

Promoting Tourism in Pakistan : Opportunities and Challenges

Outline

1. **Introduction** : Despite facing multiple challenges, promoting tourism in Pakistan is the need of the hour as it provides numerous opportunities. However, some recommendations can be suggested to minimize the challenges to promoting tourism in Pakistan.

2. **Promoting Tourism in Pakistan : An Overview**

3. **Opportunities in Promoting Tourism in Pakistan**

(3.1) Attracting foreign direct investment ;

Case in Point : Coke Naste Report

(3.2) Promotes soft image of Pakistan

(3.3) Massive revenue generation

Case in Point : Pakistan Tourism Development

Corporation Strategy 2020-25

(3.4) Employment opportunities

(3.5) Protecting environment and

preserving natural beauty

(3.6) Safeguarding historical and

cultural heritage

(2)

4. Challenges to Promoting Tourism in Pakistan

(4.1) Security concerns

(4.2) Neglected sectors

Case in point: lack of government interest and inter-provincial disharmony (PTDC - as an example)

(4.3) Under-developed infrastructure

Case in point: Economic concerns

(4.4) Overpopulation and urbanization

(4.5) Environmental pollution

(4.6) lack of marketing and promotion

Case in point: Social problems and concerns

5. Recommendation to minimize the challenges to Promoting Tourism in Pakistan

(5.1) Promoting peace by improving security

(5.2) Developing infrastructure by providing due care and fund

(5.3) Easing visa restrictions and facilitating tourists

(5.4) Enhancing marketing and promotion of tourism by implementing sustainable tourism practices

6. Conclusion

(3)

Different countries of the world tries different ways to develop in the world. In fact, they manifest several aspects for it. One of the innovative idea in this regard is promoting tourism.

Indeed, it can unleash the pathway to prosperity. In case of Pakistan, promoting tourism has been remained a neglected sector.

Alongwith facing multiple challenges, promoting tourism in Pakistan is sine qua non as it provides numerous opportunities. However, some way forwards can be suggested to overcome the hurdles to promoting tourism in Pakistan.

Tourism in Pakistan needs to be promoted at any cost as it provides abundant advantages, such as attracting foreign direct investment, promoting soft-image of Pakistan, generation of massive revenue, employment opportunities, and so on. Besides, there are some hurdles in its way also which include security concerns, lack of fund with government, poor-infrastructure, overpopulation, environmental pollution, and many more. However, these challenges are not something which cannot be eradicated. Rather, through certain measures it can be reduced, so, some

(4)

Remedies include improving security situation, developing infrastructure, and enhancing marketing for promoting tourism. Hence, promoting tourism is the need of hour and its hurdles can be mitigated through the mentioned measures.

Promoting tourism in Pakistan can make it into the list of developed countries of the world. It is like a Billion Dollar industry. And Pakistan can use this industry effectively. Unfortunately, tourism sector in Pakistan remain a neglected sector. Various governments come and make false promises of its promotion but ultimately failed. Despite that the country is blessed with natural beauty of mountains, beaches, deserts, snow-capped peaks, lakes, emerald (ornaments), historical and cultural heritage, yet it has not been explored properly. Besides, several kinds of tourism exist in Pakistan like Religious tourism (Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs) for various religion followers; adventure tourism which include trekking, mountaineering, skiing, water sports, beaches, and wild fire safaris. In a nutshell, Pakistan tourism industry is full of potential advantages, but

(5)

it requires a sincere efforts to properly use it.

The following six paragraphs will expose the opportunities in promoting tourism in Pakistan. The first one is that it attracts foreign direct investment. The foreign industries and investors sees an opportunity in investing Pakistan tourism industry. It can become a good and sustainable business hub for them. The investors can get huge income through this sector. One of United States America (USA) based traveller agency "Conde Nast" ranked Pakistan as top tourist travel destinations in the world. Some of the top tourist attractions include Hunza valley, Naran Valley, Swat valley, Lahore fort, Mohenjodaro, and lakes. These mentioned areas can attract foreign investment and tourists. Therefore, it is high time to promote tourism as it attracts foreign investment which helps in boosting economy.

The second opportunity in promoting tourism in Pakistan is that it promotes the soft image of Pakistan in the world. It shows the world

(6)

that how peaceful Pakistan is. It negates all the negativities regarding hard look of the country. Rather, it helps in promoting the positive side of country. Furthermore, it also helps in pursuing effective foreign policy in the world. This representation of soft image can be further promote through effective diplomacy and foreign policy. Pakistan peaceful perception can be promoted not only in the region but also in the world through this sector. Hence, good image and representation of Pakistan is an opportunity provided by tourism promotion.

The third benefits in promoting tourism in Pakistan is the generation of massive revenue. This sector has a major potential of creating revenue. It is like a multi-billion dollar industry. This involves hotelling associations, transportation department, employment generations, infrastructure development, and many more industries can benefit and develop with it. Pakistan Tourism and Development Corporation strategy 2020-2025 aims at generating revenue greater than Ten Billion Dollar annually. However, it is estimated that if explore ~~exp~~ properly,

(7)

it can generate greater than 100 Billion Dollar. Therefore, promoting tourism is a good opportunity for revenue generation.

The fourth advantage of promoting tourism is provision of employment opportunities. Large number of unemployed people can be employed through this sector. It has the capacity to provide employment to anyone whether local or non-local, educated or non-educated. Because this sector include many industries such as hotelling, transportation, restaurants, tourist facilitators and guides. That is why, people can be greatly benefited by promoting this department. According to PTDC report in 2020 that, "Pakistan received 750,000 international tourists in 2020, up 24 percent from 2019." This is only about international tourist, while millions of internal tourists of the country also needs facilitation. So, managing such a huge tourists number needs human resources. Thus, promoting tourism leads to the generation of employment.

The fifth factor and opportunity is protecting environment and preserving natural beauty. Environment can

(8)

be preserved by maintaining beauty of the natural environment. It can be more safe and secure, if it remain clean and preserved.

So, by supporting tourism, this aim can be achieved. Tourism should be promoted hand in hand with environmental protection.

Not only Pakistan but also the world is suffering from the menace of climate change. Hence, by supporting eco-friendly tourism, this threat can be minimized. That is why, Pakistan can maintain and preserve its natural beauty and eco-system by promoting tourism.

The sixth and last opportunity in promoting tourism is safeguarding historical and cultural heritage. The history and culture of a civilization and a country can be maintained by taking care of it, and tourism promotion is one of the way for it.

Pakistan is home to historical Indus valley civilization which was in Mohenjodaro; Remnants of Mughal empire in shape of Lahore Fort, Shahi-Qilla, the Shalimar Garden; Taxila archaeological sites; Buddhist remain Swat; and so on.

(9)

These historical and cultural heritage can be maintained by promoting tourism and awareness regarding these places. Hence, promoting tourism in Pakistan provides an opportunity for safeguarding historical and cultural heritage.

After explaining the opportunities provided by promoting Tourism in Pakistan, the upcoming six paragraphs will argue the challenges to promoting tourism in Pakistan. The first challenge is related security concerns. The country is faced with challenge of maintaining peace in the region. The security of the country is undermined by terrorism and extremism. The growth of militant organization is a threat to the peace and tourism of the country. If there is this persistent threat of insecurity in the citizen, then it is very difficult for the tourism to promote. In fact, insecurity can halt the growth of tourism in the country. Hence, concerns related to security is a major challenge to promoting tourism in the country.

Secondly, the challenge to

Promoting tourism in Pakistan is that it remained a neglected sector. This department has not been given the due care and attention. Several governments came and gone but this sector was not properly promoted. The government, in fact, allocate very less fund to this department, and also that fund is not properly utilized. There is a lack of proper planning regarding the development of this sector. The less focus and priority can also be seen in terms of inter-provincial disharmony. The different institutions other than Pakistan Tourism and Development Corporation even did not collaborate and cooperate with each other. And this is due to inter-provincial disharmony. As a result, promoting tourism in Pakistan is faced with a challenge remaining neglected sector.

Moreover, another challenge that is faced to promoting tourism in Pakistan is an under-developed infrastructure.

As a matter of fact, the country infrastructure is very poor and outdated. It has not been developed since long. The government lack interest in it because of lack of funds. And this is

(11)

all because of economic crisis in Pakistan.

There is a greater economic instability and concerns in the country. Pakistan is faced with socio-economic and political crisis. Consequently, promoting tourism faces a challenge of under-developed infrastructure.

Furthermore, overpopulation and urbanization is another challenge to promoting tourism in Pakistan. In fact, overpopulation leads to urbanization. Pakistan population is rapidly growing at a rate of 2.5% annually, according to Census 2023. And it is estimated that the country population is expected to reach 300 Million in 2050 from current 245 Million population. This is an alarming situation, as urban sprawls it is its manifestation. Likewise, environment also get degraded and polluted. Hence, all these issues poses a challenge to promoting tourism in Pakistan.

Similarly, environmental pollution is another challenge faced with promoting tourism in Pakistan. The environmental pollution is on rise in the country. It include noise pollution, water

(12)

pollution, soil pollution, and air pollution. Tourism decline where pollution exists. In fact, tourists dislike such country. According to a recent report which said that the air quality index is very low and bad of major cities of Pakistan such as Lahore, Karachi, and Peshawar. This air pollution also then diffuse into beautiful northern regions. affecting its beauty. Thus, environmental pollution is a major threat to promoting tourism in Pakistan. Last but not the least, challenge to promoting tourism in Pakistan is lack of marketing and promotion. The country lacks proper marketing mechanism and promotion. Most of the people are unaware of the fact of promoting tourism. It leads to limited interest among international traveler. Moreover, the country is faced social concerns and problems. The literacy rate is around 60% (percent). Furthermore, there is extremism and sectarianism. So, the public and government are not properly aligned on one page. In such situation, there is very less focus on promoting

(13)

tourism in the country. Consequently, promoting tourism faces a challenge of lack of marketing and promotion.

After exposing the challenges to promoting tourism in Pakistan, the upcoming four paragraphs will describe the way-forward to overcome these challenges.

The first recommendation is promoting peace by improving security. The situation of peace can be improved by tightening the security of a state. There should be a proper mechanism for providing safety to tourists. Stringent steps be taken to improve security. Terrorism, extremism, and sectarianism needs to be curbed from its roots. Anyone, who is involved in any terrorist activity, must be dealt with strict rules and regulations. Proper security network should be established and maintain. And if this happens, then there will be an upsurge in tourism sector. Thus, promoting peace and improving security can promote tourism in Pakistan.

Likewise, developing infrastructure by providing due care and fund is another suggestion to promote tourism in Pakistan. Infrastructure needs to be updated timely.

(14)

Government should be focus on developing roads, hospitals, transportation facilities, accomodations, hotel management, and other things related to tourist destinations.

According to UNWTO (United Nations World Trade Organization), "Pakistan is one of the top 10 fastest growing travel destinations." So, it needs proper care and development. Facilities like electricity, gas supply, fuel supply, and so on should be provided to tourists. That is how, by developing infrastructure and care to the sector can boost this field.

Similarly, easing visa restrictions and facilitating tourists can minimize the challenge to promoting tourism in Pakistan. There should be an easy and paper mechanism for tourist facilitation. Furthermore, tourist shall be guided and managed effectively. The procedures related to visa must be with ease. There must be favorable terms to international tourists. Likewise, facilities at tourist destination shall be maintained such as water supply, power supply, ^{and} basic info infrastructure. Thus, easing visa restrictions and facilitating tourists will pave the way for promoting

(15)

tourism in Pakistan.

Lastly, enhancing qualitative marketing for promoting tourism can minimize the challenge to tourism sector. There should be enhanced marketing and promotion of tourism both at national and international level. Awareness must be increased for Pakistan's tourism attractions. Furthermore, the private sector must be encourage for safe and sound investment. The environment related to tourism business must be smooth and conducive. For this purpose, media and civil society can raise their voices to aware the public. Hence, through enhance marketing and promoting sustainable tourism practices the challenges to promoting tourism in Pakistan can be tackled.

In conclusion, it can be said and accepted that despite facing multiple challenges, promoting tourism in Pakistan is necessary as it provides many advantages and opportunities. However, some recommendations needs to be implemented in order to reduce the challenges to promoting tourism in Pakistan. Promoting tourism in Pakistan is urgent and required, due to its

(16)

numerous opportunities like massive revenue generation, employment opportunities, preserving natural environmental beauty, protecting historical and cultural heritage. Along with these advantages, there are some hurdles in its way which are poor infrastructure, overpopulation, urbanization, pollution, lack of marketing and so on. However, these challenges can be eradicated through some measure like promoting peace, ^{and} improving security situation; developing infrastructure by providing due care and fund; easing visa restrictions and facilitating tourists; enhancing marketing and promotion of tourism by implementing sustainable tourism practices. By following these measures, the country can advance in this field. It will help Pakistan to develop by leaps and bounds. It just need the will of government and support of the public through cooperation. This sector can become a roadmap for Pakistan development. Because, if tourism is promoted, through then it will play a crucial role in bringing socio-economic and political stability in the country.