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GLOBAL ECONOMICS REVIEW



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## Restoration and Rehabilitation of Traditional Heritage for Sustainable Tourism Development: A Case Study of Tehjian Heritage Market, Neelum Valley, Azad Jammu & Kashmir

Pages: 90– 101

Vol. VII, No. I (Winter 2022)

DOI: 10.31703/ger.2022(VII-I).08

p-ISSN: 2521-2974

e-ISSN: 2707-0093

L-ISSN: 2521-2974

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**Abstract:** Cultural heritage is the property comprising monuments, buildings, and art specimens. It also includes intangible assets like language, religion, skills, and tradition. Heritage sites need to be preserved in the present day so that they can benefit future generations. But being exposed to both natural threats and human vandalism, many important heritage sites have disappeared from different parts of the world, including the Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K). The AJ&K region of Pakistan is blessed with an eye-catching landscape and rich cultural heritage. The region attracts millions of tourists from across the country and abroad due to its pleasant weather and scenic beauty. But this flow of tourists can only be seen during the summer. The flow can be sustained throughout the year if other sources, especially heritage sites, are promoted for cultural tourism. The Tehjian Heritage Market, located in the Neelum Valley, comprises 37 traditional wooden shops. This traditional market has been losing its value due to negligence and lack of management; thus needs to be revived for the promotion of sustainable cultural tourism. This paper presents a comprehensive rehabilitation plan for the restoration and revival of the Tehjian Heritage Market for sustainable tourism development.

**Key Words:** Restoration, Rehabilitation, Tehjian, Heritage Market, Sustainable Tourism, Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

**JEL Classification:** E32.

### Introduction

Traditional heritage has been one of the major sources of tourism in different parts of the world. Tourists are always excited to explore something new. Traditional architecture, due to its unique material, design, decoration, and place in the landscape, thus presents an exceptional testimony to a culture. The architectural tradition of a society has a

reflection of the local atmosphere and sociality of a certain culture. Architecture is not merely a single entity, but it is integrated with other aspects of a society that revolve around one another. Traditional architectural specimens need to be preserved in the present day so that they can benefit future generations. But being exposed to both natural threats and human vandalism, many important heritage sites have

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been vanishing from different parts of the world, including the Azad Jamun & Kashmir (AJ&K).

The AJ&K region of Pakistan is blessed with an eye-catching landscape and rich cultural heritage. The region, due to its unique natural landscape, attracts millions of tourists from across the country and abroad during the summer. But the flow of tourists is confined to some of the specific natural resorts that are constantly losing their scenic beauty due to mass tourism. And the second major issue is seasonal tourism, as the flow of tourists to this region is only during the summer. Thus, there is a dire need to explore and promote more resorts and resources to stop mass tourism and keep the constant flow of tourists throughout the year. The present research is an attempt to revive one of the heritage markets locally known as Tehjian Market, which is known for its vernacular style of architecture.

*Tehjian*, one of the most beautiful villages of Neelum Valley of AJ & K. *Tehjian* is a local term which is used for a plan area. The beautiful alluvial plan of Tehjian is located at the confluence of River Neelum and the *Tehjian Nala* (Figure 1-3) (a small stream that emerges from Mohri glaciers in Indian-occupied Kashmir). Of these, the latter used to connect the AJ&K area with India-occupied Kashmir. Tehjian is connected with Dodhanial Village through a suspension bridge over the Neelum

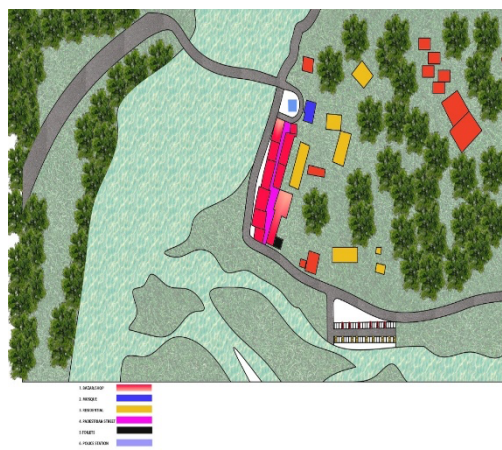
River. Located on the bank of river Neelum and surrounded by a series of lush green mountains, the Tehjian village presents a panoramic view. Apart from its scenic beauty, Tehjian is also blessed with rich cultural resources with great potential to attract tourists at local, national, and international levels. Of these, the Tehjian Heritage market is one of the most important places of tourist attraction if properly restored and promoted for sustainable tourism.

The traditional heritage market of Tehjian lies between (34.721816 N Latitude & 74.137366 E Longitude). It comprises a total of thirty-seven traditional wooden shops of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, which are being used for various purposes to fulfil the need of the local community. About 12000 local population is currently depending on this market. Apart from its tangible heritage, the traditional music, folklores and welcoming gestures of the local community makes the area more attractive for tourists. Rehabilitation and promotion of Tehjian market will make this part of the valley another important tourist destination like those of Taobutt and Arangkel.

Other important attractions associated with tourism in this specific region may include hiking tracks, bicycling tracks, bird viewpoints, dense forest, waterfront activities, zip-lining, camping and adventure sports.



**Figure 1:** Google map showing the project area



**Figure 2:** Proposed Development Plan for Tehjian Heritage Market

## Cultural Heritage and Tourism

Cultural heritage is becoming one of the most significant factors in the design of national policy regarding tourism (Agisilaos, 2012). According to Bachleitner & Zins (1999), cultural tourism has been the most developing type of tourism in recent times. The promotion of cultural tourism in a region not only helps to increase the number of tourists but also contributes to the conservation and preservation of the cultural heritage (Popescu & Corbos 2010). Effective promotion and utilization of available cultural resources not only help to increase the GDP significantly but will also increase livelihood opportunities in the tourism industry (Dugulan et al., 2010). However, over-tourism and exhaustive promotion of resources for financial gain also have negative effects on cultural heritage. It may raise some serious issues such as illegal trade and transportation of antiquities, commercialization of traditional folk festivals, illegal digging and destruction of archaeological sites and elimination or degradation of traditional arts and crafts (Karagiannis, 2006).

In summary, cultural tourism has significant effects not only on the culture itself but also on the economy, environment and on the local community. In this connection, Agisilaos (2012) has carried out intensive research in Greece to investigate and highlight the relationship between tourism, cultural heritage and the environment. This research was carried out with the aim to:

*"Investigate whether traditional communities are part of the protected natural environment and Investigate the relationship between traditional communities and the intensity of tourist activity in the surrounding areas."*

Results of Agisilaos's investigation show that cultural heritage has great potential to strengthen competitive tourist development in areas where heritage is well maintained. And communities with rich cultural heritage have the potential to develop into tourists destination and thereby grow their economy through sustainable cultural tourism (Agisilaos, 2012).

Keeping in view the potential of cultural resources of Neelum Valley AJ&K, the present study thus aims to revive and rehabilitate the heritage site of Tehjian Market.

## Historical Significance of Neelum Valley

Neelum Valley is located between 34.5891°N and 73.9106°E, with an area of 3,621 sq. Kilometres occupy the Southwestern belt of Azad Kashmir. Being the largest District, the valley is stretched on both sides of the river Neelum. While at some points, it has been divided politically by LOC (Line of Control) alongside the Kishen Ganga on the eastern side by occupied Kashmir (India). The west of the valley has a mountainous range of Nangi Mali, which segregates the valley of Neelum from Kaghan Valley and the Babusar pass.

Like other parts of AJ&K and its surrounding regions, including Hazara and Taxila, Neelum valley has also witnessed the rise and fall of many cultures and civilizations. Recent explorations in the region by Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad have unfolded the remains of different phases of human history. The newly reported sites include the ruinous remains of the Buddhists, Hindu Shahi, Mughals, and Sikhs' colonial and post-colonial periods (Khan and Rahman, 2016). After partition, Neelum valley became part of District Muzaffarabad until its up-gradation as a separate district in 2005. The demarcation of LOC changed the demographic release with a lessened role and significance of diverse cultural heritage and legacies. In ancient times the valley was known as Kishanganga, the derivation from Krishan, which denotes the river of gold. It has been attributed to Krishan, the god of vegetation, and Ganga means the river (Kumari, 1968).

Remnants of the Hindu temples and other religious buildings can still be seen in and around the Neelum valley. The best example is the Sharda temple which is said to have remained one of the major centres for education and learning. The temple has a square plan, and this square chamber is provided with a double pillar entrance

inspired by the Doric style of Hellenistic architecture. (Fig:3).



**Figure 3:** Proposed 3D model of Tehjian Heritage Market

The Buddhists and Hindus preferred to use stone as major construction material to build their religious edifices. But a significant change in style and materials can be seen during the Muslim era, especially during the last quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE. This change was due to the arrival of Syed Ali Hamadani, who is said to have brought 700 skilled persons (disciples) who introduced Central Asian art and architecture to Kashmir ([Shah and Hameed, 2012](#)).

### **Traditional/Vernacular Architecture of Neelum Valley**

Without any exception, the traditional architecture of Neelum valley is not very much different from the rest of the region, which evolved through several phases and building systems. Several settlement patterns have been developed over time to place themselves according to the culture and environment. The structures do not only adopt the traditional ways but keep safe from earthquakes and other natural hazards. The architecture of Neelum valley not only presents a unique tradition of local craftsmanship but also enhances the attraction of the landscape. The region's structure depends on local available stone, mud, bricks, and wood for the entire

body. Wood is the major material excessively used in the local traditional architecture due to its environment-friendly nature, comparatively low cost, easy availability and availability of local craftsman. ([Fathy, Shearer et al. 1986](#)). Interaction of building with the user and environment are important aspects considered in vernacular/traditional architecture.

In Neelum valley, traditional building materials are found in large quantities and variety. However, the availability of these building materials depends upon the geographical location of the site. The most widely used building materials are wood, timber, stone, mud, and thatch. These locally available materials have an economic advantage when compared with the imported materials and are more sustainable. Sustainable construction can be defined as a construction technique developed through traditional and scientific knowledge, and the use of locally available building materials have low carbon emission, reusable or recyclable, and is produced locally for having less transportation and processing cost.

Considering the economic condition of the local community, which depends on agriculture and now tourism on the rise, the



cost of construction is a major concern. Therefore, a responsive solution to the need is the use of sustainable and traditional building materials while considering other aspects of sustainability such as deforestation and environmental degradation. Also, providing them with a comfortable environment within the enclosure ([Agboola and Zango 2014](#)). Wood log architecture in Neelum valley can be seen in all types of buildings. But based on the social stratification, these can be classified into three major groups. Almost all the traditional houses are built of round or dressed wood logs. All the buildings are usually constructed over a stone wall. In most cases, stone slabs or partially dressed stone masonry can be observed without any mortar as rubble coursed ([Öztank 2008](#)). Single roofing on wood placed on the stone infills is the most common style of construction, which is locally known as *dhajji style*. Sometimes these stones are replaced by bricks, but the rest of the traditional patterns are still maintained.

### **Aims and Objectives**

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The main aims of the present study are to:

- Access and document the existing practices and patterns associated with the culture and architecture of the endangered wood build market
- Devise a comprehensive plan/mechanism for rehabilitation of Tehjian Heritage Market and its uplifting for the promotion of sustainable tourism development.

### **Restoration and Rehabilitation of Traditional Tehjian Heritage Market for Sustainable Tourism Development**

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The Tehjian village is accessible through a metal road throughout the year except for the month of January. The area receives a maximum of three feet of snow during the peak winter season, which hardly lasts for one month. Despite its rich tourism potential, there are very limited services being provided in the area. These include a few home-based accommodations, food and beverages. As a result, the local community has not been able to utilize the resources for uplifting their economy. Therefore, there is a need to devise

a proper developmental plan so that these rich resources of the area can be utilized for sustainable tourism promotion. For this purpose, the following assessments were made during the exploratory visit of the authors.

### **Available Tourism Resources in and around Tehjian**

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Tehjian village is blessed with both a moveable and immovable heritage of great importance. A brief description of the potential heritage is given as under:

#### **Food and Cuisines**

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Gastronomy has become one of the major sources of tourist attraction. Many tourists travel to get new food experiences, especially traditional cuisines. Tehjian village has a potential profile of local food items, which include forest honey, vegetables (*Langroo, Chach and Kunji*), and agricultural and livestock products such as maze bread, lassi, spinach, beans, mushrooms, yogurt, butter, *Kashmiri Kulcha* and pickle etc.

#### **Local Handicrafts**

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Tehjian village is not a densely populated area. The total population of the village and associated community does not exceed 12000. The major economy of the village is based on agriculture and the domestication of animals, such as cows, buffaloes, goats, and sheep. Some of the male and female members of the community are doing government jobs. The remaining, especially the female members of the family, produce local handicrafts such as rugs, gloves, socks, caps, sweaters, shawls, shirts, dresses and other decorative products (lamps, lampshades, paper Mache and straw baskets).

#### **Traditional Music**

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Entertainment is one of the major sources of enjoyment. Music is also a source of entertainment for the tourists as well as for the host community. The local population of the Tehjian village are also fond of music. Most of the musicians of the area sing folk songs, including Hindo *Pahari Mahiya*. The traditional

folk songs of the area include *Ratti Gali* and *Raima Saima*. But the young generation of Tehjian village, being inspired by modern Indian and Pop music, does not pay much attention to their traditional music. As a result, the traditional music being impregnated with foreign motifs is constantly losing its authenticity.

### **Market Assessment**

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Heritage Bazaar is the largest business market in the area providing the basic commodities to the local population and tourists. But due to a lack of a proper business plan, most of the shops are still vacant. Implementation of an appropriate business plan will not only help uplift the current businesses but also ensure provision of better facilities to the tourists and the locals. Land value in the research area is reasonable for startups, which is approximately (100,000) hundred thousand per marla.

The market currently houses thirty-seven shops of various sizes and different commodities, including general stores, restaurants, barber shops, vegetable and fruit shops and garages. But all these shops are currently in very dilapidated conditions and require rehabilitation and restoration on an urgent basis. The street housing the shops is also in a very bad state of preservation and needs restoration and modifications to meet the desired function. Proper space allocation is needed in this regard. For instance, covered walkways are required on either side of the street for pedestrians. Moreover, the vehicular access needs to be blocked so that activities within the heritage trail may not be disturbed. This will also help to keep the environment clean in and around the premises of the heritage market.

### **How to Utilize this Heritage Bazaar for Sustainable Tourism Development**

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Neelum valley of Azad Jammu and Kashmir is one of the emerging destinations in Pakistan. A tremendous increase in tourist flow towards Neelum valley has been observed in recent years. Unfortunately, there is no proper tourism infrastructure to accommodate the tourist flow in the future, as the involvement of

the stakeholders is inevitable prior to taking any step. For this sake, a survey was carried out in the study area by the authors with the purpose of understanding the perception/s of the local community about the restoration and rehabilitation of the Tehjian Heritage Market. From the group discussions with the stakeholders, including the shopkeepers and local community, it was noticed that the local community is in favour of the promotion of tourism for sustainable development in the area. But due to a lack of awareness about tourism and limited financial resources, the community does not have any idea how to rehabilitate the site. If the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir or some NGOs working in that area finance them under some conditions/partnership and educate them about tourism businesses, it may uplift the local economies.

In view of the above-mentioned facts, the following steps/ measures need to be taken to rehabilitate this bazaar for sustainable tourism development:

### **Community Tourism Office and Tourist Information Centre**

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Nearby this heritage bazaar, there are some very beautiful homestay accommodations run by the local community. Unfortunately, very few people know about this. This home-based tourism may be advertised using different media for tourists' awareness. A local community office may be established in Tehjian to facilitate and guide the tourists about the resources and facilities. These homestay accommodations provide an ideal opportunity for the tourists to enjoy the traditional food and mingle with the local community. Establishing a community tourism office will help to run these homestay accommodations in an organized way.

This bazaar is in a prime location and is near Sharda, Kel and Tao Bat (last abodes and very famous destinations of the valley). The establishment of an information Centre at this prime location will also help to disseminate tourists' information through brochures, maps, local guides, and transportation facilities (jeeps and horses for remote areas). Local tour operators and tour agents may be encouraged for such an information centre.

### Tourism Gears' Rental Shop

The area is also very rich in terms of adventure-related activities like trekking, hiking, camping, cycling, fishing, and rafting. So, a gear shop related to such tourism activities is crucial. This will facilitate not only the vendors but also the tourists.

### Traditional Food Restaurants/ Café

As it is the demand of tourists to experience local food, but unfortunately, traditional food is not provided even at remote destinations, so Tehjian rich in traditional food may be utilized to offer traditional/organic food to tourists.

### Promotion of Weaving Industry and other Crafts

Kashmir is famous for its arts and crafts. Kashmiri shawls are famous around the globe for their embroidery and unique designs. The weaving industry is a dying industry in these areas due to a lack of patronage and proper markets to sell. Still, there is a number of weavers who are struggling to continue this ancestral profession. Tehjian bazaar is a good starting point to make, sell, and promote local products. Display of some weaving equipment and making shawls may also provide the tourists with an opportunity for experiential tourism. Similarly, other handicrafts may also be made and displayed here, which will lead to the economic empowerment of the local craftsman.

### Establishment of Public Library

Public Library plays an important role in providing access to information and literature. The establishment of a public library in Tehjian

### The Main Entrance of Tehjian Market (4-5)



Figure 4: Existing Entrance of Tehjian Market

will provide easy access to the literature about the local art, architecture, history and other aspects of life. In this way, traditional culture will be conserved for future generations and for the education and enjoyment of the tourists.

### Role of Elders

Elders of the local community can play a positive role in all such development. Being the custodians of their history and culture, they preserve oral history, folk stories, songs, and other intangible heritage. The elders can pass it on to the next generation if they are actively engaged in this development. They also have a deep understanding of traditional medicines (herbs and shrubs). Therefore, they can be helpful in the documentation of all this heritage.

### Educating the Local Community in the field of Tourism and Hospitality

As the local community is mostly unaware of tourism and businesses related to this industry, so there is a dire need to train the local community of nearby areas and even the shopkeepers about tourism and hospitality. They can be encouraged to start homestay accommodations and become tour operators, travel agents and tour guides.

### Architectural value/ Description

A Street runs through the market, with stores on both sides. Along the Kishan Ganga riverbank, the market runs north-south. Notable architectural characteristics of the market identified and documented are discussed here.



Figure 5: Proposed Model for Tehjian Market



The street is paved with locally accessible river stone, as seen in (Fig 6). However, adequate upkeep is essential owing to snow and heavy rains throughout the year. On the right side is a recently constructed structure with stone walls, concrete floors, and a roof made of galvanized iron sheets, which, although paying omage to local architecture in certain ways, became the subject of this study. Everything will alter as a result of this shift.

### Wooden Structures (6-7)



**Figure 6:** Existing Wooden Structures in Tehjian Market



**Figure 7:** Proposed Wooden Structures of Tehjian Market

As can be seen above, all of the structures in the market are made of relatively raw wood, and GI sheets are used as roofing material when the restoration is being done. The roofs of stores in their original condition are likewise built of wooden boards.

### Exterior view of the Market (Figure 8-9)



**Figure 8:** Existing Street



**Figure 9:** Proposed Street

As shown above, each business has a bench for sitting outside the shop; the rationale for this, when questioned, was determined to be a need for a sitting area during the winters. This is where shopkeepers sit with a portable fireplace nearby.

### Covered Passage Corridor

A covered corridor (Figure 10-11) runs through the front of all of the stores. In the veranda corridors, there are doors for access in the stores, windows for service, and a bench for sitting, as well as circulation space during the rain.





**Figure 2:** Existing Corridors and Sitting Places



**Figure 3:** Proposed Corridors and Sitting Places

### Building Material

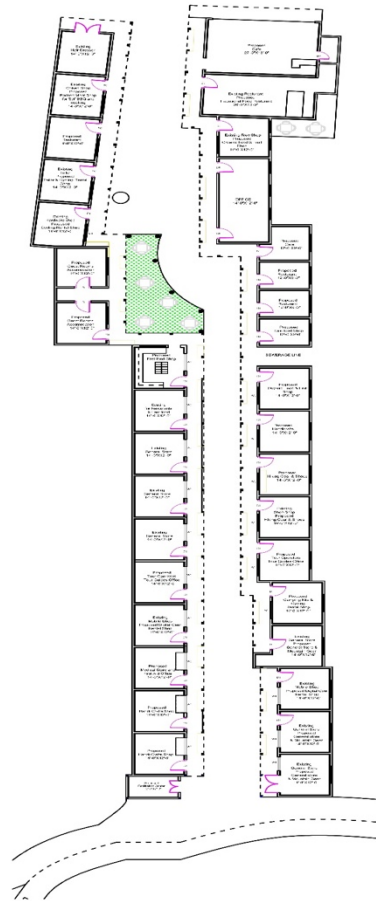
On the right side of the photograph is a wooden barrier with vulnerable wood-built Shops. All the structural parts are large pieces of wood sourced mostly from mature pine trees in the area. The structural components come in a variety of sizes, with thicknesses ranging from 4 to 8 inches and lengths ranging from 10 to 12 feet. The shops employ thin section boards with a thickness of about 3 to 5 inches and a width of 8 to 14 inches in varied lengths as partition components and roofing material. Sshlar masonry is used in the foundations to protect the structures from snow. The stone is obtained from a local quarry and prepared by local artisans.

### Material / architectural features

The architectural features found in Tehjian market include:

### Shops of Variable Sizes

As mentioned earlier in the section on construction materials, all the structures in the Bazar are made up of wood sections of varying sizes. While the sizes of the stores are uniform, the lengths of the shops vary. Aside from the sizes, each business has an entry door with a wooden shutter on the front side within the veranda and an operable awning window for service (sale/purchase). Doors and windows come in a variety of sizes, although typical windows are 2 metres wide and doors are 1 metre wide.



**Figure 12:** Proposed Restoration Plan of the Market

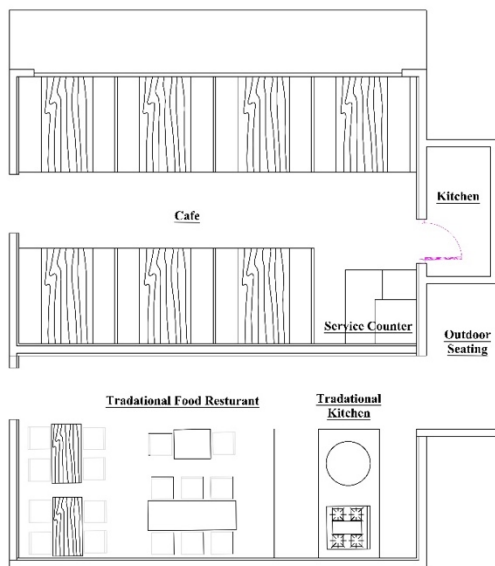


Figure 13: Proposed Plan for Cafeteria



Figure 14: Proposed 3D View of the Restaurant



Figure 15: Proposed 3D view of Vegetable and Fruit Shops

## Veranda

The width of the veranda or covered pathway also varies depending on the size and line of the stores, but the typical width in front of businesses is 1.2 meters. This is made up for many socio-cultural functions as well as a need during the severe winter season. In front of all the stores, the porch has a wooden seat that also serves as a rainy-day shelter.

## Street between the shops (Passage)

The passage between the stores in the bazaar's the most significant feature since it provides pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Because the bazaar grew gradually, the street's width did not remain consistent throughout, yet the average width of the street is 3 meters. This allows an easy passage for both vehicles and people.

## Assessment of business being practised

The existing business practices in the market are out of date when it comes to promoting this place as a heritage market since the current business practices in these stores are only focused on the local community. The business has to be altered in order to boost cultural tourism in the area, including tourist attractions such as stores selling local art and crafts, traditional meals, and tourism-related activities.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Tehjian Heritage Market, located in the Neelum valley, is one of the most important heritage sites in the valley. The Heritage Market comprises thirty-seven shops, all constructed following the traditional style. Due to its local material, unique architectural style and sufficient space for tourist activities, the heritage Bazaar has excellent potential to attract tourists throughout the years. The present research was thus an attempt to highlight the potential of the heritage market and devise a comprehensive plan for the rehabilitation and restoration of the heritage market that may lead to sustainable tourism development in the region. For this sake, a survey was carried out in and around the study

area to identify and access the resources in the area that can be used for different tourism activities. The assessment shows that the Tehjian Heritage Market, due to its unique architectural remains, ideal location and rich surroundings feasible for tourism activities such as hiking, trekking and rafting. The area is also blessed with cultural resources such as heritage sites and monuments, traditional music and local cuisines that can attract tourists from across the country and abroad.

The current survey has also confirmed that the local community, including the owners of the shops, are willing to restore the heritage market and provide sufficient facilities to the tourists. After a detailed assessment of the heritage Bazar, we would like to propose the following plan for the promotion of the heritage market.

- Restoration and Rehabilitation of the heritage market may be carried out following the traditional architectural style and materials. Tehjian heritage

market cannot be considered an archaeological heritage as it was constructed during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Alteration and addition to the existing structures are thus possible during the rehabilitation work.

- Proper spaces should be allocated for different business activities such as restaurants, souvenir shops, local consort, gear rental shops, vegetable/fruits shops, general/medical stores, mosques, tourist facilitation centres and car parking.
- The surrounding areas of the heritage market need to be developed for adventure and cultural tourism activities such as hiking, trekking, rafting and other religious activities.
- Homestay accommodation needs to be further promoted to empower the local community and provide the ideal environment for the tourist to explore local culture and food.

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