

# Promoting tourism in Pakistan:

## Opportunities and challenges

### Outline

#### 1) Introduction:

Pakistan has great opportunities to attract tourists through its skyhigh mountains, beaches and ancient sites. Yet, it faces many challenges like terrorism and lack of roads and communication networks.

#### 2) Understanding what tourism is

#### 3) Sites and areas showing opportunities of promoting tourism in Pakistan

a) Numerous religious sites

b) Sites of ancient civilizations

c) Beautiful landscapes

d) Heartwarming coastal areas

e) Diverse topographic locations

f) Diversity of cultures and art

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- g) Infamous food varieties
  - h) Richness of soulful music
- Vastness of
- 4) Hurdles that Pakistan faces in promoting tourism
    - a) Persisting security challenges
    - b) Lack of good quality roads and communication networks
    - c) Abundance of security checks and permit issues
    - d) Time consuming visa service
    - e) Scarcity of high standard hotels and resthouses.
    - f) Meagerness of basic facilities at tourist destinations
  - 5) Ways and means to reduce the hurdles and to promote tourism in Pakistan
    - a) Enhancing the security outlook of the country
    - b) Developing better quality



one of the significant lands to attract tourists. However, like many developing countries, Pakistan also faces some challenges that block its tourism potential. Challenges like security issues, scarcity of good quality communication networks and abundance of security checks top the list. Its slow visa service and lack of facilities also hinder its progress in tapping maximum benefits from its tourism potential. But for every question, there is a solution. Same is the case with Pakistan. By enhancing its security and developing good quality communication networks it can address its issues and head in the right direction. Accordingly, Pakistan has great opportunities to attract tourists through its sky high mountains, beaches and ancient sites. Yet, it faces many challenges like terrorism and lack of roads and communication networks.

Before diving into the discussion of sites and areas that portray Pakistan's tourism potential, it is important to understand what

tourism is. According to Oxford dictionary tourism is the **commercial organization and operation of holidays and visits to places of interest.**

So, tourism is a process through which people enjoy their holidays and visit different places of their liking. Tourism is a very significant source of income for a country. In fact, there are many countries who economically rely mainly on tourism. For instance, countries like **Maldives and Singapore** earn quite a lot from tourism. Hence, tourism is a way to enjoy through visiting places of interest.

Pakistan is a country that is rich in religious sites. Religious tourism is very common in the world. People go and visit the temples and ancient religious sites all over the world. Similarly, Pakistan can also use its religious sites to promote tourism. Pakistan has places of different religions including **Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Sikhism and Islam.** It has very prominent sites like **Kartarpur, Taxila and Faisal mosque.** By promoting these sites Pakistan can attract a significant religious tourism.

Therefore, it can be said that Pakistan has a great opportunity to promote religious tourism.

Furthermore, sites of ancient civilizations in Pakistan also demonstrate its tourism potential. People interested in archeology visit different places in the world. Pakistan also has very interesting areas and sites of ancient civilizations. The sites of **Moen-jo-Daro**, **Harekapa** and **Taxila** are sites of some of the world's oldest civilizations. These civilizations date even back to almost five thousand years. Ergo, Pakistan can use these sites to make itself a tourist destination for the people interested in ancient sites.

Similarly, the eye-catching landscapes of Pakistan also testify its tourism opportunities. Pakistan is blessed with diversity in its landscapes. Pakistan's landscape ranges from the **Himalayan** and **Hindu Kush mountains** - including world's second-highest peak **K-2**, intermountain valleys like **Swat** and **Kumrak valley** to the irrigated plains of Punjab and

Sindh province, Plateaus of Balochistan province and the sandy deserts of Thar and Thal are also its parts. All in all, Pakistan has a great potential to exploit its landscape to attract tourists.

By the same token, Pakistan's breathtaking coasts also provide opportunities to promote tourism in Pakistan. Beaches are something that almost every person in the world wants to visit. Pakistan has a **1046 km** long coastal belt. It has the beautiful **seaview in Karachi** and the **ecstatic scenery of Rawdar port**. Pakistan can make the most of these areas to promote tourism. Many countries like **Thailand and Singapore** attract tourists mainly because of their beaches. Therefore, Pakistan can also use the opportunities to promote tourism.

Not only that but the diversity of culture and art is something that can play its part in promoting tourism in Pakistan. The country of Pakistan contains many cultures, languages and arts. The heart-warming **Balochi culture,**

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the Topi, ajrak and Patko - Hat, shawl and Turban - of Sindh culture. Moreover, the evergreen cultures of Punjab and KPK also showcase the diversity of cultures in Pakistan. All these provinces have their languages and art of their own. These cultures and art can be exploited to enhance tourism in Pakistan. Hence, the diversity of culture and art is in itself a great opportunity to promote tourism in Pakistan.

In addition to that, the infamous food variety of Pakistan is an area of attracting tourism in Pakistan. Food lovers travel different countries to introduce their tastebuds to new and delicious foods around the world. Pakistani food is among the world's bests. The **Biryani** (rice) and **Nihari** of Karachi are world famous. Moreover, the spicy foods of Lahore and all over Pakistan are a treat to tastebuds. Pakistan's food industry in itself has a potential to attract a major chunk of tourists. Ergo, Pakistani food industry presents an opportunity to promote tourism in Pakistan.



Along with that, who can't forget the soulful music of Pakistan. Music is a universal language. One does not necessarily need to understand the lyrics, it finds its way directly into the heart. The varieties in Pakistani music include **Mutami Bhairvy, Sindhi Bhairvy, Qeer, Ghazal, Mahiya, Qawwali and Kafi** etc. The folk music in the remote areas of Pakistan is a treat to listen. The soulful land of Pakistan has produced evergreen singers like **Ustad Nusrat Fath Ali Khan, Ustad Muhammad Juman, Ustad Ghulam Ali, Madam Noor Jahan** and many more. Hence, the music of Pakistan also has the potential to attract tourists in Pakistan.

Previous paragraphs shed light upon the manifestation of opportunities to promote tourism in Pakistan. Next paragraphs spell out the hurdles in the way of Pakistan's tourism.

One of the most significant challenges that hinder tourism is the feeble situation of security in Pakistan. Pakistan's security

problems have remained a headache for the country since long. The terrorist attacks and other security breaches distort the image of Pakistan being a safe country. Tourists take into consideration, the global security image of a country before choosing their tourist destinations. The unfortunate incident of attack of on Sri Lankan cricket team in 2010 tarnished the image of Pakistan heavily. To sum it all up, the security challenges of Pakistan are major roadblocks in promoting tourism in Pakistan.

Moreover, scantiness of good quality roads and communication networks also hinder Pakistan's tourism. When someone travels towards a destination, it is not only the destination that is to be enjoyed rather it is the travelling in between the starting and ending points. But when the roads are in a bad condition, and there are no hotels of good quality by the roadside. How would one enjoy the trip? Same is the case with Pakistan. The roads and communication networks are in very bad condition. Resultantly, people do not enjoy travelling on

such roads and tourism gets hurt.

Additionally, recurring security checks and permits are also a hurdle in promoting tourism in Pakistan. The only reason behind tourism is to enjoy and the never-ending cycles of security checks and permits irritate the tourists. Nobody wants to be stopped again and again to show passports, luggage and other documents.

Moreover, many sites need special permits which create a sense of class system in tourism also. Hence, abundance of security checks and permit issues demotivate the tourists and the tourism declines as a result.

By the same token, time consuming visa delivery service is another headache for the tourists. It has been seen that the countries who attract tourists, have very easy and robust visa policies. One of the prime examples of quick visa service is Turkey, where visa is received within two hours of submitting the application. On the contrary, it takes 15-20 days in Pakistan. People have to wait ten to fifteen days for

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their visa. This points out that this increases the chances of tourists visiting other destinations instead of Pakistan owing to such lathargic visa delivery service. Ergo, snail-paced visa delivery also hinders tourism in Pakistan.

Similarly, scarcity of high standard hotels and resthouses is also a hindrance in promoting tourism in Pakistan. People love to travel along with their families. They want good quality resthouses and rest hotels. Unfortunately, hotels of high standards are very limited in Pakistan. And if there are any of these hotels, they are very expensive. This results in demotivation of travellers and tourists. All in all, the sub-standard quality of hotels and resthouses plays a vital role in demotivating the tourists.

Moreover, meagreness of basic facilities at the tourist destination act as roadblocks in tourism industry. People travel with limited luggage. They expect the basic facilities like medical stores, toilets and food areas would be there. But when they travel to the places of Pakistan

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They are disappointed by the fact that there are no any basic facilities available and even if they are available they are not in good condition. Hence, the tourists start refraining from such places. The sites of **Fort of Ranikot, moon-jo-daro and Gorakh hill stations** are <sup>some</sup> few of the testimonies of meagerness of basic facility areas. Therefore, Lack of basic facilities hinders the tourism potential of Pakistan.

Previous paragraphs shed light upon the challenges in promoting tourism in Pakistan. Next paragraphs spell out the ways and means to reduce the hurdles.

First and the most important area to look after is the security outlook of Pakistan. Pakistan's image has suffered a lot owing to terrorism and the fragile security situation. Pakistan should must get its house in order, if it wants to attract tourists: when a country is peaceful then people start travelling there. By getting rid of the terrorism and other security breaches, Pakistan can improve its security outlook. Once the security outlook of Pakistan

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improves, people will eventually start to place Pakistan on the top of their tourist destinations.

Furthermore, there is a dire need to improve the roads and communication networks of Pakistan. Travelling becomes fun when the roads are of good quality. The quality of roads plays a vital role in the overall experience of travelling. Pakistan must work on building better roads and enlarging the communication networks. The roads that lead to destinations like **Ranikot**, **Manchar Lake** and **Govakh Hill station** if improved, can attract many tourists and turn out to be very famous tourist destinations. Hence, improvement in roads and communication networks can work significantly in favor of promoting tourism in Pakistan.

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Moreover, Pakistani government should ensure provision of basic facilities at the tourism sites. The basic facilities include medical stores, hospitals, food areas, toilets and water etc. By ensuring those facilities for either free or at minimum expense, the government should facilitate the tourists and maximise their enjoyable experience. This way, the tourists can enjoy the beauty and serenity of Pakistan without any disturbance. Hence, providing basic facilities can be a way forward to enhancing tourism in Pakistan.

Last but not the least, Pakistan should improve its visa delivery system. The visa policy of Pakistan is so slow that it irritates the tourists. This is an area that needs to be improved. Pakistan should follow the footsteps of countries like Turkey, who provide visa with two hours of online application. By improving vis Pakistan can facilitate tourists. Ergo, providing visa through quick and easy policies can help in promoting tourism in Pakistan.

In conclusion, it can be said that Pakistan has great opportunities

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To promote tourism. Richness of soulful music and tasty food of Pakistan attract many tourists. Furthermore, diversity of culture and art, beautiful landscapes and beaches are another treat to watch. On the contrary, Pakistan faces some hurdles that affect the tourism negatively.

Time consuming visa service, lack of basic facilities and persisting security challenges being a few of them. However, with steps taken in the right direction, Pakistan can enhance its tourism opportunities.

By enhancing security, developing better roads and improving visa delivery service Pakistan can ~~be~~ become one of the top tourist destinations. Accordingly, this essay discussed about sites and areas pointing out the tourism potential of Pakistan. It shedded light upon the challenges in the way of promoting tourism in Pakistan.

Finally, it suggested some practical and pragmatic measures to enhance tourism in Pakistan.