

Tourism problems in Pakistan: An analysis of earlier investigations

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Abstract: Tourism being one of the fastest growing industries in the world is also facing many problems especially in the developing countries like Pakistan. Many of these problems really create hurdles to get the desired results that may be taken otherwise. If these problems associated with this industry are overcome, it will not only facilitate and satisfy the visitors but at the same time will contribute to the economy of the country and wellbeing of the local community. The current study is the part of author's PhD research and is aimed to highlight the tourism problems in Pakistan and to devise mechanism to overcome these problems. The results are not satisfactory and there is a dire need to work on priority basis to maximize the positive impacts of tourism.

Key words: *Tourism Industry; Sustainable tourism; Tourism problems; Tourism resources*

1. Introduction

Pakistan is the country bestowed with immense natural and cultural resources, which can be utilized for sustainable tourism. The country has the potential to attract the visitors across the globe. Unfortunately the tourism resources of the country have not been determined/ utilized and this industry has never been on the priorities of the previous governments in Pakistan. Besides, tourism in the country has not been planned properly and this industry is facing immense problems. These problems have greatly affected the international tourism in the country. Thus, tourism industry in the country is not playing its role as it should be.

To highlight tourism problems of the country and suggest remedial measures for its improvement, different studies have been conducted in the recent past (Fakhar, 2010; Israr et al., 2009; Karim et al., 2012; Khan, 2012; Khan, 2013; Rahman et al., 2011; Rahman et al., 2013; Shaikh and Syed, 2013; Shujahi and Hussain, 2016; Waseem et al., 2005). The current paper is an attempt to analyze the tourism problems and issues associated with the tourism industry of Pakistan.

2. Material and methods

For this study data was collected from secondary sources. A number of research studies from 2002-2017 were consulted. The problems/ issues highlighted and their solutions were analyzed. A general criticism of these studies has also been provided to fill the gaps in literature and limitations for future research.

3. Results and discussion

The results show (Table 1) that majority of the research studies i.e. 64% are of the opinion that the government policies and tourism management is the greatest problem of tourism industry of Pakistan and the previous governments have not paid proper attention to its development. The second problem of the tourism industry of Pakistan is the lack of infrastructure or tourists' facilities. Lack of basic facilities at the tourists' resorts lead to dissatisfaction of the tourists. Security issues are also big concern of the tourism industry of Pakistan. 54 % researches say that due to poor security and safety situations potential tourists are not visiting the country. Since 2000, security conditions in Pakistan became worst, which resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of tourists visiting Pakistan.

Human resources are one of the key players of any industry. Unfortunately tourism industry of Pakistan is lacking skillful and professional work force. Due to this, tourism in the country could not develop as it should be. About 22% of the research studies speak that tourism industry of Pakistan is also lacking proper promotion and advertisement and lack of proper tourism marketing is also a hindrance in the development of this industry.

Conservation of tourism resources (i.e. natural and cultural) is yet another problem that needs to be addressed. These tourism resources are deteriorating due to solid wastes/ garbage, pollution, unorganized tourist activities and lack of planning. If the situation prevails longer, these resources will soon be perished. About 18% of the studies talk about the sectarian violence and extremism in the country. This problem is severe in Northern Areas of Pakistan where in past different sectarian and

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violent events occurred resulting in the decline of tourism in that region. Currently the situation is far better and extremism has been controlled up to a great extent.

Inflation at tourist destinations is a global problem and same is with the destinations of Pakistan. Tourists visiting Pakistan especially domestic visitors complain about inflation and high prices at the destinations. There is no proper check and balance of prices at most of the tourist destinations of Pakistan and tourists are disappointed from inflation. This inflation also encourages the tourists to cut short their stays and they return back to their homes.

About 14% of the studies say that the poor economic condition of the country does not allow government to invest in the field of tourism and same is the reason that Pakistan is far behind in the field of tourism as compared with the economically sound countries.

The field of tourism is new in academia in Pakistan. The first degree awarding institute in the field of tourism was established in 2008 in the country and same is the reason that 14% of the studies say that lack of tourism education is a problem due to which tourism could not developed. Most of the degrees awarding institutes are established in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province whereas rest of the whole country is lacking in this regard. So there is dire need to establish such institutes in the whole country. In this way the problems of unawareness and professionals may also be solved.

Some of the studies highlighted that the role of national and international media in propagating the image of Pakistan is questionable and media is propagating negative image of Pakistan in and outside the country and this is a problem also for the development of tourism in the country. If the media acts responsibly the situation may be improved.

Some of the studies highlighted that there is no coordination among different departments dealing with tourism. Lack of coordination has raised many problems in tourism development. Very few of the studies have highlighted very sensitive and important aspect of carrying capacity. The hill stations of Pakistan during summer season are packed with tourists and during this season the natural resources are consumed in a horrible way. Meadows, rivers, springs, waterfalls, lakes and local community is disturbed a lot. Everywhere there is garbage and solid wastes are seen. Overcrowding cannot be controlled and same is the reason destinations are suffering from the carrying capacity problems. The need is to allow that number of tourists which a destination can accommodate without any harm.

The major recommendations/ solutions provided by these studies (Table 2) are to revisit government policies and fix the priorities, provision of basic infrastructure and facilities and tourism education. Security and conservation issues are also suggested by various scholars to overcome tourism problems.

Proper tourism marketing and promotion is crucial for tourism development in the country. Professionalism/ human resource development and awareness is also a potential solution recommended by several scholars. Some of the studies suggest management of cultural resources and external support in terms of funding and investment. Management of solid wastes, control of pollution, positive image portrayed by media and political stability in the country are also crucial and suggested by different researchers. Some of the studies suggested that sectarian violence should be controlled and there should be inter departmental coordination. Carrying capacity of the destinations, job satisfaction of the professionals working in different departments of tourism sector and inflation/ price control are some other suggestions provided in these researches for the sustainable tourism development in Pakistan.

4. Problems associated with tourism literature of Pakistan

The research in the field of tourism in Pakistan is a recent one. Some of the studies have a few problems regarding their contents. The major issues/ problems related with these studies are:

1. Some of the studies do not provide proper solutions of the issues raised in their research
2. Some studies do not correlate with the titles assigned to them and are lacking details
3. Some of the solutions provided in some studies are not practical or applicable regarding the nature of the area on which those studies are based
4. Some of the studies highlighted many issues and did not provide comprehensive solutions of all those highlighted issues and similarly some of the studies provided a lot of recommendations without highlighting proper issues
5. Majority of the studies are observing tourism as increase in international tourists' number and increase in economic growth and regard terrorism and security situations a factor for decline for these. Very few studies raised the importance of local community and the local tourism resources and their safety and involvement in tourism processes
6. In some papers it looks that authors are not fully familiar with their study areas and they either did not visit the area or visited superficially
7. In some papers there are unnecessary extra details, which is not required in the study. It only creates monotony and confusion for the readers to understand. So, unnecessary details should be avoided
8. There is a dearth of studies to understand the customers' needs and wants in the literature, so there is a need to understand the customers/ tourists' need and wants and then plan tourism accordingly.

The current authors appreciate the efforts of every researcher who has provided and is providing the base for future researches in the field of tourism in Pakistan. Author is aware of the issues/ problems regarding the data collection in the field of tourism (as also highlighted by the researchers) in the country and believes that on the bases of current studies, more important and comprehensive researches could be done by filling the gaps and overcoming the issues. With the passage of time when the field of research in tourism gets mature, these issues would be resolved with the research dedication of the scholars.

5. Conclusion

The analysis shows that work done in the field of tourism is mostly produced after CE 2000 and most of the scholars stress upon the problems/ issues of government policies, lack of infrastructure and tourists’ facilities, security issues, human resource development for tourism industry, tourism marketing, conservation and preservation of environment, extremism, inflation and high prices, solid waste management, economic crisis in the country, lack of tourism education, role of media, pollution, unawareness, lack of intradepartmental coordination and carrying capacity of the destinations etc. The scholars recommend that government should make a sustainable tourism

policy for tourism development in the country providing proper infrastructure, political stability in the country, creating awareness, professionalism in the industry, tourism education, conserving the resources, intradepartmental coordination and proper marketing etc.

Most of the problems highlighted in the studies, have not yet been resolved. Situation of security has been improved and a few destinations’ major infrastructure like main road etc. has been built. There is a need to address all these issues immediately and implement the policies with their actual spirit.

Similarly, the potential areas of research in the field of tourism in Pakistan have also been identified through this analysis of literature. There are number of potential areas which can be researched upon, like local community perception and involvement in tourism, tourists’ needs and wants, impacts of tourism, research in the field of hospitality, tourism policy and planning, cultural and natural resource management, potential, problems and prospects of tourism, human resource development in tourism and number of other areas directly or indirectly involved in tourism. In conclusion, comprehensive and consolidated efforts are needed from different stakeholders for the development of sustainable tourism in the country.

Table 1: Problems as highlighted in the literature

Scholarly works	Government Policies and Tourism Management	Infrastructure Facilities for Tourism	Security Issues	Professionalism/ HRD	Tourism Marketing	Pollution/Solid Waste Management	Preservation/ Conservation	Sectarian Influence/Extremism	Inflation	Political Instability	Economic Crisis	Tourism Education	Role of Media	Lack of Intradepartmental Coordination	Unawareness (Locals nonrention)	External Influence	Carrying/Destination Capacity	Job Satisfaction
National Institute of Pakistan Studies (2002)	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0				
Ahmed (2003)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Wasim et al. (2005)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Haq and Jackson (2007)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Baloch (2008)	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1				
Fakhar (2008)	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0				
Haq et al. (2008)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Israr et al. (2009)	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Ali (2010)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0				
Rahman et al. (2011)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0				
Saleem (2011)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Karim et al. (2012)	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0				
Khan (2012)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0				
Khan (2013)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0				
Rahman et al. (2013)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Shaikh and Syed (2013)	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0				
Abbas et al. (2015)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0				
Arif (2015)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Kabani (2015)	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Sadaf (2015)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Akmal et al. (2015)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Arshad (2015)	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0				
Sayira (2015)	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1				
Khan and Rasheed (2016)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Rasul et al. (2016)	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Shujahi and Hussain (2016)	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0				

Akbar et al. (2017)	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Nasim et al. (2017)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0				
Total responded	18	16	15	8	8	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	3	2				0
	64%	57%	54%	29%	29%	21%	21%	18%	18%	18%	14%	14%	11%	7%	%	%	%	%

Table 2: Suggestions/ recommendations as suggested in the literature

Scholarly Works	Government Policies and Tourism Management	Infrastructure/ Facilities for Tourism	Tourism Education	Security Issues	Preservation/ Conservation	Tourism Marketing	Awareness (Locals and Tourists) perception)	Professionalism/ HRD	Cultural Resource Management	External Support	Role of Media	Pollution/ Solid Waste Management	Political Stability	Intradepartmental Coordination	Influence/Extremism Sectarian	Carrying Capacity/ Destination Capacity	Inflation Control	Job Satisfaction
National Institute of Pakistan Studies (2002)	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0								
Ahmed (2003)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0								
Wasim et al. (2005)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0								
Haq and Jackson (2007)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0								
Khalil et al. (2007)	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0								
Baloch (2008)	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0								
Haq et al. (2008)	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0								
Fakhar (2008)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1								
Israr et al. (2009)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0								
Israr et al. (2009a)	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0								
Ali (2010)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0								
Rahman et al. (2011)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0								
Saleem (2011)	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0								
Karim et al. (2012)	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0								
Khan (2012)	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0								
Khan (2013)	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0								
Rahman et al. (2013)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0								
Shaikh and Syed (2013)	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0								
Abbas et al. (2015)	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0								
Ashar et al. (2015)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0								
Arif (2015)	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1								
Kabani (2015)	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0								
Kashif et al. (2015)	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0								
Akmal et al. (2015)	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0								
Arshad (2015)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0								
Sayira (2015)	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0								
Khan and Rasheed (2016)	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1								
Rasul et al. (2016)	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0								
Shujahi and Hussain (2016)	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0								
Akbar et al. (2017)	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0								
Nasim et al. (2017)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1								
Ali et al. (2017)	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0								
Total responded	25	19	13	12	12	10	9	9	6	5								
	78%	59%	41%	38%	38%	31%	28%	28%	19%	16%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

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