



Media Reporting of Security Concerns and Impact on Tourism in Pakistan

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Abstract: Even though Pakistan's tourism industry is one of the fastest-growing in the world, there are several issues with it. Pakistan has an abundance of natural and cultural resources that can be used for long-term tourism, but the country's tourist potential is underutilized as a result of a lack of dedication and management. There are number of factors that play significant part while determining status of tourism in Pakistan. Media portrayal is one of the most influential one. This study focused on media reporting of security concerns and impact on tourism in Pakistan. Researchers used qualitative technique i.e. interview method. Purposive sampling method technique was used to draw the sample size of 20 experts. After applying thematic analysis findings of the study suggest that dramatized and sensational reporting on security issues in Pakistan may have negative impact on tourism industry in Pakistan.

Keywords: Tourism, media reporting, security concerns, Pakistan

1. Introduction

In order to disseminate knowledge about events of public interest, media reporting is essential. Events that are violent are especially likely to receive extensive media coverage. Thus, even one isolated incident has the potential to damage public perceptions of security if it garners a lot of media attention. This is especially troublesome if reporting discourages foreign visitors who could boost the economy by bringing in foreign capital and skills, trading goods, or by spending money while visiting. Given the advantages of economic integration and openness generally, as well as tourism specifically, media reporting may then have unfavorable effects on economic growth (Faber & Gaubert, 2016). The degree to which news coverage affects how violent events affect the economy is not well understood. Furthermore, we are unsure about the duration or persistence of the economic effects of violent incidents. To have a deeper understanding of these inquiries, it is necessary to gather suitable data that can quantify the economic reactions to instability as well as the type and timing of news coverage (Melitz & Trefler, 2012). One of the biggest drivers of the GDP, economic growth, and employment creation is tourism. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the travel and tourism industry supported 334 million employments in 2019 and directly contributed 10.4% of the global GDP through its direct, indirect, and induced effects. It also brought in US\$9.2 trillion to the global economy. The expansion of tourism-driven satellite service industries and the world economy are likewise impacted by tourism (Frechtling, 2010). Furthermore, one of the main forces behind the expansion of services and trade is the surge in demand for travel. Nevertheless, for the past 20 years, there have been ongoing and sporadic security concerns to the worldwide travel and tourist (T&T) service industry (Goldman & Neubauer-Shani). One of a person's fundamental wants is to feel safe and secure. Therefore, a crisis for a tourist site could result from an unanticipated unfavorable incident influencing necessities. This is why, since the 1970s, a growing number of

research on tourism have concentrated on safety and security-related issues. Events like natural catastrophes, local conflicts, terrorist attacks, health scares, or an increase in crime at a specific location may cause prospective travelers to reconsider their trip plans or perhaps change their destination entirely. The detrimental effects and fallout from these tragedies were unavoidable for the tourism sector. Furthermore, a few of these circumstances showed how vulnerable tourism is on a local, regional, and worldwide scale. Consequently, a tourist destination's success or failure may depend on its ability to provide guests with a safe and secure atmosphere (Hamarneh & Jeřábek, 2018).

The way that certain dangers are viewed as dangerous and others as trivialized is largely dependent on how they are covered by the media (Kasperson, 2005). The inability of viewers to personally encounter risks like terrorism or political unrest makes them more dependent on secondary sources of information. Of these, the news media is frequently mentioned as being a particularly significant source of risk perceptions regarding hazards and the tourist locations where they occur. While news media coverage of dangers is generally seen to be related with developing erroneous knowledge of safety levels at destinations, it also serves to provide individuals with important information in a timely manner (Chew & Jahari, 2014). Therefore, by understanding how prospective tourists interpret and act upon this information and developing their own communication strategies to present a more balanced picture of the situation, destination management organizations hope to minimize the negative effects of such coverage (Baxter & Bowen, 2004). Media researchers point out that how dangerous situations are portrayed is crucial to comprehending the possible media impact on perception of risk (Hove, Paek, & Jwa, 2015). Numerous studies show instances of how particular features of dangers are overemphasized in the media when discussing them, to the exclusion of other aspects (Daye, 2014).

It is generally acknowledged that a speaker's emphasis on certain aspects of a topic can affect how listeners comprehend and perceive the topics they are discussing. Studies on tourism and hospitality that make use of framing theory show that message frames can affect trust and intentions to book a hotel and destination attractiveness (Sparks & Browning, 2011). Scholars studying tourism believe that news framing can make a destination appear safer or riskier (Hall, 2002). In addition to examining the impact of various approaches of depicting risks, experts on framing effects point out that audience characteristics should also be taken into account (Lecheler, Vreesel, & Slothuus, 2009). In social scientific literature, "the processing of physical signals and/or information about potentially harmful events or activities, and the formation of a judgment about seriousness, likelihood, and acceptability of the respective event or activity" is the widely accepted definition of perceived risk, also known as subjective risk (Renn, 2004).

With certain outcomes being more appealing to travelers than others. Risk is generally explored in terms of unfavorable consequences, such as lost time or money that may result from using tourist products, like trekking in new places, even if it can have both positive and negative effects. Risks that have been highlighted include those related to health (such as food poisoning) and terrorism or political instability, which can manifest as dangers like bombings, kidnappings, coups, and disturbances in the streets. Because the potential harm from visiting areas affected by such catastrophes is unpredictable, involuntary, and random, people frequently note that terrorism and personal injury pose particularly frightening risks (Heng, 2006). Political risks, like terrorism, are seen as more dangerous than social and physical risks, like unfriendly locals, and physical dangers, like bad weather. This may be due in part to the intense emotional impact that these incidents carry, which is heightened by the fact that the harm is man-made rather than the result of natural occurrences. One of the primary effects of man-made disasters is that, in addition to the physical harm, the psychological toll is frequently the greatest (Schmid, 2005).

Although they are related, political instability and terrorism have distinct conceptual identities, as many writers who study the phenomena from this angle attest to (Saha & Yap, 2013). In 2022, a protracted conflict between Russia and Ukraine may result in a \$14 billion decline in worldwide tourism receipts (UNWTO, 2022). There will be widespread repercussions from the Russian attack on Ukraine in numerous businesses, particularly in the tourism, travel agency, airline, and cruise sectors. On the other hand, previous studies have neglected to consider the broader effects of both destination-specific and global security factors, such as defense capability (e.g., military spending, heavy and nuclear weapons, weapons imports, exports, and armed services personnel) and geopolitical power-plays (e.g., deaths from external conflict, displaced people, UN peacekeeping funding) on the T&T service sector (e.g., leisure tourism spending, employment, and GDP contribution). Although the connection between economic activity and country risk indicators is getting more and more clear (Koch, 2022).

Systematizing the security dangers to tourism can take several forms. One approach is to categorize the threats into three categories: natural (such as earthquakes, floods, and storms), human-caused (such as terrorism, wars, and

criminal activity), and health-related. According them, there are four primary concerns to the security of tourism: political unrest, war, terrorism, and criminality (Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006). Similarly numerous variables, including the state of the economy, political unpredictability and instability, border disputes and territorial disputes, environmental change, and risks to biosecurity, can have an impact on tourism and the behavior associated with it (Hall, Timothy, & Duvall, 2003). Globally, the body of research demonstrates that security incidents typically have a negative and complex effect on the travel and tourism sector, the destination, the local community, and the tourists themselves (Mansfeld & Pizam, 2011). The first goal of any tourist location should be safety and security since they are essential to giving high-quality travel experiences. The topic of safety and security is crucial for both the reputation of a travel location and the happiness of its guests (Holloway, 2006). Crimes can happen in a variety of settings and circumstances, including crimes done by locals against visitors, crimes committed by visitors against locals, crimes committed by tourists against other tourists, and planned crimes against tourism-related organizations (Prashyanusorn, Kaviya, & Yupapin, 2010).

1.1 Research Objectives

Current study focuses in the following research objectives;

- a) To understand the relation between security situation and tourism in Pakistan.
- b) To find the impact of media coverage of security issues on tourism in Pakistan.

1.2 Research Questions

- a) Does security situation have any impact on tourism in Pakistan?
- b) What is the impact of media reporting of security issues on tourism in Pakistan?

2. Literature Review

When it comes to Pakistan's reputation around the world, several things are in doubt. In the mainstream western media, Pakistan is primarily depicted as a terrorist state that provides safe haven and breeding ground for terrorists. In everything from blockbuster films like Iron Man to Netflix Original series like Bard of Blood, Pakistan has been presented as the source of terrorism. Quetta, a possible tourist destination in Pakistan, is portrayed in the Netflix series Bard of Blood as the center of terrorism. Homeland is one more example of a show like this. The worldwide audience's perception of Pakistan as dangerous is ultimately the result of this representation. Aside from television programs and motion pictures, the Western news media has been the final straw in persuading the global public that Pakistan is nothing more than a dangerous destination with unfavorable views against the nation (BBC Country Rating Poll, 2011). This perception of Pakistan was most likely created by bias, ignorance, and a particular narrative propagated by the mainstream media. Due in large part to prejudice and people's inability to learn the real facts about this area, Pakistan has come to be perceived as a very inhospitable destination for tourists. Although it is a grim truth, the perception of Pakistan as a terrorist state has been gradually shifting (Aftab & Khan, 2019). Furthermore, financial levels, outside influences, and contemporary social trends are all potential influencing elements when it comes to travel (Roslow, Li, & Nicholls, 2000).

A traveler's decision-making process consists of three stages: planning, the actual trip, and returning from the trip. It is clear from this that social media can be quite helpful during these three phases. According to a 2010 Google study, 87% of tourists utilized the internet for planning (Torres, 2010). And because more people are utilizing the internet and social media is becoming more widespread, this has grown with time. "Social media have widely been adopted by travelers to search, organize, share and annotate their travel stories and experiences through blogs" (Leung, Law, Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013). It is the global economy's largest and fastest-growing trading sector. In addition to generating revenue, tourism contributes to the advancement of a country's culture and civilization. The growing interest in travel for business, leisure, sports, health, religion, culture, and education has led to changes in the tourism industry. The goal of tourism is to visit a location without negatively affecting the locals or the environment while simultaneously boosting the social structure and economy of the area. All activities associated with travel, including lodging, dining out, and shopping, are categorized as tourism. It could be for a trip with friends or family, a work trip, or a vacation (Arshad, 2018).

Pakistan has enormous tourism potential, but regrettably, due to its diversity of cultures, civilizations, and customs, it has remained elusive. Pakistan also has a number of historical, religious, archaeological, and adventurous attractions that might bring large numbers of tourists from around the globe. Prior to the pandemic, Pakistan hosted more than two million international visitors, the most of them were from the northern regions. The necessity of

boosting tourism in Pakistan has emerged in the last few days. Comparing Pakistan to other well-known tourist destinations like Turkey, Italy, and Malaysia is a bit of a stretch. There has been a significant increase in the number of tourists visiting Pakistan in recent years. It is now easier to obtain a tourist visa for Pakistan. According to a government announcement, visitors from 30 different nations would not require a visa in order to enter Pakistan (Ahmed, Ahmed, & Abbas, 2022). Pakistan's breathtaking peaks, lakes, picturesque valleys, holy places, spectacular monuments, traditional delicacies, eating alternatives, and friendly people are known to people worldwide. Additionally, foreign tourists are aware that a range of tourism areas offer activities including fishing, hunting, rock climbing, paragliding, and safaris through the desert on camels and automobiles. Pakistan introduced initiatives like "Amazing Pakistan" and "Emerging Pakistan" to enhance its reputation as a travel destination. According to the World Economic Forum's tourism and competitiveness rating, Pakistan is now ranked 124th (Ahmed, Ahmed, & Abbas, 2022).

As everyone is aware, Pakistan's economy depends heavily on tourism, which also generates a sizable portion of the nation's foreign exchange earnings. Each country selects its own path based on a variety of factors, including its natural and human resource base, political, economic, and governance environments, and overall level of development. There must be contributions from the social, cultural, ideological, archeological, natural resource, and educational domains. Improved cost-effectiveness, infrastructure, and service quality are all factors that could impact demand overall (Arif, 2019). The influence of the media has harmed tourism. Pakistan's reputation has been harmed globally by the way the media has depicted the country, focusing only on the accidents, bombings, deaths, and other social issues. Pakistan's magnificent landscapes were showcased on TV shows at one point so that the entire globe could view them. However, at that time, the government controlled the media. Without thinking about how it might affect the state's reputation, the media started to promote anything they wanted (Arif, 2019). While the tourist industry has received a great deal of attention in wealthier nations, it is still mostly unknown in developing nations (Nadeem, et al., 2020). Pakistan's four distinct seasons, the second-highest peak in the world (K2), the coldest and warmest regions in the north and south provide evidence for Pakistan's tourism potential to the world. However, the media's portrayal of social issues, accidents, political warfare, and bloodshed have all contributed to the country's reputational problems (Alastal & Burdey, 2017). A complex business venture with exceptional process technology capabilities because of its labor-intensive character, ability to generate revenue through taxes, mostly from the hotel industry, significant foreign exchange income, cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, marketing opportunities, and nation-wide economic development (Khalil, Kakar, & Malik, 2007)

Pakistan possesses an abundance of natural and cultural resources that can be leveraged for extended periods of tourism (Baloch & Rehman, 2015). The nation has the capacity to attract tourists from all around the world. Attracting tourists is the most crucial part of growing Pakistan's tourism industry. Combining a number of interesting elements, like shopping, gaming, tradition, history, nature, and leisure activities, can make tourism more competitive (Alastal & Burdey, 2017). Travel abroad might be influenced by a multitude of factors. The removal of monetary taxes on tourist departure, political stability, rising levels of disposable income, rising levels of travel discounts and promotions, rising levels of customer confidence across emerging economies, improvements in bilateral relations, rising hotel prices, rising tourism packages, and the availability of travel product information via the internet and social media are the most significant. The local economy receives a substantial financial boost from tourism in the form of payments made by visitors for goods and services. With its wide variety of cultures, intriguing landscapes, stunning beaches, and an abundance of sites and activities that appeal to both domestic and foreign tourists, Pakistan provides fantastic travel opportunities (Karim, Latip, Marzuki, Shah, & Muhammad, 2021).

The tourist sector has been greatly impacted by terrorist attacks on travelers, especially those from Western nations. Pakistan is now ranked 103rd out of 124 countries that offer tourism services. Popular tourist destinations offer few options for lodging and transportation. In addition, the residents' general social, political, and economic circumstances were unfavorable. The conflict in Swat has had a significant impact on travel and sightseeing (Baloch & Rehman, 2015). The people ought to support the government in its efforts to eradicate terrorism. To improve the state of law and order, the government should take all necessary action. Then, a variety of services must be offered by the government in resorts. It should be simple and convenient to travel. All of this will cause tourism to spike—that is, increase significantly. The country's tourism industry is required to follow the most stringent international guidelines. Pakistan would thus become a more appealing destination for tourists (Akamavi, Ibrahim, & Swaray, 2022). Through collaboration between multiple stakeholders on critical issues like branding, marketing, promotion, infrastructure development, and encouraging private sector investments that can draw more

foreign tourists who are seeking to visit Pakistan, the development of tourism in Pakistan will be a process of defining the future of mobility and hospitality. All paths must eventually lead to the expansion of inclusive and sustainable tourism in Pakistan when the best practices have been applied and the required steps have been taken (Rizvi, Asif, Zahid, & Iqbal, 2022).

3. Methodology

This study uses qualitative technique. Interview method has been adopted by the researchers to collect data from the respondents. For this purpose, 10 media experts and 10 members from different tourism organizations have been selected using purposive sampling technique. Data has been analyzed based on different categories and subcategories.

| Categories | Sub-categories |
|--|---|
| Tourism in Pakistan | Potential of tourism Management and facilities Policies and strategy |
| Factors influencing tourism in Pakistan | Political stability Substantial government policies Hospitality sector Infrastructure Facilities and maintenance Influence of media Security and safety |
| Relation between security situation and tourism in Pakistan | Poor global impression Vulnerability of tourists |
| Media coverage of security issues | Frequent coverage of security issues Poor security for tourists News about terror attack on foreigners |
| Effect of media coverage of security situation and tourism in Pakistan | Negative image of Pakistan Pakistan among least visited spot among tourists Decreased influx of tourists Decline in tourism in Pakistan Economic effects |

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Tourism in Pakistan

Pakistan possesses an abundance of natural and cultural resources that can be leveraged for extended periods of tourism (Baloch & Rehman, 2015). Every nation's economy depends heavily on tourism, and Pakistan has the potential to be one of the most visited places on earth. Pakistan is a "growing country," but the tourist industry has the will and capability to make this weakness work to its advantage. Respondents of the study opined that Pakistan is blessed with huge potential with regard to tourism. Pakistan also has a number of historical, religious, archaeological, and adventurous attractions that might bring large numbers of tourists from around the globe. Pakistan's breathtaking peaks, lakes, picturesque valleys, holy places, spectacular monuments, traditional delicacies, eating alternatives, and friendly people are known to people worldwide. Additionally, foreign tourists are aware that a range of tourism areas offer activities including fishing, hunting, rock climbing, paragliding, and safaris through the desert on camels and automobiles. While considering the tourism potential Pakistan is capable of generating huge revenue from this industry. Apart from economic benefits it can promote good face of Pakistan amid rapidly deteriorating situation. It will also promote societal trust among the visitors who see it as dangerous and unfriendly country. However, this natural potential of Pakistan has not been fully utilized. The flagrant negligence of the tourism planning adversely contributes to Pakistan's appalling state of tourism. The building of hotels and other possible sites for tourism routes that could draw both locals and tourists was previously disregarded by succeeding administrations. Not everyone like having to camp or prepare meals for themselves, which is a common occurrence for travelers. To turn breathtaking sites into well-liked tourist destinations, hotels or resorts are required.

4.2 Factors Influencing Tourism in Pakistan

There are number of factors that play influential part in tourism industry in Pakistan. Respondents of the study believe that unfortunately tourism sector in Pakistan still remains marginalized industry. Despite number of policies and plans endorsed by successive governments, limited improvement has been witnessed in this area. A study finds that many things may impact a person's decision to travel overseas. The most important ones are the elimination of monetary taxes on traveler departures, political stability, rising disposable income, increasing travel discounts and promotions, rising customer confidence in emerging economies, bilateral relationship improvements, rising hotel rates, rising tourism packages, and the ease with which travel product information can be accessed online and through social media (Karim, Latip, Marzuki, Shah, & Muhammad, 2021). Participants of the study argued that there are several religious sites in Pakistan, especially those that are dedicated to "Buddhism, Sikhism, and Christianity." Between 300 BC and 200 AD, the earliest Buddhist sites in Pakistan were established. Jaulian Monastery, Jindal Temple, and Sirkap are a few of Pakistan's most famous Buddhist sites. Such sites have been poorly managed, except of the "Baba Guru Nanak", and do not bring much of the tourists as brought by other sites. Most well-known tourist destinations are often exposed to poor management. These places are illustration of subpar government effort. There are no hotels or other traveler lodgings, the roads are poorly maintained, and the area is regularly trash. All these indicators suggest the incompetence of the government. International standards state that the hotel business is still underdeveloped due to inadequate infrastructure, a dearth of government programmers, and issues with security. At the moment, a number of the nation's running eateries and motels lack adequate certification standards that guarantee top-notch service. The implementation of the legislation ensures cutting-edge services, which are critical to maintaining hotel industry standards, which in turn represent shifts in the travel and tourist industry.

4.3 Relation between Security Situation and Tourism in Pakistan

Globally, the body of research demonstrates that security incidents typically have a negative and complex effect on the travel and tourism sector, the destination, the local community, and the tourists themselves (Mansfeld & Pizam, 2011). Similarly, terrorism has caused enormous harm to Pakistan's tourism sector. Following the events of 9/11, Pakistan's reputation suffered as a result of the country's global designation as "unsafe" due to an upsurge in terrorism. Frequent bomb blasts, deliberate killings, drone strikes, and widespread devastation throughout the country persisted as obstacles to the growth of Pakistan's economy and tourism industry. Because of this, even though tourists from all over the world wanted to visit Pakistan, many of them were afraid to because of the nation's current law and order problems. The topic of safety and security is crucial for both the reputation of a travel location and the happiness of its guests (Holloway, 2006). Crimes can happen in a variety of settings and circumstances, including crimes done by locals against visitors, crimes committed by visitors against locals, crimes committed by tourists against other tourists, and planned crimes against tourism-related organizations (Prashyanusorn, Kaviya, & Yupapin, 2010). Citing a strong relation between security and tourism respondents of the study believe that Pakistan along with other countries can serve as a case study in this regard. A country such as Pakistan with exceptional potential of tourism has suffered and still suffering due to the poor security conditions. Top northern areas remain vulnerable to security threats. Government could not manage to improve that standards of security to international standard thus adversely affecting tourism industry in Pakistan. Security and safety of the visitor is the utmost requirement that serves the top most decisive factor in tourism planning. Therefore, good security should be the first priority of the government to improve that standards of tourism in Pakistan.

4.4 Media Coverage of Security Issues

Pakistan faces numerous security difficulties due to the current international, regional, and internal environment. States have since leveraged the media's enormous capacity to shape the public and mass image to counteract both internal and external adversaries. However, it is often known that the media takes a nationalistic stance when it comes to issues of national security and interests, regardless of the level of independence and objectivity available to them. Nation states and non-state political players are becoming more and more aware of the media's enormous power and how to utilize it to further their goals (Rahat, Ahmed, Ashraf, & Sidiqqua, 2022). Participants of the study opined that when it comes to media and security issues, media is often witnessed as dramatized and sensational. Pakistan has long history of security vulnerabilities and threats related to terrorism. Since security serves as among the top-rated beat in media industry its reportage is often sensationalized creating fear and threat

among consumers. A similar situation has taken place in case of Pakistan where national and international media has widely covered Pakistan in relation to its security concerns. Such media portrayals have declared Pakistan as “unsaved” place.

4.5 Effect of Media Coverage of Security Situation and Tourism in Pakistan

Considering the role of media in influencing public, media plays significant part in tourism as well. Both traditional and social media serve the source of information for visitors about the host country. Social media has become more powerful while making different choices. Since the inception of the Internet, print and visual media have perhaps never benefitted tourism more than they do now. The best features of almost every town, county, city, state, and country are highlighted on their own homepage. The print and image content of banner adverts, which are frequently placed strategically on the highest pages of websites, is typically targeted to the visitors' demography. An advertisement for a soothing vacation resort or outdoor retreat may appear on a professional or financial website that people with high-stress occupations frequent. Advertisements for Disneyland or other kid-friendly attractions are frequently seen on children's websites. People can get addicted to what they see through print and visual media, and the travel and tourism sector gains from each and every click (Chaudhary, Chowdhary, & Chaudhary, 2020). Similarly, experts opined that since media has power to promote tourism industry it has the potential to have negative effects as well. When news about bomb blast, assassination of foreigners, robbery incident with tourists, and other similar threats are reported in media, potential tourists are more likely to direct their choices of visitation. Pakistan's reputation has been harmed globally by the way the media has depicted the country, focusing only on the accidents, bombings, deaths, and other social issues. Pakistan's magnificent landscapes were showcased on TV shows at one point so that the entire globe could view them. However, at that time, the government controlled the media. Without thinking about how it might affect the state's reputation, the media started to promote anything they wanted.

5. Conclusion

Every nation's economy depends heavily on tourism, and Pakistan has the potential to be one of the most visited places on earth. Therefore, if Pakistan wants to compete on a global level, the government needs to learn about the delights Pakistan's tourism sector has to offer. There are number of influential factors in terms of improving the standards of tourism in Pakistan. Media reporting is one of them. Media serves as an introduction for new places and locations for the visitors nationally and internationally. When media frequently covers security issues and acts of terrorism, it can have negative impact on the potential visitors. Findings of the study suggest a similar stance. Sensational and dramatized coverage of security issues in Pakistan can have negative influence on tourism industry in Pakistan. Thus, media needs to play a responsible part to give good image of the country and report efforts being done to improve security situation so that tourism industry may flourish to the best.

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