

Tourism in Pakistan

Challenges and Opportunities

1. Introduction

1.1. Hook

1.2. Background

1.3. Thesis statement

The tourism in Pakistan faces multiple challenges some are at state level while others at community level, some are related to services while others to promotional activities but it also encompasses few opportunities like enchanting tour sites, peaceful tourism, governments' positive initiatives, and hospitable locals.

2. Main Body

A. Challenges to Tourism in Pakistan

2.1. State level challenges

2.1.1. Depleted infrastructure

2.1.2. Terrorism

2.1.3. High Taxation

2.1.4. Political instability

2.2. Community level challenges

2.2.1. Threats from locals

2.2.2. Language barrier

2.2.3. Antisocial conflicts

2.2.4. High costs

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2.1.2. Historical landmarks

2.1.3. Cultural places

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2.2.3. Eco-friendly initiatives

2.2.4. Sustainable tourism practices

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Frans Lanling signifies the worth of tourism in a country in his words, "I'd much rather have 1000 tourists going up the Tambopata than 1000 gold miners." Tourism is important because it can create sustainable local economies. "Tourism provides employment to the poorest of the poor. Gram seller earns something, auto-rickshaw driver earns something, pakoda seller earns something, and tea seller also earns something." These words are not coming from too far but from the prime

minister of our neighbouring country India. Pakistan has a great deal of tourist potential but it has sadly remained elusive because of its diversity of cultures, civilization, and customs. Several security threats, digital propagandas, underdeveloped hospitality sector, and lack of friendly-services added fuel to fire in hindering growth of tourism in our country. Pakistan is home of several historical, religious, archeological, and adventurous attractions that might draw numerous visitors from all over the world. More than two million foreigners visited Pakistan before pandemic, mostly in northern regions. Pakistan is breathtakingly gorgeous nation but lack of promotional activities led to the negligence of world towards these sites. The tourism in Pakistan faces multiple challenges, some are at state level while some are at community level, some are related to sector of service while

some are related to promotion sector, but it also encompasses few opportunities like enchanting tour sites, peaceful tourism, government's positive initiatives, and hospitable locals. To get most from the opportunities Pakistan tourism has, there is dire need to curb these challenges hindering its development. So, let us look at some challenges Pakistan may undergo on its journey to being the world's most popular tourist destination with many opportunities.

A limited hotel business, security threats, high taxation, and political instability are some of most significant problems at state level. First, the depleted infrastructure includes lack of hotels, poor road accessibility, underdeveloped tourist routes, and a shortage of visitor services. Quality infrastructure is crucial for boosting tourism, including airports, access to roads, vehicles, trains, aircrafts, services, dining establishments, lodging options (

hotels, motels), and local tour operators. For instance, Pakistan ranks 101st out of 119 countries in 2024 Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) and major chunk of this poor progress is due to lack of advanced and sufficient infrastructure and terrorism.

Second, the terrorism has caused great suffering to the tourism industry of Pakistan. After 9/11 there was an immense shift in terrorism in Pakistan badly effected her reputation as an unsafe state.

The regular bomb explosions, targeted assassinations of foreigners, drone attacks, and carnage across the nation continued to be an obstacle to the progress and expansion of tourism and economy. Therefore, many visitors are apprehensive about visiting Pakistan due to country's existing law and order situation. Third, the high taxation and multiple taxation on tourism which lead to less opportunities

of foreigners. Tourism is so sensitive to taxes because taxes will significantly impact prices. Fourth, the political instability which is number one cause of image depletion of Pakistan at globe level. Routinely processions, aggressive protests, mob violences, government - public trust deficit, ineffective governance, and internal conflicts lead to bad ^{law} and order situation which ultimately shifts tourists mind set from visiting Pakistan. Hence, all these factors are related to government which must be handled at state level.

Additionally, there are certain challenges at community level like threats from locals to tourists, language barrier between locals and foreigners, internal conflicts of community, and exploitation of foreigners in terms of finance. First, the extremist behavior of locals toward foreigners. For example, the behavior of

people at specific places is unpredictable like Murnee, where there have been numerous instances of tourists being beaten by locals on social media. What impression it gives to the rest of the world? This discourages the visitors from visiting Pakistan. Second, the language barrier, the travellers struggle to understand local traffic laws, signage, and public transportation schedules. They face great difficulty in talking with locals, as there is already a lack of personalized guides of tour, they can not get much from locals as well regarding many routine and significant things. This also leads to a lack of cultural understanding. They may not fully appreciate the culture and traditions of the destination as they cannot communicate well with the local community. The locals in northern areas and other visited sites are also not much qualified.

Third, internal riots in community include tribal conflicts, sectoral issues, so-called freedom fighters and a lot more disputes which impacts badly on the tourism in Pakistan. These disputes yield to damaged community reputation. For example, there are many areas in Pakistan near rural Sindh, Balochistan, and South Punjab notorious for robbery and abduction. Despite the fact, there are many beautiful and adventurous sceneries in these areas, foreigners do not prefer to visit them. Fourth, the financial exploitation of tourists leaves a worst impression of locals on them. The Pakistani community is honorable, welcoming, and compassionate. However, this is not always the case. For instance if traveller even a Pakistani resident travel ^{to the} north alone, the local shopkeepers try to overcharge him. Likewise, they tend to exploit the

foreigners who do not have idea of prices of items of Pakistan. This dishearten them and make them dispoited ~~from~~ visiting Pakistan again. These are all community related issues which must be actively curbed by locals in order to contribute in country's tourism expansion.

Furthermore, there are multiple challenges related to service in Pakistan which are potential hindrances in the growth of tourism.

These include lack of crisis management plans, lack of registered tour operators, and lack of personalized services to customers, and negative portrayals of media about bad services in Pakistan. This hampers the appeal of international visitors to Pakistan. First pressing issue is the lack of crisis management plans among service providers, which lead to unpreparedness in the face of emergencies or

unforeseen events, further deterring potential tourists. When the incidents occur — be the natural disasters, (absence of) health crisis, security threats — the absence of established protocols can result in confusion and poor response, damaging the reputation of the country's tourism industry. Second, the deficiency of registered tour operators cause unregulated services that lead to compromised safety and quality. Many potential travelers are hesitant to travel with unregistered operators, fearing inadequate support and potential fraud. They also exploit visitors financially and retard their further chances of visit to Pakistan. For example, there are several instances on social media about the fraud to foreigners by unregistered operators. The travelers choose these operators due to lack of registered ones. Third, the lack of personalized services

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is another critical aspect of service sector contributing to overall decline of tourist experiences. Visitors increasingly seek tailored itineraries and unique local experiences, yet many service providers in Pakistan fall short of offering personalized options that cater to individual preferences and needs. Fourth, the major negative portrayal of the country in the media exacerbates these challenges, as sensationalized reports about poor services or incidents in the tourism sector of Pakistan distort public perceptions and deter tourists from visiting Pakistan as a viable destination. These factors create a compounding effect that stifles the growth of tourism in Pakistan, necessitating immediate attention and reforms in the service sector of Pakistan.

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