

THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION IN POTOHAR REGION

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the complex relationship between tourism development and cultural heritage preservation in Pakistan's Potohar region. The study used a google form survey aimed at young individuals, a growing demographic of cultural heritage tourists. The findings show that historical relevance, architectural beauty, and religious significance are major motivators for visiting Potohar's cultural heritage sites. However, the research also highlights the possible concerns with the tourist's experience, emphasizing the need for better infrastructure and responsible tourist actions. The study verifies the strong appreciation for Potohar's cultural heritage and finds potential benefits between tourism and preservation initiatives, with greater awareness and money generation potentially financing restoration operations. However, a balanced approach is necessary. Concerns regarding wear and tear on cultural heritage sites require appropriate tourism practices. The study includes significant recommendations from respondents for attaining this balance, including as government investment in restoration, public education programs, community engagement, and sustainable tourist practices. Additional research into the economic impact of tourism and the viewpoints of many stakeholders is suggested. This study adds to the ongoing effort to safeguard the long-term viability of Potohar's cultural heritage by giving useful data and insights to policymakers, tourist stakeholders, and local people.

Keywords: Tourism, Cultural Heritage, Potohar, Architecture, Religious beauty, Sustainable tourism development.

INTRODUCTION

The Potohar region of Pakistan, which has a diverse and rich cultural history. Its history goes over millennia, as archeological discoveries from the Potohar Plateau demonstrate traces of early human occupation as far back as the Paleolithic epoch, or about 2 million years ago. From the Indus Valley Civilization (2750–1750 BCE) to the Gandhara Grave Culture, this fertile land fostered the growth of numerous cultures, leaving a legacy of towns, monuments, and creative manifestations.

Located in the magnificent Himalayan foothills, the Potohar region unfolds as a fascinating history. Its long history dates back thousands of years, whispering tales of risen and fallen civilizations that left behind a rich cultural heritage. Potohar has an enduring charm that never fails to attract people,

from the green hills covered with beautiful wildflowers to the lush plains irrigated by the Indus River. Subsequent times witnessed the ascent and collapse of formidable empires, each imprinting their mark on the terrain. The region's architectural and artistic legacy is influenced by the Mauryan dynasty, the Mughal Empire, and the Sikh Empire. Ancient and majestic forts such as Rohtas Fort whisper tales of fought battles and defended empires. Enchanting temples, like the Katas Raj Temples complex, still carry the resonance of the past rituals. Potohar's cultural legacy extends beyond its material forms. It is expressed in the colorful tapestry of languages, cultures, and rituals that make up the essence of life here.

The number of tourists visiting Potohar has increased recently. More and more people are traveling to the area, drawn by its rich cultural heritage, scenic beauty, and historical charm. The important query of this study is this one. The literature now in publication examines both the advantages and disadvantages of tourism on cultural heritage across a range of locales (Kalhor, 2016). This research focused on the Potohar region is still scarce, nevertheless. The complex relationship between tourism and Potohar's distinctive cultural landscape and historical landmarks is not widely recognized.

A region's identity and progress are based on its cultural heritage. Through tying communities to their history and influencing their present, it promotes a feeling of place. In Potohar, social cohesiveness and cultural pride are significantly supported by cultural heritage. The historical sites and varied customs of the area act as a link between different people, promoting tolerance and understanding. Cultural heritage also presents a large economic opportunity. When tourism is grown ethically it can boost the Potohar region's economy by bringing in income, employment, and other benefits. The purpose of this study is to clarify the complex relationship that exists in the Potohar region between tourism and the preservation of cultural heritage. By using qualitative research method, we shall attempt to comprehend the different viewpoints of tourists and opinion of young adults. We'll be able to document the experiences and issues of tourists, administration in historical sites, and local populations through survey.

Research Objectives

- Understanding the present trends and issues linked with tourism growth in Potohar.
- Explore the various elements that make up the Potohar region's cultural heritage.
- To look into all the ways that the cultural heritage affects Potohar's social, cultural, and economic landscape.
- To investigate how tourism development may affect the preservation of cultural heritage in Potohar.
- Identify solutions for fostering responsible tourism practices that ensure the long-term preservation of Potohar's cultural heritage.

Literature Review

The Author emphasizes how environmental elements, socioeconomic background, and cultural influences all have an impact on the choice of ornamental techniques and materials (Wahab & Khan, 2016). This idea is especially important when taking tourism's effects into account. An increase in tourists may change the humidity in the air or bring in new contaminants. Creating sustainable preservation solutions requires an understanding of the historical environment and how the original materials responded to it. For instance, increased tourist traffic may accelerate the deterioration of fresco paintings, which are particularly vulnerable to dampness, seen in historical buildings in the Potohar region. The piece examines the ornamental features utilized in the Potohar region during the Mughal, Sikh, and British periods (Wahab & Khan, 2016). This historical background is essential to our investigation. Certain ornamental techniques or materials may have been used in different historical periods. When evaluating the existing level of preservation and the possible influence of tourism on different historical places, these variations must be taken into account. For example, Sikh architecture may have prized stone carvings, whereas Mughal architecture may have placed a strong emphasis on elaborate stuccowork. Comprehending these historical discrepancies will provide a more focused evaluation of the influence of tourism on ornamental components. The Potohar region can benefit from best practices derived from research on effective preservation methods used in other areas with comparable historical buildings and decorative arts.

Understanding the Impact:

This paper by (Priyanto & Pirastyo, 2019) on the effects of tourism on Kebonagung tourism village in Indonesia offers insightful information.

The research emphasizes the complex relationship between tourism and culture (Priyanto & Pirastyo, 2019). Positive effects of tourism include a rise in tolerance and financial gains for the community. But technology can also be a threat to language, art, and customary ways of living.

The study highlights how crucial it is to look at a variety of cultural factors when evaluating the effects of tourism (Priyanto & Pirastyo, 2019). They investigate how these affect livelihoods, language, art, religion, and social structure. This method offers a thorough framework that we may modify to fit our

research in the Potohar area. We can investigate the relationship between tourism and various Potohar-specific cultural elements, like traditional crafts, Islamic ornamental arts, and local festivals.

Tourism Cluster in Potohar Region:

The objective of (Kalhor, Mapping out a Tourism Policy for the Potohar Plateau, 2019) proposal is to promote cultural tourism in the Potohar region. It offers insightful information that is pertinent to our study on how tourism affects the preservation of cultural heritage. This is how the data relates to our subject: The idea of "tourist clusters" is emphasized in the concept; each cluster will provide specific schedules and the Potohar region will be divided into these groups (Kalhor, Mapping out a Tourism Policy for the Potohar Plateau, 2019). This idea fits nicely with our objective to learn how to manage tourism development to have the least detrimental effects on cultural heritage sites. We may be able to concentrate visitor flows and resources for more effective preservation efforts in particular regions by forming concentrated groups.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework relies on two important concepts:

Heritage Capital: Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital, this notion sees heritage as an asset that contributes to a community's identity, sense of place, and economic development. Cultural heritage locations, traditions, and artifacts offer a sort of capital that can be utilized for many purposes.

Sustainable Tourism Development: This notion highlights the importance of developing tourism in a way that has a minimal detrimental impact on the environment, cultural heritage, and local populations. It argues for a balance between economic benefits created by tourism and the preservation of cultural assets for future generations.

Theoretical Lens: This paper studies tourist development in Potohar through the prism of these two themes. The research aims to explore solutions that can optimize the beneficial impacts of tourism on cultural heritage preservation by understanding it as a kind of capital and acknowledging the importance of sustainable tourism development.

Materials and Methodology

Qualitative approach is used to investigate the relationship between tourism development and cultural heritage preservation in Potohar, Pakistan. Qualitative research methods get better in exploring subjective experiences, attitudes, and perceptions, making them excellent for understanding tourist motives, experiences, and suggestions for change in the context of cultural heritage sites.

Data was collected using a Google Form survey. The survey was meant to collect qualitative data from a specific group - young adults (aged 18-24), who are a growing section of cultural heritage tourists. The poll included a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions to capture a variety of opinions and experiences.

The qualitative data collected through open-ended questions was evaluated thematically. This entailed systematically classifying the responses to find repeating themes, patterns, and essential topics. These topics were then examined to acquire insight into the motives, experiences, and recommendations of young adult visitors that visited Potohar's cultural heritage sites. The data from the closed-ended questions were utilized to add to and reinforce the findings from the open-ended responses.

A Google Form survey was chosen for its accessibility, ease of distribution, and capacity to reach a widely located group. The survey structure allows for the efficient collecting of data from a large number of respondents in a short period. The use of both open-ended and closed-ended questions maintained a balance between collecting unique qualitative data and delivering measurable results to support the analysis.

Data Collection

The survey data sheds light on the demographics, patterns of visitation, and perceptions of cultural heritage sites in Pakistan's Potohar area. Male students were more likely to be among the responders, who were primarily young adults. Survey participants noted that historical significance, architectural attractiveness, and religious significance were the main reasons they visited the numerous cultural heritage sites that were recorded. Even while the majority of respondents said they had a positive experience, certain unfavorable visitor behaviors—like littering and destroying artifacts—were noted. The vast majority of respondents stressed the value of maintaining Potohar's rich

cultural legacy, which they feel contributes to the area's distinctiveness and sense of community. To encourage responsible tourism and preservation activities, recommendations include implementing visitor control systems, integrating cultural heritage education, and increasing government spending on tourism. Use digital technology to promote and increase awareness of Potohar's cultural heritage globally.

Results and Discussion

Importance of Preservation and the Benefits of Tourism:

The overwhelming consensus on the significance of cultural heritage protection emphasizes the necessity for effective strategies. Surprisingly, respondents recognized numerous positive aspects of tourism, including improved awareness, economic benefits from revenue generation, and prospective funding for restoration programs.

Positive effects include improved intercultural understanding, revitalization of traditional customs, and financial gains for nearby communities. Degradation of the environment, a loss of cultural authenticity, and social change are examples of negative effects. These effects can be thoroughly examined in your research, and methods to optimize favorable results and reduce unfavorable ones can be found.

Investigating certain Pakistani cultural tourist sites through case studies can yield insightful information about the efficacy of various management techniques.

Investing in sustainable development strategies can be justified with the support of a thorough analysis of the financial effects of cultural tourism on nearby communities. (Hayat, Asif, & Riaz, 2021)

Present Situation and Difficulties:

The facility was neglected following India's and Pakistan's 1947 division. The decline of the Hindu population in the area affected upkeep.

In addition to murti theft and restricted access for Hindu pilgrims, there are other concerns such as pollution from adjacent cement manufacturers endangering the water level of the holy pond.

The Supreme Court's intervention has stressed the need for more restoration and cooperative efforts. Preservation Efforts: The Pakistani government has been working on restoration projects since 2005.

These initiatives include cleaning the pond, remodeling temples, and adding filtration plants.

Addressing challenges and promoting responsible practices:

Tourism provides economic advantages and raises awareness; prudent management techniques are critical to ensuring the long-term viability of the region's outstanding cultural treasures. The statistics and debates presented provide vital insights for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and local people to establish a collaborative approach that promotes responsible tourism while also protecting Potohar's cultural heritage for future generations.

Conclusion:

This study looked into the complex relationship between tourism growth and cultural heritage preservation in Pakistan's Potohar region. A Google Form survey was used to collect data from young persons aged 18 to 24, the majority of whom were students, a group that is increasingly interested in cultural heritage tourism because of its religious significance, architectural beauty, and natural monuments. The data indicate various motives promoting tourism in Potohar. Respondents cited historical relevance. Potohar's complex historical history spanning 6,000 years, architectural beauty emphasized its unique architecture, including forts and houses of worship, and religious significance were significant attractions. However, the study also reveals possible flaws in visitor experiences, with some respondents reporting littering, destroying artifacts/structures, and disregarding designated walking trails.

The survey statistics show that all respondents agreed on the importance of cultural heritage in Potohar, emphasizing the urgent necessity for effective preservation initiatives. Interestingly, the study found a possible symbiotic relationship between tourism and cultural heritage protection. Tourism's increased awareness, combined with possible cash production from tourist visits as a positive influence, could provide critical resources for restoration efforts. However, achieving this combination of strengths requires a balanced strategy. The observed rise in tourism, combined with worries about overcrowding and wear and tear on cultural heritage sites as a negative influence of tourism development, mandates the implementation of responsible tourism practices that address both

positive and negative elements of tourism development. The valuable suggestions made by survey respondents provide a road map for policymakers, tourist stakeholders, and local communities.

These recommendations include government investment in the restoration and maintenance of cultural heritage sites, public education initiatives on the importance of cultural heritage to promote responsible tourism, community engagement in tourism efforts to ensure the benefits of tourism reach local communities, and the adoption of sustainable tourism practices such as visitor limitations and infrastructure development. Sustaining the long-term viability of Potohar's cultural heritage requires a concerted effort. Policymakers, tourist stakeholders, and local communities may work together to develop a symbiotic future in which tourism and cultural heritage preservation thrive side by side. This research has helped to achieve this goal by giving useful data and insights that may be used to establish a balanced and sustainable approach to tourist management in Potohar.

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