

Impediments of Tourism in Dir Lower: The Way Forward

* Mohammad Hanif Khan, Assistant Professor

** Mohammad Alam, Lecturer (Corresponding Author)

*** Shah Manzoor, Scholar

Abstract

The study examined impediments of tourism in Dir Lower. The objective of the study was to find the reasons why tourism is not flourished in the area and what is the way forward. The population of the study was the inhabitants of District Dir Lower residing in 7 Tehsils. A total of 510 respondents as a sample was taken from the population. The questionnaire was employed for collecting data. Data analysis was done through SPSS. The study found that lack of Government concern towards tourism, infrastructure, and superstructure of the area and Dir state policies were the main hurdles for the less development of tourism in Dir Lower. The study recommended that Government should give more focus to the tourism of the area by taking steps which develop and promote tourism in Dir. Infrastructure and superstructure development is another area that needs attention. Government and locals need to step up to overcome this challenge. It is also recommended that steps need to be taken to bring awareness among people and mindset needs to be changed so they can accept tourism for their benefits and the benefits of the area and country.

Keywords: Impediments, Tourism, Dir Lower, SPSS

Introduction

Tourism consists of all those activities in which people travel to certain areas and they stay there which is out from their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, pleasure, or business (UNWTO). The tourism industry is one of the world's largest industries and contributing 10% to the world's GDP. Every 10th person is employed in the tourism industry. For the last 9 years, continuous sustained growth is recorded in tourism. Total international tourists' arrival increased by 5% which becomes 1.4 billion USD in the year 2019 in comparison with the year 2018. Total international tourism exports also increased by 4% and took the size of 1.7 trillion USD in the year 2019 with comparison to the previous year. There is a continuous growth in international tourist arrivals and at the same time growth in receipts also contributes to the world economy in both advanced economies and emerging economies are benefiting from increasing tourism income (UNWTO, 2019).

Pakistan has got diverse tourism potentials in the shape of geographic, ethnic, natural, historical, and cultural diversity. Pakistan has mountain ranges, peaks, rivers, lakes, deserts, historical places, archaeological sites, scenic beauties, fertile land, plateaus, and much more to offer (Arain, 2018). In the year 2017, the Tourism industry in Pakistan contributed PKR 930.9 bn (US\$ 8832.1 million) which is 2.9% of the total GDP of the country. British Backpacker Society in the year 2018 ranked Pakistan in the top 20 destinations of the world. The same society declared Pakistan as number 3rd in adventure tourism in the world. Forbes Magazine enlists Pakistan in the top 10 under radar places to visit in 2020 (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2020). Pakistan is the land of ancient civilizations. In the north of Pakistan three greatest mountain ranges of the world meet. We have religious and sacred places combined with seasonal varieties. It offers almost all sorts of tourism to every niche. Every province of Pakistan offers a unique culture. Out of 13 peaks in the world that have got more than 8000 meters height, 5 of them are there in Pakistan, including K-2 which is the second-highest peak in the world. Out of the North and South poles, the biggest glaciers in the world are in Pakistan.

* Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, University of Malakand, Pakistan
Email: hanifyousafzai@uom.edu.pk

** Department of Tourism and Hospitality, Hazara University, Pakistan Email: Alampices@hotmail.com

***Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, University of Malakand, Pakistan

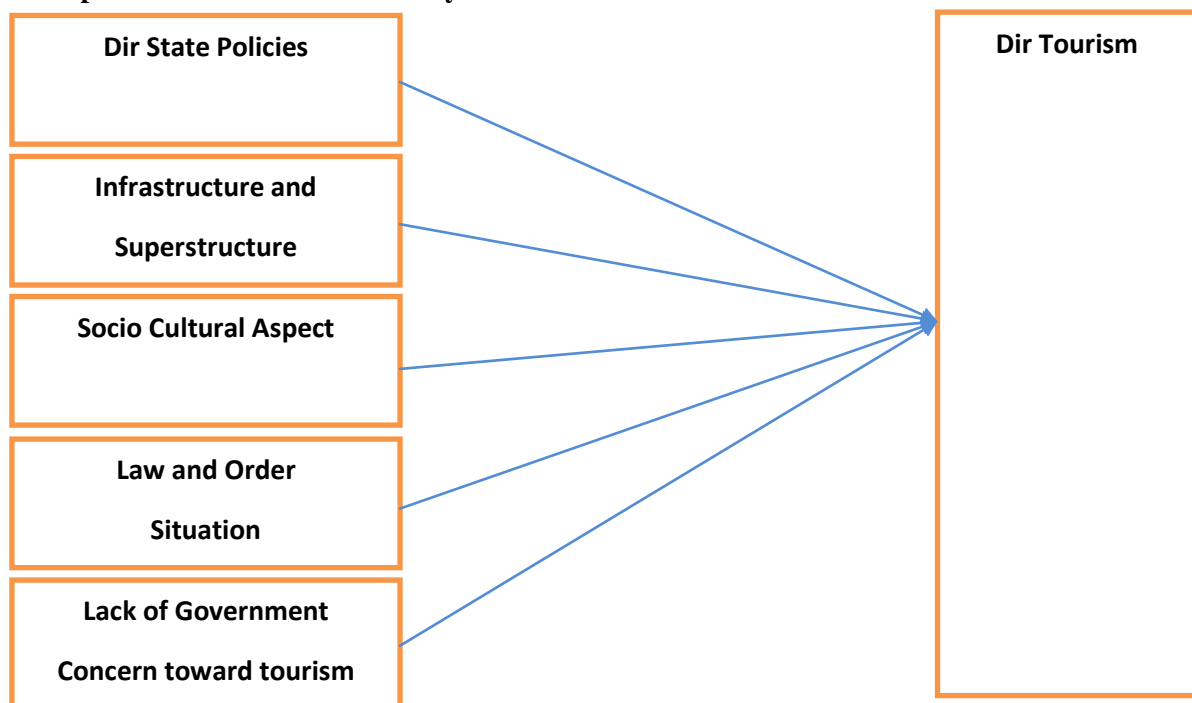
From the past few decades tourism sector has achieved significant importance in the world. Pakistan has huge tourism potential, and the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is among the biggest in terms of having massive tourism resources. Despite the security challenge in the country, this province is fully capitalizing on its potential. Major tourism attractions of the country lie in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa comprising of historical, cultural, archaeological, and places having religious importance as well as natural and beautiful scenic places (World Bank, 2019). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is ideal for tourism especially adventure tourism, archaeological/historical tourism, ecotourism, religious tourism, and medical tourism. Popular spots in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are Swat, Galyat, Naran, Kaghan, TakhtBhai, Gorgatri, Kumrat Dir, Shangla, Shogran, Khyber Pass, and many more.

Dir Lower is one of the districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The borders of Dir Lower are touching Swat, Malakand, Bajaur, Dir Upper, and Afghanistan. At the time of independence, it was a princely state headed by Nawab Shah Jehan Khan, later on, in year 1969 this state was merged in Pakistan. There are seven tehsils in Dir Lower which are Adinzai, Balambat, Khal, Lal Qala, Munda, SamarBagh, and Temergera. The places of tourist attractions in Dir Lower are Churchill Piquet, Dir Museum Chakdara, Laram Top, Jakar Baba, Shahi, Bin Shahi, Sheen Ghar, Siah Top, and the like (Tahir, 2011).

Malakand Division is a tourism hub. Tourism starts from here and goes to the Northern Areas which is a paradise of tourism in Pakistan. Malakand Division is a gateway to Northern Areas. There are seven districts in Malakand Division, namely Swat, Dir Upper, Dir Lower, Buner, Shangla, Chitral, and Malakand. Swat and Chitral are comparatively more developed in terms of tourists' arrivals. The rest of the districts are now getting their share in tourists' arrivals gradually. But still far behind from Swat and Chitral. Dir Lower is also getting momentum in terms of tourists' intake, as from the last three-four years the ratio of Dir and Swat arrivals is 2:3 (Mukhtar, 2020).

This study aims to find out what are the impediments of tourism in Dir Lower, why tourism in Dir Lower is not developed compared to Swat, and what is the way forward; as both have almost the same resources in terms of landscape, weather, historical buildings, archaeological sites, and scenic places.

Conceptual Framework of the Study



The scope of this study is limited to Dir Lower. This study focuses on impediments of tourism in Dir Lower and the way forward. Various issues are obstacles in the development of this area. Like lack of infrastructure and superstructure, socio-cultural aspect, lack of government concern, law and order situation, Dir state policies, the mindset of the people, low acceptance of other cultures, lack of

public and private partnership, no comprehensive promotion efforts, lack or no destination management and the like. But the focus of this study is limited to the first five variables only.

Lack of infrastructure and superstructure: Tourism infrastructure is the sum of things and organizations creating material and organizational bases, facilitating the development of tourism. Infrastructure includes roads, water supply systems, electricity, safety services, sewage disposal systems, gas lines, health services, communication, and public transportation (Gearing et al., 1974).

Tourism superstructure can be written as all the facilities and buildings which primarily cater to the interests or needs of the hospitality and tourism visitors. Tourism superstructure is all those facilities generally developed to give respond to the needs and demands of the visitors. It can be found in the form of hotels, conference centers, restaurants, car rentals, parking lots, museums, stores, and some other major attractions. The superstructure is determined by the wishes of the visitors rather than dominant by residents' desires.

The state of infrastructure and superstructure in Dir (Lower) is not at a level acceptable to the tourists. The means of roads, transportation, telecommunication, water supply systems, electricity, health services, and safety services are not up to the mark. There is only one main GT road that leads to Chitral and takes a load of Dir Lower, Dir Upper, Bajaur, and Chitral. The condition of this road is satisfactory and it deteriorates in various parts which makes the journey troublesome. The same road has traffic jams in Chakdara and other congested towns regularly. Link roads are also in bad shape and bad condition. The provision of drinking water supply is also not channelized. The transportation system does not match the requirements of tourists. Power failure is also an integral part of the lives of inhabitants as witnessed in other rural parts of the country. Health services do not meet the requirements of the 21st century and serious patients are always referred to big cities of the country. The concept of tourist safety is also not implemented in its true spirit.

Superstructure condition in Dir Lower is also not encouraging rather disappointing. There are 9 registered hotels and restaurants compared to 238 in Swat (Hotel and Restaurant Directory Pakistan 2007-08).

Dir State Policies: Dir was an independent Princely state since it emerged in Pakistan in the year 1969. Before merging, it was ruled by Nawab's Family (Ali, 2015). This era was regarded as the dark era of Dir State. To safeguard their interest; the state had some strange traditions which were the actual reasons the state remained in the dark. Nobody was allowed to get modern education as it was a threat to their throne and had to face serious consequences like an exile from the state along with family. The use of words in conversation from other languages like Urdu and English was strictly discouraged and punished. To keep the residents of Dir State unaware of the rest of the world the use of Radio and other such devices was completely banned. To start your new business you will need to take permission from the Dir State and when it is against the interest of the State it was not possible to start any new endeavor. The use of cement and tin was not allowed in the construction of buildings. Two-story buildings were not allowed as well as no coloring of buildings and making designs on them. Wearing white dresses was not allowed. All these policies and restrictions were not there in favor of tourism which badly affected tourism of the area (Shahid, 2005).

Socio-Cultural Aspect: Socio-Cultural aspect is a combination of customs, beliefs, practices, and attitudes/behavior which exists in a certain area or population. Socio-cultural elements are values, living style, and customs. Precisely, aspects of culture are education, aesthetics, law and political language, social organizations, religion, material culture and technology, attitudes, and values. Social factors comprising of family, reference groups, status, and role in the community (Thornton, Ribeiro-Soriano, & Urbano, 2011). The literacy level of the people of Dir is comparatively low. They are not that much educated and well versed in comparison to other nearby districts. Due to the low level of education people of the area are rigid and having orthodox thinking and living standards. They are lacking the expertise of dealing with tourists professionally. People are very much religious-minded and love their religion. This religious inclination sometimes does not move smoothly for the provision of a conducive environment to tourism.

Law and Order situation: Societies always function under smooth law and order situation. No single society can function in chaos and disorder (Nadeem, 1997). Law and Order are defined as all civil laws mentioned in the constitution, their implementation, and enforcement by the agencies responsible for and prosecution of the lawbreakers. Law and order situation determines the pace and pattern of the development of the country. Smooth Law and order situation is the sign of stability of

the economy of any country (Robertson, 2002). Peace is the foremost factor for tourism. Due to internal insecurity, Law and order situation can be arises. Factors can be ethnic cleavages, religious/sectarian extremism, external aggression, etc. All these are responsible for intensifying the conflict and have an impact on the overall smooth operation of the society (Khan, 2017). Peace is necessary for the smooth functioning of society. Tourism also flourishes in those societies where peace prevails. The top destinations of the world are very peaceful and law and order situation is ideal (Burtner, 2010).

Lack of Government Concern toward Tourism: Since the inception of Pakistan, tourism is not prioritized in the country. Practical steps are not taken through large measures are considered but practically nothing was seen on the grounds as no visible steps were witnessed. Roads of the area are in bad condition; overall infrastructure is also not encouraging. There is no single tourist facilitation center for tourists. The government's role remains passive in taking the private sector on board towards the development of tourism. No single body was formed to take tourism to the heights or at least to get it to the track where it can catch height (Arif, & Shikrullah, 2019). Very few sensitization programs were arranged and if arranged, it was arranged by private sectors/foreign funding agencies or NGOs. In the Government campaign for tourism promotion hardly any location of Dir is highlighted except Kumrat, it is made possible when Imran Khan visited this area and people came to know about Kumrat. Various bloggers around the globe were invited to document and make short films on the tourists' attractions of the country but no single blogger was invited to highlighted tourism potential in Dir. To find and highlight new destinations for tourists' attraction is a good step towards the promotion of tourism in the country but from Dir, only one destination was chosen as a tourists' destination although Dir has got plenty of tourist spots which can attract tourists domestically and around the globe.

Methodology

The quantitative research design was used. Data were collected from inhabitants of Dir Lower comprising of Transporters, Travel Agents, Hoteliers, and others (politicians, teachers, farmers, and social activists, etc.). A cluster sampling technique was used. The population was large so it was divided into clusters (tehsils) and data was collected through the Simple Random Sampling (SRS) technique. The closed-ended questionnaire was used for data collection. The total sample size was 510 comprised of 113 transporters, 157 hospitality sector personnel, 101 travel agents, and 139 others. Pilot testing of the instrument was done as the instrument was developed by the researchers and the result of Cronbach's Alpha was .801 which exhibits the reliability of the instrument. Data were analyzed through SPSS for frequency distribution and presented.

Analysis and Findings

In this section, the responses of the respondents are analyzed, and conclusions are drawn. The study was analyzed and presented in the form of tables and analysis based upon different variables. This work revealed that Dir state policies were not tourism-friendly and it pushed back District Dir. No policies were made by the state which supports and facilitate the tourism industry of the area. Tourism was not the priority sector when it was a princely state. People were kept unaware and the potentials of Dir were not explored and promoted. Traditionally Dir has been lacking infrastructure and superstructure for tourism. Infrastructure and superstructure of Dir need improvement because there is relatively poor infrastructure and superstructure found in Dir, such as poor power supply system, lack of asphalted roads, lack of water supply, lack of telecommunication system, unavailability of PTDC facility, unavailability of tourists' sites protection, poor destination management and lack of tourists' information centers. Infrastructure and superstructure are the primary and basic elements to attract tourists toward destinations. For a long, the literacy level of the area remained on the lower side combined with weak financial positions of the inhabitants who cannot afford to facilitate tourism. But data revealed that low literacy level is one of the obstacles in tourism promotion but the affordability of the inhabitants does not have any impact on the same. Cultural rigidity and religious fundamentalism do not have any impact on the tourism of the area. This argument is supported by the data. The Law and order situation of the area is also a concern for policymakers. Most of the respondents think that if tourism promotion is the focus then we should work on the law-and-order situation of Dir. The most dominant factor which is considered responsible for the prevailing miserable condition of tourism is the lack of government concern towards tourism in Dir. Respondents opined that government concern is missing. They are not keen to work in tourism. There

are no visible efforts of the government for the uplift of tourism which in return can make this place a heaven for tourists and they can take great memories from the area.

Conclusion

To promote tourism in the area; the infrastructure and superstructure need to be improved. It was concluded that it is the joint responsibility of both public and private entities. Both parties will need to shoulder the responsibilities of the development of the infrastructure and superstructure. The local community can also be sensitized through awareness about tourism so that they can also contribute to this cause. This developed infrastructure and superstructure will be beneficial for the local community in many ways and they can enjoy their lives. This can inspire the economic activities in the area thus resulting in the prosperity of locals in specific and country in general.

Government should prioritize tourism in Dir by taking visible steps in the shape of developing and promoting sites in the area, establishment of tourism information/facilitation centers, the constitution of the tourism task force, developing infrastructure, give incentives to private entities who work for tourism promotion, regulate the industry, encourage planned tourism, capacity building of the human resource and involvement of local community will result sustained development of tourism in Dir.

Law and order situation also needs attention. Some issues are identified in some areas. Although this number is very nominal still it needs to work on the same to make this area ideal for all types of tourists. It is also recommended that steps need to be taken for tourism awareness among people and to change their mindsets so that they can accept tourism for the benefits of themselves and the area as this area have all the resources for becoming one of the best places for tourists.

This study was a cross-sectional study wherein data was collected at one point in time. Limited variables were measured. The same can be extended to some other variables which have effects on the same one way or another. Data can be collected from some other demographics to get more dimensions in the study.

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