

MEDIA FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GROWTH IN PAKISTAN: AN ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL AND NEW MEDIA CHANNELS

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Abstract

This research paper examines the role of media in tourism promotion in Pakistan through traditional and digital media. Through analyzing how television, radio, print media, social media, and influencers have shaped the global image of Pakistan as a tourist destination, this paper throws insights into what is happening in the outdoor space of international marketing. It further discusses media institutions' challenges while promoting tourism, including financial constraints, security issues, and increased strategic orientation. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, which derive from interview data from media, influencers, and government officials and the latter from surveys, it tries to address the gap in understanding tourism development marketing practices in Pakistan. The research findings suggest that although digital media has emerged as the most effective tool for promoting tourism, traditional media are also important instruments in respect of domestic tourism.

Keywords: tourism, media, Pakistan, digital platforms, social media, traditional media, influencers, tourism promotion.

Introduction

Tourism happens to be the fastest-growing industry around the world and is a massive economy for the world. The countries that have been blessed with such an incredible cultural heritage, varied landscapes, and exclusive historical sites attract millions of tourists every year. Pakistan, with such massive potential in its natural beauty, history, and culture, has remained an untouched destination for so many years. Now the government is viewing the tourism sector of Pakistan as an important one to be rapidly promoted in both domestic and international tourist markets.

Media has always been a prominent part of tourism promotion. Traditional media is something that has long been exploited for the promotion of tourist destinations, through favourite TV or radio programs and print media, but today with the arrival of the digital age, social media, influencers, and online campaigns are the better means of presenting real-time experience, user-generated content, and more interaction with audiences than traditional media can offer.

This paper intends to evaluate the roles both traditional and new media can play in tourism promotion in Pakistan. This writing identifies challenges which the media might face while offering proposals for better tourism promotion through the media.

There are various pieces of research indicating that media forms play a role in encouraging tourism. Ahmad (2019), for example, postulates that traditional media channels have played a significant role in engaging domestic tourism as television travel shows and radio programs have been responsible for increased knowledge of local tourist attractions. He, however, further adds that traditional media is affected by several drawbacks, including low-budgeted and unattractive features.

On the contrary, Ali and Khan (2020) focused on Pakistan's barriers to international tourism and argued that negative perceptions of the security situation within the country have kept many prospective visitors from visiting, highlighting the effectiveness of 'no-visit' by negative perceptions about the security situation in the country. Additionally, they have argued that the media has been responsible for influencing these perceptions, both positively and negatively.

In the context of global tourism marketing, Jenkins (2018) refers to the impact that media convergence is making on the way destinations are marketed as having completely changed with the advent of the digital side. Countries can therefore reach a larger audience and provide more engaging content using a mix of traditional and digital platforms. From this perspective, social media influencers also influenced the vision of the tourism industry of Pakistan. Khan and Ali (2021) furthered this argument by stating that the influence of social media influencers had a profound impact on the tourist attraction in Pakistan.

Methodology

This study was applied through a mixed-method approach, being both quantitative and qualitative. It comprised a survey of five hundred tourists visiting Pakistan between the years 2019 to 2023. The research strives to measure how these media outlets affected their decision-making to visit Pakistan. It also conducted interviews with twenty media professionals, influencers, and government officials involved in tourism promotional activities. Thematic analysis was performed about both the traditional media and digital media campaigns for evaluation purposes.

Analysis

This paper focuses on the role of various media channels in promoting tourism in Pakistan. The data collected from both surveys and interviews have been expressed in tabular form as well as in narrative form to get a better understanding of the role of media.

Quantitative Data Analysis

A survey of five hundred tourists who visited Pakistan has been conducted to determine the influence of media platforms on their decision to visit the country.

Table 1: Influence of Media on Tourists' Decision to Visit Pakistan

Media Platform	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Social media (Instagram, YouTube)	60%
Travel Blogs/Websites	15%
Television (Travel Programs)	10%

Media Platform	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Newspapers/Magazines	5%
Word of Mouth	10%

Table 1 shows that social media networks, especially Instagram and YouTube, are quite the leading media for destination Pakistan. Their influence inspired 63.8 percent of the respondents; again, travel blogs/websites took the second position by inspiring 15.2 percent.

Social Media Influencers Effects

Social Media influencers play an especially key role in rebranding the image of Pakistan's tourism sector. Some popular influencers, who have done so much, are Eva Zu Beck and The Great Escape.

Table 2: Impact of Influencer Campaigns on Tourists' Perception

Influencer Campaign	Percentage of Engagement (%)
Eva Zu Beck (YouTube, Instagram)	35%
The Great Escape (YouTube)	25%
Local Pakistani Influencers	20%
Other International Influencers	20%

Table 2 gives some success rates of influencer campaigns. It is clear from the success rate that Eva Zu Beck remained the most successful influencer as her campaigns reached 35% of tourists surveyed. Thus, it is obvious that famous influencers are important for international tourism promotion in Pakistan.

Role of Traditional Media in Popularizing Domestic Tourism

Traditional mass media like television and radio are the most important promotional vehicles for domestic tourism. More importantly, television travel shows helped even generate local tourist traffic in the northern regions of Pakistan, cultural heritage sites, and coastal areas.

Table 3: Influence of Traditional Media on Domestic Tourism

Media Platform	Percentage of Domestic Tourists (%)
Television (PTV, Geo)	40%
Radio	10%
Print Media (Newspapers)	15%
Social media	30%
Word of Mouth	5%

Table 3 shows that television was the most major traditional source of information; it informed 40% of the respondents. Social media is catching up with this, as 30% of domestic tourists indicated that it was a major source of information.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Media stakeholders and government representatives were interviewed in-depth to highlight a set of themes closely related to the problems and opportunities in media-based tourism promotion. These are summarized below based on thematic analysis:

Table 4: Key Themes from Interviews with Media Professionals

Theme	Summary of Findings
Digital Media Effectiveness	Influencers and social media campaigns have the highest impact.
Budget Constraints	Limited funds reduce the quality and reach of traditional media campaigns.
Lack of Strategic Focus	Government bodies need to adopt a cohesive strategy for tourism promotion.
Security Concerns	Perception of insecurity remains a challenge for international tourism.
Infrastructure Development	Media campaigns are hindered by the lack of infrastructure in tourist areas.

The qualitative data gathered through interviews appears to indicate that digital media campaigns are much more effective, and that traditional media faces a much bigger challenge primarily due to a lack of budget and strategy. This is because security issues and infrastructural limitations continue to affect the success story of media-driven tourism promotion.

Discussion

Media, specifically digital media, has been important for the promotion of tourists in Pakistan. Digital media, particularly social media, is the most potent agent that lures international tourists. It provides richly visual and attractive content that can reach the global masses. Influencers are expected to transform the image of Pakistan as a safe and incredibly attractive tourist destination by dismantling negative stereotypes that have been affixed to the nation for an extended period in the past and have been used against its tourism industries.

Whereas traditional media continues to play its part, domestic tourism faces many challenges. Low budgets and a failure to focus strategically have undermined the campaigns of the traditional media, further compounded by low travel advisories given by it to the tourists, which place credibility and trust in doubt. However, digital media now opens new avenues for the tourism sector to reach a wider and much more diversified audience.

Conclusion

The role of media in Pakistan towards tourism promotion cannot be ignored. Observations have shown how the old and new media influence the concept of Pakistan in mindsets as a destination for tourism for local tourists as well as international tourists. However, there is also a call for a more synergistic strategy and approach toward tourism promotion by the media. Through this medium, there is immense opportunity for Pakistan to explore the international tourism market; yet, content quality, collaborations with influencers, and positive engagement with social media require much more focus. On this toolset, Pakistan can fully explore the tourism industry to its capability, thereby contributing to that country's economic growth, which would walk together with cultural exchange.

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