

Tourism Events Calendar For Malakand Division

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Abstract

Events Calendar is very important in tourism, which inform and guide tourists about various events taking place at a destination. The main objective of the study was to identify tourism events in Malakand Division in order to attract tourists and structure a proper tourism events calendar for tourism planning, management, promotion and sustainable development of tourism in the area. To have in depth analysis of the proposed study, data was collected through interviews with tourism officials, tourism and hospitality teachers, event organizers, members of the local community, tour operators and hospitality managers. Structured interviews were carried out for the collection of data. Thematic analysis method was used to analyze the data and thereafter results were drawn. The study reveals that Malakand Division has diverse cultural, religious, heritage, adventure and seasonal tourist events. But the lack of a formal tourism event calendar has led to weak event coordination, promotion, effective tourism event management, event overlap, tourist follow and awareness in the local communities. The study proposes a thorough tourism event calendar, proper documentation form of events, better coordination of stakeholders, effective promotion of events and a digital platform for tourism information, which will improve destination management, tourism experience and sustainable development of tourism in Malakand Division.

Keywords: Tourism Event Calendar, Sustainable Tourism, Malakand Division.

Introduction

Tourism is acknowledged as a key driver of the economic development, cultural exchange and regional development. It is the temporary transfer of people out of their normal place of residence to use it towards leisure, recreations, cultural exploration, as well as social interaction. One of the important aspect is of event tourism which has become a significant part of the larger tourism industry, where tourists come together for cultural, religious, sporting and social events being organized. In addition, opined by

Journal of Management Science Research Review

<https://jmsrr.com/index.php/Journal/about>

Volume. 5 Issue No. 1 (2026)

Online ISSN: 3006-2047

Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Getz & Page, (2019), planned events are an important factor in destination attractiveness, local economy boosting, and community identity building by way of tourism. Events are also increasingly used as strategic tools to promote the attraction of tourists to the destination, and to promote regional development, such as festivals, exhibitions, sports events and cultural events. But, the systematic planning and scheduling of events in terms of the tourism management of the modern tourism has become imperative in destination planning. The study of event management highlights on the importance of well-coordinated, promoted, and timely tourism events that optimize the number of visitors to the event, but also increase economic benefits. It is emphasized that the tourism events have to be well planned and adjusted with the evolving social, economic and global tourism trends so that the events can be attractive and competitive (Ferdinand & Shaw, 2012). Similarly, Nguyen, (2025) carried out a research on traditional festivals, which reveals that cultural and community festivals play an important role in preserving traditional culture and attracting tourists, both local and international.

Pakistan has abundant tourism resources and various tourism events such as cultural festivals, religious festivals, seasonal festivals, heritage events, and adventure events are also held in the country (Richards, 2018; Getz & Page, 2016). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially Malakand Division, is one of the most important regions for tourism in Pakistan with various tourism events which are related to the cultural heritage, traditions and natural attractions (Alam et al, 2022). The events can have a real impact on the number of domestic and international visitors, the presence of local culture, employment opportunities and the economic development of the region (Getz & Page, 2016; Richards, 2018). Similarly, Kalsoom Ahmed (2024), states that tourism is one of the most important economic sectors that could help in the development of the region and to promote the country internationally. Besides, the Government must give more importance to the tourism so that they can make some arrangements to make the people aware of the tourism, promote and develop infrastructure and superstructure which will attract people's attention. They tried to open the eyes of people and introduce tourism as their profit and profit of the region and country as well (Hanif, 2021).

However, the tourism sector in Pakistan has been plagued by many hurdles such as lack of infrastructure, security problems, low destination marketing, lack of a tourism event calendar and lack of good strategic planning which are impeding the growth of this sector despite its great tourism potential (Khan, Alam et al. 2024). These have hampered the development and utilization of the tourism resources in various parts of the country (Abbas et al., 2022). Even though Malakand Division has a wide variety of events in terms of cultural, religious, seasonal, heritage and adventure tourism, there is no mechanism in place for scheduling, coordination and promotion of these events. This means that sometimes event

Journal of Management Science Research

Review

<https://jmsrr.com/index.php/Journal/about>

Volume. 5 Issue No. 1 (2026)

Online ISSN: 3006-2047

Print ISSN: 3006-2039

dates conflict, promotion is not extensive, tourist numbers are subject to seasonal variations and destination development is underutilized. According to the researcher, no detailed study has been found that has developed structured tourism event calendar for Malakand Division. The present study, therefore, will contribute to the existing tourism literature by creating a concerted tourism events calendar, which will be developed from the existing tourism events, their appropriate timing and the views of concerned stakeholders in this area.

This research will have significance for tourism policy makers, destination management organizations, communities, tourism event planners, tour operators, hotels and other tourism stakeholders because it will bring a practical framework for event planning and marketing for tourism events, in a systematic way. In terms of academia, this study will contribute to the literature on tourism event planning in Pakistan and will serve as a basis for further research in the fields of tourism event calendar and sustainable destination management in Pakistan. The proposed tourism event calendar will facilitate effective scheduling of events, enhance the coordination between the various players, minimize overlaps between events, bolster the destination marketing, and serve as valuable tool for informing visitors about tourism events throughout the year. In addition, the results will support sustainable tourism development in Malakand Division by improving the tourist experiences, boosting tourism demand, engaging the community in tourism activities and providing data for evidence-based tourism planning.

Literature Review

The tourism industry, today, is an important industry in terms of economic development, cultural preservation, and promotion of tourist destinations throughout the world. Event tourism is one of the more popular types of tourism as it can draw visitors, create revenue, help to build community identity, and help the region to develop (Getz, 2012). Event tourism refers to cultural events, religious events, sports events, exhibitions, heritage events and other events that help make the destination attractive and competitive (Getz 1991).

Successful event tourism is a product of effective planning and scheduling. Tourism event calendars are well-known as effective tools to plan events, facilitate tourism stakeholder coordination, promotion, minimize event conflicts and support visitors with timely and accurate information about upcoming events (Kim et al., 2018). Well-structured event calendars also help promote destination marketing, by raising event awareness, improving the planning of the visitors and encouraging them to plan their trips for the whole year. (Vardan & Vardevanian, 2021).

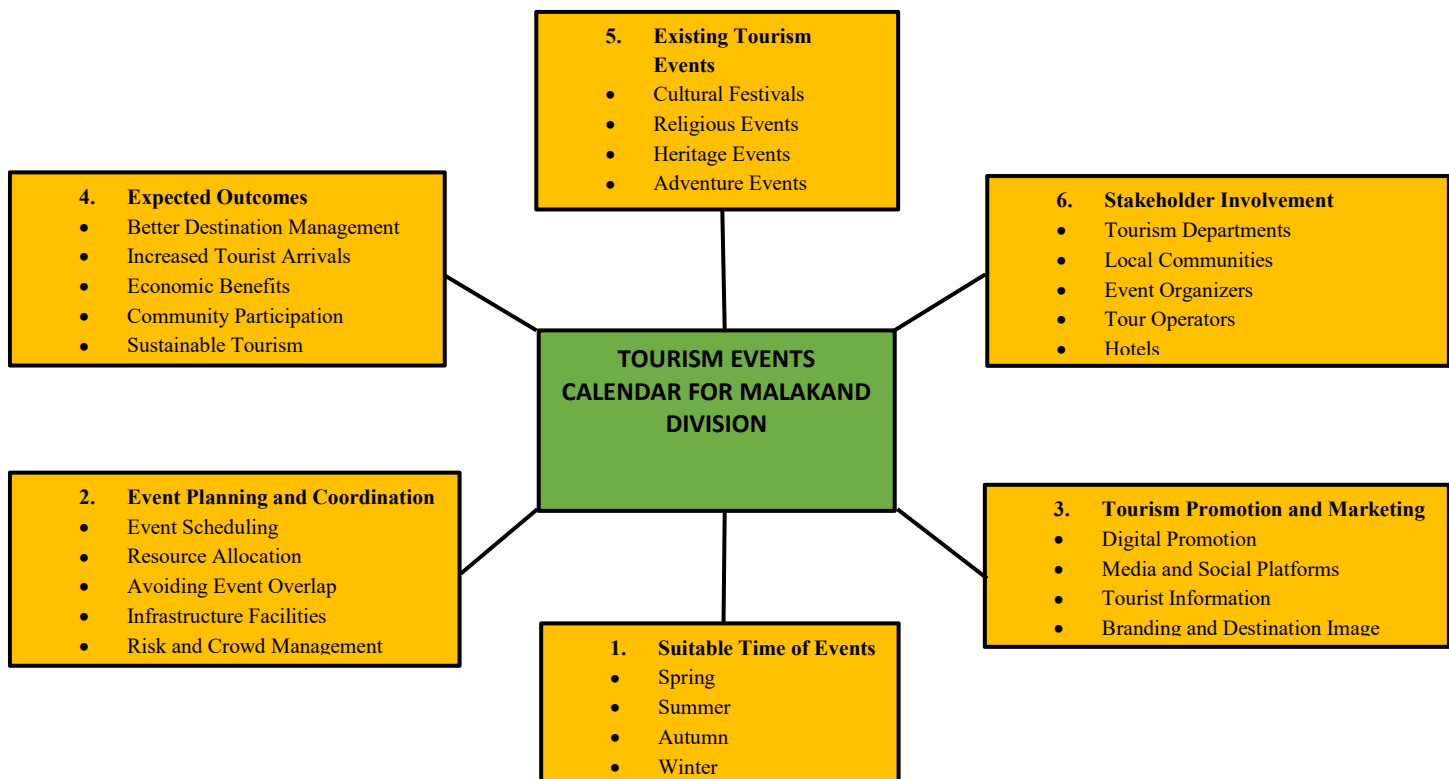
Worldwide, event calendars are formalized tools developed for the tourism destinations to enhance tourism planning and promotion efforts. Major events like the Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup and cultural festivals

are organized years ahead of time so as to make the best of the visitors' participation and economic contribution (Getz, 2016). Official tourism event calendars have been created in countries like Qatar, Malaysia, Albania and Azerbaijan, to ease DMO management and enhance tourist access to tourist information on events. The vital role of systematic event calendar in sustainable tourism development is highlighted in these practices.

Pakistan has a lot of potential to become a great tourism destination because of its cultural diversity, religious heritage and natural beauty (Abbas et al., 2022). Other tourism events in Malakand Division in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are Shandur polo festival, Chilam Joshi Festival, religious events, cultural events and adventure events. In spite of these events, no complete tourism event calendar is kept to record, organize and promote these events systematically. This gap hinders effective planning, coordination of stakeholders and tourism promotion in the area.

This study follows the Event Tourism Framework proposed by Getz that highlights the importance of planned events for destination development, community involvement and tourism development. With this as a basis, the study reviews the existing tourism events in Malakand Division and suggests a structured tourism event calendar for supporting tourism planning, management, promotion and sustainable development of the region.

Conceptual Model



Journal of Management Science Research

Review

<https://jmsrr.com/index.php/Journal/about>

Volume. 5 Issue No. 1 (2026)

Online ISSN: 3006-2047

Print ISSN: 3006-2039

Methodology

To explore the tourism events and their appropriate timing in Malakand Division, a qualitative research approach was taken and to design tourism event calendar for tourism planning and promotion. Tourism stakeholders such as tourism officials, event organizers, tour operators, hospitality managers and local community representatives were included in the population.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling technique and they were those who had direct knowledge and experience with tourism events in the region. For this purpose, 15 stakeholders (Tourism Department, Local Communities, Event Organizers, Tour Operators, Hotels and Tourism experts), were picked from various districts of Malakand Division. Structured interviews were conducted for data collection. The topic of the interview was centered on the tourism events, the practices of scheduling the events, the involvement of stakeholders in the event and the tourism promotion (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Thematic analysis is the method used in analyzing the collected data, which was based on the six steps of Braun and Clarke (2006). Themes that emerged from the analysis were on current tourism events, appropriate timing of events, role of stakeholders, tourism promotion and development of a structured tourism event calendar. The results were then interpreted and a complete tourism event calendar for Malakand Division was prepared.

Results and Discussion

The respondents were interviewed to get in-depth information about their views and experiences. In these interviews, a discussion has taken place with stakeholders and initial codes were derived on how the respondents perceived and replied to it. These codes were then carefully examined and analyzed for their relevance and meaning. After coding and assessment, the codes were grouped together into similar themes, which then enabled more general themes to be identified. These themes were used as the basis of the thematic analysis and also were applied for the interpretation of findings in relation to the research question/objectives. Codes were inductively developed based on the responses of the participants and represented the general patterns associated with the tourism event, stakeholders' participation, tourism promotion, tourism development, and planning of the events.

Coding was centered on the tourism event types, event timing, stakeholders involved tourism promotional strategies, the benefits of tourism, tourism challenges, and tourism planning.

Below are some of the codes that were important for their analysis. Cultural festivals, Seasonal tourism, Adventure tourism, Religious functions, Sports festivals, Food and handicraft events, Heritage tourism, Community participation, Collaboration with stakeholders, Support of tourism

Journal of Management Science Research

Review

<https://jmsrr.com/index.php/Journal/about>

Volume. 5 Issue No. 1 (2026)

Online ISSN: 3006-2047

Print ISSN: 3006-2039

department, Promotional platforms, Digital marketing, Tourist awareness, Development of tourism, The generation of employment, Destination promotion, Improvement in infrastructure, Scheduling of events, A desire for a tourism event calendar, Hidden event tourism, Opportunities for investment, Sustainability and environmental protection.

The coding process was used to break down large quantities of qualitative data into manageable categories. These similar codes were later aggregated to larger themes in the theme development.

- The diversity of Tourism Events in Malakand Division
- Seasonality of and timing for tourism events
- The role of the stakeholders in the management of tourism events
- Focuses on the role of tourism events in the process of tourism development
- Promoting Tourism and the necessity of a program of organized tourist events.

The responses of tourism experts further reinforced the coding process and indicated that seasonal tourism, the cooperation of the stakeholders, digital promotion, developments of tourism and employment creation are important. In addition, strategic planning of tourism events is important in Malakand Division.

Thematic analysis was done by systematically coding the participants' responses to the interview questions and categorizing the codes into larger themes. Themes produced during the coding process emerged that directly related to the research objectives and stakeholders' perceptions of the tourism event planning in Malakand Division. The results indicated that a wide variety of tourism events are held in the region such as cultural festivals, religious ceremonies, seasonal festivities, heritage events, sports festivals, food and handicraft exhibitions and adventure tourism. These events do not, however, tend to be managed formally, in terms of a schedule or any type of coordination. This is in line with the study by Getz (2012), which pointed out that effective destination management and tourism development depends on well planned and coordinated events.

The analysis also revealed that the seasonality or timing of tourism events is closely linked to the seasonal conditions, culture, and practices, underscoring the need for the consideration of event timing to environmental and socio-cultural conditions. This discovery lends support for the researchers' work of Mair and Whitford (2016), who claimed that the success in tourism event planning is achieved by considering the seasonality, environmental and cultural factors to enhance the participation of visitors and effectiveness of the events.

Stakeholders also emphasized the importance of enhanced cooperation between the tourism departments, local authorities, communities, event planners, tour operators, hotels, and other tourism providers in event

Journal of Management Science Research

Review

<https://jmsrr.com/index.php/Journal/about>

Volume. 5 Issue No. 1 (2026)

Online ISSN: 3006-2047

Print ISSN: 3006-2039

planning and management, as well as in promoting events. The results support the work of Allen et al. (2011), who found that the collaboration of stakeholders was very crucial for the successful management of events and sustainable tourism development. Another strong theme that was recognized was the role of tourism events in destination development. Participants concurred that the tourism events that are well planned, affect the appeal of the destination, boost tourism figures, create job opportunities, help local businesses and stimulate regional economy. The results are corroborated by Getz and Page (2016), who have found that tourism events have a significant effect in destination branding, local economic development and tourism competitiveness.

Additionally, the results highlighted the increasing significance of the promotion of tourism by using digital marketing, social networking and orchestrated promotion efforts to boost the awareness and visibility of tourists. In line with this, Page (2019), pointed out that the effective management of a destination information system (DIS) and destination marketing organization (DMO) is crucial to promoting tourism and enriching the experiences of tourists.

One of the major findings of the study was that there is no well-organized tourism event calendar in Malakand Division. This posed a significant challenge for those involved in event organization, destination marketing, stakeholder partnerships and visitor information. In general, the results show that a well-designed tourist event calendar can be helpful towards the development of sustainable tourism in Malakand Division and for the strengthening of tourism planning, coordination of stakeholders' activities and promotion of the tourist destination. The results support the claims of Getz (2012) and Getz and Page (2016) which suggest that structured event calendars are strategic tools in the tourism planning, destination management and sustainable tourism development processes.

Based on the opinions of respondents, the following tourism calendar has been designed wherein all types of tourism events are included.

Tourism Event Calendar for Malakand Division

No.	District	Tourism Event	Season	Month / Date	Destination	Main Activities
1.	Chitral Upper	Shandur Polo Festival	Summer	07-09 July	Shandur Pass Broghil	Polo, cultural shows,
2.	Chitral Upper	Yak Polo Festival	Summer	12-15 July	Broghil	Yak Polo and Traditional cuisine
3.	Chitral Lower	Chilam Joshi Festival	Spring	13-16 May	Kalash Valleys	Traditional Dance, Music
4.	Chitral Lower	Uchal Festival	Summer	20-22 August	Kalash Valleys	Communal feasting, Fresh grape wine,

Journal of Management Science Research

Review

<https://jmsrr.com/index.php/Journal/about>

Volume. 5 Issue No. 1 (2026)

Online ISSN: 3006-2047

Print ISSN: 3006-2039

5.	Chitral Lower	Choimus Festival	Winter	15-22 Decemb er	Kalash Valleys	Traditional music, Circle dance and Bountiful harvest Cultural and religious ceremonies
6.	Chitral Lower	Kalash Cultural Fair	Summer	10-12 June	Bumburet Valley	Handicrafts, local cuisine
7.	Chitral Lower	Trophy Hunting/ Markhor Watching	Autumn	24-28 October	Chitral Gol National Park, Tooshi Shasha Conservancy, Ghairat Goleen Conservancy	Hunting of Markhor/ Watching of Markhor by naked eyes
8.	Swat	Kalam Summer Festival	Summer	15-20 July	Kalam	Music, Sports, Family recreation
9.	Swat	Malam Jabba Snow Festival	Winter	20-25 January	Malam Jabba	Skiing, snowboarding
10.	Swat	Swat Trout Festival	Autumn	10-12 Septemb er	Bahrain	Fishing, food festival and watching Trout Fish
11.	Swat	Swat Fruit Festival	Summer	20-25 June	Grassy Ground Mingora	Variety of Peaches, Apple, Plum, Oranges, Apricot and pears
12.	Swat	Water Sports Festival	Summer	15-18 June	Swat River	River rafting/Kayaking/ Water Polo
13.	Swat	Mahodand Lake Adventure Festival	Summer	08-12 August	Mahodand Lake	Boating, Camping, Trekking
14.	Swat	Swat Heritage Festival	Autumn	10-12 October	Saidu Sharif	Heritage exhibitions
15.	Swat	Dry Fruit/Honey Festival	Autumn	3-7 Novemb er	Grassy Ground, Mingora	Walnuts, Almonds, Dried Apricots, Dried Figs, Pine nuts, Honey
16.	Upper Dir	Kumrat Summer Festival	Summer	11-13 July	Kumrat Valley	Camping and Trekking/Hiking, Traditional Music
17.	Upper Dir	Jahaz Banda Trekking Festival	Summer	15-18 August	Jahaz Banda	Trekking and Lakes/Water Falls Exploration

Journal of Management Science Research

Review

<https://jmsrr.com/index.php/Journal/about>

Volume. 5 Issue No. 1 (2026)

Online ISSN: 3006-2047

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18.	Upper Dir	Dir Cultural Festival	Spring	12-14 April	Dir Town	Traditional Games/Cultural Performances, Knife exhibition
19.	Upper Dir	Fresh Fruits Festival	Summer	22-24 August	Upper Dir	Variety of Peaches, Apple, Plum, Oranges, Apricot and pears
20.	Upper Dir	Eco-Tourism Festival	Summer	05-07 June	Kumrat Valley	Nature conservation activities
21.	Lower Dir	Timergara Cultural Festival	Spring	15-17 March	Timergara	Traditional music, Handicrafts, Dir Caps, Local handicrafts
22.	Lower Dir	Handicraft Exhibition	Autumn	08-10 October	Timergara	Local handicrafts
23.	Lower Dir	Food Festival	Spring	22-24 April	Chakdara	Traditional cuisine
24.	Lower Dir	Youth Adventure Festival	Summer	12-14 June	Laram Top	Hiking and camping
25.	Lower Dir	Winter Sports Festival	Winter	14-18 February	Shahi, Bin Shahi Top	Tug of War, Skiing, Volley Ball, Snow fall
26.	Lower Dir	Adventure Sports	Spring	April 5-8	Laram, Sheen Ghar	Paragliding, Trekking, Camping
27.	Buner	Elum Mountain Festival	Summer	25-27 July	Elum Mountain	Trekking and Camping
28.	Buner	Buner Cultural Festival	Spring	08-10 April	Daggar	Traditional music, games and handicrafts
29.	Swat	Archaeological Heritage Festival	Autumn	20-22 October	Barikot Area	Heritage awareness
30.	Buner	Spring Flower Festival and Birds Watching	Spring	20-22 March	Pir Baba Area	Flower exhibitions/Birds Watching
31.	Buner	Local Food Festival	Summer	15-17 June	Daggar	Traditional foods
32.	Shangla	Shangla Summer Festival	Summer	08-10 July	Alpuri	Cultural activities
33.	Shangla	Yakhtangay Adventure Festival	Summer	18-20 August	Yakhtangay	Hiking and camping
34.	Shangla	Shangla Cultural Day	Spring	25 April	Alpuri	Folk music and Cultural Activities
35.	Shangla	Winter Snow Festival	Winter	15-17 January	Besham Highlands	Winter games
36.	Shangla	Fruits and	Autumn	12-14	Shangla	Local products

Journal of Management Science Research

Review

<https://jmsrr.com/index.php/Journal/about>

Volume. 5 Issue No. 1 (2026)

Online ISSN: 3006-2047

Print ISSN: 3006-2039

		Honey Festival		September		exhibition
37.	Malakand	Jashn-e-Malakand	Spring	10-12 April	Batkhela	Cultural programs
38.	Malakand	Malakand Heritage Festival	Autumn	15-17 October	Malakand Fort Area	Heritage promotion
39.	Malakand	Adventure Sports Festival	Summer	20-22 June	Malakand Hills	Cycling and trekking
40.	Malakand	Tourism Awareness Week	Autumn	10-16 November	Batkhela	Tourism exhibitions, cultural heritage displays
41.	Malakand	Food and Handicraft Festival	Summer	25-27 July	Batkhela	Local products promotion, traditional handwoven shawls, live craft-making,
42.	Swat, Dir, Shangla, Buner, Chitral	Medical Tourism	All seasons		Mountains	Exploration of medicinal plants in the area
43.	All Districts	Eid Tourism Festival	Variable	Eid Holidays	Major Tourist Sites	Cultural celebrations, Celebrations with traditional music, traditional dishes and Eid Party
44.	All Districts	Independence Day Tourism Festival	Summer	14 August	Major Tourist Destinations	Cultural events, Flag-hoisting ceremony, traditional folk dances, folk music concerts, poetry recitals, local sports competitions, handicraft exhibitions, food stalls

Conclusion and Suggestions

The objective of this study was to create a structured calendar of the tourism events for Malakand Division identifying the existing tourism events in the division, appropriate time of the events and stakeholders' views on event planning and promotion. The results showed that the area has a variety of tourism activities, such as cultural festivals, religious holidays, seasonal activities, heritage-based activities, and adventure tourism functions. However, these activities are not structured and properly coordinated in form of a calendar, that's why limited tourist are attracted resulting in less promotion of the tourist destinations. The lack of proper event calendar in the

Journal of Management Science Research

Review

<https://jmsrr.com/index.php/Journal/about>

Volume. 5 Issue No. 1 (2026)

Online ISSN: 3006-2047

Print ISSN: 3006-2039

tourist spots reduce tourism promotion, overlapping of events, irregular arrival of tourists and ineffective use of the resources. The same was also observed as the major challenge in promoting tourism activities in Malakand Division which need proper attention and planning tourism events with special consideration to various seasonal conditions. This will help in proper distribution of tourism activities at various spots and will avoid overlapping in events which will help to attract maximum tourist in the area.

Further, it is suggested that qualitative methods may be used in future research to assess and evaluate the impact of digital events calendar on economic growth, social development and promotion of tourism in Malakand Division. The results of the study are in aligned with the findings of Getz (2012) who also suggests that a proper structured event calendar is very important to promoting tourists destinations which enhance visitor's experience. Not only this, but it also helps in effective planning, marketing, managing and strengthening coordination among tourism stakeholders as suggested by Allen et al. (2011).

Although the study has contributed towards promoting tourism in the areas, it has certain limitations like data collection at one point with a small sample of tourism stakeholders. Therefore, it is suggested that future research should focus on various stakeholders like local communities, event organizers, tour operators, tourism department, hotel administrators, and tourism experts in order to have a more comprehensive insight. For future direction, more extensive research is required in the future, to make separate tourism events calendars like sport events calendar, adventure events calendar etc, involving tourists, government officials, tourism experts and local communities, to gain more in-depth information. Further studies may also examine the research development of digital tourism event calendar systems and their efficacy in promoting tourism destinations in Pakistan, as well as quantitative or mixed-method studies that can examine the economic, social, focus no stakeholders, community, separate events and tourism impacts of event calendars.

In conclusion, the study finds that Malakand Division has significant tourism potential; however, this potential can be only materialized with the development of a tourism event calendar. The proposed calendar will help in tourism planning, management, development and promotion of tourism in the area, will bring prosperity in the lives of local community, and bring all the stakeholders to one platform for tourism promotion thus resulting bringing in prosperity in the region and country at large.

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Volume. 5 Issue No. 1 (2026)

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