

# Unlocking the Tourism Potential of Mawlana Yaqoob Charkhi Valley in Charkh District, Logar Province, Afghanistan

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## ABSTRACT

This research study examines the tourism potential of Mawlana Yaqoob Charkhi Valley in Charkh District, Logar Province, Afghanistan, and investigates its impact on the local economy. The primary objective is to identify key enhancements that can effectively attract a larger number of visitors and assess the influence of tourism on local market demand. A quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 100 visitors. The collected data was analyzed using the Wilcoxon non-parametric test in the statistical software SPSS. The findings reveal significant associations between various factors and increased visitor numbers, including improvements in road conditions, allowance for family visits, the establishment of hotels, the activation of additional recreational activities, the opening of shops and restaurants, and the extension of telephone and internet services in the area. Furthermore, it was observed that visitors from distant regions tend to contribute more significantly to the local economy through higher expenditure during their visits. Based on the study's results, recommendations are made for the Afghan government and private sectors to focus on infrastructure development in the aforementioned areas. This research contributes to the understanding of rural tourism development in Afghanistan and provides valuable insights for policymakers, managers, and tourism planners.

**Keywords-** Mawlana Yaqoob Charkhi Valley, Charkh District, Logar Province, Afghanistan, tourism potential, local economy, visitor attractions, infrastructure development.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Today, the need and serious attention to tourism as a leading industry and a new phenomenon in life is very much felt, and its importance in the world is increasing day by day.

Policymakers, managers and tourism planners look at the development of the rural tourism industry with an industrial perspective that seeks cultural, social and economic stability for rural communities, and many believe that the development of rural tourism will be the solution to many problems in Afghanistan.(Habibyar 2020).

Afghanistan has its own natural and cultural attractions that can be a great opportunity for tourism industry expansion and creates countless cultural, social and economic opportunities for the country.

As per the world bank data Afghanistan has received 75 Million USD of tourism industry in 2020 which makes 5.080 % of the country's total export. (World Bank 2022).

One of the places in Afghanistan having the potential to attract tourists, is Mawlana Yaqoob Charkhi a beautiful valley located in Charkh district of Logar province.

Mawlana Yaqoob Charkhi valley in Charkh district is a well-known place with its natural attractions, waterfalls, far from pollution where you can find the shrine of Mawlana's ancestor. The area is blessed with stunning nature, pleasant weather, mountains, and gardens. The Logar River starts from this spot and flows down from the top of a hill, creating beautiful views. Because of these special features, the valley has become a popular destination for tourism, picnics, and sightseeing. People from Charkh district, as well as other districts in Logar province and even from other provinces, visit the valley to enjoy its beauty and have a good time.



Charkh district, located in the southern region of Logar province, boasts a rich history and diverse geographical features. Covering an area of 760 square kilometers and comprising 108 villages, it is bordered by Pul Alam to the north and east, Zormat in Paktia province to the southeast, Jagato in Ghazni province to the south, and Nerkh in Wardak province to the west. Ibn Battuta, in the beginning of the 8th century, described Charkh as a large village with abundant gardens and good fruits, where Friday prayers were held. The district experiences a moderate climate and is characterized by numerous mountains. The cultivation of agricultural fields in Charkh district is made possible by the main stream of the Logar River, which originates from Molina hill. The district is home to Pashtun and Tajik tribes, with the residents primarily speaking Pashto and Dari languages. Charkh Bazar, the central hub of Charkh district, is located approximately 110 kilometers southwest of Kabul city the capital of Afghanistan and south of Pul-e-Alam, the capital of Logar province. The city is crossed by the main branch of the Logar River. In the past, Charkh held significant importance as a location within the land of Sofia, and it is associated with Yaqub Charkhi, a prominent figure from the Naqshbandi family. Other notable figures linked to Charkh include Maulana Nizamuddin Khamish and Khawaja Hasan Attar. The city's historical landmarks include the tomb of Yaqub Charkhi's ancestors, a admired pilgrimage site, and the Shah Mohiuddin Charkhi Mosque, known as Shah Sahib, featuring an intricately carved wooden altar and Kufic script inscriptions dating back to the Ghaznavian period (Shah Mahmood, 2017).

Charkh is one of the big villages of Logar province in Afghanistan and the birthplace of Maulana Yaqub Charkhi a mystics and commentators of the 9th century AH (Mohammad Kazim 2009).

He wrote some books and short treatises (risalah) like Tafsir Yaqoob Charkhi (Persian), Risalah Na'iyah, Risalah Unsiyyah, Sharh Asma-Allah etc. (Anwar-un-Nabi 2013).

Geographically, Charkh district is situated between 68 and 69 degrees, 45.5 minutes and 6 seconds of eastern longitude, and 33 degrees, 47 minutes and 47.50 minutes and 25 seconds of northern latitude (Encyclopedia, 1987).

As of 2023, the population of Charkh district stands at 52,890, representing 11.87% of the total population of Logar province (Population, 2023). Logar province itself spans an area of 4,568 square kilometers and comprises seven districts, with Charkh being one of them (NSIA, 2022).

**Research objectives:**

The objective of this research is to assess the tourism potential of Mawalan Yaqoob Charkhi valley and examine its impact on the local economy.

**Research Questions:**

To achieve the research objectives, the following questions will be addressed:

1. What specific improvements in the valley can effectively attract a larger number of visitors?
2. How does tourism in Mawalan Yaqoob Charkhi valley affect the local market in terms of increasing demand?

**Hypothesis:**

For the first question of the research 7 below hypothesis are going to be tested.

**Null Hypotheses:**

1. There is no significant relationship between improving the road condition leading to the valley, public transport, and parking facilities, and the number of visitors in the valley.
2. There is no significant relationship between opening hotels for stay and the number of visitors.
3. There is no significant relationship between activating phone and internet services in the area and the number of visitors.
4. There is no significant relationship between opening shops and restaurants and the number of visitors.
5. There is no significant relationship between providing emergency services and the number of visitors.
6. There is no significant relationship between allowing families and the number of visitors.
7. There is no significant relationship between activating extra recreational activities and the number of visitors.
8. There is no significant relationship between increasing local hospitality and the number of visitors.

**Alternative hypothesis:**

1. Improving the road condition leading to the valley, enhancing public transport infrastructure, and expanding

parking facilities are positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors to the valley.

2. The establishment of hotels for accommodation is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.
3. The activation of robust phone and internet services in the area is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.
4. The opening of shops and restaurants is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.
5. The provision of emergency services is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.
6. Allowing families to visit the valley is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.
7. The activation of additional recreational activities is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.
8. Enhancing local hospitality, including the quality of services and interactions with visitors, is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study conducted by Sharifullah Habibyar in 2020, titled "A study of rural tourism management and its role in rural development of Afghanistan," concludes that there exists a limited and ineffective relationship between rural tourism management and rural development in Afghanistan. The research emphasizes the need to address security issues and implement comprehensive strategies in order to revive the tourism industry and promote the development of rural Afghanistan. (Habibyar 2020)

Hamid Amiri's study reveals a lack of notable efforts by the Directorate of Tourism, resulting in inadequate infrastructure development in transportation, accommodation, healthcare, and cultural amenities. Furthermore, Afghanistan's volatile security situation poses a significant challenge, deterring both domestic and international tourists from visiting the country. These challenges have hindered the growth and development of the tourism industry. (Amiri 2018)

The study conducted by Mirfkarudini and Dadman (2022) investigates the tourism industry in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, and explores potential solutions to its challenges. The authors highlight issues such as security threats, negative media publicity, lack of strategic planning, inadequate transport networks, shortage of skilled personnel, and insufficient accommodation facilities. The findings of the study emphasize the need for positive publicity, improved infrastructure, and strategic planning to promote tourism and overcome these challenges. (Mirfkarudini and Dadman 2022)

The aim of the study by Nadry, Mohammadi, and Qasimi was to investigate and propose a favorable solution for tourism development in Balkh Province. The findings suggest that strategic planning, infrastructure development, and effective tourism management are crucial for fully utilizing the tourism potential of the region. The study identifies the defense strategy as the most effective approach for achieving tourism development in Balkh Province. (Nadry, Mohammadi, and Qasimi 2021)

## III. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of the research, a quantitative approach was employed. A purposive sampling method was utilized to select a sample of 100 visitors who had previously visited the valley. The sample was diverse, encompassing individuals from various backgrounds, residing at different distances from the valley, and spanning different age groups.

A structured questionnaire consisting of 19 questions, comprising both closed-ended and open-ended items, was administered to the participants via online platforms and in-person interactions. The questionnaire covered various aspects related to the visitors' experiences and preferences. In addition to demographic inquiries, participants were asked about the frequency of their visits to the valley over the past year. Subsequently, they were presented with scenarios regarding the potential availability of different facilities (as outlined in the hypothesis section) and were asked to indicate their anticipated visit frequency in response to these improvements, either by maintaining the same number or specifying a new value.

The demographic data collected from the participants were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using the SPSS software. Furthermore, the factors influencing the number of visits were examined using the Wilcoxon non-parametric test for two related samples, also conducted in SPSS. It is important to note that the distribution of data in the sample exhibited a significant deviation from normality, likely due to substantial variations in visit frequencies among the visitors.

## IV. RESULT

The data obtained from a specific section of the questionnaires, which captures information on the frequency of visits to various facilities within the valley, were subjected to statistical analysis using the Wilcoxon non-parametric test. The resulting findings are presented in the table below.

Comparison	Z Value	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Result	Rank
Last year visit number Vs visit number if Road condition is improved	-3.819 <sup>b</sup>	0.0001	Significant	1

Last year visit number Vs visit number if hotels are opened	-3.500 <sup>b</sup>	0.0004	Significant	3
Last year visit number Vs visit number if phone and internet services are activated	-2.333 <sup>b</sup>	0.0196	Significant	6
Last year visit number Vs visit number if shops and restaurants are opened	-2.449 <sup>b</sup>	0.0143	Significant	5
Last year visit number Vs visit number if emergency services are provided	-1.414 <sup>b</sup>	0.1572	Not significant	
Last year visit number Vs visit number if families are allowed	-3.698 <sup>b</sup>	0.0002	Significant	2
Last year visit number Vs visit number if extra recreational activities are activated	-2.460 <sup>b</sup>	0.0138	Significant	4
Last year visit number Vs visit number if local hospitality is improved	-1.414 <sup>b</sup>	0.1572	Not significant	

b. Based on positive ranks.

Source: Questionnaire data analyzed in SPSS

The findings of the analysis reveal that out of the factors included in the questionnaires, six factors have exhibited statistically significant effects on the increase in visitors to Mawalana Yaqoob Charkhi valley. These

factors have shown to play a significant role in influencing the visitation patterns and preferences of visitors.

Based on the finding, we assess the validity of our hypotheses in this table.

S. N.		Hypothesis Description	Result
1	H0	There is no significant relationship between improving the road condition leading to the valley, public transport, and parking facilities, and the number of visitors in the valley.	Rejected
	Ha	Improving the road condition leading to the valley, enhancing public transport infrastructure, and expanding parking facilities are positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors to the valley.	Accepted
2	H0	There is no significant relationship between opening hotels for stay and the number of visitors.	Rejected
	Ha	The establishment of hotels for accommodation is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.	Accepted
3	H0	There is no significant relationship between activating phone and internet services in the area and the number of visitors.	Rejected
	Ha	The activation of robust phone and internet services in the area is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.	Accepted
4	H0	There is no significant relationship between opening shops and restaurants and the number of visitors.	Rejected
	Ha	The opening of shops and restaurants is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.	Accepted
5	H0	There is no significant relationship between providing emergency services and the number of visitors.	Accepted
	Ha	The provision of emergency services is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.	Rejected
6	H0	There is no significant relationship between allowing families and the number of visitors.	Rejected
	Ha	Allowing families to visit the valley is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.	Accepted
7	H0	There is no significant relationship between activating extra recreational activities and the number of visitors.	Rejected
	Ha	The activation of additional recreational activities is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.	Accepted
8	H0	There is no significant relationship between increasing local hospitality and the number of visitors	Accepted

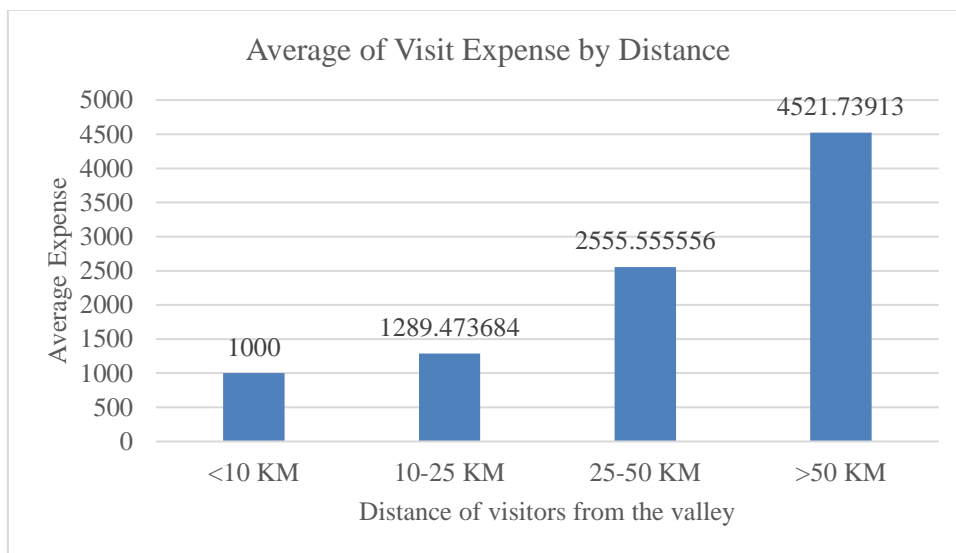


	Ha	Enhancing local hospitality, including the quality of services and interactions with visitors, is positively associated with an increase in the number of visitors.	Rejected
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Through our analysis, we have identified several significant factors that influence the number of visitors to the area. These factors include improvements in road conditions, the establishment of hotels, activation of telephone and internet services, the availability of shops and restaurants, the allowance for families to visit, and the activation of additional recreational activities.

To further assess the relative significance of these factors, we considered the corresponding p-values. A lower p-value indicates higher significance, while a larger p-value suggests a lower level of significance. Based on this ranking, we can order the factors from highest to least influence on visitor numbers as follows: road condition improvement, family allowance, opening hotels in the area, activating additional recreational activities, opening shops and restaurants in the area, and extending telephone and internet services to the area.

The analysis of the questionnaire data reveals findings that address the research question regarding the relationship between visitor expenses and the distance from the valley in Mawlana Yaqoob Charkhi. The average expense by a visitor to the valley, including one-time food, is determined to be 2200 AFN. This amount only includes transportation, food, and refreshment expenses of the visitors that are managed by themselves, and there are no charges in the valley in terms of entering the place, swimming, fishing, and parking. The expenses of the visitors depend on the time they stay, the distance they come from, and what they want to buy. However, the information from the questionnaire reveals that the average expense shows a direct correlation with the distance of visitors from the valley, as depicted in the chart below.



The reason for this relationship, along with transportation expenses, can be attributed to the time visitors stay in the valley, as people coming from distant areas usually stay longer, sometimes even spending the night in the valley.

Specifically, visitors located within a distance of less than 10 KM from the valley have an average expense of 1000 AFN. Those within the range of 10-25 KM exhibit an average expense of 1289.4 AFN, while visitors located 25-50 KM away have an average expense of 2555.5 AFN. Lastly, visitors situated more than 50 KM away from the valley demonstrate the highest average expense of 4521.7 AFN.

It is important to note that the majority of these expenses are made within the local market. This implies that visitor spending has a positive impact on increasing demand for goods and services within the local market. This increased demand, in turn, stimulates the supply

sector and generates numerous positive consequences throughout the value chain, benefiting the local community as a whole.

## V. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the factors that significantly influence visitor numbers in Mawalan Yaqoob Charkhi valley. Based on the results, the factors with the highest priority, ranked according to p-values, are as follows: improving road conditions, allowing families to visit, opening hotels, activating additional recreational activities, opening shops and restaurants, and extending telephone and internet services to the area.

Improving road conditions leading to the valley has been found to have a significant positive impact on

attracting visitors. Therefore, it is recommended that authorities focus on enhancing road infrastructure and accessibility to ensure a smooth and convenient travel experience for visitors. This may involve road maintenance, signage improvements, and the implementation of measures to reduce travel time and enhance safety.

Allowing families to visit the valley has also shown to be a significant factor in increasing visitor numbers. To capitalize on this finding, it is recommended that family-oriented amenities and activities be developed within Mawalan Yaqoob Charkhi valley. This could include the establishment of family-friendly facilities, playgrounds, and picnic areas, as well as organizing events and programs specifically tailored to families.

The opening of hotels in the area has demonstrated a positive association with an increase in the number of visitors. To leverage this finding, stakeholders should consider investing in the development of accommodations, including hotels or guesthouses, to cater to the growing demand. Providing diverse options for visitors to stay overnight will not only increase the length of their stay but also contribute to the local economy through increased spending on accommodation and related services.

The activation of additional recreational activities has shown to be an important factor in attracting visitors. It is recommended that authorities explore opportunities to introduce new recreational options within the valley, such as guided tours, nature trails, adventure sports, and cultural events. These activities can enhance the overall visitor experience and provide additional incentives for tourists to choose Mawalan Yaqoob Charkhi valley as their destination.

Opening shops and restaurants in the area has also been found to positively influence visitor numbers. To leverage this finding, stakeholders should encourage and support local businesses in establishing shops, cafes, and restaurants within or in close proximity to the valley. This will not only provide visitors with a range of dining and shopping options but also contribute to the growth of the local economy by generating employment opportunities and increasing the demand for local products and services.

Extending telephone and internet services to the area has shown to be a significant factor in attracting visitors. It is recommended that efforts be made to improve and expand telecommunication infrastructure in Mawalan Yaqoob Charkhi valley. This includes ensuring reliable and high-speed internet connectivity, as well as mobile network coverage, to meet the communication needs of visitors. This will enhance their overall experience and enable them to stay connected during their visit.

Regarding the second research question on the impact of tourism on the local market in terms of increasing demand, the findings suggest that visitor spending has a positive effect on the local economy.

Visitors' average expenses were found to be correlated with their distance from the valley, with those coming from farther distances spending more on average. This indicates that tourism in Mawalan Yaqoob Charkhi valley contributes to increased demand for goods and services within the local market.

To fully harness the potential of tourism as an economic driver, it is important to ensure that local businesses are prepared to meet the increased demand generated by visitors. This may involve capacity building initiatives for local entrepreneurs, encouraging the supply of locally sourced products, and fostering collaborations between businesses and tourism stakeholders. By strengthening the linkages between tourism and the local market, the positive economic impacts of tourism can be maximized, leading to sustainable economic growth and development in the region.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight specific improvements and factors that have a significant impact on attracting visitors to Mawalan Yaqoob Charkhi valley. By prioritizing improvements in road conditions, allowing families to visit, opening hotels, activating additional recreational activities, opening shops and restaurants, and extending telephone and internet services, stakeholders can enhance the tourism potential of the valley. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of managing the impact of tourism on the local market by ensuring that local businesses are adequately prepared to meet the increased demand generated by visitors. By implementing the recommended strategies, Mawalan Yaqoob Charkhi valley can realize its tourism potential and contribute to the sustainable economic development of the region.

In comparison to the study conducted by Sharifullah Habibyar in 2020, which identified security as a significant challenge for tourism in Afghanistan, the present study highlights a notable difference. The current research acknowledges that the security situation in Afghanistan has improved significantly, and there are no longer concerns regarding security. This shift in the security landscape is a crucial development that positively impacts the potential for tourism in the country. As a result, the findings of this study suggest that the previous limitations and ineffectiveness in the relationship between rural tourism management and rural development, which were primarily attributed to security concerns, may no longer be relevant. The discussion section of this paper will delve further into the implications of this change and explore the new opportunities and challenges that arise in the context of peaceful conditions in Afghanistan. (Habibyar 2020)

In contrast to Hamid Amiri's study, this research did not identify security as a challenge for the tourism industry in Afghanistan. The study focused primarily on assessing the state of facilities and infrastructure. This difference can be attributed to the significant improvement in the security situation in Afghanistan since the end of the war. (Amiri 2018)

Upon comparing the findings of this study with the research conducted by Mirfkhariudini and Dadman, it becomes evident that while their study primarily focused on identifying challenges and proposing solutions to the tourism industry in Jalalabad, this research adds valuable insights by highlighting specific factors that can attract tourists. (Mirfkhariudini and Dadman 2022)

In comparison to the findings of the study conducted by Nadry, Mohammadi, and Qasimi, both studies emphasize the importance of infrastructural development as a crucial factor in tourism development. However, the present study delves into more specific and detailed aspects, particularly highlighting the different facilities that contribute to attracting tourists. This added level of specificity provides a comprehensive understanding of the various factors that play a role in fostering tourism in the region. (Nadry, Mohammadi, and Qasimi 2021)

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