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Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Wah Gardens

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ABSTRACT

The unchecked and unplanned urbanization in developing countries are adversely deteriorating the historic character of the cities in Pakistan. The city's historic profiles are diminishing not being part of the planning processes and the heritage is being destroyed at the name of modern developments. The integration of the historic values in addition to other tangible and intangible values of the cities in the form of historic sites and monuments is the only sustainable solution and way forward in the current scenario for sustainable urban development. This research documents the development of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the less well-known areas like the Wah Gardens (almost at the verge of being disappeared) situated in the Wah cantonment, Punjab. The Wah Gardens were abandoned after the Mughal rule and most of the historic features are lost due to the new developments in the surrounding areas or being over shadowed as not integrated in the planning. Wah Gardens comprising of gardens, pavilions, water tanks and natural spring was built during the sixteenth century.



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Introduction

The unchecked and unplanned urbanization in developing countries are adversely deteriorating the historic character of the cities in Pakistan. The city's historic profiles are diminishing not being part of the planning processes and the heritage is being destroyed at the name of modern developments. The integration of the historic values in addition to other tangible and intangible values of the cities in the form of historic sites and monuments is the only sustainable solution and way forward in the current scenario for sustainable urban development. This research documents the development of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the less well-known areas like the Wah Gardens (almost at the verge of being disappeared) situated in the

Wah cantonment, Punjab. The Wah Gardens were abandoned after the Mughal rule and most of the historic features are lost due to the new developments in the surrounding areas or being over shadowed as not integrated in the planning. Wah Gardens comprising of gardens, pavilions, water tanks and natural spring was built during the sixteenth century. The sustainable tourism strategy formulation is based on the data collected through the visual surveys and in-depth interviews for the documentation of the historic fabric of the area in addition to the historic literature references. The main features of the sustainable tourism strategy are the enhancement of the tourist experience without compromising the quality of local inhabitants and preservation of heritage.

The city of Wah Cantt is full of greenery and surrounded by mountains from all the sides depicting the view of valley. Purportedly due to this reason when the Mughal Emperor Akbar visited this place was amazed by the idyllic settings, mesmerising environment and natural springs uttered 'WAH' which mean wow and later on the place was known as Wah and the Bagh-e-Hasan Abdal got its name as Wah Gardens (Gohar, 2018). The lavish green environment of the city has also a positive influence upon its residents as the city has acquired the literacy rate of 96% and is also known as 'An island of excellence' (Algieri et al., 2018). Wah Gardens are located about 50km to the north west of Rawalpindi near the ancient city of Taxila. Overall, authors have conducted this study following the guidelines provided in the previous research (e.g., Peng, Liang, Fatima, Wang, & Rasheed, 2023; Rasheed, Hameed, Kaur, & Dhir, 2023; Rasheed, Pitafi, Mishra, & Chotia, 2023; Pitafi, Rasheed, Kanwal, & Ren, 2020; Rasheed, Okumus, Weng, Hameed, & Nawaz, 2020; Zhang, Rasheed, & Luqman, 2020; Nisar & Rasheed, 2020; Rasheed, Jamad, Pitafi, & Iqbal, 2020; Rasheed, Yousaf, & Noor, 2011; Sattar, Rasheed, Khan, Tariq, & Iqbal, 2017).

Garden complex is quadrangular in shape and originally a three terraced garden enclosed by a boundary wall. The arched gateway in the east was the main entrance to the complex. The upper terrace consists of the palace Farudgah-e-Shahan-e-Mughlia and the water tank. This palace is the best example of Mughal ornamentation in the Wah Gardens complex. The middle terrace remains the main point of attraction as the Turkish hammam, main water tank along with mahtabi and the baradaris are its prominent features. In between the middle and the lower terrace lies the paen bagh or ladies garden which was provided with the screen wall. The lower terrace consists of the western gateway, mahtabi, watch water gates and the central water canal along with the adjacent water channels (Gulzar et al., 2022).

The Mughal Emperors have always cleverly constructed the gardens where there they find the access of water and natural environment. The Wah Gardens are the natural gardens where the natural springs and surrounding atmosphere forced the emperor for its construction however in the Shalamar gardens of Kashmir the emperor Jahangir had to build an artificial canal from the Dal Lake for the supply of water and same is the case with the Shalamar gardens of Lahore where Shah Jahan access the water from the river Ravi from an artificial canal called Shah Nahr.

The geographical, climatic and environmental position of Wah Gardens distinguishes it from the other gardens of the Mughal period and the well-developed planning enhances its aesthetic value. Here number of species of flora and fauna could be seen enlightening the garden characteristics. Number of Masheer fishes in the main water tank is an eye-catching feature of the garden. The cypress trees of same height in the lower terrace aligning the central canal enhance the scenic beauty of the garden. The Wah Gardens are open for the visitors giving them a sense of spirituality, a mean of connection with Allah Almighty where one praises the natural beauty and Allah's countless blessings.

The Wah Gardens which once was the glory of Muslims architecture was turned into ruins. From the time of its construction till now the complex had to face severe problems. Much of the damage was faced during the Durani period. The Sikhs also stole the precious stones from the garden. The time when the garden was taken by the government of Pakistan it was in tattered form. The Department of Archaeology also didn't pay attention during the early occupation. The main water tank got filled with heavy mud. The pavilions collapsed due to the worst effect of climate and human vandalism. The water channels got buried under the debris and heavy mud, which affect the flow of the water from the point of natural springs.

The area acquired by the government in 1976 was 157 kanal, but it appears that originally the area covered by the garden was much more, as structural remains are also found lying scattered on its northern side. Wah Gardens was originally a three terraced garden like the Shalamar Gardens of Lahore (Arif et al., 2021).

In 1992, an excavation team of professionals took the step and cleared the main water tank from the debris and discovered the hydraulic system of the garden. The Department of Archaeology proposed the conservation and development plan in 2014 for the Wah Gardens restoring number of its element but the use of derivate materials have effect its originality. Removal of Farudgah is another important issue. Lack of maintenance is causing a great damage to the Wah Gardens which in result affects its tourism.

Literature Review

During the last few years' tourism emerged as the fastest growing industry in the world. One of the ambitions of people to earn more money is to travel diverse destinations around the national and international level with different culture, heritage, historical background, norms and values. People are more into the exploration of the world as travelling is the best mean to gain ample amount of knowledge, leisure activities and to relief the stress and anxiety of daily routine life. The heritage architecture is a foremost area in tourism industry. All the built historic structures and monuments are a living example of human genius and a mean of tourist attraction in todays world due to the human association with their history and identity. The literature review of the paper has been conducted following guidelines provided in previous studies (e.g., Anser et al., 2020; Kanwal, Pitafi, Rasheed, Pitafi, & Iqbal, 2019; Kanwal, Rasheed, Pitafi, Pitafi, & Ren, 2020; Moin, Omar, Wei, Rasheed, & Hameed, 2021; Rasheed, Malik, et al., 2020; Yousaf, Rasheed, Hameed, & Luqman, 2020; Yousaf, Rasheed, Kaur, Islam, & Dhir, 2022).

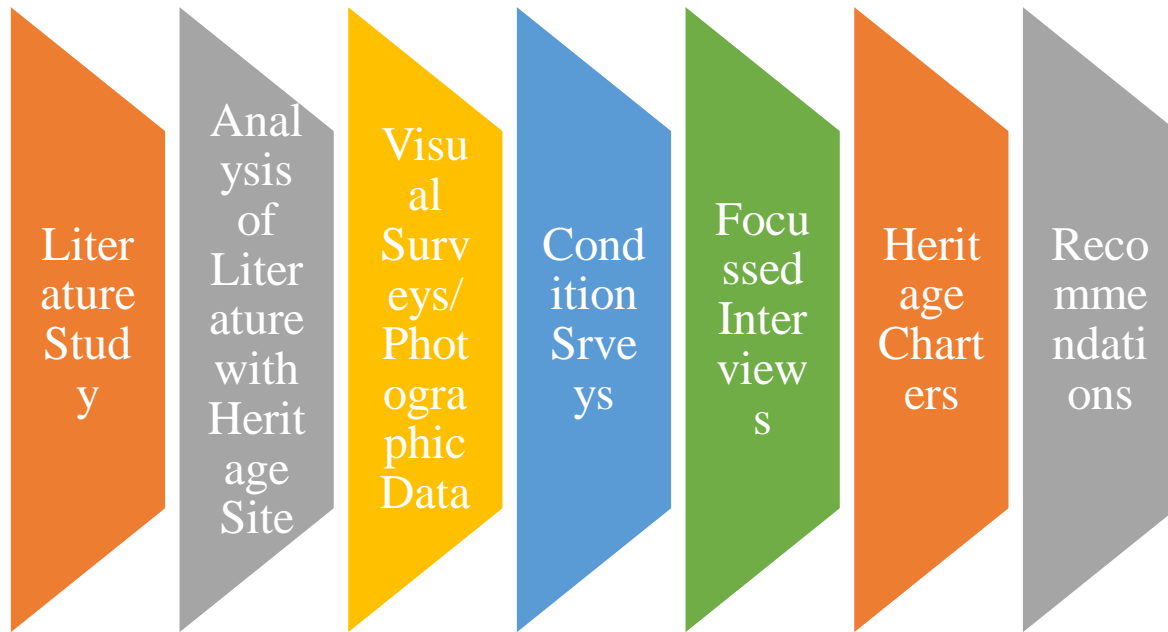
A well said phrase by Alan A.Lew, 1987 clearly states the importance of tourist attraction.

“Without tourist attraction, there would be no tourism and without tourism, there would be no tourist attraction.” (Bertolini., 2021).

A well organized, planned, maintained and preserved heritage destination sites serve as an important economical and developmental factor of a country, as it depicts the positive image of the state and its inhabitants thereby encouraging the tourist activities of an area. Tourism is a vast phenomenon that not only serves the state but also the local community of an area and emerges as a forte to reduce the poverty and un-employment.

Methodology

The research methodology is a systematic process started with the literature mapping and visual surveys of heritage site to document the existing scenario. The literature data and site documentation need to be first established for further studies in heritage site. The research is furthermore strengthened through Interviews from the management, professionals and custodians regarding the history, tourism aspects, previous conservation details and the role of the Department of Archaeology particularly with reference to the selected heritage site. The guidelines have been taken from the international charters and case studies to formulate the recommendations for the selected heritage site. Overall, authors have designed method of this study following all the available guidelines in previous research (Iqbal et al., 2021; Kanwal, Pitafi, Rasheed, Pitafi, & Iqbal, 2022; Luqman, Masood, Shahzad, Imran Rasheed, & Weng, 2020; Luqman, Masood, Weng, Ali, & Rasheed, 2020; Naeem, Weng, Hameed, & Rasheed, 2020; Nisar, Rasheed, & Qiang, 2018; Saleem, Rasheed, Malik, & Okumus, 2021; Zhang, Wu, & Rasheed, 2020).



CASE STUDIES

The following historic gardens nationally and internationally have been taken into account in order to carry out the research work and to identify the required conservation works needed in Wah Gardens to boost its tourism.

VILLA D'ESTE

Site History

Villa d'Este was built in 16th century in Tivoli, Italy on the command of Ippolito (II) d'Este. The gardens are famous for its ingenious plan, extensive water system, profusion fountains, rich decorations and landscape. The site was inscribed by the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 2001 fulfilling the cultural criteria (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv).

The Villa d'Este is the masterpiece designed by Pirro Ligorio and was completed by Alberto Galvani having an irregular quadrilateral plan as the architect was constrained to take in account the previous monastic buildings into the plan and covers an area of 4.5 ha. The entire complex is a substantial example of Renaissance Architecture consisting of terraced gardens, villa, church (S.Maria Maggiore), countless fountains, sculptures decorations and water networks. The best part of the Villa d'Este is all the fountains work under the principle of gravity where the water has been taken from three sources, two aqueduct collects water from the springs from the mountain and an underground tunnel was built to fetch water from the Aniene River. The major fountains of Villa d'Este are oval fountain, wall of the hundred fountains, rometta, dragon fountain, organ fountain and fountain of Neptune. The palace is simple in contrast to the other elements present in the garden with decorated rooms. The splendid garden fell into disrepair between 18th and 19th century when it came into the custody of the House of Hapsburg.

Tourism Potential

Tivoli is rich in cultural heritage sites and is surrounded by number of historical gardens, museums, temples, church, villas and is a hub for tourist activities. Its history dates back to the Roman Empire. The Villa d'Este is managed by the Superintendence of Environmental and Architectural Heritage of Lazio. The Villa d'Este is the richest and most innovative architecture and serves as a model throughout the world. Being surrounded by many other rich heritage sites and natural beauty it provides the visitors with a plus point to explore the area and has the potential for tourist attraction. The Villa is visited by the locals, nationals and foreigners and provides the best facility of accommodation. These historic heritage sites are the backbone in the economic growth of Italy.

SHALAMAR GARDENS LAHORE

Site History

Shalamar gardens are the icon of Mughal Architecture located in Lahore, Pakistan. The gardens were built during the reign of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (1641-1642) under the supervision of Khalilullah Khan. It has been designed as a three terraced garden laid out in Persian Chahar Bagh style, having a rectangular plan and covers an area of 16 hector. The upper terrace is called Farah Baksh, middle and the lower collectively called Faiz Baksh. Different range of plants and trees are the zenith of the garden. The Shalamar gardens is well known due to its preserved historic architectural monuments, elaborate water works consisting of 410 fountains in total with 5 cascades, water channels and a huge water tank in the middle of the central terrace. The garden has rich architectural decorations in the form of pavilions, aiwan, hammam, baradaris, diwan e khas o aam, gateways and minarets. It was included in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1981 fulfilling the cultural criteria (i), (ii) and (iii). To fulfil the need of water in the gardens it has been fetched from the River Ravi by the help of Shah Nahr, all the fountains in the Shalamar gardens used to run under the principle of gravity. The Shalamar garden of Lahore went through the different phases of alteration and restorations work.

Tourism Potentials

The magnificent Shalamar Gardens Lahore is rich in tourism, it provides the social interaction and community identity. The gardens are the source of economic growth through tourism due to its rich historic culture and architecture. Lahore previously known as the city of garden is the focus of attention due to its wide spread Mughal Architecture, Sikh Architecture and British Colonial Architecture. The Shalamar gardens are an asset for the community income generation in the form of surrounding markets, cafes and restaurants. The more the community will have the care and association with its historic architecture and heritage the more they will be benefited from it. The Shalamar Gardens have got much of the attention for being listed in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

PINJORE GARDENS CHANDIGARH

Site History

The Pinjore gardens near present day Chandigarh, India are perhaps the only important gardens of Aurangzeb's period. Also known as Yadavindra Gardens, built during the 17th century by Nawab Fidai Khan, who was serving as the Governor of Punjab at that time. Nawab Fidai Khan was astonished by the enchanting beauty of Pinjore valley and decided to build a garden there. The garden covers an area of 100 acres and comprises of seven terraces. Its important architectural elements are the Shish Mahal, Rang Mahal, Jal Mahal, Chini khana, boundary walls, gates, octagonal bastions, fountains, flowing water channels and cascades. Well planned splendid garden of Pinjore with its surrounding natural beauty is the zenith of an area. The garden is approachable through the highest terrace with the water channels descending to the lowest terrace. The water channels are flanked by the paved paths and planting beds. During the development of the new Chandigarh city the Pinjore gardens served as nursery for the provision of fruit trees and plants thereby developing the city landscape (Khan, 1996). The garden went through different phases of construction and remained under the custody of Mughals, Sikh Patiala, British and then finally to the Government of India under the custody of Haryana Tourism Cooperation.

Tourist Potentials

Pinjore garden is encircled by abundant beautiful places and is a hub for tourist activities. The area is also important due to its ancient and historical settings having ancient temple known as Bhima Devi Temple consisting of erotic statues of 8th-11th century AD. The other attractions are the Rock gardens of Chandigarh, Sukhna lake, wild life sanctuary, museums and modern water parks. Numbers of yearly festivals are organized in the Pinjore gardens to attract the tourist the most prominent among them are the mango festival and the baisakhi festival. The garden could be accessed at night due to the availability of lighting facility however these lights should be concealed rather than revealed. The incorporation of new

material like the bath tiles in water channels should be prohibited according to the international charters (Khan, 2015).

Result And Discussion

The Wah Gardens long been remained an ignorant historic garden. It didn't gain much appreciation as been acquired by the gardens of Lahore of Mughal period. Although much of the attention should be given by the authorities, local community and the rest of the state inhabitants as it is the only Mughal garden in the region comprising of all the architectural characteristics the other being the Lalazar garden in Hasan Abdal but that lack the important features like the terraces, water channels, fountains and baradaris. This chapter consists of the factors promoting the tourism of Wah gardens.

The whole study shows that the tourism potentials of Wah Gardens are developing at a very slow rate. The government can boost up its tourism potentials if they are well developed and efficiently managed. If this is done it will attract more tourists around the country. It will equally raise the income of local community and government; unemployment will also be reduced thus leading to poverty alleviation. Authors have followed the writing of research style from previous studies (e.g., Ahmed, Nawaz, & Rasheed, 2019; Anser et al., 2022; Chang et al., 2022; Khalid, Weng, Luqman, Rasheed, & Hina, 2022, 2023; Khan, Liu, Khan, Liu, & Rasheed, 2020; Khizar, Iqbal, & Rasheed, 2021; Rasheed & Weng, 2019; Umrani et al., 2022; Yousaf, Humayon, Rasheed, Ahmed, & Danish, 2014).

Current Visitors

Currently the Wah Gardens is mostly visited by the local community however the schools and colleges also arrange the student trips to create awareness about the history and for leisure activities. From University level students of different departments use to visit the Wah Gardens as the site is rich in its architecture, botanical, environmental, medical and historic aspects. The number of sikh pilgrims while visiting the Panja Sahib also make their way to this historic garden. (Khan et al., 2012)

Surrounding Tourist Attraction

Wah Gardens are located in an area rich in historic and cultural heritage. Towards the southern side of the gardens lies the city of Taxila known for its ancient Buddhist civilization being listed in UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The site has tourist potentials both at national and international level. Adjacent to Taxila is Khanpur valley which is an adventurous site for leisure activities. Towards northern side lies the city of Hasan Abdal known for historic point of view as mentioned earlier it is an important religious hub welcoming the visitors of different religions Sikhs, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslims.

The location of Wah Gardens is ideal in respect to these surrounding attractions. Proper Signage, guide map, advertisement and promotion of this historic garden will attract the visitors of these places thereby enhancing the tourist activities of the garden. There are the two very important tourist spots in Wah Cantt. The Sher Shah Suri Park consisting of the losar baoli of mughal period and the Jamia mosque of Wah Cantt being designed on Badshahi Mosque of Lahore of the Mughal period.

Garden Accessibility

Wah gardens are easily accessible for being present on the Grand Trunk Road with is further connected with important road networks one being the Karakoram highway. The adjacent city of Hasan Abdal has the Railway stations welcoming the visitors from far off places. The Motor way lies 14km away from the gardens and is further connected with New Islamabad International Airport. Due to the smooth connectivity with road networks and major stations the gardens has the prospective for tourist activities.

Tourist Facilities

No tourism can be flourished and promoted without the amenities provided by an area. The heritage site should always provide the facilities and attractions to welcome the visitors. The Wah gardens are provided by following surrounding tourist facilities.

- Restaurants/Hotels
- Petrol Pumps

- Banks and ATMs
- All kind of Edibles and Groceries shops
- Medical Services

Benefits Brought By Tourism Industry

The tourism industry brings the continuous benefits for the state and the local community. It is a source of direct employment in the field of travel agencies, hotels, restaurants, food industry, product industry, aircraft and shopping outlet. Tourism also promotes the infrastructure. Provision of food and other goods to the tourist spot requires the smooth infrastructure as it brings about more visitors and provides benefits to the local residents. The other important benefit is the revival of the cultural heritage and historic site. Tourism creates the community identity and also protects the history and heritage from the risk of being lost.

Current Revenues Generated By Wah Gardens

Street vendors could be seen selling food items inside and outside the Wah gardens which is the mean of earning by the local community and also creates revenues for the garden as the seller needs to buy the ticket for that. Similarly, the parking generates the revenues for the garden and also creates the employment and source of earnings for the local rickshaw drivers as the service is available outside the gardens mostly during summer due to the large number of visitors and this service is less available during the winters as the drivers have to wait and even have to leave due to non-availability of passengers.

Conclusion

The entire research carried out demonstrates that the Wah Gardens remained the well admired complex consisting of all the architectural characteristics that are the essentials of the Mughal Gardens. Lack of maintenance, underlying conditions and context are the threat towards this historic heritage site. There is a need to protect and promote tourist activities in Wah Gardens and to secure this heritage from the risk of being lost Exemplary planning would make it worthy for the masses and future generation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAH GARDENS

In order to bring back the magnificence and to develop sustainable tourism strategy of the Wah Gardens entire study has been conducted and the following conservation recommendations have been proposed in accordance with the ICOMOS charters. Guidelines have been taken from the International Florence Charter on Historic Gardens (1981), International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (Venice Charter 1964) and International Cultural Tourism Charter (1999) for the promotion of tourist activities in the Wah gardens.

- To maintain the surrounding context of heritage site a distance of 200ft is proposed according to the guidelines.
- To control the residential and commercial encroachments and to safe the historic context of an area following land need to be acquire and is to be declared as part of the heritage site.
- The survey should be conducted for the illegal structures growing rapidly around the selected heritage site and on the southern hillside. This whole encroaching scenario has destroyed the area and damaged the overall authenticity of the heritage site.
- This natural built site needs comprehensive planning for mitigation measures against the natural disasters.
- Farudgah Palace being the most important part of the Wah gardens should be again amalgamated in the original site by the government to maintain the integrity of the site.
- The baradaris and the gates are rich in term of ornamental decorations so original method and materials should be used for the conservation of architectural features in the garden. The previous conservation of the garden elements need consideration as they lack authenticity thereof that

plaster should be removed and an original lime plaster applied after proper study and material testing should be applied so the building context remains the same.

- The proper entry into the site and exit should be planned accordingly as the current solution is no more workable. Also, the provision for disabled ramps etc. needs to be included in the new development plan.
- To facilitate the tourist the parking is proposed to be redesigned. During summer the visitors are double in number as already mentioned in the above table. The marked area in front of the Wah Gardens is proposed to be utilized for that purpose so it could accommodate more visitors keeping in mind the futuristic approach.
- There is a need for provision of tourist facilities at the Wah Garden to increase the tourist number. The facilities like eating places, small library, research activities center etc. would be beneficial for attracting more tourists in the area. The southern hill remained a part of the complex in previous times, the visitors should be encouraged for hiking and the hill should be provided with facilities without demolishing the green land. Care should be taken that the flow of natural springs remains out of danger. The terrace should be provided with the same style benches instead of those of different colors and designs that spoil the aesthetics of the Wah Gardens. Signage in and around the site is also one of the major elements that needs to be planned properly.
- The road should be provided with speed breakers along the garden premises that would ease the visitors. More visitors in the future would result in traffic congestion so the width of the road needs to be increased as already it's a two-way road and linked with the Wah village.
- The entire complex requires a certain number of staff members for its maintenance, protection and promotion. The lack of maintenance staff and skilled people is one of the basic problems. The security guards should be placed at the entrance gate and near the structures like baradaris, water tanks and western gate to save it from human interventions.
- The built structures should be free from all hindrances to enhance the visitor experience. The security guard should be present there all the time to save it from human vandalism.
- The water coming from the natural springs is fresh, clear and clean without any impurities. These are the visitors who are spoiling the aesthetics of the water tanks and water channels by throwing the garbage in it. The water tanks and channels should be cleaned properly and punishment should be imposed on the one making it dirty.
- The landscaping areas need a thorough maintenance for their long-term survival.
- The fountains present in the central canal should be restored to bring back the gardens to its original aesthetic settings. Example should be taken from the Villa de'Este where the hydraulic system is still in the running position. The restoration of the water tank will also result in the removal of algae from the southern water channels in the 3rd terrace during the summer due to the slow supply of water from natural springs. The speedy water from the storage tank under the principle of gravity will prevent the water from getting stagnant.
- All the planning should be done by a sustainable futuristic approach to save the gardens from any damage and to help flourish the tourism department that in turn flourishes the economic development of the local community and Nation as a whole because tourism gives life to a number of industries.
- To facilitate the visitors at night the Wah Gardens should remain open till 9:00 pm during winters and 11:00 pm during summers with all the facilities as many people are fond of night walks. Proper lighting facilities are required for that purpose like the Pinjore Gardens but care should be taken that the lights are not revealed but concealed as it causes glare.
- The beautiful enchanted Wah Gardens of the Mughal period should be promoted through advertisement on multimedia. An ample concentration is required to create awareness among the masses about the importance of this heritage site. Special programs are proposed to be organized in schools, colleges and universities for its endorsement. Brochures regarding the importance of the site and different activities taking place in Wah Gardens should be printed and distributed.

- To bring back life to the Wah Gardens different festivals are proposed to be organized like the spring festival for beautifying the gardens with the flowers, orange festival in winter to welcome more visitors. Similarly, eid festivals and youth festivals where the heritage and cultural goods should be promoted exhibit and sold.

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