand, a different study that was conducted by Saad et al., (2020) found that the underdeveloped districts of Hunza will be helped by CPEC because it will create possibilities for the women in the region to play their role in the economic activities that are taking place. According to the findings of the study, there are few chances for women in the area, which prevents them from making a significant contribution. Nevertheless, this demonstrates that different regions of Pakistan are plagued by a unique set of challenges and obstacles. There is speculation that these obstacles also slow the expansion of tourism in the area. Tourism has been found to be a very promising industry for any country after much research and study. It has been noticed that nations whose economies are struggling or which are falling behind in the global competition are more likely to capitalize on tourism and want to become global icons in the tourism industry, like Dubai. It has been discovered that various nations make use of various resources within their potential to boost tourism within their nations. The current study was conducted to investigate tourism potential in Pakistan.

3. Research Methodology

The nature of the study was quantitative. Descriptive research design was used to complete the study. Online survey was conducted as a method of data collection and purposive sampling technique was utilized to approach the respondents. Questionnaire was used to collect the response about the awareness about tourism among tourists; challenging and opportunities; potential of tourism and factors affecting tourism in Pakistan. Demographic variables include; gender of the respondents, marital status and their education. The 577 respondents provided their response and completed online survey on tourism in Pakistan.

4. Results

Table 1: Describes the demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	321	55.5
Female	256	44.4
Total	577	100
Marital Status		
Married	352	61.0
Unmarried	225	39.0
Total	577	100
Education		
Educated	449	77.8
Uneducated	128	22.2
Total	577	100

Table 1 shows the demographic information the respondents that includes; gender, marital status and education. Response rate was reported higher by the male respondents as compared to female. Similarly, married people were found with greater tendency of providing the response on survey than unmarried. Consequently, educated community was investigated with greater level of providing the response on tourism in Pakistan as compared uneducated.

Table 2: What are your reasons for travelling to foreign countries?

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Tourism Purpose	241	41.8
Educational Purpose	192	33.3
Religious Purpose	80	13.9
Business Purpose	64	11.1

Table 2 shows the reason for traveling to foreign countries. In the light of this online survey the response of the community toward tourism in Pakistan is clear. People are interested to visit Pakistan for the purpose of tourism instead of educational, religious and business purpose. Results of the study reveal that people want to visit Pakistan for tourism.

Table 3: Which category of tourism does you like the most?

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Cultural Tourism	224	38.8
Sightseeing Tourism	241	41.8
Religious Tourism	80	13.9
Adventure Tourism	32	5.5

Table 3 describes the tendency of people toward the category of tourism. Findings of the study reveal that people are more interested to visit any country for the purpose of cultural tourism and secondly, they prefer sightseeing tourism as compared to other category such as religious and adventure tourism in Pakistan. In addition, results depict that cultural tourism is the most interested category of tourism among the tourist.

Table 4: Would you like to visit a country, which has diversified attractions such as cultural diversity, historical attractions and beautiful landscape, etc.?

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Yes	352	61.0
No	225	39.0

Table 4 describes the response of the tourists toward cultural diversity, historical attractions and beautiful landscape. Results of the study depict that beautiful landscape, cultural diversity; historical attractions are the convincing factors of tourism for the tourists. These diversified attractions are the rich source of appealing the tourist for any country for tourism. Table 5 describes the reasons for not considering Pakistan for tourism. The factors that cause hurdles in way of tourism are; negative image of Pakistan, lack of facilities to travel and terrorist attacks. Majority of the respondents are not aware about the visiting places in Pakistan. Secondly, lack of facilities to travel is the major cause of not considering Pakistan's opportunities of tourism. In addition, tourists are not willing to visit Pakistan for the purpose of tourism due to negative image of Pakistan in the world. Consequently, due to terror attacks in Pakistan is the leading factor of threatening the opportunities of tourism.

Table 5: If not, what is the reason for not considering Pakistan?

Variables	Frequency	Percent
You do not believe there is any attractive place to visit in Pakistan.	160	27.7
Due to negative image of Pakistan.	64	11.1

Due to lack of facilities to travel.	256	44.4
Due to terrorist attacks.	97	16.8

5. Discussion

Overall, tourist statistics revealed in the literature review demonstrated that the flow of tourism has increased throughout the recent few years. As a result, various types of tourism have evolved, and people are looking for different countries and sites to visit in order to satisfy their demand for unique tourism. The literature has examined adventurous, cultural, religious, and numerous other types of tourism. The information gathered from the respondents also revealed that they are thinking about various types or justifications for travelling. It indicated that respondents wish to travel for adventure, cultural values, and a variety of other things. It demonstrates that people are becoming more aware of various types of tourism. They are also eager to go to different nations for recreational purposes. This also indicates people's level of awareness of tourism.

The natural beauty of Pakistan, its cultural diversity, historical features, and several other aspects of the country have been highlighted in the literature. It has been discovered that certain national characteristics can influence how much tourism is generated domestically. Furthermore, the data gathered by the respondents suggested that the country can provide possibilities for travellers to visit the country by promoting its image through social media and marketing. Furthermore, respondents indicated a propensity to visit a country with attractions similar to those found in Pakistan. Furthermore, the country is building infrastructure and facilities to house the population. These are opportunities to enhance tourism within the country. The literature found that one of the most detrimental elements affecting Pakistan's tourist potential was the terrorist activity. Though the terror operations are virtually over, they have left a poor impression in the minds of the public. As a result of their lack of knowledge about the nation, the respondents also exhibit several other variables. In addition, Pakistan's government must promote tourism activities on a global scale in order to boost the number of visitors to the country.

6. Conclusion

According to the findings of the investigation, Pakistan has enormous tourism potential. The officials must make improvements in the way they promote the country in order to receive a favorable response from foreign tourists. The theoretical part of the study provided evidence regarding the potential of tourism within the country. Following the potential of tourism, it specifically states that different types of tourism provide opportunities within the country. Each nation is seen to have a unique form of tourism that alone generates income and boosts the national economy. Furthermore, economic data show that the tourism business makes a major contribution to the economies. The tourist business in Pakistan is experiencing substantial expansion in terms of income generation. The study has presented key findings from a review of many issues that are acting as roadblocks to the expansion of tourism in the country. In various circumstances, these factors have been noted in the literature. However, the recent study's findings have further supported the impact of several negative aspects on the country's tourism growth. It has been shown that utilizing technology and the most recent forms of connection and communication can have a positive impact on the country's tourism industry. However, efforts must be made at the national level by both the corporation and government officials to establish such infrastructure that can welcome foreign tourists within the country. Years of planning are necessary, but it is possible to use the available resources to boost tourism in the country.

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