

## An Exploratory Study of the Factors that Promote and Delay Sustainable Eco-Tourism Development in Mansehra

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### Abstract

Geographically Mansehra district is situated on Karakoram Highway that links to ancient Taxila, Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, China, and Central Asia. It is the central point for visitors, transportation, exchange, and business in the northern zone. This vicinity is constantly cherished by visitors for its rich potential of tourism attractions with delightful nature, magnificent valleys, and high altitude mountains for adventures and nature lovers. However, this research seeks to make contributions to the present literature of heritage management and tourism development through exploring the rich tourism potential in Mansehra. Exploratory in nature, the study adopts a qualitative technique combining primary and secondary data analysis and scholars observation. The findings reveal that Mansehra has no longer yet been scientifically explored and developed as a tourism destination. The general problems that preclude the development of tourism activities in Mansehra are lack of awareness, basic tourism infrastructure, scientifically exploration and documentation, developmental plan, waste management, conservation, and poor management of cultural and natural sites.

**Key Words:** Mansehra, Tourism Potential, Challenges, Prospects, Management

### Introduction

District Mansehra is situated in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The Boundaries of this district is connected with Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Muzaffarabad, Abbottabad and Haripur region (Figure: 1). It is situated between 34° - 14' to 35° - 11' north scope and 72° - 49' to 74° - 08' east longitude and covered the 4,579 square kilometres area (Watson, 1907, Census Report 1981 and Ali, 2005). As per Google map, Mansehra city is on a distance of 28.0 kilometres from Abbottabad, 223.7 from Peshawar, and 161.0 from capital Islamabad via Hazara Expressway.



Figure 1: A Geographical Map of Mansehra District

This territory is situated on the Karakoram Highway that connects to ancient Taxila, Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, China, and Central Asia (Qamar, 1990). It is the central point for explorers, transportation, exchange, and business in the northern zone (Shama, 2002). Numerous explorers and invaders have crossed the Indus River on western routes. Truly, this territory has consistently been a focal point of social exercises (Sardar, 1995). The historical background of

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Hazara dates back to the Stone Age. As indicated by (Ali 2009), there is solid proof that methodical research and unearthing or incidentally recouped archaeological materials connected this region with the Persians domain, followed by Greeks, Mauryans, Indo-Greeks, Scythians, Parthians, Kushans, Hindu-Shahi, Islamic, Sikh and British periods.

The Mansehra has an assortment of vacation spots, religious and historic buildings, and monuments. The most exceptional site is the Zardheri Buddhist complex (Figure: 2); it comprises an exceptional cruciform Stupa and Monastery (Hargreaves, 1922, Youshihide, 2011). The Ashoka rock edicts (Figure: 3) are recorded on a little rough mountain outside the city of Mansehra (Shama, 2002). The Islamic Period is additionally set apart with the Tomb of Shah Hamadan (Figure: 4) situated in Naokot town (Dani, 1996) and Turkish Court or (Guli Bagh monument) (Figure: 5) situated around 23 km away from Mansehra city (Rehman, 1989). The Lingam temple (Figure: 6) - is located 10 km north of the district headquarters of Mansehra on the main road of Karakorum Highway (Samad, 2008). The temple is as yet living, and the Hindu people groups play out his love (Shah, 2013). Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha is situated on the main Kashmir road in Mansehra city (Figure: 7). The three-story building speaks to the design of the British Colonial Period (Bansal, 2015).



Figure: 2 Zardheri Buddhist complex



Figure: 3 Ashoka rock edicts



Figure: 4 Tomb of Shah Hamadan



Figure: 5 Guli Bagh monument



Figure: 6 Lingam temple



Figure: 7 Gurdwara

The atmosphere is pleasantly warm in summer and cold in winter; October to March is the winter season, and April to September is the summer season. Due to its picturesque attractiveness, pleasant weather, and social totality, this area is consistently has been predominant among the visitors. Kaghan and Naran valley (Figure: 8) is among the top vacation spot in Mansehra. This valley is encircled by the Lower Himalaya range, and its most elevated point is Babusar Pass (Khan, 2011). The most eye-catching spot of this valley is Ansoo Lake, Lalazar, Shogran, Sripayee, Charnath Phagal (Figure: 9) Saif-ul-Maluk Lake, Babusar Top and Lulusar Lake (Arif, 2019).

Thus, numerous different charms and valleys are waiting for scientific exploration and documentation here. The unexplored-Siran valley, a little-known valley (Figure: 10), also known as Bhogarmang valley, got its name from village Bhogarmang centrally situated in the valley. This valley is generally known for the Siran River, which is famous for “Trout” fish (Faysal, 2019). Around 14 kilometres spread, Mahnoor valley is as yet immaculate (Figure: 11), situated in Balakot tehsil via-Naran-Jalkhad road close to Mahandri. A heavily cultivated valley, Agror makes its territory with Oghi tehsil of Mansehra in the recent past; it is the small state under the control of Nawab of Agror.

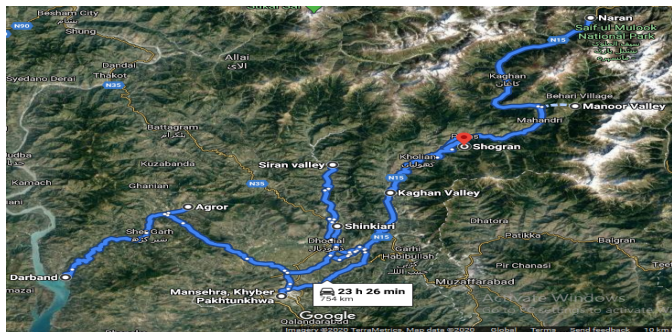


Figure 8: Geographical Locations of Natural Valleys in Mansehra District

This valley is famous for its mountains, natural landscapes, and cultivation of crops (Shakirullah, 2016). The Ganool valley (Figure: 12) is situated on the main road to Kaghan, a ways off of 10 km from Balakot. This valley is known for its natural beauty, pine forests,

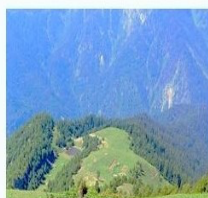


Figure: 9 Charnath Phagal Kaghan valley



Figure: 10 Shahzaib Lake Siran Valley



Figure: 11 Mahnoor Valley

natural springs, and hilltop meadows and panoramic views of the surroundings (TTF, 2018).

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Figure: 12 Unexplored Ganool valley



Figure: 13 Unexplored Darband valley



Figure: 14 Unexplored Sheri Meadows

However, this region is having a rich potential of diverse tourism attractions with picturesque excellence, magnificent valleys, scenes, craftsmanship and art, chronicled structures, and high-altitude mountains for experience searchers and nature sweethearts. Despite ownership of such an ideal tourism resource, Mansehra District failed to proportionate gain and attracted the desired number of tourists. This study is concentrated to highlight the tourism potential and feature the general issues that hinder the progress of tourism activities in Mansehra.

### Objectives of the Study

- To highlight the tourism potential of District Mansehra.
- To investigate and identify the major problems that hinder the progress of tourism.
- To devise a management plan for enhancing tourism activities.

### Research Methodology

A descriptive and exploratory research technique was adopted to conduct this study. The study was sorted out through secondary and primary sources. Primary data was collected through a systematic survey. The survey is based on the heritage assessment report to find out on-ground issues, current status, and catching digital photographs of the sites. Further, likewise arbitrary interviews were conducted from stakeholders including; experts of tourism, heritage, and conservation, hoteliers, travel agents, sightseers, and local administration. To make the study increasingly noteworthy and precise, overview information, individual perceptions were enhanced with secondary data. Secondary data relating to heritage management and tourism development in Mansehra were analyzed to comprehend the issues. These documents include previous literature, books, official reports, research papers and articles, government planning documents, and other publications referring to heritage management and tourism development in Mansehra. Therefore, the gathered information was assessed and sorted out and draw in the accompanying discussion.

### Findings and Discussion

The present study identified some potential problems which are discouraging the tourism activities in Mansehra District. During the study, a large portion of the issues concerning the tourism infrastructure, destination development, and conservation, yet here in this examination concentrated on those potential issues which are discouraging the tourism activities. Some of the general problems are discussed in the accompanying lines.

**Lack of Awareness:** The principal strengths of the tourism industry are natural and cultural assets. For example, mountains, streams, landscapes and historical landmarks have made the visitors and voyagers make a trip to a particular destination. In each country, the tourism industry needs a spotless and secured environment (Ismail, 2014). This is the duty of travellers and nearby individuals to satisfy their own needs while ensuring and upgrading the open doors for the up and coming age. Due to unplanned tourism and lack of awareness, natural and cultural resources are at an alarming rate in Mansehra. Most of the cultural and natural sites, agricultural lands, and beautiful landscapes are being misused, i.e. unplanned construction of lodgings, cafés, markets and housing societies etc. (Arif, 2019). The research team conducted an extensive study of the distinctive heritage sites to investigate the different problems. This lack of awareness has come about the misuse of the sites by the local communities. During the field study, it was seen that the significant heritage sites are being exposed the human vandalism, and the heritage sites are continuously losing their inventiveness (Samad, 2008). Residential squanders material is another basic issue. This is observed during the field visit that the individuals from the nearby local community as well as visitors tossing their waste material to streams,

lakes, and around the historical places ([Kaseva, 2010](#), [Waseem, 2005](#)). Throwing waste material everywhere are not only breaking down these assets as well as eye taking off also ([Arif, 2019](#)).

**Lack of Scientific Exploration and Documentation:** More than 253 sites and monuments are documented by Hazara University Mansehra ([Ali, 2011](#)). Mansehra is the hub of tourism resources. Most of the valleys like Siran, Agror, Mahnoor, Ganoor, and Darband are not fully explored and documented. To extend the tourism in Mansehra needs scientific exploration and documentation of each valley.

**Lack of Heritage Conservation:** Heritage conservation is an integral part of tourism development strategies to ensure the sustainable use of tourism products for long term benefits. Conservation of natural and cultural resources is a very sensitive issue ([Bizzarro, 1996](#)). Due to a lack of policy, financial resources, planning, and experts of conservation, the built heritage is confronting irremediable threats from nature and humans. Due to the lack of conservation and preservation, these sites are on the verge of destruction. Subsequently, the concerned office needs to take the step and implement the antiquity laws to stop the infringement and misuse of these sites. Essentially, the arts and crafts industry is additionally vanishing due to lack of financial support, skill development projects, availability to national and worldwide market and investment from the private sector etc. ([Ahmed, 2003](#)).

**Urbanization/Absence of Developmental Order:** Due to the lack of developmental order and town planning, a lot of natural and cultural resources are misused, i.e. modern housing societies, shop centres, a new structure of inns and cafés, etc. ([Burak, 2004](#)). The unplanned urbanization in Naran and Kaghan Bazaar is a threat to the natural resources of this valley. This cutting edge framework, without following the developmental order, is disturbing the natural resources, historical buildings, archaeological sites, farming areas, and scenes too.

**Access and Network:** The most significant correspondence implies voyaging. ([Subash, 2015](#)). However, sadly in the Mansehra region that the upkeep of the streets is overlooked. At present, the progression of travellers is relying upon on single Karakorum highway. The current state of the connecting roads from Karakorum highway is gravely harmed. The link roads in Mansehra towards the different tourist destinations are one of the serious issues, particularly during the rain. The absence of appropriate street signage, billboard, information, and direction are causing trouble in identifying locations, particularly to the visitors travelling by road. The poor infrastructure has been one of the major drives behind the visitor has been avoiding this zone.

**Inadequate Coordination:** Coordination among the adjusted division is a lot of significant, particularly during the season. Tourism is an industry, not a single department; it is related to several other divisions and subdivisions, such as environment, wildlife, forestry, communication, security, hospital, local government, and local Police, etc. ([Sujith, 2017](#)). However, the deficiencies of coordination among these divisions the things are deferred step by step, and afterwards, a little thing can turn into a major problem.

**Absence of Publicizing:** Mansehra city favoured with eye-getting appealing magnificence, glorious mountains, and pinnacles, various delightful valleys, religious and historical places. Be that as it may, because of the nonattendance of a structured methodology for promotion and campaign, we can't present Mansehra as the most well-known destination in the region. Advanced media is one of the significant influencers in the market. They can assume a significant job in throwing a positive picture of this district ([Aftab, 2014](#)). This period has a place with advanced advertising, and we have to appropriate use of computerized media to feature the immaculate natural resources of this region for the promotion of tourism ([Rana, 2015](#)).

**Overall Tourism Infrastructure:** The planned and well-organized tourism infrastructures are one of the significant segments in the tourism industry ([Ahmed, 2016](#)). The overall tourism infrastructure in Mansehra is less evolved, contrasted with other tourist destinations like Galliyat valley. Mansehra needs a proper tourism developmental plan to keep up the current structure, develop new destinations, convenience, food, facilities, information, and up-gradation of tourist destinations, tracks need to fix, and reestablishments as per the international standard ([Baloch, 2007](#)).

**Security and Safety:** The deficient security and harmony circumstance in the state is one of the significant difficulties towards empowering the tourism industry ([Raza, 2013](#)). Without appropriate security, the visitor doesn't visit any tourist destination ([Zahidullah, 2018](#), Isfaq, 2011). In Mansehra District, particularly in the session, the number of mishaps is expanding because of the overwhelming traffic. Most of the visitors have no idea about the condition of the road in this mountainous region. In this respect, the present government propelling the task of the tourism police; this tourist police will perform their duty in tourist areas to facilitate the tourist, which is a healthy sign towards encouraging tourism in the province.



**Skilful Labour:** For the sustainable tourism industry, skilful manpower is one of the fundamental parts ([Nafees, 2008](#)). But due to lack of awareness and low priority of the tourism industry from the government side, the tourism industry is confronting a lack of talented labour at the national and local level ([Shaikh, 2013](#)). In many inns and eateries, this issue is seen; in this portion, the Government and private sector ought to use the expertise of the Tourism Department, Hazara University, to provide basic training to the worker of all tourism industry-related organizations.

**Lack of Amenities:** Due to the absence of fundamental amenities on tourist destinations and the visitor routes, due to the unavailability and shortage of amenities, the tourist are endured, and they are confronting issues during their voyaging and stay. Fundamental conveniences including clean drinking water, all around kept up and tidy up sitting areas, medical services community, toilets, emergency treatment, routes guide available bus station, and so on ([Sadaf, 2015](#)). Other than this, accessibility of banks, credit cards, or other electronic cash move facilities are absent outside the Mansehra city. A refreshment amenity is one of the key components in the tourism and hospitality industry and has a significant job in the development of the tourism industry ([Raj, 2008](#)). In some of the destinations like Naran and Kaghan main Bazar, Shogran, tourists go for refreshment where recreation facilities are available, but these facilities should be prolonged to all other tourist destinations in this region ([Hudson, 1998](#)).

### **Management Plan for Enhancing Tourism Activities**

Tourism development needs some fundamental prerequisites, like the quality of products, harmony and security, eco-accommodating condition, socialization and scientific management plan on the ground and so on. ([Baloch, 2007](#)). As indicated by ([Eurosit 1999](#)). A Management Plan can be characterized as "a composed, flowed and approved record which depicts the site or zone and the issues and opportunities for management of its natural protection, landform or scene highlights, and empowering targets dependent on this data to be met through significant work over an expressed period". Consequently, the accompanying proposals are recommended to consolidate in Management Plan.

**To Prioritize Tourism Industry:** Tourism industry is one the major financial sector, creates employment opportunities, and make prosperity access the world. Tourism is an engine for socio-economic development. Therefore the government should officially declare tourism as a significant part of economic growth and make a strong policy to encourage the private sector investor to invest in this sector. As per the Mansehra district, the government should be developed, repair, and maintenance of the basic arrangement for tourism infrastructure on a priority basis (NIPS, 2002).

**Establishment of Tourism Development Authority:** In Pakistan, there are various structures regarding tourism, and various form of organization is set up. The government has different tourism structures in every province ([Baloch, 2007](#)). The current Kaghan development authority should be redesigned and extend its jurisdiction to the whole of Mansehra. Mansehra district needs a comprehensive tourism plan to utilize these tourism resources for socio-economic development. For that, the authors recommend own tourism development authority to take some imitative on priorities bases like to develop & maintain the tourism infrastructure, new destination development, marketing and projection, tourism education and social awareness, conservation and protection of the cultural and natural environment, and to develop skilful human resources on a local level.

**An Awareness Campaign for Eco-tourism:** Currently, in Pakistan, tourism exercises are not eco because of the absence of awareness in tourists as well in local communities. To lunch a national awareness crusade for eco and sustainable tourism and ecological insurance. To sensitize the Government, service sector, students, and the general population on the importance of tourism for the socio-economic development of the country. This awareness campaign should be brought up in each tourist destination, school, college, university student, and local communities ([Haroon, 2002](#)).

**Environmental Protection and Natural Heritage Conservation:** Heritage conservation is an integral part of sustainable tourism development. Heritage provides a base for tourism; it is assets and product; due to unsustainable tourism, the natural environment is confronting various issues. Subsequently, the government and the concerned department take imitative to ensure the ecological security, conservation, and rebuilding of assorted organic variety and sustainable use of natural assets for eco-friendly tourism ([Arif, 2019](#))

**Tourism Land Zoning:** To protect and conserve the natural environment, we should require a developmental order and tourism land zoning, in tourism land zoning, make the best possible all-inclusive strategy and gap the entire

territory as per United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, for example, settlements and commercial uses, land-use change, and forestry activities.

**Promote Sustainable Domestic Tourism:** For the foreign exchange, the foreign tourists are consistently preferencing local visitors; however, we can't overlook the significance of local tourism. At the point when we developed domestic tourism in a meaningful way, it is a sustainable and complementary way for international tourism (Ahmed, 2003). Along these lines, the government should be a focus on the development of eco-friendly domestic tourism to provide basic infrastructure and facilitation to attract more and more domestic tourists (Iftikhar, 1997).

**The Management Plan for a Built Heritage:** There is a pressing need to make a comprehensive management plan to protect historical buildings and landmarks. Mansehra city having a rich potential of cultural heritage, including historical, religious buildings and monuments, and so on. Which has a place with various religions, these sites should need to promote heritage and religious tourism (Timothy, 2006). To ensure sustainable, eco-friendly tourism at all tourist destinations, the concerned departments and agencies should prepare the management plan to protect historical buildings and landmarks.

**Up-gradation of Basic Tourism Infrastructure:** For the fascination of more tourists we have to redesign the current infrastructure, including roads, the extension of Karakorum Highway, give interface road from Hazara motorway, transport facilities, accommodation facilities like hotels, café, restaurants, visitor house, youth inns, and so on.

**To Promote Pre-Poor and Community-Based Tourism:** The local communities run the tourism businesses that provide services, for example, visit guides, town guides, visit organizers, tour planners, accommodation centres and provide food on their initiatives. To upgrade the prosperity of local people and reduce poverty through these tourism businesses (Goodwin, 2000). Along these lines, the government should be bound by all hotel and tourism-related businesses to give at least 70 % employment to indigenous people in all tourism-related businesses. Furthermore, the government guarantees to give 100% vacancies of BPS 1- 16 to indigenous people in the government sector (Zahidullah, 2018).

**Hygienic Food and Up-Gradation Hotel & Restaurants:** Hotels and cafés are an essential part of the tourism industry; during the survey, this issue is featured by the majority of the visitors. There is a need; that the private sector should be provided hygienic food, clean water, web-based booking, availability of accommodation during the season at a reasonable cost, and the governments ensure the price, quality, and proper check and balance on hotels & restaurants (Arshad, 2018).

## Conclusion

Mansehra District has a very good prospect for tourism due to its geographical location with delightful nature, valleys, lakes, streams, wildlife, excellent landscape, historical and religious landmarks, diverse culture, arts and crafts, and high altitude mountains for adventure and nature lovers. Mansehra District has the potential to satisfy the necessities of a huge number of visitors. These visitors can enjoy the picturesque beauty of this region.

There is a pressing requirement for sustainable tourism in this valley; the government must prioritize tourism and make a far-reaching ground-breaking strategy to protect the cultural and natural environment for sustainable and ecological tourism. According to the sustainable tourism definition, it addresses the desires of current tourists and the host region while securing and improving the open door for what's to come. Otherwise, these assets will be lost, and the coming age of visitors and local communities won't enjoy the beautiful excellence of this zone.

Mansehra district needs a comprehensive tourism plan to utilize these tourism resources for socio-economic development. For that, the authors recommend own tourism development authority to take some imitative on priorities bases like to develop & maintain the tourism infrastructure, new destination development, marketing and projection, tourism education and social awareness, conservation and protection of the cultural and natural environment, and to develop skilful human resources on a local level. If we managed and properly explored these resources for tourism, it will play the role of catalyst to socio-economic development and to raise the wellbeing of the local community in the Mansehra district.

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