
Decline of International tourist arrival in Pakistan from 2014-2019

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ABSTRACT:

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries for decades. In Pakistan, tourism is among the fastest-growing economic sectors and is the largest source of foreign exchange. Moreover, competitive tourism market with new emerging destinations, can create a competitive advantage that could result revisit intention. However, the international tourist arrivals in Pakistan have been declining significantly from the year 2011-2019. Present research aims to provide the insight of pakistan tourism sector pitfalls and the theoretical overview of destination image, satisfaction and intention to revisit as these variables play major role for the arrival of international tourist. The research finding provides some guidelines to the policy makers and Pakistan department of tourism to improve the international tourist arrivals.

Keyword: Destination image, Tourist satisfaction, Intention to revisit, International tourist;

1. Introduction:

In many developing nations, tourism has become a vital commercial industry in recent years (Aman et al., 2019) due to the creation of connected employment, improvements in local people's living conditions, and supporting the expansion of other businesses (Bră tucu et al., 2017; Villanueva-Álvaro et al., 2017). The tourism offerings of developing nations are being improved and diversified in order to attract more foreign tourists to their countries. As a result, tourism becomes more important in

such nations, with a rising number of research focusing on tourism development (Gössling et al., 2008; Saufi et al., 2014). It is widely believed that tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit are important variables in determining the success of any place, among other aspects (Mai et al., 2019). Some of these factors' antecedents are linked to the overall concept of destination image in earlier research (Jeong & Kim, 2019).

1.2 Pakistan tourism

Pakistan is famous for tourism and hospitality due to its cultural, historical inheritance, archaeological places of different old civilizations, religious heritage, festivals, various landscapes with fertile land to deserts, high mountains range, forests, abundant adventure zones, coastal zones of the sea in this ancient region (Ali et al., 2019; Arshad et al., 2018; Manzoor et al., 2019; Rauf et al., 2020; Sajjad et al., 2018). According to Arshad et al. (2018) “Pakistan has various tourist destinations like Swat, Malam Jabba, Behrain, Kalam, Shangla, Balakot, Kaghan, Naran, Ayoubia, Murree, Chitral, Gilgit Baltistan, Hunza, and Neelum valleys, mountainous ranges, and historical and archaeological sites”. Pakistan provides great opportunities for tourism such as trout fishing in the rivers of Gilgit Baltistan and Swat, traditional Shandur Polo tournament, paragliding, rock climbing, and northern area trekking, Cholistan Desert’s jeep and camel safari, Arab Sea boar hunting and car boarding (Arshad et al., 2018). Similarly, Bhandari (2018), claimed that two bio-geographic lands out of eight over the world are in Pakistan. Pakistan is holding five (5) highest mountain peaks in the world (Arshad et al., 2018). “Pakistan has some of the best eco-tourism destinations in the world. There are high mountains, glaciers, rough cliffs, alpine meadows, coniferous forests, sub-mountain

scrub forest, varied flora and fauna (endemic and migratory), deserts, beaches, coastline, and wetlands (Himalayas, Karakoram, and the Hindu Kush ranges)” (Arshad et al., 2018).

Manzoor et al. (2019), acknowledged that international tourism is growing in Pakistan; 1.75 million tourists are recorded in 2017 and achieved 24.4% growth over the last two years. According to (WTTC, 2019), Pakistan tourism generated \$19.4 billion, which is 6.9% of the GDP and is predicted to increase to \$36.1 billons in 2030. Tourism in Pakistan contributed 6.0% to total employment and an increase of 6.3% by 2017. According to the WEF, (2013), that Pakistan ranked 25th of world heritage sites (Yaping Liu et al., 2019). According to UNWTO (2017), Domestic tourists increased by 6.1% in 2018 (PKR 1,445.9 billion) and are predicted to increase up to 5.9% (PKR 2,564.3 billons).

Moreover, Pakistan tourism cannot be compared with other developing countries; it also struggles to attract international tourists (Ali et al., 2019). World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked the tourism industry in Pakistan lower than other South Asian countries. After the United States of America 9/11 attack, the Pakistan tourism industry faced severe losses, (Ali et al., 2019; Sajjad et al., 2018). According to Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services report, the majority of Pakistan tourism destinations are suffered due to natural disasters, worst hygiene, waste management at tourist spots, and lack of research are also the main challenges of Pakistan. Hence lack of research affects tourism development (PIPS, 2018). Nevertheless, Pakistan is currently taking steps to develop its tourism industry by promoting tourism destinations through all channels (Kanwel et al., 2019). Moreover,

the safety of the tourist destination is ensured; so international tourists' visits experience can be related to positive perception (Ali et al., 2019).

According to UNWTO (2020) report, most regions in the world saw a rise in international tourist arrivals in 2019. Nevertheless, uncertainty regarding Brexit, the fall of Thomas Cook, geopolitical and social uncertainties, and the global economic slowdown, led to slower growth in 2019; relative to the extraordinary rates of 2017 and 2018. This downturn has mostly impacted advanced economies, particularly those in Europe, Asia, and the Pacific region.

1.3 International Tourist Arrival in South Asia (Mill) (2014-2019)

The international tourist arrival in selected South Asia countries face major decrease. Furthermore, it indicates that the overall international tourist arrivals in selected South Asia countries vary from the 2014 to 2019 period. On the period of five (5) years, India recorded an average of 9.02 million; Sri Lanka at 1.96 million; the Maldives at 1.32 million; Pakistan at 0.80 million; Nepal at 0.79 million; and Bangladesh at 0.20 million international tourist arrivals.

Although, the South Asia region's economic base is weak; and the region has a great potential for tourism business Nawaz & Hassan (2016), claimed that the tourism sector was ignored and given very less attention to Pakistan. Pakistan standing is far away on the basis of international tourist arrivals; compared to South Asian countries (Baloch, 2007; Kanwel et al., 2019). The declining international tourist arrivals and tourist receipt would definitely have a negative impact on Pakistan economy (Khan et al., 2020). The average international tourist arrival in South Asia from 2014-2018 is about 2.34 million, while Pakistan average international tourist arrival is 0.80

million within the period of 2014-2018. Furthermore, (Khan et al., 2020), study shows significant relationship between economic expansion, tourist arrivals, and tourist receipts. According to (Kubickova, 2019), those tourism receipts are related to demand and supply factors, and demand can create through the destination image attributes which appeals the tourist to visit the destination more oftently (Manrai et al., 2018).

1.4 Challenges of Pakistan Tourism Sector

Pakistan's tourism sector is facing challenges due to the devolution of powers in Pakistan; which is caused by poor coordination, government support, poor enforcement of standards and certifications, and poor budget (Kanwel et al., 2019; PIPS, 2018). Tourist management is the responsibility of the provincial/ federal governments. Each provincial / federal territory has its own tourism department or cell in Pakistan. These organizations lack the capacity and resources to encourage, study and creativity (Arshad et al., 2018).

No other country could have achieved the status of famous tourist destination in the globe with highly regarded tourist attractions as Pakistan has accomplished. Moreover, Tourists' safety and security is important factor tourism development, and the national image is also significant. Furthermore, there is a lack of development projects for the new visiting sites in Pakistan (Arshad et al., 2018).

The imposition of unnecessary restrictions on international tourists' movement, a slow procedure for issuance of NoCs and expedition approvals for trekking and mountaineering in Pakistan is another drawback (Rehman et al., 2020). In addition, Hotels and restaurants have established no certification and service quality standards (Malik et al., 2020). Hence, law enforcement is necessary to uphold the standards of hotels, travel agents, and tour guides to promote sustainable tourism (Akbar et al., 2017). Similarly, there is a lack of consistency in applying the standards and certifications in other tourism-related facilities, such as transportation, which has a disruptive effect on tourism demand and visit intentions (Shaker et al., 2020).

According to stated, that World Economic Forum (2013) TTC emphasized the importance of security services to world-wide tourism. Reliability of police services is regarded a key component of tourist competitiveness, according to the research. Pervious researchers suggested in their study that safety and security of travellers at destination is important

for the upcoming tourism, which can be done by planning and taking measures, that eventually leads to growth and return visitation.

Previously, tourist revisit the same destination has been acknowledge as one of the most important features of the stabilized growth of tourist destination in the context of tourism, and increased organizational profitability. The tourist revisit intention considered, as a result of tourist satisfaction with positive destination image. If the tourist is satisfied with the assessment of the physical characteristics of the destination, then the tourist will be revisiting destination in future. This is because positive assessment of the physical characteristics of the destination, will positively effect tourist satisfaction and satisfaction have high impact on revisit intention, it is likely he/she will revisit the destination. However, a positive destination image would display positive future behavioural intentions, while a negative destination image effect revisit intention. The tourist revisit intention has been mostly influenced by destination image and its relationship has also been researched by several studies in different tourism setting. To increase the revisit intensions of international tourism in Pakistan; it is essential to project the soft image of Pakistan as “Amazing Pakistan” which positively affects the Pakistan tourism to grow and serves as a mechanism to generate employment and increase foreign reserve (Maher, 2020).

1.5 Theoretical overview

1.5.1 Tourist satisfaction

Satisfaction is one of the most widely researched variables in tourism literature (Zhang et al., 2018) and is considered a significant antecedent of the tourist experience (Chiu et al., 2016). According to Oliver (1997), customer satisfaction is defined as the consumer's fulfilling reaction to a product or as an appraisal of how effectively a product meets a need (or both) (Bitner & Zeithaml, 2003). In the context of tourism, satisfaction refers to the sum of one's feelings (Cole & Scott, 2004) and the degree to which one experiences overall enjoyment (Quintal & Polczynski, 2010) as a result of visiting a tourist attraction. For example, the emotional response that results from cognitive responses to service experience (Chi, 2016) or

the gap between pre-trip expectations and post-trip experiences may be used to quantify tourist satisfaction (N. Chen & Funk, 2010). Tourists will be happy when their comparison of previous expectations and post-travel experiences produces emotions of pleasure, and they will be dissatisfied when the comparison produces feelings of dislike (Chen & Chen, 2010; Chi, 2016).

1.5.2 Intention to revisit

In the tourism literature, the intention to revisit has been highlighted as a major study issue to investigate (Li et al., 2018). Numerous academics believe that repeat visitors spend more time at a place, engage in more consumptive activities, become more satisfied, and promote favorable word of mouth, all while needing far less marketing than first-time visitors (Lehto et al., 2004; Zhang et al., 2014)

As stated by Cole and Scott (2004), post-consumption behavior refers to the intention of a tourist to revisit to the same destination after experiencing it once or twice (Baker & Crompton, 2000). It also pertains to the visitor's assessment of his or her likelihood of returning to the same destination (Khasawneh & Alfandi, 2019)(Stylos et al., 2016), as well as the visitor's desire to promote the destination to others (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Khasawneh & Alfandi, 2019).

Client happiness is widely acknowledged to be important in achieving customer loyalty, not just in the context of physical goods, but also in the area of tourism (Ryu et al., 2012). According to Um et al. (2006), the intention to revisit is considered as an extension of the desire to be satisfied. When visitors have positive sentiments when visiting a tourist spot, they are more likely to be happy with the location, which increases their desire to return in the future. There are various studies in the literature that demonstrate that tourist satisfaction has a positive impact on the likelihood

of revisiting (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Chen & Chen, 2010; Khasawneh & Alfandi, 2019).

1.5.3 Destination image

In tourist marketing literature, the topic of destination image has received considerable attention since Gunn (2014) did his groundbreaking study on it. According to Mohamed et al. (2020) destination image may be described in a number of ways, but typically as a multidimensional phenomenon. Destination image is defined as an individual's overall impression of a destination (Chiu et al., 2016). The term "destination image" refers to a collection of perceptions, ideas, expectations, and emotional thoughts regarding a certain place (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Stainton & Iordanova, 2017; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). It is also a representation of interconnections and information that are linked to a certain place (Stainton & Iordanova, 2017; Stylos et al., 2017).

Various theoretical frameworks explaining tourists' decision-making process attribute a significant role to the destination's image. Tourists, according to Iordanova (2017), base their purchasing choices on the mental impressions they have of the places they have visited. Cognitive, affective, and conative aspects of destination image are regarded to be three distinct attributes (Sharma & Nayak, 2018; Stylos et al., 2016, 2017). When visitors evaluate a destination's perceived features, they form beliefs and related information that are reflected in their cognitive appraisals of the destination (Sharma & Nayak, 2018; Stylos et al., 2016, 2017). Affective image component: This component provides visitors' emotional reactions to or evaluations of a particular place (Sharma & Nayak, 2018; Stylos et al., 2016, 2017). Component that contribute to visitors' feelings about a certain place are known as "Affective images (Sharma & Nayak, 2018).

1.6 Discussion

In this study, the emphasize is being drawn upon that how much international tourist arrival is important for any country especially for Pakistan and how destination image is essential for tourist to get satisfaction from their visit to Pakistan and how does it will lead them to revisit. Destination image and satisfactions are the direct antecedent of intention to revisit. It is very important for Pakistan tourism sector to understand the importance of destination image and its attribute as the tourist make their next travel decision on the basis of their previous experience with the destination based attributed. Pakistan has excellent tourist opportunities owing to its history, diversity of cultures, geostrategic position, and scenic landscapes. It is found that Pakistan is missing out on the benefits of the tourism industry in the present condition. The tourist sector has the potential to become one of the most important drivers of monetary recovery and development. The revamping of destination image of Pakistan tourist places is highly important to get the influx of international tourist arrivals. Pakistan should prioritize the establishment of a strategy that takes this into consideration for making it possible.

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