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Article:	Post militancy Tourism in Swat: Perceptions of Tourists from Malakand Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a temporary but multi-facet journey. It is visible across the globe and more frequent in develop world where tourism is encouraged and professionally developed at national level. Pakistan is located in South Asia, where tourism is observed in all provinces including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The current study was conducted in 2021 to record the status of tourism in Swat after post militancy. This was a mix study method, however mainly focused on qualitative approach. After 2007 militancy in Swat, tourism industry suffered a lot. The study aimed to explore the status of tourism in Swat in view of tourists' perceptions. The study also investigated the satisfaction of tourists in view of restored peace and safety after armed forces operation against militancy. Quantitative data were collected via questionnaire. Qualitative data was recorded via A total of 400 tourists visited different tourist spots of Malakand, Swat, Dir, Chitral, Shangla and Bunir districts of Malakand Division. There were recorded 180 tourists visiting Swat. Convenience sampling was used. Data was processed thematically. The study confirmed restoration of peace and safety after armed forces action against militancy in Swat. Tourists were feeling no more insecure to visit Swat. A proper attention is required to develop tourism industry for economic benefit and further projecting the healthy image of Pakistan at international level. A special attention of the policy-makers is invited in this context.

Key Words: Tourism, Tourists, Swat, Militancy, Malakand Division

Introduction

Tourism is an emerging industry, which conveys a message of peace (Bohalis *et al.*, 2006), elevates learning experience, brings profit, improves socio-economic conditions (Geoffrey *et al.*, 2012; Almeida *et al.*, 2014) and retains human ease and healthy life (Rehman *et al.*, 2018; Littrell, *et al.*, 2012; WTO, 2005; Huh, 2002). Global statistics on world tourism shows that major portion of the economy in many countries like U.S.A, France, Canada, Spain (Lozano *et al.*, 2018), UK, Nepal, Greece, Egypt, India (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005), Turkey (Sinclair, 1998), Germany and Switzerland (Assaf *et al.*, 2015) depend upon tourism industry to a high level.

Pakistan is located in South-Asia, where the history of tourism dates back to the sub-continent. Tourism is known here since 1945. Tourism is observed in all provinces of Pakistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province is specially known for tourism in Pakistan. Malakand Division in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is the hot spot for tourism due to its beautiful, scenic spots in district Swat, Chitral, Malakand (Abid & Khan, 2010; (Spain, 1995)) and Dir (Khan & Alam, 2021). These areas possess a rich heritage of history, culture and known for historical, cultural, archeological, sports and adventurous tourism. The beautiful valley of Swat is famous for historical, archeological, adventurous and sports tourism (Ali *et al.*, 2020; Baloch & Rehman, 2015).

Pakistan is a developing country, possesses rich historical and cultural heritage and having greater potential for tourism. There are lush green fields, rivers, beautiful lakes, mountainous regions and historical spots and cultural heritage. People have great hospitable nature, thus having a promising characteristic for tourism in Pakistan. In 2017 two Million international travellers visited the Northern areas of Pakistan (PTDC, 2019). However this figure is quite a scratch as compared to tourists' data of other develop countries (Arshad *et al.*, 2018). A great variety of tourism is available in Pakistan, including eco-tourism, historical tourism, cultural tourism, archeological tourism, sports tourism, adventurous tourism, spiritual and religious tourism (Manzoor *et al.*, 2019). Unfortunately tourism industry suffered alot after 9/11. In 2008, the flow of tourists declined towards Swat and all tourists drifted towards Abbotabad, Kaghan and Naran, due to which a great number of private jobs vanished and local people suffered alot in jobless conditions (Ali *et al.*, 2020; Arshad, 2010).

The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a great potential for cultural, historical, archeological and sports tourism. The tourism rich spots in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa include Kaghan, Naran, Gilgit Baldistan in Northern areas, Hunza, Kalash valleys in Chitral, Nathia Galli (Abbotabad), and Swat are quite eye-catching for tourism (Ullah *et al.*, 2019; Spain, 1995). The lush green valley of Swat is remarkably known for its tourism potential. Swat is blessed with attractive land, snow covered peaks, mountains, having fresh water fountains, springs and rivers, which have great attraction and appealing for world tourists (Fakhar, 2010; Isobel, 1989). Due to unrest and militancy across the country in general and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in particular, devastated the rich potential of tourism industry, so the purpose of this study aimed to record the current status of tourism in Swat in the light of tourists' perceptions. Previous studies worked out the status of tourism in Swat but data was

lacking on the current status of Swat tourism in the light of tourists perceptions and suggestions and to further know the revival of tourism in Swat.

Objectives:

Following are the objectives of the current study regarding tourism in Swat.

1. To explore the potential of tourism with reference to post militancy era in Swat.
2. To record the tourists perceptions regarding Swat tourism.
3. To evaluate the tourists perceptions about safety in Swat.

Research Questions:

Following are the research questions of the current study.

1. Is militancy caused decline in tourism?
2. Is tourism boosting again after post militancy in Swat?
3. Is peace and safety restored after armed forces operation against militancy in Swat?

Significance of the study

Significant of this study is to record the current status of tourism in Swat according tourists perceptions that will ultimately show the status of tourism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and in country as well. It will be helping how to further improve tourism across the province and country as whole.

Study area

The current study is conducted in district Swat, located in Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Tourism

Tourism is a recreational travel and leisure for people, which broadens their vision, a good source of learning and experience, explores unseen world and beauty of the nature. It has been given global importance after the Second World War and after that; it became a global leisure activity. Traveling and tourism are a free time activity both on domestic as well as international level having incoming and out-going effects on a country's economy. That is why, tourism is a major source of income for many countries contributing a major share in GDP and give global popularity and familiarity to these countries, cultures, languages and societies in general. It creates understanding and cultural familiarity among different nations through visits of their citizens to other countries (Huh, 2002).

Tourism across the globe:

The word "tourism" is multi-facet. Different sources have described it variously. Some have simply defined it, "It is the journey in which a person returns to his starting point after entertainment, business, pleasure or educational purpose by visiting various places" (WTO, 2001). Others have defined it as, "It is the sum of all movements of persons/people by leaving

their original stay station and stay away at other spot for at least 24 hours up to one year for various purposes, which are usually not carried out in staying at own residence or station” (WTO, 2005).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017), there were 292 million employment and US\$7.6 trillion (\$10.2 percent of the world GDP) in travel and tourism in 2016. According to additional WTTC forecasts, the tourism industry could support more than 380 million jobs by 2027, with growth rates in South Asia projected to reach between 5 and 6 percent annually (Geoffrey *et al.*, 2021).

The modern technological advancement has brought the far away destination at the door steps. Now people can easily move across the globe in a minimum possible time. Tourism has emerged as a industry for the last 05 decades. According to 2017 estimates (WTO, 2017), at global level tourists spent 1.3 dollars per day in a single year, which obviously reflects the people trend and interest in tourism. The modern world is no more consist of faraway located countries. Globalization has changed the status of states by rapid access and transportation facilities. Fast and swift transportation services are available almost everywhere in the world. Tourists can easily avail this, can move anywhere across the globe.

Tourism brings economic benefits to developing as well as to developed nations. It washes out poverty by creating more job opportunities for host country and local people. This can definitely uplift the socio-economic status and standard of living in host countries (Geoffrey *et al.*, 2012; Almeida *et al.*, 2014; Oh, 2005; Durbarry, 2004). It is also a source of mental ease (Littrell, *et al.*, 2012), adding new things to human knowledge, serve as a business opportunity, a good sign of peace for a country (Bohalis *et al.*, 2006).

Tourism in South Asia:

South Asia is blessed with a variety of physical features encompassing forests, grasslands, rivers, oceans, snow covered ice caps, deserts, rushing-gushing streams and beautiful coastal areas. The suitable climate adds further to its beauty and suitability for every type of tourism. In South Asian countries, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Butan, Nepal and Afghanistan are included. All are developing countries. Here, tourism can leverage to weak economies. According to statistical record, in 2017 tourism contributed 8.9% to the total GDP in South Asia, while 7.2% in 2018. However these estimates were predicted to touch 6.2% GDP contribution in South Asia by 2028. The expected increase in jobs opportunities will elevate from 3.0% to 7.8% by the year 2028 in South Asia (Hwang & Lee, 2019).

Tourism in Pakistan:

Pakistan is holding a considerable position in South Asia for tourism. It is full of historical, and cultural and archeological assets. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is well known for tourists’ movement. The beauty of Swat, Chitral, Abbotabad, Kaghan, Naran, Malam Jabba and Behrain has always attracted tourists. Nothern Pakistan including Gilgit Baldistan, Malakand and beautiful valley of Gopaiz and Hunza are famous for tourism. Chitral is always attracting sniper hunters from abroad. Karakoram, Hinduksuh and Pamir ranges are favorite

choices for hikers and climbers. Kalash valleys of Chitral are full of tourists in April to mid of October for visiting Kalash special festivals. Chitral is famous for sports tourism. Polo game is decade's old traditional game of local people in Chitral (Spain, 1995). Swat is full of Buddhists relics, stupas and monasteries. Gandhara civilization is well preserved in Swat. It has been the center of interest for many archeology loving tourists. Malam Jabba in Swat is well known for sky divers (Fakhar, 2010). Historical monuments of Malakand are famous. Kaghan Naran has splendid beauty of frozen lakes and ice covered mountain caps (Ali *et al.*, 2020; Ullah *et al.*, 2019; Arshad, 2010; Isobel, 1989).

Tourism was/is also an important sector of Pakistan. The direct contribution of travel and tourism to Pakistan's GDP in 2016 was US \$ 7.6 billion (PKR 793 billion), constituting 2.7% of the total GDP. World Travel and Tourism Council expects that amount to rise to 36.1 billion dollars by 2030. In 2017, the number of tourists has reached 808,000 from all tourist producing market places. This figure is a 24.4% rise from the previous two years.

According to the report, in 2017, 1.75 million visitors traveled to Pakistan (Rehman, 2016). Presently, there is a prevalent consensus that tourism growth should be sustainable, even for local communities and the environment. The inspiration behind sustainable tourism is to visit the locations not at the cost of local community and nature and also having some productive impact on the environment, society, as well as the economy of the country.

Militancy in Swat and armed forces operations

The America's attack on Afghanistan against Al-Quaida and Taliban regime, formation and establishment of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and subsequent military operations in Malakand Division including district Swat against terrorists brought havoc to the beauty and tourist sites of this region, which badly affected the tourism sector. However, after a long military operation by Pakistan Army, terrorists were rooted out from the area and writ of the state restored, peace and normalcy was brought back to Malakand Division (BBC, 2013: Operation Rah-e-Rasth, 2009) including district Swat (BBC, 2013: Operation Rah-e-Haq, 2007). Since then in Pakistan especially in Swat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, tourism industry is at crawling stage due to past unrest. However, the setting government and Pakistan Army started a joint venture, endeavoring to make Malakand Division, including district Swat safe, peaceful and tourism friendly area again for national and international tourists alike.

Pakistan armed forces carried out 766 minor and 323 major operations against the militants. Some major operations were:

- Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-2002)
- Operation Al-Mizan (2002-2006)
- Operation Rahe Haq (December 2007/July 2008/26 January 2009) in Swat.
- Operation Rah-e-Rast (2007-2009) in Malakand Division, Swat.
- Operation Black Thunder Storm (2009) in Swat, Dir, Buner Shangla.
- Operation Rahe-e-Nijat (June 19, 2009- December, 12, 2009) in South Waziristan.
- Operation Khyber-1 (2014), Khyber Agency.
- Operation Khyber-II (2016), Khyber Agency.

- Operation Zarb-e-Azab (2014-2016), in South Waziristan.

Peace was restored in Malakand Division after Operation Rah-e-Rast (2007-2009) and Operation Black Thunder storm, while Operation Rahe-Haq (2007, 2008, and 2009) and Rah-e-Rasth (Dawn, Islamabad, 10th April, 2009) restored security and safety in district Swat (ISPR report on PTV, 2012). The above said were the major military operations launched against militancy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Methodology

A mixed method study was used, i.e. both qualitative and quantitative study methods were applied, but focus of the study remained on qualitative method (Creswell, 2013). Both primary and secondary data was collected for the current work.

Thematic Analysis:

Interviewees' data was collected on designed data sheet. The data was thematically analyzed. Quantitative questions were close ended while qualitative questions were open ended. Qualitative data was obtained via interviews. All information's were saved in Microsoft Excel sheets. Creswell, (2013) analysis method was followed for qualitative analysis of interview data. Quantitative data was hand coded and placed in Tables for data presentation purpose.

Step by step/ Line by Line Coding of Data:

In qualitative part of data, codes were assigned to all main points in tourists interviews, recorded on designed data sheets/questionnaire.

Decoding of Data:

Step by step analysis was made. Then codes were expanded and data was transcribed from data sheets. A narrative form of data was produced. All codes were carefully decoded.

Report Writing:

Once, the data of all interviewees was decoded. A proper shape was assigned to the data for publishing purpose and further sharing it with audience of national and international level, particularly with those, who are interested in tourism related studies.

Ethical Approval

The current study was ethically approved by Ethical Approval Committee of Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar.

Results and Discussion

As part of study to record the status of tourism in Malakand Division, tourists were recruited from district Swat. The study was conducted in 2021. A total of 400 tourists were

included in the study, who were visiting district Swat, Dir, Chitral, Buner and Shangla for tourism. There were 180 tourists visiting district Swat for tourism. Data on the current status of tourism was collected and tabulated (Table-01).

Table-01: Tourists visiting Malakand Division

Which District of Malakand Division you visited?			
S.NO.	Area of visit	Frequency	Percentage
I	Buner	24	6.0
Ii	Chitral lower	10	2.5
Iii	Chitral upper	65	16.3
Iv	Dir lower	12	3.0
V	Dir upper	39	9.8
Vi	Malakand	21	5.3
Vii	Shangla	49	12.3
Viii	Swat	180	45.0
Total		400	100.0

Data in Table-01 shows the number (N=400) of tourists visited different districts of Malakand Division. The frequency of tourists visiting Swat was high (N=400, 180/400= 45 %) among the other districts. However 180 tourists visiting Swat were asked what area they prefer to other tourists for visiting in Malakand Division. Their responses (N=400) were tabulated in Table-02, which shows 210 (N=400, 180/400=52.5%) respondents were suggesting Swat as best place for tourism to other tourists (Table-02).

Table-02: Tourists response and suggestion to others for tour.

Districts, You suggest to others for visit			
S.NO.	District suggested	Frequency	Percentage

I	Buner	15	3.8
Ii	Chitral lower	7	1.8
Iii	Chitral upper	50	12.5
Iv	Dir lower	0	0
V	Dir upper	27	6.8
Vi	Malakand	26	6.5
Vii	Shangla	65	16.3
Viii	Swat	210	52.5
	Total	400	100.0

Table-03: Comparison- Tourists personally visit area and suggested area to others for tour

Tourists visited by self				Tourists suggested to others		
S.NO.	Area of visit	Frequency	Percentage	Suggested to others	Frequency	Percentage
I	Buner	24	6.0	Buner	15	3.8
Ii	Chitral lower	10	2.5	Chitral lower	7	1.8
Iii	Chitral upper	65	16.3	Chitral upper	50	12.5
Iv	Dir lower	12	3.0	Dir lower	0	0
V	Dir upper	39	9.8	Dir upper	27	6.8
Vi	Malakand	21	5.3	Malakand	26	6.5
Vii	Shangla	49	12.3	Shangla	65	16.3
Viii	Swat	180	45.0	Swat	210	52.5
	Total	400	100.0	Total	400	100.0

This clearly shows that Swat was the first priority of tourists visiting Malakand Division for tourism. Moreover, some tourists opted to visit other districts of Malakand Division, i.e. district Malakand, Dir, Chitral, Buner and Shangla.

Interview analysis of Tourists from District Swat:

Interviews were conducted from tourists visiting district Swat in post militancy period. All tourists' interviews were recorded, where 22% respondents were males and 78% were females. Interviewees' ages were ranging from 25-50 years. Tourists were coming from Punjab province, Capital area (Islamabad and Rawalpindi) and little tourists from Sindh province. However, there was no tourist coming from the same province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). The interviewees were belonging to different professions, i.e. Govt. Jobs, business, student, private job, lawyer and transport job (in Daewoo express service). Their stay duration was ranging from 03 to 07 days.

All the interview respondents showed their cause of visit was mostly enjoying good season, relaxation, and visiting relatives. More than half (55%) of interviewees mentioned that conditions in Swat has been improved after militancy. They confirmed peace and safety in Swat after militancy. A 24 years female student mentioned that:

“Swat is good for stay”.

Among all interviewees, 55% respondents answered, they feel secure in Swat due to active security and increased security check points in main and important areas in district Swat.

A 27 years young lady from Lahore visiting district swat said:

“Swat is totally secure now after militancy. I feel safe to stay and move around in Swat. She travelled from a long distance to visit Swat”.

She stayed at Swat for tourism. Her coming from Lahore to visit Swat is interesting evidence that peace and safety has been restored again in Swat. She further mentioned:

“Swat is safe after armed forces action against the militants. All militancy elements are washed by the armed forces”.

During her stay, she travelled alot and faced no problem.

The other interviewees informed that they stayed at Swat for 3-4 days. While there were others who stayed here for 07 days in Swat. They were mostly tourists coming from other provinces, i.e. Sindh and Baluchistan. All the above interview points speak well regarding the restored peace and safety in the beautiful valley of Swat after militancy.

Upon asking the reason of their preference to visit Swat, the respondents showed their cause of visit was mostly to enjoy good season, getting relaxed, visiting relatives and scenic beauty in Swat. It confirms the existing potential of tourism in Swat. All interviewees in district

Swat were asked regarding any improvement they see here after post militancy. Their sum-up response was:

“Swat is safe now for stay and free movements. Tourists can move freely with any risk”.

“It is safe after post militancy”.

“Swat is safe for tourists stay after post militancy”.

Among tourists 55% interviewees confirmed that they feel safe during Swat tour due to heavy checking and installation of security check points all around in important and main centers in Swat. They said, militancy is no more surviving in district Swat. From Lahore, a 27 years young lady working in Daewoo service visited Swat. She said:

“Swat is safe after armed forces operation”.

Her comment reflects peace and safety in Swat.

Interviewees were asked regarding their next visit to Swat. Majority (70%) of the interviewees were agreeing to visit Swat along with their family members next time except one lady who visited Swat from Lahore. She was of the opinion to visit Swat all alone instead of coming with family. This might reflect her single social status (personal view of the author).

In the context of suggestion, tourists mentioned improvement of hoteling, renovation of damaged roads, proper check on price hike and developing good shopping centers nearby tourists spots will boost tourism in Swat (they said). One interviewee mentioned that beggars must be discouraged at tourists spots, as they are always irritating tourists.

Interviewees were asked:

“Are you satisfied from the available facilities in the area for tourism?”

They suggested some improvements in hoteling to increase tourism in Swat. In last, interviewees were asked that how they find the response of local people towards tourists in this area. More or less similar answers were recorded. They said:

“Locals are polite”.

“Locals are honest”.

“They are good people”.

“Locals are friendly”.

All the above answers reflect that local people of district Swat were treating the tourists in a good way. This was an interesting response from local inhabitants of Swat. This can further boost tourism in district Swat.

Conclusion

Swat, being lapping a rich potential of tourism could be a considerable contributor to local and national economy (Manzoor *et al.*, 2019), if tourism sector in Swat is actively managed and improved/restored. Interviews from tourists surfaced that Swat is a beautiful valley. It is known as Switzerland of Pakistan (Fakhar, 2010). The valley of Swat is still a preferable choice of tourists other than Malakand, Dir, Buner, Shangla and Chitral in Malakand

Division. In previous last 02 decades, Swat was the hotspot for tourism due to its heavenly beauty and profound peace and safety. A 46 years old lady tourists informed that “militancy has tarnished the beautiful face of Swat and its natural beauty”.

However, after post militancy, security and peace is well restored. Tourists mentioned that, “Swat is again safe. One can freely move around here. There is no risk to stay at Swat. The vigilant security check points at all main entrances-and-out going points has ensured security in Swat”. The role of armed forces against militants was admired, as conformed from tourists’ interviews. Govt. has done enough to restore infrastructure in Swat. Govt. verses private partners ship can further enhance tourism potential of Swat, especially in hoteling sector (Geoffrey Deladem, 2015; Assaf *et al.*, 2015; Arshad, 2010).

The role of foreign aid granting partners is not least. Saudi Govt. did enough to restore infrastructure in Swat. Japan, Malaysia and USA provided huge funds for various developmental and restoration infrastructure projects. Korean owned transport services, i.e. DAEWOO Company offered 30% low prices to tourists going to Swat (Oh, 2005). Private organizations and NGOs offered their services to restore the faded beauty of Swat. However there are still gaps to be covered for making this profitable industry more productive (Manzoor *et al.*, 2019). A well secured Swat with huge number of foreign tourists will definitely bring more economic boost for the country and will speak loudly of peace message propagating across the country borders.

Recommendations

- The existing Govt. may pay proper possible attention to restore the demolished infrastructure in Swat by assigning enough funds in Budget for the reconstruction and restoration of Swat tourism in Swat.
- Tourism status of Swat may be projected through social media campaign supported by Govt. set-up.
- Tourism Department may be strengthened to pay proper attention in promoting tourism in Swat.
- Installation of tourists’ facilitation centers in main areas.
- Tourists guide maps may be installed along the access and main roads.
- Sports and cultural events may be launched via Govt. assistance.
- Prices hike may be strictly checked in tourist’s spots.
- Cell phone services and ATM facilities may be ensured in tourists spots.
- Emergency health services centers may be installed near tourists’ spots.
- Local administration may train special force for tourists’ vigilance to avoid any mishap with tourists.
- Special transport facility for tourists may be initiated to ensure foreign tourists entry.
- Hoteling standard may be improved and private owners running hotels may be registered with concerned Govt. authorities.
- Private owners running hotels may be officially directed to imbibe the services of local people as to stop possible migration of local people in search of jobs in distant areas.
- Sanitation and drainage may be improved near tourists’ spots.

- Beggars may be discouraged near tourists' spots.

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