



SWOT Analysis of Kaghan Valley, Mansehra: Some Suggested Measures for Sustainable Tourism Development

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Abstract: Kaghan valley, Mansehra, is one of the topmost tourist destinations in Pakistan. Every year millions of tourists visit this valley. The valley is known for its natural beauty and pleasant weather. Its natural beauty also attracts inbound tourists. Kaghan valley is blessed with immense tourism resources. Some of these resources have already been explored, while many of them are yet to be explored and developed. The valley has a lot of strengths and opportunities for sustainable tourism development, but at the same time, there are a number of weaknesses and threats too. If these weaknesses and threats are not tackled immediately, it will cause a decline in tourism. The current paper is an attempt to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Kaghan valley and suggest some measures to overcome these issues for sustainable tourism development in the valley.

Introduction

Kaghan valley is in the northern part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It is among the topmost tourist destinations in Pakistan. Every year millions of visitors mark their way towards this beautiful valley within a short span of tourist season of three to four months. Tourists' concentration is at very few selected destinations of the valley (i.e. Balakot, Shogran, Kaghan, Naran, Lake Saiful- Malook and Lala Zar). The rest of the valley, being either unexplored or not accessible, receives a very limited number of tourists. Kaghan valley is the north-eastern corner of the district Mansehra of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It is bordered on the northern side by Northern Areas of Pakistan, i.e., Gilgit- Baltistan and on the eastern side by the

Neelum valley of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and on the other side, it is bordered by the settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province ([Masrur and Khan 1973: 4](#)). Its length from south-west to northeast, as the crow flies, is 60 miles. By road from Babusar Pass to Balakot is 159 kilometres. The valley is about under 92 miles (159 kilometres), and its average width is about 15 miles. Balakot town is the gateway of this beautiful valley ([Watson 1907: 202](#)). There are a number of strengths and opportunities of Kaghan valley, which may be utilized for sustainable tourism development, which will help to uplift the economy of the local community. However, at the same time, there are a number of weaknesses and rising threats, if not tackled properly, that may affect the tourism of Kaghan Valley adversely.

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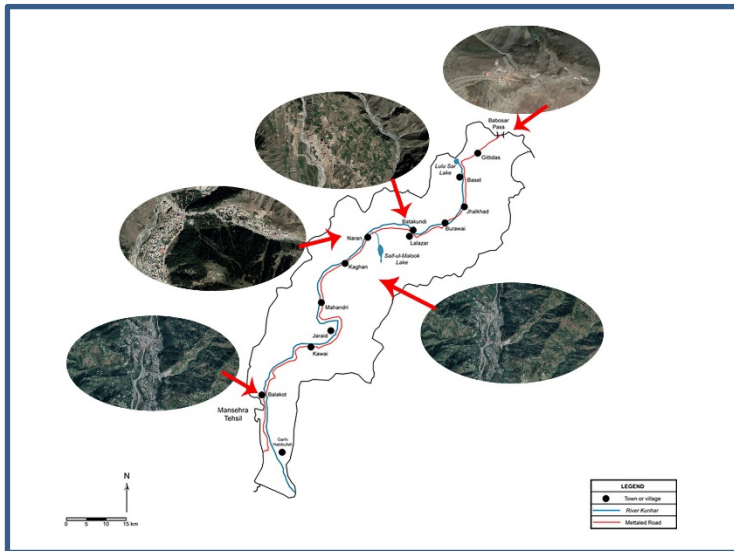


Figure 1: Map of Kaghan Valley, Manschra- showing General View

Very limited research has yet been carried out on the aspect of SWOT analysis for sustainable tourism development found in Pakistan. The current paper is one of the first attempts in his regard using SWOT analysis and considering Kaghan valley as a case model. A comprehensive work on this aspect was done by the senior author in the last few years (Arif, 2019). Some significant studies using SWOT in the literature and the region can be found in Mondal (2017), Kantawateera et al. (2013), Zhang (2012), Goranczewski & Puciato (2010) and Wall (2002). Other basic studies on Kaghan valley highlighting some tourism resources of the valley, which are in the form of guidebooks mostly are Khan (2011), Rasheed (2009); Maqbool (2001); Raza (2001); Mujahid (1999); Aziz (1998); Khan (1996) and Saeed (1995). The present study is based on the data collected through field surveys, focused group discussions, interviews and secondary sources.

Discussion on the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Tourism in Kaghan Valley

Based on primary and secondary data, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the tourism industry of Kaghan valley are highlighted in the following lines. The strengths

and opportunities should be taken maximum benefits from, and the weaknesses and threats should be overcome. This will lead to sustainable tourism in the valley, giving maximum benefits to the local community and the country, and visitors will also enjoy their visit to the valley.

Strengths

Kaghan valley is one of the most beautiful valleys and a famous hill station in Pakistan, having abundant natural and cultural resources. Its weather is very pleasant in summer, and the beautiful landscape, long patches of meadows with velvet grass and almost twenty smaller and larger lakes attract visitors within the country and abroad. Some of the lakes like Saif-ul-Malook are world famous for their beauty. The valley has a lot of other water resources like the river Kunhar and other streams and springs. River Kunhar is famous for its white-water rafting in Pakistan and provides different grades of white water rafting, from easy to difficult for aqua adventure lovers. The water resources of the valley accommodate the world-famous trout fish, which may be enjoyed in the valley. There are many waterfalls and springs in different parts of the valley. The water of some of the springs, like the Garlat sulphur spring and Dumnaarian spring, is used for the treatment of different

diseases like skin diseases and Diabetes.

The valley has some very beautiful mountain peaks having beautiful meadows on their laps. Being a mountainous valley, it has innumerable treks, connecting different valleys with one another, providing a wide range of options for hikers and trekkers to trek and explore the valley.

The valley is rich in its cultural heritage. There are diverse cultures in the form of nomadic, semi-nomadic and rural cultures. It also has unique religious and archaeological heritage sites with immense potential for tourism. Millions of visitors to Kaghan valley enjoy these cultures every year. The local community of the valley is peaceful, hospitable and tourist-friendly, and the traditional food of the valley is unique. A lot of visitors try to enjoy the traditional food of the valley. There are comparative cheaper accommodations available, which is also a strength of the valley because the visitors of Kaghan valley are the middle or lower middle class, and cheaper accommodations can provide an opportunity for visits to the middle and lower middle class.

Awareness about Kaghan valley is increasing among domestic tourists, and the same is the reason that the number of tourists is constantly increasing every year. The valley has the strength to satisfy the varying needs of almost all types of tourists. Tourism resources of the valley may be utilized for a longer time in future if properly planned and managed.

The major strength of Kaghan valley is its accessibility. Visitors from any part of the country can reach throughout the year. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes near the valley and so has the potential to attract tourists travelling from CPEC in future.

Weaknesses

Apart from the strength, the following weaknesses were also identified in the valley during the recent survey:

Lack of planning and management is one of the most alarming weaknesses that gives birth to many other issues. If these weaknesses are not overcome, visitors will not be satisfied, and the valley will experience a downfall in tourism. The roads leading to the destinations are very poor, which causes accidents many times. Tourists

cannot visit these destinations due to a lack of proper road infrastructure. Traffic jams and road accidents can be seen due to the condition of the roads. Similarly, there are no or very few public washrooms in the valley.

The weather of Kaghan valley is unpredictable, and being a mountainous region, land sliding is a hazard in the poor weather/ rainy season. As a result of severe weather, including landslides, floods and heavy rain during the monsoon, casualties occur every year. There is no garbage disposal system in the valley. Garbage is directly thrown into the river and fresh waters. It is not only eye soaring but also polluting the environment. Clean drinking water and electricity are another weakness of the valley.

There is a lack of effective promotional policies, and the role of media in creating Pakistan's image is not praiseworthy. Similarly, the law and order situation creates a downfall in inbound tourism to the valley. All this adversely affects tourism in the valley.

The natural and cultural resources of the valley are deteriorating due to a lack of conservation and restoration. There is also a lack of understanding of tourists' needs and demands. In peak season, prices go very high, and accommodations are sometimes not available, creating problems for tourists. Similarly, the valley also lacks star-rating hotels.

Seasonality is also one of the weaknesses of the valley, as it is available only for a few months in a year. Over construction and overuse of natural resources are also deteriorating the landscape and natural beauty of the valley. It may be a great threat in future for the valley. The daily life of the locals is also disturbed due to overcrowding during the peak season, resulting in hatred for tourism in the minds of the locals.

There is a shortage of tourism professionals in the valley, so services provided to the tourists are not satisfactory, and some tourists complain about such non-professionalism in the tourism and hospitality industry of the valley. Complicated official processes for the investment in the tourism sector in the valley are also a weakness. A number of investors cannot execute their tourism-related projects due to these hurdles. There are also insufficient financial resources for the development of tourism in the valley to overcome

these weaknesses. The concerned government departments have not yet been able to take any initiative.

Opportunities

The opportunities identified for sustainable tourism are:

Located very close to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and borders with Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Northern Areas of Pakistan, Kaghan valley is easily accessible. The benefits can be taken from this opportunity in increasing the number of tourists and developing tourism in a sustainable way.

There is a lot of potential for different types of tourism activities. The benefits from this opportunity can be taken in the form of introducing new types of tourism in the valley, including trekking and mountaineering. There are also opportunities for the promotion of Archaeological and Religious Tourism in the valley. The valley has the potential for cultural tourism. Museums of different fields for the preservation of the resources and education and amusement of the local community and tourists can be established.

An opportunity to conserve and promote the local arts and crafts through tourism. Having abundant natural, botanical and zoological resources, there is a good opportunity for Medical, Wildlife and forest tourism. The valley has immense potential for Educational Tourism as a lot of visitors to the valley are students. There is an opportunity to promote and preserve traditional and local sports through tourism in Kaghan valley in the form of Sports Tourism. There are also a lot of opportunities for winter sports as well.

Kaghan valley is an ideal place to invest and start tourism and hospitality-related business. The local community is flexible, peaceful and hospitable, and the workforce of the valley is loyal and reliable. There is abundant availability of local educated and less educated workforce to work in tourism and hospitality businesses (hotels, restaurants, transport, travel agencies and guides etc.). This opportunity can be taken benefit in the form of introducing homestay tourism. Visitors want to experience the traditional food of the valley, and in peak season, accommodation is also

difficult to find, so home-based tourism is a good option to provide the demands of the visitors and overcome the accommodation issue. It will also lead to the promotion of community-based tourism, raising their standard of living.

Law and order situation in the country is getting better now, and this opportunity can be taken to benefit for the development of sustainable tourism in the valley. Potential tourism markets can be accessed through effective marketing strategies in and outside the country. Use of knowledge and experience of developing countries and foreign organizations like UNESCO and WWF can be engaged to take maximum benefit from these opportunities.

Threats

Some of the threats to sustainable tourism development identified during the recent survey in Kaghan valley are as under:

The economic crises of the country are one of the most important threats that raise many issues related to the tourism industry of the country and the valley. This economic crisis also leads to terrorism and insurgency in the country, which adversely affects tourism and especially inbound tourism. Political instability is another threat to tourism. It leads to the discontinuation of tourism policies resulting in a hindrance to the development of sustainable tourism. A local community of the valley is also politically unaware, and this ignorance is also a threat to the development of tourism in the valley in a sustainable way. Frequent constitutional amendments are also a threat to tourism in the valley. The lack of tourism planning and management in the valley is yet another hurdle. Tourism resources are deteriorating day by day due to this threat. Lack of coordination among the relevant government departments is a barrier to tourism development in the valley. Less allocated budget for tourism and a lack of qualified and trained staff in the relevant government departments like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) is also a threat to tourism development. Very complicated official procedures for the investors in the valley and a lack of proper guidance from the relevant departments also discourage the investors, and the valley lacks recreational facilities in this way. High prices and

lack of accommodations during the peak season are also the major threats to tourism in the valley.

Illegal hunting of the wildlife and treasure hunting of archaeological resources, and illegal cutting of the forests are also major threats to tourism in the valley. Haphazard construction in the valley is deteriorating the beauty of the valley. Heavy tourist burden on few selected tourist destinations in the valley, including legendary Saiful-Malook Lake, resulting in the rapid deterioration of resources/ destinations. Similarly, pollution and garbage are also some of the increasing threats to the valley.

Overcrowding in peak season, which disturbs the visit of the tourists and the life of the local community, is also a threat. During Eid days especially, the arrival of some irresponsible visitors in the valley and making noises and hooting, due to which clashes are reported between the locals and the visitors. Due to such type of visitors, families are also avoiding visiting the valley these days since last few years.

Due to bordering with northern areas of Pakistan, the remote upper parts of Kaghan valley are not too much safe for visitors to visit without taking security and safety measures. Visitors mostly avoid visiting such areas. It is also a threat to the tourism of the valley.

Suggestions

This section provides some measures to be taken by relevant departments, especially Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), for sustainable tourism development in the valley. KPCTA may take benefit from this study and suggestions and, if implemented in its spirit, may change the direction of tourism in the valley; at the same time, these suggestions may be applied to other parts of the province and the country as well. These suggestions are for the benefit of the government and other stakeholders, and there are some suggestions for the visitors and the local community as well, for the development of sustainable tourism and friendly host and guest relationship in the valley.

Some of the suggestions based on the findings of this study, data are given in the following lines:

Continuation of Tourism Policies and Political Stability

A country cannot develop without the continuation of good policies. Due to political instability in Pakistan, tourism planning and development and tourism policies could not be practised in letter and spirit. The tourism policies already formulated have not yet been properly implemented. The other problem in Pakistan is the issue of ownership regarding Tourism. Some governments consider it a federal subject, and some provincial. In 2010, the Ministry of Tourism was devolved and handed over to provinces through the 18th amendment. In 2019, National Tourism Coordination Board (NTCB) once again formulated at the federal level to coordinate tourism matters with the provinces. Similarly, weakening and strengthening PTDC repeatedly also creates hindrances in tourism development. Political stability and continuation of policies should be maintained and implemented with letter and spirit for the development of tourism in the country. Tourism has not been the priority of most political parties. It is one of the fastest growing industries in the world, and the political parties of Pakistan and governments should realize the importance of this industry and develop tourism in a sustainable way for the development of local communities.

Tourism Planning and Management

Most of the tourism-related issues and problems are due to a lack of patronage and planning on the part of governments and relevant stakeholders. Due to lack of interest, ignorance and lack of responsibilities, tourism resources of the valley are gradually destroying, and some of them are on the verge of destruction. Still, there is hope that if governments take measures, these resources can be conserved for a longer period.

Due to a lack of planning and management, certain problems have arisen in Kaghan valley, which are continuously putting adverse effects on the natural and cultural resources of the valley and also affecting the local community's daily life and dissatisfying the tourists. Some major problems raised in the valley like environmental threats, inflation and high prices, safety and security issues and traffic problems are due to lack of planning and management.

Implementation of Buildings Rules

There are construction rules for the development of the natural areas in Pakistan, and these rules can also be modified according to the requirements of Kaghan valley. There is a dire need to implement construction rules in the valley immediately. The valley is famous for its natural beauty and landscapes due to tourism. Hotels have been constructed for the last few years violating the rules regarding the selection of areas for construction of such buildings. At different sites of the valley, bulldozers and excavators can be seen, smoothing and surfacing the land, destroying the landscape. The famous destinations of the valley like Naran, Batakundi, Lala Zar, Sohnri, Sohch, Dumdumah and Katha are under heavy threat of haphazard construction and destruction of landscape. The local community and several regular visitors of the Kaghan valley are of the opinion that the valley has lost the beauty and charm that it had a few years back. This is all due to a lack of planning and management. Now, this construction trend has been shifted towards the remote upper parts of the valley, and very beautiful potential destinations are becoming the victim of this development.

Similarly, for Ecotourism destinations, there are also some ethical and construction guidelines in the world. Kaghan valley has very good potential for Ecotourism and should not be spoiled due to haphazard and modern constructions. Another fact is that the valley is also located on a fault line (earthquake zone), and the construction of huge and multi-storied hotels and plazas may damage precious lives in future. So, the relevant departments and Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) dealing with the buildings should play their role and take immediate notice of it.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding has become a burning issue in Kaghan valley's tourism. Due to overcrowding, tourists and the local community are suffering alike. Some of the local community of Naran has moved to other places due to this disturbance created by Mass Tourism in the valley. This overcrowding can be managed by offering some alternative destinations in the valley and providing different activities to tourists. In this way, tourists will not rush to visit only a few selected destinations and activities. There are many other

potential destinations where tourism activities can be started to control overcrowding. Similarly, the development of some other potential hill stations and valleys in the country may also share the tourists' burden, especially in the summer season.

Seasonality

Seasonality is a big problem in many tourist destinations of the world, and the same is the case in Kaghan valley. Due to seasonality, tourism activities in the region are limited to a few months (from June to September). Consolidated efforts are needed to keep the flow of tourists throughout the year. For this purpose, roads leading to the valley should be clear all the time, and the land sliding should be controlled. Glaciers are another threat to block the roads and restrict the movement of tourists, but Frontier Works Organization (FWO) and National Highway Authority (NHA) can play their role through mutual efforts.

The next step is the provision of basic facilities at the destinations in the winter season. There should be a proper heating system, hot water, meals, safety, and security to satisfy the demand of the tourists. People from different parts of Pakistan visit Murree to enjoy snowfall. By providing these facilities, the flow of tourists may be diverted towards Kaghan valley to enjoy winters and snowfall. Some adventure and winter sports may be helpful to reduce the seasonality in the valley. The development of ski resorts and ice hockey may be helpful in this regard. Some festivals and exhibitions and off-season packages will also attract tourists to the valley during the winters.

Development of Infrastructure, Potential Destinations and Recreational Facilities

The roads of the Kaghan valley are very poor and narrow, and most of the potential destinations do not have proper access. To develop tourism in the valley, proper roads should be provided.

Clean drinking water and electricity are also a problem in the valley. These facilities should also be provided. There are no worth mentioning hospitals in the valley, and visitors and the local community face a lot of problems. Good hospitals are a dire need in the valley. Banks, ATMs, Wi-Fi,

mobile services and shopping facilities should be provided for a memorable visitor experience.

Signs and signage indicating distances, directions, destinations and popular features should also be provided. Bilingual sign boards should be provided. For international tourists, signboards in English are very much necessary.

Availability of tourist information centres should also be made possible. Petrol, CNG, tyre and mechanical workshops, laundry, barber, cobbler etc., should be provided, encouraged and patronized. Public washroom problems should be solved immediately.

Some more destinations along with the existing ones should be planned for the enjoyment of tourists and to share the burden on the existing destinations. Provision of recreational activities like camping sites, parks and amusement, playgrounds, chairlifts, different sports activities like rafting, boating, swimming, diving, fishing points, hunting, bird watching towers, special events and festivals, exhibitions etc. should be arranged.

Planning and Management of Cultural and Natural Resources

The cultural resources of Kaghan valley are deteriorating, and there are a number of ways to conserve these resources. Tourism is one of the best ways to keep traditions alive. The same may be done in Kaghan valley to preserve the cultural resources of the valley. The women and the artisans who produce remarkable pieces of art can best be presented through tourism.

There should be a heritage bazar/s where artisans of the valley may have their stalls and work life could be seen. It will provide an opportunity for visitors to learn how the arts and crafts are wrought/ produced and may also have an opportunity to buy gifts and souvenirs which they also demand. In these bazaars, the work of the local women may also be displayed, thus conserving the heritage in one way and giving benefits to the local community as well.

Museums of different subjects like Archaeology and Ethnology, Botany, Zoology, Geology and Agriculture should be established at different sites in the valley. These museums not only will preserve and conserve the heritage of the

valley but may also serve as research centres, facilitating the tourists and researchers alike to take benefit from them and enjoy their visits as well.

Natural resources like meadows, natural landscapes, lakes, rivers, streams, springs, waterfalls and wildlife should be retained maximum nature and not be contaminated by irresponsible tourists' activities. There should be building rules implemented, treks to walk and hike, dustbins and recycling for proper disposal of wastes, camping sites, fishing points and spots and towers for wildlife/ bird watching. There should be safe along the river, and there should not be illegal hunting of the animals in the valley. The wildlife department should play its role effectively in this regard.

Kaghan valley is also rich in terms of archaeological and religious heritage, but unfortunately, its potential for tourism and local development has not yet been realized. The archaeological and religious heritage sites are on the verge of destruction. Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is trying its best with the available resources (financial and professional), and the Auqaf department should take a step to conserve the archaeological and religious heritage. There is a dire need for a conservation and tourism management plan for these resources, and KPCTA should involve and seek the help of these departments to plan and manage these resources.

Awareness

Awareness about tourism and conservation of tourism resources is equally needed among the local community and the tourists. Tourists should be taught not to destroy/ disturb these resources and the ecosystems of the valley. They should be educated not to throw garbage and litter everywhere and not to spoil the water resources and take maximum care and keep the environment clean.

The local community should be taught that these resources are precious for them and to future generations, and they should own these resources. They should not disturb/ destroy the cultural heritage of the valley. Some of the local communities feel inferiority complex in their culture to that of the tourists. These community members should be taught that tourists come to

see their culture and natural heritage. They should feel proud of it and struggle for the conservation and management of these resources.

Awareness can be created through awareness campaigns by governments and the private sector. School children and their teachers, if aware, can create awareness in the community. So, the schools, and colleges of the valley, both boys and girls, should be approached and aware of this regard. Community leaders are also the best source for creating awareness.

Friendly Host Guest Relationship

Tourism cannot be developed without a friendly host-guest relationship. Social contact between these two groups enhances mutual understanding and a positive attitude. In Kaghan valley, this relationship is very friendly, but due to some irresponsible visitors and their activities who do not respect the local cultures, this relationship is being faded. The irresponsible attitude of some of the visitors creates problems for both locals and visitors. To avoid this misunderstanding and disrespect, there is a dire need to establish tourist facilitation centres at every destination where the visitors should be educated about the local cultures, norms, and traditions.

Need of Professionalism

There is no professionalism in the local tourism industry of Kaghan valley. In hotels and restaurants, there is no proper uniform/ dress code. Most of the serving staff do not know how to welcome the guests and serve them. Similarly, in most restaurants, the dress of the serving staff is dirty. Hotels and restaurants hire the services of local young boys during the season at low wages and do not train them properly. This has a very negative impact on tourism. Establishments should hire the services of local educated youth and train them properly in their respective fields and give them reasonable wages/salaries. These local youth can be trained at the Department of Tourism and Hospitality, Hazara University Mansehra, which is located nearby. Short-term courses of two weeks and one month (long sessions and practical focused) in the field of tourism and hospitality may be fruitful. Professionalism is also lacking in the local drivers, whose driving skills and attitude towards the

visitors are questionable. Government and NGOs can support enhancing the capacity of the drivers.

Public Private Partnership

It is difficult for the government to deal with all such investments due to the economic crisis and budget. And tourism industry should also not be fully dependent on the government. The role of all the stakeholders is important in this industry. The public-private partnership should be encouraged, and the local community should be involved in the decisions making, and it should also be ensured that maximum benefits go to the local community. There are donors/ investors, available nationally and internationally, who are willing to invest in tourism. Their support would be helpful and beneficial for both the locals and the government. In this way, the financial burden on the government may also be reduced.

Similarly, the local community may also be provided with easy loans to establish their tourism-related businesses to facilitate the visitors and for their employees as well. Local youth would be encouraged to have their own business and jobs. Currently, most of the businesses are owned by businesspersons from outside the valley. The resources of the local community are being utilized, and the benefits are taken by others, who are fortunately rich. The local community is now feeling it a lot and showing its aggression as well (discussion with the locals). So, involving the locals in tourism-related businesses would encourage and relax them, and they will serve in a better way in the development of sustainable tourism in the valley.

Proper Guidance

Some of the visitors complained about the guidance in the valley. There are a number of ways due to which guidance may be improved. There are two PTDC motels in the valley; these motels may introduce tourists' information centres. In these information centres, services of professional guides may be provided. These information centres should also provide with the visitor literature of the valley, in the form of books, booklets, monographs, brochures etc. This material may be offered free of cost and on sale as well. The interested visitors may take benefit from this service.

Similarly, KPCTA and KGDA may also provide these services in the valley and establish their tourist information centres to facilitate the visitors. Tourists' services may also be provided by the other relevant departments like Wildlife, Forest and Agriculture. Local tour operators, though very few, may also provide these facilities. This is a golden opportunity for local educated youth to take benefit. From these information centres, services of transport to the valley should/ may also be hired. Hotels may also provide proper guidance on the above-mentioned directions (a few of the hotels in the valley also do) to facilitate the visitors.

Provision of Traditional Hospitality

Some of the visitors demand traditional local food. There are different pulses, vegetables, and spinach/ greens available in the valley in abundance, along with a number of mushrooms. To satisfy the visitors' demands, these pulses, vegetables, spinach/ greens, and mushrooms could be grown at the commercial level, giving a boost to the local economy and providing raw material for traditional hospitality as well.

Homestays

Currently, so many visitors visit the valley that the accommodations and restaurants cannot accommodate them. To facilitate the visitors and benefit the local community, homestay tourism should be encouraged. This is also in practice in the developed world, where visitors stay in houses of the local community, and the owner of such establishments facilitates the visitors with night stays and good breakfasts and meals, and visitors enjoy such stays.

By adopting this concept in Kaghan valley, the tourists would not find problems in having the accommodations, and the construction of hotels would also be reduced, which will also help to protect the landscape and benefit the local community.

Some Ethical Considerations

The world is becoming a global village, with many countries enjoying a multicultural environment. Understanding and respecting other cultures helps to promote coexistence. Embracing and respecting different cultures during travel will not only give

you cultural awareness and acceptance but also help break down cultural barriers while interacting with people of diverse backgrounds. At the same time, disrespect for other cultures creates barriers and hatred between the visitors and the host community.

In Kaghan valley, there are some ethical issues related to tourists, the local community, local business vendors and police. The local community is of the opinion that the visitors do not respect their local culture. They violate the local norms and traditions by taking photographs of local women and their houses, teasing them, wearing an immodest dresses and being involved in prostitution and addiction that are not acceptable to the local community. Other unethical activities of the visitors highlighted by the local community include staring at females, both local and other tourists.

Similarly, there are also ethical issues related to the local business vendors, i.e. hotels, restaurants, shops and local transport, especially who receive high prices from the visitors and the locals as well. Tourists are guests in the valley and come from far-flung areas, and looting them in the form of receiving high prices is not ethical. Local business vendors should only receive reasonable prices. Relevant government departments should take notice of the high prices and facilitate the visitors. The cooperation of the local community and the police is also essential to ensure the safety and security of the visitors. Respect and acceptance of local cultures, norms and traditions are thus critical for ample coexistence.

Conservation of Kaghan Valley

There is a dire and immediate need for the conservation of natural and cultural resources of the valley. For the last few years, the entry fee has been collected in Balakot town. Every tourist vehicle has to pay this fee. This amount should be utilized for the conservation of natural and cultural resources of the valley so that visitors and the locals may take benefit from them, and the life of the resources may be prolonged for future generations.

Women Empowerment through Tourism

The socio-economic conditions of the women in

the valley could be improved through tourism, resulting in the improvement of the local community. Women in the valley are highly skilled and produce handicrafts of high quality. These handicrafts may serve as gifts and souvenirs for tourists. The dying arts and crafts traditions of the valley may also be revived and conserved due to tourism. Similarly, women can serve in the tourism and hospitality industry, especially the hospitality industry. They can establish food stalls serving the traditional food of the valley to tourists. Educated local women can also serve as managers in local hotels. Similarly, women can play an important role in the establishment and service of homestays. The need is to encourage, patronize and promote them.

Alternative Measures

There is no doubt that tourism has the potential to become the biggest industry in the valley and can contribute to the economic development of the local community, but at the same time, it should be kept in mind that there is a specific age of a destination and after that age/ time period most of the destinations seek downfall. It may be due to new trends emerging globally, due to dissatisfaction of the visitors or the introduction of some new destinations in the region and security-related issues and natural calamities (i.e. floods, earthquakes and land sliding). This downfall may happen gradually or abruptly, depending upon the causes and circumstances. And when a destination seeks downfall, it happens and affects all the related segments of the industry and the workforce associated with that industry as well. So, the related industries and businesses like agriculture and domestication of animals/ dairy industry should not be abandoned and focused upon with the same spirit as tourism. Agricultural lands should not be destroyed to construct hotels and plazas. Farming and domestication of animals/ dairy industry should also be developed side by side. It will not affect the local community a lot if Kaghan valley tourism faces a downfall.

Role of KPCTA and KGDA

KPCTA has the leading and key role in the planning and development of tourism in Kaghan valley. It should fix the priorities and coordinate with all the relevant departments and stakeholders to plan tourism in the valley immediately. The

problems which researchers are facing, like that tourists' statistics and expenditures, should be solved and provided on its official website, and access to relevant literature should also be provided. Income gained/ earned through entry fees in the valley should also be recorded and spent on the conservation of the resources in the valley. KPCTA should hire relevant experts in tourism and include academia as well in its planning and development process. The young researchers of tourism in different universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa may be helpful for exploring the problems, prospects and SWOT analysis of tourism in different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and these researchers should/ may be assigned with these tasks. Similarly, in Kaghan valley, further research in the field of tourism should be financially supported.

KPCTA should increase its professional staff, and more young and motivated professionals are needed for the planning and development of tourism. KPCTA should make its official procedures and processes and procedures easy so that the interested investors can easily get a license to launch their tourism-related projects in the valley. Hectic and long taking official correspondence irritates the investors, and they leave their desired projects to install.

A major issue of the local community of the Kaghan valley is that all the resources utilized are of the local community, and businesses and profits mostly go into the pockets of the nonlocal investors. So, there is a dire need for planning to ensure that the local community may get involved in tourism-related businesses and get maximum profit/ benefits. In this way, the local community will own the tourism resources and tourism in the valley.

KGDA was established in 2010, and even after more than a decade, it has not yet been able to update its official websites with tourism-related information. Similarly, in the office of KGDA, which is in Mansehra, no data regarding Kaghan valley is available. So, this is very disappointing. KGDA should sense the sensitivity of the matter and work for the development of Kaghan valley. It should also be provided with professionals and enough staff to work efficiently.

Consolidated and Joint Efforts of Different Government Departments for the Planning of Sustainable Tourism in the Valley

A single government department like KPCTA cannot plan and manage tourism in Kaghan valley. There are different stakeholders and departments that could come forward and join hands with KPCTA to finalize one-point agenda (tourism planning and sustainable development). The role of KPCTA may be the leading one, but without the help of any single related department, tourism cannot be planned and developed in the valley. Some of the main stakeholders in the valley are the Federal Government of Pakistan, as most of the infrastructure, funding and even policies related issues would be solved by the federal government. The other main stakeholders in the valley are the National Tourism Coordination Board (NTCB), Kaghan Development Authority (KGDA), departments of Wildlife, Forest, Watershed, Fisheries, Agriculture, Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA), *Mehkama Maal*, Police (tourist, traffic and KP police), National Highways Authority (NHA), FWO, Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (EERRA), Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Department of Culture, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Auqaf, Metrology, local business owners, tour operators working in Kaghan valley, NGOs working for local development in the valley like Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) and others, tourists and the local community. Sustainable tourism in the valley may only be planned when these leading stakeholders sit together and devise a comprehensive tourism management plan for the valley. Ministry of Culture, Sports, Tourism, Archaeology and Youth Affairs, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can join hands to develop tourism in the valley along with other stakeholders.

All these departments may be assigned different tasks related to tourism, i.e. Wildlife department may be assigned the task of planning Wildlife Tourism and national parks. Similarly, the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums with the

task of planning Archaeological Tourism and Auqaf department to plan Religious Tourism, and other departments may be assigned tasks related to their field of expertise.

KPCTA should also make short and long-term tourism development plans for Kaghan valley and start working on them immediately. Priorities should also be fixed, and in this way, within a few years, there would be several destinations available for the visit and enjoyment of the tourists and sharing the tourists' burden as well. At the destinations under developmental work, visits can also be restricted to achieve better results.

Conclusion

Kaghan valley is one of the most beautiful and attractive valleys of Pakistan, located in the northern part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The valley has the potential to attract thousands of visitors to satisfy their diverse needs. The current research shows that the valley has the strength to attract tourists with its rich natural, cultural, educational, sports, religious, archaeological, and other resources, including traditional food. An important opportunity for the valley is its location, and being closer to CPEC, its tourism industry can grow significantly, contributing a lot to local and national development. Some of the weaknesses of the valley include its poor infrastructure and tourist facilities, which are gradually dissatisfying the tourists. Roads of the valley are very poor, and in the high tourist season, inflation takes place, creating problems for both tourists and the locals. In peak season, there is a shortage of accommodations and tourists cut short their stays. The current economic crisis in the country, which is a potential threat, may lead to a decline in tourism in Kaghan valley. To overcome this economic crisis and develop tourism in a sustainable way, there is a dire need for public-private partnerships. Government should facilitate and encourage investors, both national and international, to invest in the valley. All the relevant departments should sit together and devise strategies immediately to develop tourism in the valley for the enjoyment of the tourists and to uplift the local economy.

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