

**TOURISM AS A STRATEGY OF RURAL
DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF
DISTRICT NEELUM**



Pakistan Institute of Development Economics

By

**ZOHAIB MEHMOOD AWAN
PIDE2019MPHILDS28**

Supervisor

MUHAMMAD AQEEL ANWAR

**MPhil Development Studies
PIDE School of Social Sciences
Pakistan Institute of Development Economics,
Islamabad
2022**



Pakistan Institute of **D**evelopment **E**conomics, Islamabad
PIDE School of Social Sciences

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled: "**Tourism as a strategy of rural development: A case study of District Neelum**" submitted by **Zohaib Mehmood Awan** is accepted in its present form by the PIDE School of Social Sciences, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad as satisfying the requirements for partial fulfillment of the degree in Master of Philosophy in Development Studies.

Supervisor:

Mr. Aqeel Anwar

Signature: _____

M. Aqeel

External Examiner:

Dr. Ghani ur Rahman

Signature: _____

Ghani ur Rahman

Head,

PIDE School of Social Sciences: Dr. Hafsa Hina

Signature: _____

Hafsa Hina

Author's Declaration

I ZOHAIB MEHMOOD AWAN hereby state that my MPhil thesis titled, "TOURISM AS A STRATEGY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF DISTRICT NEELUM" is my own work and has not been submitted previously by me for taking any degree from Pakistan Institute of Development Economics or anywhere else in the country/world.

At any time if my statement is found to be incorrect even after my Graduation the university has the right to withdraw my MPhil degree.

Date: 30 Dec - 2022



Zohaib Mehmood Awan



Pakistan Institute of Development Economics

CERTIFICATE

(Provided by the department after the successful oral defense on the submission of final thesis along track changes)

Dedication

*I dedicate this thesis to all those martyred across LOC in cross firing
exchange in District Neelum.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my gratitude to Allah Almighty and Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). I would also like to thank my supervisor Muhammad Aqeel Anwar. Moreover, Dr Abid Ghafoor has always been helpful. Without their guidance this thesis would not have been possible. I

would also like to thank Mr Fahd Zulfiqar who has always been kind at times.

I thank my father and mother who brought me up to this. Without their assistance it was not possible. I would like to thank Maria Arshad, Sarah Khan, Farwa Yousaf and Rubab

Sakina who have always been so cooperative. I would like thank my brother Shoaib

Mehmood who has always guided me in life.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the impacts of tourism on the development of local community of district Neelum. This research signifies that how tourism development has enhanced the rural development in the valley. Local community acted together in the form of community organizations to be the actors of development. Projects have been launched by the local community to facilitate the tourists in return of which they provide them with business opportunities. Tourism has changed the market structure which has directly affected the local community. Infrastructure has seen massive improvements consequently offering more and better choice of occupations. The focus in this research has been how these changes impacted the lives of people and overall socio-economic development in any subtle or prominent manner. How has it impacted the Gender gap? Participatory rural appraisal has been used in this research to interpret the linked phenomenon. This study was conducted in district Neelum of Azad Kashmir. This study comprises samples from the local community aged more than 40 years who have been living in Neelum. Data from government agencies has also been collected for findings and analysis. There has been a very little work done in this area and this research can be extended in broader term to draw mechanisms to enhance rural development with the enhanced tourist flux.

Keyterms: Tourism, Community organizations, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Gender gap.


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>List of figures</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>List of tables</i>	<i>viii</i>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
Introduction	0
Statement of the problem	6
Research Problem	7
Research Questions	7
Objectives of the Research	8
Explanation of the Key Terms/Concepts	8
Tourism	8
Rural Development	8
Participatory Rural Appraisal	8
Community Organizations	8
Gender gap	9
Units of Data Collection	9
UDC1: Individual(s) to be interviewed	9
UDC2: Government Agencies' data	9
Organization of the thesis	9
Review of Literature	10
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework	16
Significance of Research	17
Research Methodology	18
Introduction	18
Research Strategy	18
Research Design.....	18
Methods of data Collection	18
Rapport building	18
Semi structured interviews	19
Data collection tools.....	19
Interview guide	19
Data Analysis	19
Sampling	20
Locale	20
Analysis and Discussion	22
Policy Implications	34
Recommendations.....	34
Conclusion	36
References	37

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Number</i>		<i>Page</i>
Fig 2.1	Model for impacts of tourism on Rural Development.....	15
Fig 3.1	Geographical Map of District Neelum	19
Fig 4.1	Primary school made up of stone structure at Arrang Kel.....	25
Fig 4.2	Cable car connecting Kel to Arrang Kel.....	28
Fig 4.3	Child wearing ready-made dress at Gagai.....	30



LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	Themes and subthemes extracted from the finding.....	20
------------------	--	----

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
LOC	Line of Control
AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
PPAF	Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

Introduction

Globalization not only connects people from all around the world but also disseminate them to the picturesque landscapes and other places, giving a boost to tourism industry globally (Leo H., 2008). Tourism refers to the travelling of people towards scenic and other holiday destinations, whether national or global, in order to take a break from their chaotic daily routine. Nevertheless, it is more than just spending leisure time away from home.

Several other reasons also count for travelling which include visiting friends or relatives, business tours, health and study related travelling etc. (Gössling et al., 2009). Religious tourism is also one of the kind of tourism. In this study the tourism means the travelling of people to the district Neelum for spending leisure time in order to get rid of their monotonous routine. In addition to being the leisure time activity, tourism also serves as one of the major source of development of a country.

There is a vast range of literature available depicting that a country's growth has a significant correlation with its tourism industry. Tourism is considered as a proficient driver of growth in the developing economies. In most of these countries, tourism along with agriculture, capital, and the development in energy sector contributes to their growth and development (Khan et al., 2020). Tourism programs found in different rural areas serve the purpose of generating income as well as building harmony. It is a key driver of development and poverty alleviation in these areas (Hassan, 2000; Davis and Morais, 2004). Ivolga & Erokhin (2013) in their study on the sustainability of rural development on as a result of tourism in Caucasus Mineral Water resort area of Russia identify that the assurance of sustainable economic development results in investment as well as the development of infrastructure including recreational and tourist as well as bringing in transport, engineering and touristic spheres.

Tourism is emerging as a rather more dynamic industry than its counterparts. It can be maintained by adopting measures of a strategic approach in its planning and development (Theobald, 2005). The modern world is prone to the perils of global warming and emphasizes for more sustainable advancement in every sector. According to Murphy and Price (2005), the

existence of an inevitable relationship between environment and economy designates the concept of sustainable development. And tourism, being the one highlighting that relationship, is promoting the sustainable growth of economy in the developing countries.

Along with being a growth engine, tourism encapsulates as an employment generator as well. It provides employment opportunities to the diverse fragments of society ranging from specialized to the unskilled labor force (Nagaraju & Chandrashekara, 2014).

The economic share which rural areas have in the gross domestic production of a country is either through agriculture or through cottage industry (Kapur, 2019). Recently, as globalization has paved the way for advancement, picturesque rural areas are now a great focus of tourism industry (Hall et al., 2004). It has a pivotal role in the progress of rural areas as compared to other parts of the country (Chow W.T., 1980). As most of the scenic spots are present in rural areas of a country, therefore, the potential of growth of these areas from tourism can be adopted as a strategy for development in such region (Nagaraju & Chandrashekara, 2014).

This goal can further be achieved by assimilating these strategies of rural development with visitor marketing (Chow W.T., 1980). These strategies, which include infrastructural development, will help lift these areas in terms of employment opportunities as well as revenue generation for the country (Nguyen Q.H., 2021)

Tourism has completely transformed the countryside of the west and lately it has progressively been acting as a significant device to address the rural problems in the developing countries (Saarinen & Lenao, 2014). Pakistan is one such example of the developing countries with much promising future of tourism. The country's rich culture, history, geography and the diversity of biological species are some aspects of its potential for tourism industry (Arshad et al., 2018).

Various tourist destinations in this country include the mesmerizing beauty of areas like Swat, Malam Jabba, Shangla, Balakot, Naran, Kaghan, Murree, Gilgit Baltistan, Hunza, Neelum Valley, several sites of historical and archeological interest, mountainous regions and much more (Arshad et al., 2018). The one destination which this study is focused on among all others is the

Neelum Valley of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, especially the status of progress in this region through tourism (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2021).

In the north-east of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, lies the district Neelum. Starting from 43km north, the district spreads out to an area of almost 3,621 kilometer squares (Bukhari, 2015). The district comprises of several valleys, which are among the popular tourist destinations, including Neelum, Sharda, and Gurez. Neelum valley is regarded as the favorite tourist attraction as Line of Control, the disputed border between Pakistan and India, passes through the valley (Khan, 2021). The local community of this valley has been the victim of LOC violation i.e. firing across border, since the inception of Pakistani-administered territory of Azad Kashmir. The inhabitants have suffered hugely from the violations during 90's. Then the cease fire agreement between Pakistan and India was undersigned during the Musharraf Era in 2002 which managed to provide some relief to the locals (Shah, 2020).

The district faced a severe calamity, a major earthquake, in 2005 which turned the place into shambles but it was the turning point for the district as it gave new facet to the developmental activities in this region (Neelum District Disaster Risk Management Plan, 2007). According to recent studies, the district of Neelum has become the epicenter of tourist activities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (Kalbe, 2019). The impact of increased tourism rate in this part of AJK on the host community in terms of their life styles, other aspects and the socio-economic development of this region are still unknown. This research aims to address these different aspects of development that have been impacted by tourism and how these changes have come about.

Tourism has seen a deteriorating condition in the previous decade in Pakistan due to several reasons. Unlike other SAARC countries, Pakistan has been lagging behind in producing the benefits from tourism despite huge potential. The northern areas, especially the Neelum valley is the most visited destination by the local tourist; however, the international tourism has not only been limited but has also declined. Being home to some of the highest mountain peaks, Pakistan must be an eye catcher for the mountaineers, but the mountaineering expeditions also experienced a loss in 2005, which is still yet to recover (Baloch, 2007). This states the potential

of tourism in Pakistan, especially the Neelum valley, and in addition it also highlights the weaknesses which can be improved.

The infrastructure in District of Neelum was put in place after the earthquake of 2008 particularly focusing on road that led to a massive influx of tourist activity in various valleys of the District Neelum (Khattak et al., 2010). Mahmud (2020) stated that the number of tourists in AJK is rising with every passing day. In 2019, this number elevated from 1.4 million to 1.5 million. After the lockdown restrictions were eased, this number raised to the highest ever figure of 2.2 million in recent years. This incursion of tourists in AJK has resulted in the development of tourism in this area. Therefore, the development of tourism in Azad Jammu and Kashmir has substantial impacts on the economic growth of the region (Akram et al., 2021).

As AJK has starting attracting a lot more tourists than before, the infrastructure of this region needs immediate attention. The dearth of hotels, and guest houses is one such example. The accommodation of tourists was a problem of grave concern in the beginning which often led to people living in cars as existing accommodations were already occupied. In 2014, only 114 guest houses were registered in Neelum Valley. In 2016, the tourism industry took effective measures and the tally had risen to 314. By the end of 2018, a list compiled by the tourism department showed the number of guest houses in the area had reached 520 (Shabbir et al., 2020). Despite the efforts of making accommodation a less hectic fragment of the tour, the infrastructure of the district Neelum requires more consideration because the guest houses and hotels combined are still laden during the peak time of the year.

To overcome the issue of scarcity of accommodation places and for the purpose of empowering the local community in terms of socio-economic aspects, numerous effective measures have also been taken on the organizational level. Several NGOs led by Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) have also joined hands to empower the locals in order to tap into the potentials of tourism. 100 houses were selected by the local partner organizations of PPAF, and they were asked to upgrade the most scenic room as per modern standards where tourists could stay as guests. The charges of these rooms are lower compared to commercial places but this will benefit the hosts, who are mostly poor (Arshad et al., 2018). Hence, the

resident community will be empowered from the tourism industry which will contribute to the overall development of the state.

Tourism has played a pivotal role in creating a significant amount of work opportunities for the locals. The increased number of hotels and guest houses and the attraction of tourists for the local markets have maximized the job pool for the residents. Women are also playing their role in this regard. Different types of local made things like plates for keeping tortilla are made by women and sell in the markets. Moreover, different embroidered clothes are also made and sell by the women. Women are also earning in this way. Resultantly, it has helped the native community to earn more and to improve their livelihood (Khan & Callanan, 2017). Furthermore, the recent trend of the mountain activities of tourists has also contributed in the creation of new jobs, increase in income, the opening of new market prospects for the local products enhancing the demand of indigenous products in the international market which further weave another way for economic growth in the form of increased export (Kakroo & Dada, 2020).

As Neelum valley is a fundamentally rural area, it needs to be developed not only for the sake of country but also for its natives. Just like any other hill station, Azad Kashmir has vast variety of potential which can be used for the benefit of the natives as well as the country. There are many facets of the rural development that is brought around by the tourism industry. As a region captures the attention of the tourists, there are certain parameters that are generated immediately and there are still some others which produce a long term effect.

If the tourism gains alacrity in AJ&K and specifically in Neelum valley, the research has it proved that it will have a massive effect on the sectors of economy of the region. The first and foremost advancement will be the generation of jobs in the region for the local natives. As the research indicates, in 2017, travel and tourism produced as much as 1,493,000 jobs. Azad Jammu and Kashmir solely has capacity to generate, if not more, then same amount of the jobs (Akram. et al, 2021). If the statistics of the researches are observed, the potential of only Neelum valley to generate jobs is enough to bring further rural development. In 2017, AJK attracted 250 million for tourism; this number is enough to bring the infrastructure development. Being a rural area, the infrastructure of the Neelum valley is not appropriate to hold the tourism, for example the roads, bridges, hotels and other transport methods are in dire straits.

Tourism will bring development in the infrastructure as it will demand better system of transport and stay. The infrastructure developed for the tourists will also be used for the local people and it will bring ease to their lives. Mostly in the region of Neelum valley, the bridges to cross the mountains or rivers, are made of wood and are very old to carry heavy loads. The roads are in the similar conditions. To improve tourism in any region, the transport system must be new and safe so that people can feel safe to travel.

As the regions' transport system will be improved, it will increase the trade in the region. AJK, and specifically Neelum valley has much resources, as it has rivers, waterfalls, lakes, forests of pine and green meadows. This makes this region a strong candidate for rare trades for example that of apple, apricots and plums etc. Improved transport and infrastructure will make it possible for people to trade in these regions (Hassan, 2000).

Apart from the economic development, according to the World Bank and World Health Organization (WHO), tourism has potential to help the poor and developing nations in many other ways. In addition to the above mentioned benefits, tourism can bring social, environmental and cultural benefits to the regions as well (Saarinen et al., 2014).

AJK has a long history of suppression and the natives have been busy in fighting for the survival for so long that they have now forgotten about their culture. AJK is rich in culture and this culture needs to be depicted to the world. When the tourism will grow in the region, it will give recognition to the region's culture and social norms. The culture has a great power in every means, for example it will give the natives a sense of self-worth and will boost their confidence. The recognition of the culture will also make their small-scale and local industries known to the world. The handicrafts industry in different regions of AJK including production of carpets, rugs, Namda, Gubba, silk woven clothing, shawls and wood carvings are very famous; however, they still have a huge un-met potential (Khan, 2013). Tourism has a great potential to not only acknowledge, but also to fulfill this un-met potential of job production, industrial development, infrastructure improvement and economic upsurge in the region of AJK.

All of the above discussed possibilities will have one common and most important impact in the region which is the improvement of quality of life for the local inhabitants. The rural

tourism, albeit seems simple, has different facets of activities. All the activities, which seem to benefit only a targeted population, in fact, collectively have an impact on the whole region as a whole. These simple, sole steps make up a whole integrated system of rural development which goes on to generate national level benefits for the whole nation (Naghiu et al., 2005). A bare look on the type of tourism that the region generates, including, archeological and historical tourism, ecotourism and adventure tourism, AJ&K alone can contribute much more to improve the Pakistan's rank from 124 out of 136 in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) list, if its potential is used successfully (Arshad et al., 2017). All types of tourism will bring the development to the rural areas of Neelum district.

As many researches have insisted and pointed out the flaws in the tourism industry and way forward to change them positively, this research paper will take a step ahead and will point out the benefits that development in tourism will bring to the rural areas in the northern Pakistan. The main purpose of research is to portend the parameter of experiment before it is practically performed. As a Finnish case study has proposed that the unrealistic expectations for rural development from tourism leads to more damage, this research paper intends to carefully state the only achievable dynamic (Saarinen & Kask, 2008). This context of development with specific reference to the district of Neelum is currently not available in research studies, henceforth, the present study is aimed at filling the research gap of this aspect with the locus of the district under study.

However, tourism in the areas of Neelum district still requires a lot more effort. The government of Azad Kashmir is taking expert opinion in this regard. This study is an evaluation on the basis of tourism that exists in the valley since the last decade. There will be impact evaluation of tourism on rural development and the development of local community. Impacts are always evaluated on the basis of practices of several years. This study will be an explanatory research.

Statement of the problem

The development of tourism and the policies assisting the promotion of tourism contributes in the development of rural areas. This study is an explanatory research on the basis of tourism

that exists in the valley since a decade. There will be an impact evaluation of tourism on rural development and the development of local Community.

Research Problem

Tourism contributes in the social and economic development of the rural areas as it involves the local community. I am narrowing my research problem into, “Tourism as a strategy of Rural Development: A case study of district Neelum” and have operationalized the following research questions and objectives.

Research Questions

- i- What is the impact of tourism on infrastructure?
- ii- How the structures of the markets have changed with the development of tourism?
- iii- What are the trends in occupations of the local community after mass-tourism development?
- iv- How the projects have been launched with the participation of local community?
- v- Has the tourism development reduced the gender gap?

Objectives of the Research

Objectives of this research are as under

- 1- To analyze the impacts and evaluation of tourism development on the life of local masses (host community).
- 2- To study changes in structures of the local markets and to analyze the trends in the occupations of the community.
- 3- To study the participation level of the local community and the projects launched with the participation of locals.
- 4- To study the gender gap.

Explanation of the Key Terms/Concepts

Tourism

The sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors (McIntosh & Goeldner, 1986).

Rural Development

According to Harris, Rural development is a broader process of change in rural societies, which may or may not involve the state's intervention. The local community is the agent of change in Rural Development.

Participatory Rural Appraisal

Participatory Rural Appraisal is an approach where the government intervention is not necessary. Different Non-Governmental Organization plans a strategy for action for the people of rural areas. This approach got recognition in late 1960's but was majorly accepted in 1980. Participatory Rural Appraisal describes a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act (Chambers, 1992).

Community Organizations

Community organization is a process by which a community identifies needs or objectives, takes action, and through this process, develops cooperative and collaborative attitudes and practices within a community (Ross, 1967). Community organizations are organized with the purpose of making desired betterments in overall socio-economic conditions of the community.

Gender gap

According to the World Economic Forum, The gender gap is the difference between women and men as reflected in social, political, intellectual, cultural and economic attainments or attributes (Harris, 2017).

Units of Data Collection

I have chosen two units of data collection for my research which will give information about my topic of research. For this research units of data collection are as under;

UDC1: Individual(s) to be interviewed

The first UDC will be the individual(s) that will be the key informant as they will provide information regarding my research. They will provide in depth information about the research. The medium of language is Urdu and Pahari depends on the suitability.

UDC2: Government Agencies' data

Data is collected from the Government offices like Directorate of Tourism and Archeology AJK and Tourism Help desks so that arrival of tourists and numbers of facility providers could be known from time to time. Moreover, department of communication and works' data will be analysed.

Organization of the thesis

This thesis has been divided into six chapters. The first chapter of this thesis includes the general introduction of the topic, its key terms, research problem, research objectives, research questions and units of data collection. The second chapter includes the review of existing literature and the proposed theoretical and conceptual framework. The third chapter describes the research methodology used to conduct this research. The fourth chapter comprises of analysis, findings and discussion. Chapter five incorporates the policy implications and chapter six concludes the thesis.

Review of Literature

Tourism in recent years has been referred to as an effective method to increase development in less developed areas such as mountains and inland because of the possibility of increased employment opportunities as well as income. It also contributes to generating linkages in other related industries. Tourism in the development debate has consistently been referred to as a 'pivotal activity' in order to attain socio-economic progress in the rural areas (Ribeiro & Marques, 2002). According to Bontron and Lasnier (1997) tourism is one of the major contributors of rural development however, the impact of this influence varies from region to region. It is often also referred to as an alternative development strategy as it restructures the agricultural sector and provides employment to unemployed youth that have attained higher education (Dernoi, 1991; Pompl & Lavery, 1993).

Issues such as counter urbanization, depopulation, declining service provision and agricultural restructuring as well as the degradation of the natural environment are rampant in the rural areas (McAreavey & McDonagh, 2011). Tourism as a result has been hailed as a way to construct a harmonious society and increase income in rural areas. It is also referred to as an approach with significant influence in terms of environmental protection, sustainable development and poverty alleviation (Davis and Morais 2004; Gu and Zhang 2009; Hassan 2000; McGehee & Andereck 2004). Development countries across the globe have seen a marked increase in tourism in rural areas since the 1970s which has been a major factor in of their social and economic development (Perales, 2002).

Tourism has over the last few decades continued to play a key role in the development strategies of rural communities (Kinsley, 2000). As such developed countries realized the potential for development due to tourism a long time ago and hence have focused resources to construct the infrastructure needed to make this strategy successful. However, with in developing countries this is still a relatively new phenomenon.

A number of factors are relevant in the tourism debate but the idea of 'collective actions' is recurrent. This allows local population to address their problems from a perspective that more

relevant to them (Mitchell & Reid 2001; D'Silva & Pai 2003). This results in more positive way associated with utilizing tourism as a development strategy. These actions are responsible for creating an environment of understanding and positive resident attitude and behavior vital in making tourism as development strategy successful (Cooke, 1982; Allen et al., 1988).

Tourism programs found in different rural areas serve the purpose of generating income as well as building harmony. It is a key driver of development and poverty alleviation in these areas (Hassan, 2000; Davis and Morais, 2004). This is evident by the vast literature present on the topic.

Sharpley & Roberts (2004) identify two major themes in the tourism research. One is the sustainability debate in rural tourism and the second is rural tourism as a catalyst for rural development.

Wang (2005) in his research on Europe finds that in order to deal with the economic and social challenges faced by rural areas the strategy employed as well as promoted is tourism, especially since the decrease in the agrarian industries typically found here at one point.

Naghiu et al (2005) in their paper offer descriptive evidence of the rural tourism activities as a mean of rural development in Romania. He concludes that because of the foreign interest in tourism the tourist activities available here are designed according to international demand but existence of an internal market for these activities is essential for their maintenance.

Mafunzwaini & Hugo (2005) in their research on the Limpopo province of South Africa deduce six major areas that play a key role in the promotion and implementation of rural tourism as a strategy of rural development. These include financial administration and funding, infrastructure and transport, leadership in community and industry, education and training, accreditation and industry standards as well as enterprise and product development.

Šimková (2007) studies rural tourism and its strategic approaches as a means of rural development. The author identifies key problems in this regard which include not enough developing projects and development focus on individual villages, lack of involvement from local community as well as cooperation and ineffective use of local resources.

Koster (2008) investigates mural-based tourism strategy for the development of rural areas in Canada. It was found that factors that determine the choice of mural based tourism for rural development include the economic re-stabilization of existing industries, the proximity of the rural communities to larger populations and the size of community. Tourism acts as a positive contributor to the sustainability of rural areas within Canada.

Feng (2008) in his work examines Fenghunag County in the Hunan Province of China. He analyzes that local governments in collaboration with outside developers work to develop and manage resources both cultural and natural in order to boost revenues from tourism. The research identifies profits for developers as well as boosts for economic growth based on the capital-intensive model used for the development of rural areas through tourism.

Hakkarainen & Tuulentie (2008) analyze tourism's role in the rural development debate of the Finish Lapland. They identify that due to sparse population and subsequent depopulation combined with phenomena's such as climate change development strategies focus on alternative methods such as tourism which has become quite popular due to its ability to exhibit local and cultural attractions. However he says that with in the case of Finish Laplands tourism is widely accepted as no other alternatives are explored and while tourism is the strategy employed it is not dispersed amongst people in a way they can understand. As a result, local participation in tourism is very low even though locals wish to be a part of the tourism strategy.

Aylward & Kelliher (2009) in their research analyze the role of stakeholder in the rural tourism as a strategy of rural development debate. According to them while rural tourism is part of the 'new paradigm' of rural development, the role of stakeholder in this context are not still ambiguous. In an effort to build a 'rural stakeholder network relationship model' they utilize structuration theory. They conclude that the key factors in this model shared by the stakeholder include trust, commitment, co-operation as well as reciprocity. Culture and position within the network are also important. While factors that act as barriers to interaction include limited resources, lack of time, attitude towards sharing information and geographical dispersion of stakeholders.

Fotiadis (2009) analyzes Greek and Hungarian villages in order find strategies and techniques for the successful implementation of rural tourism strategies in order attain

development goals in rural areas. According to the researcher, the planning and development of the rural tourism strategies starts with determining the geographical location and the presences of scenic attraction as well as culture, heritage and infrastructure. It is then followed by ensuring the offering of quality services as well as continuous training of owners of these services. The sue of technology magnifies the attraction of these places as well saves time for both public and operators.

Danglah (2010) in his research on rural based tourism in Nigeria identifies that key resources of the Nigerian region which include cultural as well as natural resources are present in rural areas. Tourism led development in Nigeria's other region has been successful and has managed to promote employment and foreign earnings. Thus, rural tourism would evidently be a useful way to promote rural development.

Dimitrovski et al. (2011) in their study on the region of Gruza, Serbia conducted an experimental study on the impact of tourism led development and the type of tourists that this tourism stragy attracts. Their study indicated that the average tourist belongs to urban areas with a higher level of social and cultural background and medium income. While the local involved in offering tourist services are mostly male between 40 to 60 years of age and holding a secondary school diploma.

Ivolga & Erokhin (2013) in their study on the sustainability of rural development on as a result of tourism in Caucasus Mineral Water resort area of Russia identify that the assurance of sustainable economic development results in investment as well as the development of infrastructure including recreational and tourist as well as bringing in transport, engineering and touristic spheres. This is mostly driven by rational usage and preservation of the environment and existing resources.

Nagaraju and Chandrashekara (2014) identify the ways in which rural tourism contributes to rural development in India. According to them it contributes in a number of areas such as job retention, job creation, new business opportunities, opportunities for the youth, service retention, community diversification, enhancing and revitalization of community pride, heritage and culture, landscape conservation, increase in the sale of local crafts as well as environmental improvements.

Pirzada Irshad (2003) identified in his book, Azad Jammu and Kashmir that there is a lot of potential for mining of gemstones in kundal shahi area of district Neelum. A very good quality of granite is also present at kail seri area of the district Neelum. It could be industry for the times coming.

Giannakis (2014) analyses Cyprus for its tourism led rural development. Impact assessment of tourism as well as tourism centered multiplier analysis was conducted which indicated that within the rural economy tourism places a significant role in creating backward linkages which results in massive potential for economic growth within these communities.

Aslam & Awang (2015) explore the area of rural tourism for sustainable rural development in the context of Sri Lanka. According to the 'sustainable tourism development' indicates that there exists an inventory of rural resources, the presence of rural product development as well as designing while integration and cooperation between stakeholder and local resources exists. However, they find that there exist challenges in the rural tourism design such as lack of integration, inappropriate initiations as well as restraint of local resources.

Nugroho et al. (2016) analyses the case of Indonesia and the promotion of rural development through ecotourism activities. They identify six areas that require efforts which include development of education based products, development of tourism management services, strengthening of a conservation vision, development of environmentally conscious infrastructure, development of a place for learning of products and services as well as maintain standards and to promote rural tourism in other places as well.

Petrovic et al. (2017) in their research on Serbia and Slovenia identify rural tourism competitiveness as a key factor of rural development. Employing the Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness. They identify factors that influence this which include friendliness of residents, ease of communication, infrastructure and health facilities.

Mir (2018) analyses the role of community tourism and rural development in the case of Indian Occupied Kashmir. According to him community based tourism acts as form of sustainable tourism that promotes pro-poor strategies a community level which helps root out

poverty. It promotes involvement from local community in supervision and management. This tourism is harnessed as a rural development strategy.

Curcic et al. (2021) employing the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methodology on the village of Zlakusa analyze rural tourism and sustainable rural development. The research indicates that success factors on a number of activities which include involvement of marginalized groups, human and social capital, organized activities for local authorities and diversification of economic activities. Informal education also plays a key role in making the cultural and natural contents commercialized.

Nooripoor et al. (2021) in their research on the Doroodzan region of Iran show that tourism and rural development are closely interlinked. Using primary research, they indicate that tourism one the main factors behind the rural development of this area.

Khan (2015) in his research identifies that tourism in Azad Jammu and Kashmir is very common. It serves as one of the most prominent drivers of socio-economic development of the villages in AJK. It has played a key role in generating employment opportunities for the local population but has also been one the major reasons of the development of infrastructure in these areas. However, this did come with certain negative aspects such as increase in land prices as well as vital commodities and rent. Change in dressing style, structures of family and community relationships were also observed as socio-cultural impacts of tourism.

Zaffer Ahmed Malik (2016) put emphasis on how Neelum is wealthy in natural resources: water, forests, wildlife, and minerals that it can be self-sufficient.

However, despite existing research rural tourism is a phenomenon concentrated domestically and while it is found across countries, it is not comparable across these countries (Gartner 2004; Sharpley & Roberts 2004). As a result, existing research focuses on rural tourism in different countries (Gao 2009; Duk-Byeong et al. 2012; Gyan and Surya, 2012). This is why existing research cannot be generalized and country and area specific research need to be done.

There is a very little work done where tourism and Rural Development go hands in hands in District Neelum. Some of the journalists have done their work in this regard. So there is a big

research gap. The data available on the tourism and rural development in District Neelum is very rare. There is not an extensive literature on the tourism as a development strategy in this region.

Though, tourism paves way for local development. However, there are certain side effects of this phenomenon. There is capture of resources by the rich. People from urban proximities invest in rural areas which is a hindrance to the development of local community (Asmat ,2018). Same is the case with District Neelum.

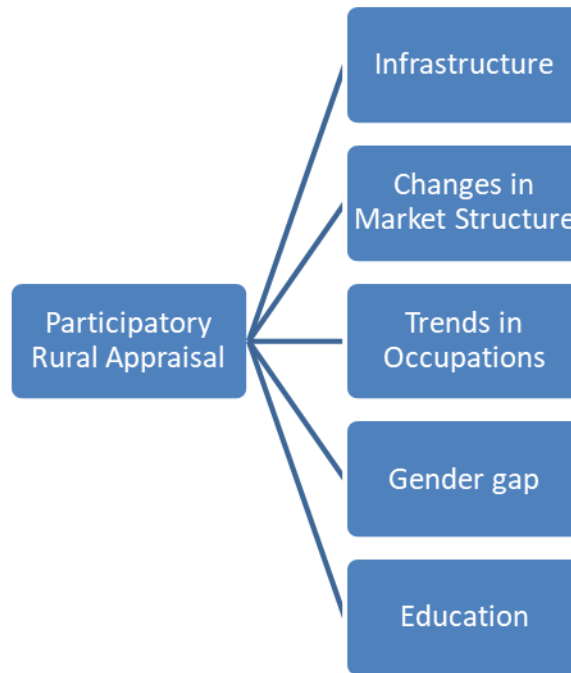
The literature present hails tourism as the go-to development strategy for rural development, this success of this strategy in the context of District Neelum of AJK remains to be seen. The research aims to provide an analysis of this idea for this District as the tourism debate is hardly comparable even across different regions of the same country.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theory used in this research is Participatory Rural Development. Participatory Rural Appraisal is an approach where the government intervention is not necessary. Different Non-Governmental Organization plans a strategy for action for the people of rural areas. This approach got recognition in late 1960's but was majorly accepted in 1980. Participatory Rural Appraisal describes a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act (Chambers, 1992). People often form groups called community organizations for their common needs. Participatory Rural Appraisal has sources in activist participatory research, agro ecosystem analysis, applied anthropology, field research on farming systems, and rapid rural appraisal. In Rapid Rural Appraisal information is more elicited and extracted by outsiders; in PRA it is more shared and owned by local people.

Following model is used to investigate the changes in the local community after the spread of mass tourism in the valley. Infrastructure, market structure, trends in occupations,

gender gap and education are its main



themes.

Fig 2.1 Model for impacts of tourism on Rural Development

The abovementioned theory will be tested among the local community through interview questions.

Significance of Research

There is a very little work done in this area specially in the field of tourism due to security concerns and constant clashes across LOC. So there is a big research gap. Some of the journalists have done their work in this regard. So there is a big research gap. The data available on the tourism and rural development in District Neelum is very rare. There is not an extensive literature on the tourism as a development strategy in this region. This research will help Government of AJK and Tourism Department of AJK in formation of Tourism policy with respect to rural development as well as it will aide in the collaboration of Department of Tourism AJK and Department of Local Government to enhance the Rural Development.

Research Methodology

Introduction

Research methodology is the system of methods that a researcher selects so as to carry out his/her research. Basically it is roadmap that how a researcher will gather and analyze data. Those methods and processes which a researcher uses to predict, elaborate and describe any phenomenon is research methodology.

Research Strategy

The research is qualitative in nature as it focuses on the economic as well as the social impacts of tourism on the rural development that how the local communities are effected. In-depth information regarding research is needed. We will get insight from the perceptions of the target subjects which will be subjective in nature due to difference of opinion. The study was based on the inductive approach as it generates new findings and analysis about rural development linked to tourism.

Research Design

The research design that will be used in this research is explanatory as we want to explore the impacts of tourism on the rural development which happened over the time.

Methods of data Collection

The method preferred for data collection in this research is interview method. Semi structured interviews have been conducted in this regard. The instrument that is used in this research was interview guide. However, it was kept open ended to have space for probing.

Rapport building

Rapport building is a technique used by a researcher to get access to the community under study. Since district Neelum lies across LOC (line of control) and the information sharing has always remained a sensitive issue here. Rapport building has proved to be a very useful tool here to gain trust of the respondents. Support from government agencies was gained to develop rapport. Henceforth, respondents were informed that it was only a research activity in which a researcher wants to explore the impacts of tourism on local development.

Semi structured interviews

Semi structured interviews were used to interview the respondents (locals). An interview guide was drafted in this regard. However, it was kept open to probes and additional information. Each interview lasted from 30-50 min. The duration of the interviews varied for each respondent. Before recording and noting down the interview, verbal consent was taken from the respondents. The medium of communication (Urdu or Hindko) during interview varied upon the socio-cultural backgrounds of the respondents.

Data collection tools

Following tools were used in order to gather data under the above research methods:

Interview guide

This research intends to figure out impacts of tourism on the local development. An interview guide was framed in this regard to collect data. While considering the general framework of PRA, questions were formulated keeping in view the following themes:

- 1- Infrastructure
- 2- Market structure
- 3- Transport
- 4- Occupational changes
- 5- Gender gap
- 6- Trends in education

Data Analysis

After transcription of data, thematic analysis was used to analyze. In thematic analysis themes are searched by the analyst which are basically the categories identified. These themes are related to the research questions basically, which leads to the theoretical understandings. Data collected was incorporated in the already drawn themes in the interview guide. New themes were also added in order to tabulate relevant data.

In this study there were certain themes and then subthemes were added so as to get more clarity. If we take the theme of infrastructure, different subthemes like reconstruction, transport, residences, communication sources, network availability etc. are added. Similarly, if we take the

main theme of transport, its advantages and side effects are discussed. If we take market structure, the impact on the local community and business community is discussed on the basis of subthemes like components of goods, job creation, market competition etc. similarly, occupational trends are discussed on the basis of the certain subthemes like more avenues for jobs, less migration for jobs etc. educational trends and gender gap are also the main themes in this study. Table 4.1 clearly illustrates the themes and subthemes used in this for the analysis.

On the basis of these main themes, questions were asked from the participants and then the subthemes are formulated on the basis of the information gathered from the interviews.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this research to collect data. Maximum Variation sampling also known as heterogeneous sampling was used in this regard because greater insight of experiences and events were needed in order to have a look from all angles. The number of samples interviewed was kept 12. The size of sample was kept as 12 because the interviews lasted for 30-50 min, as it gives enough information in this limited study. After the transcription of interviews, themes were categorized. The criterion kept for the participants was age more than 40 years. This is because he/she must have an overview before and after the expansion of mass tourism in the valley. In this way, the data collected is more reliable to the research. There were nine men and three women interviewed for data collection depending on the consent.

Locale

Most of the people who visit Kashmir make their destination Neelum. It consists of different Valleys like Neelum, Gurez and Sharda. The Most interesting fact about the valley is that it is located across Line of Control which is the disputed border between Pakistan and India. The local community has always been the victim of cross border firing since decades. The main Neelum Valley road infrastructure was paved in 2008 after the earthquake which made tourists visit the valleys of District Neelum. In 2014, only 114 guest houses were registered in Neelum Valley. In 2016, the tally had risen to 314. By the end of 2018, a list compiled by the tourism

department showed the number of guest houses in the area had reached 520 and 920 in 2021(Mughal, 2020).

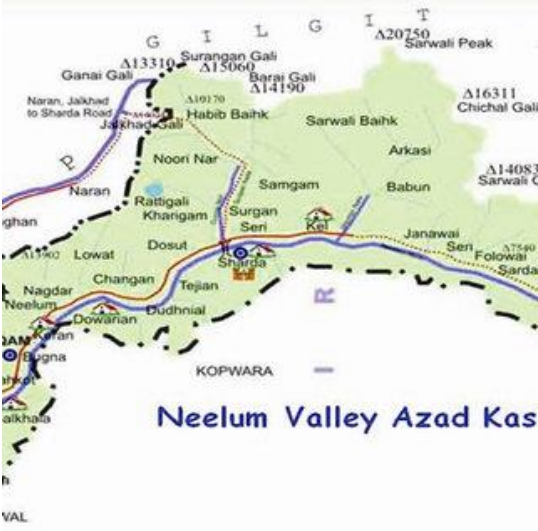


Fig 3.1: Geographical Map of District Neelum (source: google photos)

Analysis and Discussion

Arrival of Tourism to any region brings myriad of changes in the cultural, social as well as economic aspects of the region. It impacts the life of ordinary people whether they are directly associated with the tourism industry or not. Tourism leads to human integrations and becomes a social force between the local hosts and tourists. Tourism Industry is growth oriented and kick start development in the region but sustainability of that growth depends on timely planning and effective management. Tourism boosts the overall economic growth, triggers socio-cultural change and expedites the development with its consequences for the environment because providing services to the tourists opens avenues of a services sector for the locals which become the point of contact between the locals and tourists. This phenomenon is further explored through the infrastructure development, provision of transport facilities, changes in market structure and consequently in occupational trends, impact of tourism in closing gender gap as well as promoting education among the locals in the Neelum District.

Following themes and subthemes has been extracted from the collected data and then analysed through thematic analysis.

Table 4.1 Themes and subthemes extracted from the findings

Sr. No.	Main Theme	Sub-themes
1	Infrastructure	Reconstruction
		Guest house construction
		Roads & bridges development
		Investment from outsiders
		Transport maintained completely by locals
		NGOs offering training for hospitality and hotel management
		Increase in number of schools and colleges
		Communication networks / Internet availability

		Transmission of public electricity lines (earlier used to be only hydro-electric)
		Tourist Police –assisting & guiding tourists, First-Aid, lost & found
		Introduction of Tourism festival in Neelum
		Privacy concern in houses
		Land ownership (People own very little Majority is owned by govt called Khalsa Sarkar or shamlaat)
		Land grabbing
		Deforestation to make guest houses
2.	Transport	Managed by locals
	i. Benefits	Source of side income
		An alternative to migration
		Mitigation of number of accidents
		Pollution: one car emits 350g of carbon
	ii. Side effects	Shortage of fuel: only 2 fuel pumps in the district and that too only at headquarters
		Shortage of Vehicles for locals as drivers prefer giving services to tourists as they pay more
		Lack of long-term sustainability
		High fares for locals
3.	Market Structure	Components of the market/goods/available vendor.
	i. Impacts on common man	Availability of non-local goods like mineral water, poultry market
		Local production almost halted
		Job creation
		Basic necessities available in Neelum
		Construction material originally fetched from Muzaffarabad
		Guest houses – businesses
		Restaurants
		Clothes: used to be of single pattern, now mostly ready made
		clothes are available everywhere
		Tour guides
	ii. Impacts on Business community	Horses / vehicles as means of service
		Increase in average income
		Chances to grow increased
		Market competition
		Developing stage / not saturated
		New business ideas // attracting people from other districts to invest in Neelum

4.	Occupational changes	More avenues of employment
		No particular change in female labor as they assist in Household alone
		Guest Houses becoming a means of income
		Decrease in migration trends as people find jobs locally
5.	Gender Gap	Visible gender gap in tourism industry
		Problems with social networking
		Likely to be employed in less paying jobs
		Little to no ownership of businesses
6.	Educational trends	Female education increased
		Number of schools increased
		Availability of educational institutes at shorter distances

Infrastructure development is one of the key element of sustaining tourism. Infrastructure wise, Neelum district has also fairly developed in the last three to four decades as we see. It is significant to understand the process of these developments as facilities are created in remote tourist areas to cater the needs of the visitors. Provision of the need-based facilities may have both positive as well as negative impacts on the region. Depending on the needs of the tourists, district Neelum has seen developments of transportation facilities, healthcare system and water system as well as conservation of historical sites like Sharda University which is historically considered as oldest University from Buddhist era. As for the road connectivity, there used to be only one main road of 200kms of length connecting Muzaffarabad to Neelum before 2005, called as Main Neelum Valley road. Currently, the road infrastructure consists of 398.7 kms of main roads, 205kms of link roads and 58 number of bridges to provide smooth road connectivity. Similarly, locals have developed community tanks for water storage to facilitate tourists as well as their community whereas earlier women used to go long distances to fetch waters in “gaagar” a steel vessel for water. Government has also installed public electricity transmission lines to provide electricity facilities throughout the Neelum which was originally based wholly on the hydro-electric projects initiated by the locals themselves. Local community operates the hydro-electric projects, carry out regular maintenance and enhance capacity according to their usage. Communities contribute monthly to keep it running, and the incentive is the income through tourism! These hydro-power plants meet their needs in cheap manner as well as sustain the tourism. Functionality and ease of accessibility to these facilities fulfilling basic necessities of

tourists sets the ground for a flourishing tourism industry in a region. These changes in Neelum have taken place with the collated efforts of the natives as well as the government initiatives.

Another common trend analyzed from the data was the construction of “guest houses” to meet the accommodation needs of the tourists. With the influx of tourists in the recent years, many locals have started constructing guest houses on their lands. Many have converted their homes into guest houses. These guest houses provide a relatively sustainable solution for the tourists’ influx and also offer the tourists to experience local traditions and culture more closely and comfortably while visiting to remote areas. Development sector has also stepped in to facilitate on this in Neelum. Many NGOs offer short trainings on “hospitality” and “hotel management” to aide people in effective service delivery to the tourists during their stay in their locally run guest houses. These trainings have proved to be quite helpful for the people. But this culture of rapid construction of guest houses come at its own costs: there is an increasing trend of “land grabbing” being observed in Neelum. As per law, most of the land is owned by the government and is called as “khalsa Sarkar” while people own very small area of land. With the increase in tourism, many people have illegally constructed guest houses on public property. Such speed in increase in number of guests also comes at the cost of rapid deforestation which is environmentally unsustainable. Forests, in particular, gets affected and suffer, as discussed above, in the form of deforestation caused by fuel wood collection and land clearing for construction of guest houses. For example, it is an estimation of the locals that around four to five kilograms of wood is consumed by one tourist in a day. In village Arrang kel, the only building which was not made up of wood is the primary school. Fig 4.1 illustrates the children going through the morning assembly near the school’s building.



Fig 4.1 Primary school made up of stone structure at arrang kel

The Land degradation because of rapid construction of guest houses, extensive deforestation and use of fossil fuel leads to erosion of forests, wetland. This also has a slowly but surely negative impact on wildlife and ecosystem of the region which might become prominent in the coming decades, in the views of the Chief Conservator Forests of AJK. Increase in number of tourists and the undue restraint on natural resources may harm the scenic landscapes as well, as we have seen in Murree and Naran; many locals who were interviewed raised this concern that though tourism provide them benefits but “Once you provide facilities, you provide accessibility without effectively managing the flow of tourists according to the available resources as well as the limit to which you can put pressure on and suddenly the place loses its scenic charm and serenity.”

Managing the environmental impacts of tourism can be quite a challenge especially for regions novice to the Tourism industry. It can cast immense strain on the local resources. Increased use of transport and energy resources not just constraint the physical resources available in the region like wood, water and electricity to provide proper heating, hot water and other facilities to tourists but it also leaves a trail of pollution and other environmental problems. Since, Tourism has a seasonal character, certain seasons attract tourists than other seasons of the year. This causes an uneven pressure on the resources throughout the year making any unplanned development unsustainable. Furthermore, the pollution originating from tourism can have the same deteriorating impact as any other industry including but not limited to: air emissions, noise pollution, solid waste and excessive littering, and infrastructural as well as visual pollution.

One of the most welcome developments from the tourism department of AJK government has been creation of “Tourism Police”. It consists of 120 members from both genders i.e. male and female officers. The working of this taskforce is unconventional, that is, they do not perform normal policing obligations. Instead, they perform the duties of being a host/tour assist to domestic as well as foreign visitors. They are thoroughly trained and well-equipped to handle the tasks assigned to them. Previously, there were cases of Police misbehaving with the tourists which led way for creation of a separate task force to avoid its negative impacts on the Tourism industry. Tourism Police is specifically instructed to behave politely, be respectful and facilitate the tourists in every way possible. They act as liaison for tourists at entry points and guide about the best routes. They have also established a hotline where tourists call in case of any trouble.

This initiative would re-energize the tourism in the district. In the words of Irshad Pirzada, Director General of AJK Tourist Police, this would help in tapping the potential of tourism in the region which consequently raises the income level. He reiterated that this policing drive will attract and sustain up to 2-3 million tourists in the coming year than 1.5 in the previous year.

Mobility constitutes one of the most fundamental requirements of modern tourism and is both an effect and cause of tourism. An array of interrelated factors like the increasing influx of tourists and their subsequent demands put strain on the existing transport infrastructure of tourist areas. This calls for the upgradation of transportation facilities in tourist areas like Neelum Valley, incentivizing local residents and administration to increase accessibility to tourist spots and scenic places. Transport thus becomes heavily dependent on the input of local residents whose livelihoods are associated with tourism in areas like Neelum Valley. As mentioned above, transportation and tourism are mutually beneficial, so locals have a high stake in the development of transport facilities to boost tourism-related activity. They do this mostly by upgrading their own transportation and logistics facilities or by demanding better infrastructure from the local administration. Clearly, this demand and supply mechanism is responsible for various positive and negative effects on the transport sector of the Neelum Valley and hugely impacts the livelihoods of locals in both positive and negative ways.

In the Neelum Valley, transport is generally managed by the locals. It greatly benefits them because it becomes an additional source of income. This is mainly because tourists from around the country find it difficult to rely exclusively on their personal transport in the remote parts of the valley, which leads them to heavily rely on locals for mobility and sight-seeing. The risky mountainous roads of Neelum Valley are also nearly impossible to drive on for common drivers. This places a high premium on the experience-based driving skills of local drivers in order to avoid accidents. Besides the direct income from providing jeeps and logistic support to tourists, locals equally benefit from the fact that they do not have to move to far-off urban areas in agriculture-off seasons. Their earning finds its way to their doorsteps because of the tourists' incessant search for new places. In conclusion, tourism has generated various opportunities for local residents of Neelum Valley by incentivising them to gradually revamp local transport infrastructure in the area along with improving their lifestyles. A cable car from one mountain to other and from one bank of the river to other is also a good mode of mobility in Neelum valley.

Cable car connecting village kel to arrang kel is the major example carrying hundreds of people from one village to the other daily. It can be seen in the following fig.



Fig 4.2 Cable car from Kel to Arrang Kel

As the transport sector undergoes expansion and upgradation in Neelum Valley, concerns also abound that it has its downside as well. For instance, a growing concern for the locals and environmentalists is that the boom in tourism will also create environmental degradation in the valley. This is basically related to the huge influx of tourist vehicles which emit tremendous amounts of fossil fuels. A single car is estimated to be causing 350g of carbon emissions. A booming tourism sector also demands easy accessibility of fuel, which is woefully absent in the Neelum Valley. There are only two fuel stations in the district, that too at the district headquarters, which are insufficient to meet the ever-growing fuel needs of the ever-increasing tourism in the area. Furthermore, transport facilities for locals are also insufficient because local drivers are incentivised to invest only in the transportation of tourists, which has led to a shortage of transport vehicles for locals. Another result of this commercialisation of transport is that local transport drivers also charge high fares from local passengers in order to compete with those drivers who are engaged in tourism-related transport. Conclusively, the tourism boom in Neelum Valley has also generated various challenges for the transport sector which need to be dealt with in order to pave way for sustainable and cheap transport facilities.

Market structure can be thought of as the overall characteristics of a particular market as well as its organisation. It deeply influences the choices and decisions of all stakeholders in a

given market. Tourism, in this context, invariably influences the market structure of tourist areas by creating new opportunities, halting some existing market processes and impacting vendor availability in certain ways. In the same manner, the market structure of Neelum Valley region has been gradually altered by the growth in tourism. Tourism has spurred both positive and negative changes in the overall market structure of the Neelum valley. As transportation facilities improve, the availability of non-local items like mineral water and poultry products has significantly improved. It has improved the lifestyles of locals who can now engage in selling utility items to incoming tourists and various other economic activities on a small scale. Another positive impact on the lives of locals is the creation of new livelihoods in the newly built hotels, restaurants, pharmacies and general stores. Construction activity has also been accelerated due to the easy availability of construction materials, including LPG, electronics, concrete and sanitary materials in remote areas. Guest houses, which were once confined to the public sector, are now being constructed by private builders for commercial purposes and accrue great benefits to local investors and communities. Road-side restaurants have also undergone a mushroom growth due to the increasing influx of tourists. Moreover, tourism-related activities have also given a fillip to independent employment in the form of tour guides/assists etc. The business community of Neelum valley is also gaining several benefits from increased tourism. Incomes and returns have considerably gone up for investors who invest in the tourism sector as the productivity of businesses has increased due to infrastructure development. To sum up, tourism has unleashed tremendous opportunities for the local residents of Neelum valley by altering the market structure in a positive way. But it's too early to suggest that the market structure of Neelum valley has achieved its saturation point because it's still developing and needs more market competition and infrastructure development to come of age.

Every society is bound to undergo all kinds of changes with the passage of time but the tourism often expedites that process. The contact between tourists and locals causes many socio-cultural changes in terms of language, culture, cuisines and other customs. For instance, people in Neelum tend to speak Urdu more than their native language Hindko. The traditional Kashmiri food has been mostly replaced by karahi's and other dishes from across the various regions of Pakistan. The ways of dressing in Neelum valley is another example that how tourism impacted the region's culture. Earlier, people only wore very particular kind of, locally resourced clothes;

however, now you can see even in the last end of District Neelum which connects it to the boundaries of Gilgit, people wear ready-made clothes brought from the other cities. A child can be seen in the following figure, wearing the readymade dress at the end of neelum in area called ‘Gagai’ where there is no concept of road.



Fig 4.3 Child wearing ready-made dress at Gagai

Tourism fosters both macroeconomic and microeconomic development in destination countries or regions. Above all, it greatly benefits the balance of payments in a destination country by contributing to the current account. Along with macroeconomic benefits, it also creates new employment and increases household incomes, and also sets in motion other economic activities than the ones it directly benefits. Governments and local communities re-spend the revenue generated from tourism to accelerate indigenous business activities. In the same manner, domestic tourism also boosts business activity in the tourist regions of a country. Income, jobs and business activities of host regions are given an impetus by the influx of tourists and the revenue generated by it. Human capital of tourist regions is also developed because revenue generated from tourism is invested in health, education. infrastructure development etc. In such areas, other opportunities for employment and development are often limited because these are mostly peripheral regions of a country. Therefore, tourism sometimes provides the only source of livelihood to people residing in such areas. For example, the establishment of tourist spots and hotels gives a chance to locals for developing their own facilities. Such facilities as

hotels and restaurants actually add to the infrastructure of tourist regions, thereby giving a chance to the locals for achieving broader development goals. Another effect of tourism on such regions is that land prices see a sharp rise in a matter of years. For this reason, the landowners and farmers often sell their lands in return for short-term gains, which can skew the patterns of land ownership in such regions. Therefore, sustainable planning and development strategies should be devised which benefit both the tourists coming to such areas as well as the locals.

Despite the tremendous opportunities generated by tourism, the employment in tourism sector is often characterized by a visible gender gap, and the case is no different for women in Neelum valley. Tourism is basically a labor-intensive sector, especially in the peripheral and mountainous regions. Globally, the tourism sector employs 46% women. Although the bargaining power of women and their incomes have increased to a considerable extent, they still face gender segregation in this industry. Their vertical mobility is deeply affected by their inability to assume leadership roles in tourism industry. Furthermore, their incomes are considerably lower than men because men enjoy more prominence and value in the tourism sector, hence their labor being considered more worthy than that of women. This trend is in consonance with the general income gap observed between women and men worldwide. According to the World Bank, for every \$1 earned by men, women receive on average 65-70 cents.

The empirical data reveals that a very small number of women participate in tourism related activities in Neelum, primarily due to the nature of the job. Due to the existing socio-cultural inequalities between men and women, the gender gap is evidently reflected in business ownership, as well. Women are less likely to initiate their own business activities because human development and social networks are already gendered (a problem that acquires more potency in peripheral regions). Additionally, local administrators (mostly men) are often more likely to favor and work with those of their own gender because of the same-sex bias. Horizontal segregation based on gender aggravates this situation because women are mostly encouraged to be employed in jobs like cleaners, waitresses and sales persons while men mostly get better paying jobs. To counteract the gender gap in tourism industry, governments and communities need to devise strategies for more equitable division of labor, better female education to boost confidence, community involvement and creating leadership roles for women.

Furthermore, women in Neelum can be mainly seen either assisting only in household chores or they are mainly involved in producing handicrafts, for examples, Kashmiri shawls which are renowned for its aesthetics and qualities. “Kashmiri Shawl making is a household craft in which female members especially girls and women help the embroiderers in stitching, washing and dying”. A local woman I interviewed reflected how household handicrafts helped her sustain her income after her husband passed away: *“I am a 50 years old widow. I was quite young with three little children when my husband passed away in a heart attack, I have been providing for my family by stitching the shawls for a local shop which sells souvenirs to the tourists.”*

My analysis from the interviews suggests that there is a connection between the effects of tourism and changes in the occupational trends which indicates a positive economic impact of tourism and has increased the overall life standards of the people living in those communities. It is evident that tourism leads towards socio-economic development of the region which doesn't limit itself to the tourism related activities but extends to other areas of life at the same time. Tourism creates wide set of work opportunities. Generally, the demand of workforce for tourism industry is unskilled and semi-skilled labour as compared to other industries. Moreover, the native knowledge and know-how of the area always add as a bonus point for the locals to thrive in their services. However, tourism has little effect on overall unemployment as it only hires people for part-time services based on demand as well as seasonal requirements. But the silver lining here is, the locals in Neelum earlier had to migrate to other cities during the winters to find a job which was extremely difficult for them to relocate temporarily, now with the influx of tourism, they don't have to migrate.

Another prominent negative impact of the tourism is the hike in land price, increase in rents of the houses as well as transport for local people. Furthermore, during the tourist's season, there is an inevitable shortage of housing for local people. The expansion of tourism needs land and in consequences land price increases. One of the interviewees, 64 years old, retired officer from forests conservation department said that: *“around two or three decades back, agriculture was the main source of livelihood of the people in our village. But the changes has been very*

high-paced with the increase in tourism related activities in 1990s, now people from other parts of countries end up making some investment arrangements with locals and take more benefits. But this trend has tended to cause increase in land prices.”

Consequently, many people are motivated to sell their agricultural lands in a process to convert it into high-profit hotels and recreational facilities. This will actually lead to deepen the economic divide in the region, making the poor farmers poorer landless peasants while benefitting only a certain segment of the society at the cost of environmental unsustainability.

Another main negative economic impact dug from the interviews conducted with the locals is the inflationary trends seen in even the everyday necessities and commodities. This has alarmed the locals to a great extent. Although, the price hike may not be contributed only to tourism but also general economic crunch in the country but the tourism still remains the culprit. From the view of one of the interviewees: *“Since tourists don’t hesitate to pay more a fairer amount as long as its within a suitable range and doesn’t exploit them, this makes the service providers prefer offering their services to tourists than locals who’d haggle for the same product or service. This causes a subtle but progressive impact on the price hike of general commodities. Everything is expensive in our village and people find it extremely hard to meet their needs in their limited income”*

Another step taken by the government was introducing the Homestay Project which was further carried out by an NGO called Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) in Kashmir. Neelum Valley remains “untouched and pristine” due to its geographical proximity to Line of Control which has also been the reason that it has less developed road and infrastructure than many other districts. This became the main reason for Homestay Projects to succeed here and benefit both tourists and locals in the valley.

While such projects have led a culture of Paying guests at houses but this has led to certain privacy concerns for the locals as tourists often don’t respect privacy of the locals; Loud music and barging into the private places without any realization. Now many houses have started fencing which is a new concept to be seen in Neelum.

Policy Implications

Tourism development has impacted the life of common man in a very good manner. There are new opportunities for locals to earn more so as to have better socio-economic conditions. New jobs are created as well as new business opportunities have paved way to get better facilities in District Neelum. Infrastructure development has boosted up after the expansion of mass tourism. People have changed their occupations with the advent of time. Now, there is less migration in District Neelum as compared to earlier times when people used to flow to metropolitan cities for the sake of job as majority of the valley is covered with snow in winters. Majority of the infrastructure development is on the cost of disturbance of eco system. Natural habitat is destroyed due to these developments. All those developments on the cost of disturbance of natural eco system should be discouraged in anyways as the world is emphasizing on sustainable development. Majority of the guest houses are made up of wood which increases deforestation. There is a quota identified in the Azad Kashmir forest law for cutting of trees for useful purposes. However smuggling of timber wood has increased due to this quota. If we take example of arrang kel village in Neelum Valley, there is no single house or guest house which is not made up of wood. The only building made of stones in that village is Government primary school.

Infrastructure development has caused a very serious threat to the forest and wildlife. Moreover, landownership of locals is in very low percentage as majority of the land belongs to Government and specially forest department. Commercial purposes need more place so it has increased the land grabbing. People have converted their houses in to guest houses and made new shelters for their own living at Government owned land. Though government agencies take action from time to time but there is a need of lot to do.

Recommendations

- 1- There should be a total ban on deforestation for commercial purposes. Total ban on deforestation restricts the existing quota of wood cutting which is allowed under forest law.
- 2- There should be a public private partnership (PPP) as very few percentage of land is owned by the people. Majority of the land which belong to government named Khalsa Sarkar which is of no use to the Government should be leased out to the locals on rent so

that it enhance commercial activities. It will benefit both the locals as well as the Government. It will discourage land grabbing too.

- 3- Commercial entities should be restricted to have concrete structure instead of wood so that ecosystem of the valley does not get disturb.
- 4- Littering is one of the main causes of the pollution. Plastic bottle is one of the major constituent of pollutants. Till now there is no single worker deputed to take these waste off to the dumping place. So there is a need to hire workers to take garbage off the valley.

Conclusion

Neelum Valley, the district of Azad Kashmir is famous for its breathtaking panoramic views and beautiful lakes. Also, because of its unprecedented proximity with the Line of Control it remained on the screens. But in the last two decades, this untouched valley started attracting tourists. With the development of tourism industry in the valley, it also underwent socio-economic and cultural changes. This paper has explored such impacts of tourism on the valley particularly in rural development as well as the challenges it poised for the local community. Local community has actively played the role of actors in this development by leading community projects where which added to government efforts. Many projects have not only provided business opportunities for locals but also led to infrastructure development in the valley to support tourism industry and uplift the locals. The market structure has also seen a shift. Tourism has created diverse opportunities for the people to find jobs which weren't earlier. Socio-cultural dynamics were also subjected to the ongoing changes. The study found out many positive effects of influx of tourism in Neelum.

Despite such scale of socio-economic development, gender gap remains visible in tourism industry as very few businesses are owned by women in Neelum and mostly the jobs they get are low paying. However literacy rate has been observed to improve drastically. Accessibility to schools and colleges has improved.

To put this discussion in a nutshell tourism brings with itself better resources and socio-economic conditions for local community.

References

- Adnan Hye, Q. M., & Ali Khan, R. E. (2013). *Tourism-led growth hypothesis: A case study of Pakistan*. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(4), 303-313.
- Akram, S., Shahzad, M. W., Khalil, A., Younis, W., Shahzad, M., & Ghazanfar, F. (2021). *Investigating the impact of tourism development on socio-economic development in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan*. *International Journal of Management (IJM)*, 12(6), 189-200.
- Arshad, M. I., Iqbal, M. A., & Shahbaz, M. (2018). *Pakistan tourism industry and challenges: a review*. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 23(2), 121-132.
- Arshad, M., Kächele, H., Krupnik, T. J., Amjath-Babu, T. S., Aravindakshan, S., Abbas, A., & Müller, K. (2017). *Climate variability, farmland value, and farmers' perceptions of climate change: implications for adaptation in rural Pakistan*. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, 24(6), 532-544.
- Aslam, M. S. M., & Awang, K. W. (2015). *Enterprising rural tourism for sustainable rural development in Sri Lanka*. *International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues*, 5(1), 27-33.
- Aylward, E., & Kelliher, F. (2009). *Rural tourism development: proposing an integrated model of rural stakeholder network relationships*.
- Babar Shahbaz, M. L., & Cho, G. R. (2014). *Analysis of rural development timeline in Korea and Pakistan: What lessons Pakistan can learn?*. *Journal of the Korean Society of International Agriculture*, 26(3), 197-209.
- Baloch, Q. B. (2007). *Managing tourism in Pakistan: A case study of Chitral valley*. *Journal of Managerial Sciences*, 2(2), 169-190.
- Bontron, J. C., & Lasnier, N. (1997). *Tourism: a potential source of rural employment*.
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2021, March 18). *Azad Kashmir*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Azad-Kashmir>

Bukhari S.M. (2015, October 20). *Pakistan's Blue Gem: Neelum Valley*. Dawn Shah A.S. (2020, August 30). *Life at LOC; A Hell in Heaven*. *Daily Times*

Chambers, Robert(1994), *The origins and practice of participatory rural appraisal*.

Chow, W. T. (1980). *Integrating tourism with rural development*. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 7(4), 584-607.

Cooke, K. (1982). Guidelines for socially appropriate tourism development in British Columbia. *Journal of travel research*, 21(1), 22-28.

Danglah, D. G. (2010). Developing rural based tourism as a strategy for rural development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Creativity and Technical Development*, 2, 1-3.

Davis, J. S., & Morais, D. B. (2004). Factions and enclaves: Small towns and socially unsustainable tourism development. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43(1), 3-10.

Dernoi, L. A. (1991). Prospects of rural tourism: Needs and opportunities. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 16(1), 89-94.

Dimitrovski, D. D., Todorović, A. T., & Valjarević, A. D. (2012). Rural tourism and regional development: Case study of development of rural tourism in the region of Gruža, Serbia. *Procedia environmental sciences*, 14, 288-297.

F Theobald, W. (2005). *Global tourism third edition*.

Feng, X. (2008). Who benefits?: tourism development in Fenghuang County, China. *Human organization*, 67(2), 207-220.

Findeis, J. L., & Jensen, L. (1998). *Employment opportunities in rural areas: Implications for poverty in a changing policy environment*. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 80(5),1000-1007.

Fotiadis, A. (2009). The role of tourism in rural development through a comparative analysis of a Greek and a Hungarian rural tourism area. *PhD Tesis, University of Pecs*.

Gao, S., Huang, S., & Huang, Y. (2009). Rural tourism development in China. *International journal of tourism research*, 11(5), 439-450.

- Gartner, W. C. (2004). Rural tourism development in the USA. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 6(3), 151-164.
- Giannakis, E. (2014). The role of rural tourism on the development of rural areas: The case of Cyprus. *Romanian Journal of Regional Science*, 8(1).
- Gössling, S., Hall, C. M., & Scott, D. (2009). *The challenges of tourism as a development strategy in an era of global climate change. Rethinking development in a carbon-constrained world. Development cooperation and climate change*, 100-119.
- Hakkarainen, M., & Tuulentie, S. (2008). Tourism's role in rural development of Finnish Lapland: interpreting national and regional strategy documents. *Fennia-International Journal of Geography*, 186(1), 3-13.
- Harris, Briony (2017). Formative content . *World Economic Forum*
- Hassan, S. S. (2000). *Determinants of market competitiveness in an environmentally sustainable tourism industry. Journal of travel research*, 38(3), 239-245.
- Hassan, S. S. (2000). Determinants of market competitiveness in an environmentally sustainable tourism industry. *Journal of travel research*, 38(3), 239-245.
- Irshad Pirzada. (2003). *A hand book on Azad Jammu and Kashmir*
- Ivolga, A., & Erokhin, V. (2013). Tourism as an approach to sustainable rural development: Case of Southern Russia. *Экономика сельского хозяйства*, 60(4), 789-800.
- Jalaludin Mughal (2019), *Why Neelum Valley looks different this year, 2019*
- Kakar, Asmat . (2018). *Developing the rural economy in pakistan through income generation grants.*
- Kakroo, N. A., & Dada, Z. A. (2020). *The significance of Mountain based adventure activities for Mountain Tourism Development: A case study of Jammu and Kashmir.*
- Khan, A., Bibi, S., Lorenzo, A., Lyu, J., & Babar, Z. U. (2020). *Tourism and development in developing economies: A policy implication perspective. Sustainability*, 12(4), 1618.

- Khan, F., & Callanan, M. (2017). *The “Halalification” of tourism. Journal of Islamic Marketing.*
- Khattak, G. A., Owen, L. A., Kamp, U., & Harp, E. L. (2010). *Evolution of earthquake-triggered landslides in the Kashmir Himalaya, northern Pakistan. Geomorphology, 115(1-2), 102-108.*
- Koster, R. L. (2008). Mural-based tourism as a strategy for rural community economic development. In *Advances in culture, tourism and hospitality research*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Mafunzwaini, A. E., & Hugo, L. (2005). Unlocking the rural tourism potential of the Limpopo province of South Africa: Some strategic guidelines. *Development Southern Africa, 22(2), 251-265.* doi:10.1080/03768350500163048
- Mahmud E. (2020, June 14). Are AJK & GB ready for tourism?
- Malik, S. A. (2013). *Development of difficult region through travel, trade and tourism: A case study of twin border districts Rajouri and Poonch. International Journal of Marketing, Financial Services and Management Research (Print Journal), 2 (2), 56, 66.*
- McAreavey, R., & McDonagh, J. (2011). Sustainable rural tourism: Lessons for rural development. *Sociologia ruralis, 51(2), 175-194.*
- McGehee, N. G., & Andereck, K. L. (2004). Factors predicting rural residents’ support of tourism. *Journal of travel research, 43(2), 131-140.*
- Mir, S. R. (2018). Community tourism and rural development in Kashmir. *International Journal of Tourism & Hospitality Reviews, 5(1), 36-39.*
- Mitchell, R. E., & Reid, D. G. (2001). Community integration: Island tourism in Peru. *Annals of tourism research, 28(1), 113-139.*
- Nagaraju, L. G., & Chandrashekara, B. (2014). Rural tourism and rural development in India. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies, 1(6), 42-48.*

Naghiu, A., Vázquez, J. L., & Georgiev, I. (2005). Rural development strategies through rural tourism activities in Romania: chance for an internal demand? *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 2(1), 85–95. doi:10.1007/bf02893253

Naghiu, A., Vázquez, J. L., & Georgiev, I. (2005). *Rural development strategies through rural tourism activities in Romania: chance for an internal demand?. International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, 2(1), 85-95.

Neelum District Disaster Risk Management Plan. (2007). Building enabling governance and institutions for earthquake response (BEGIN-ER)
<https://cms.ndma.gov.pk/storage/app/public/plans/October2020/5A8T7TtCdClxyCp phe1q.pdf>

Nguyen, Q. H. (2021). *Impact of Investment in Tourism Infrastructure Development on Attracting International Visitors: A Nonlinear Panel ARDL Approach Using Vietnam's Data. Economies*, 9(3), 131.

Nooripoor, M., Khosrowjerdi, M., Rastegari, H., Sharifi, Z., & Bijani, M. (2021). The role of tourism in rural development: Evidence from Iran. *GeoJournal*, 86(4), 1705-1719.

Nugroho, I., Pramukanto, F. H., Negara, P. D., Purnomowati, W., & Wulandari, W. (2016). Promoting the rural development through the ecotourism activities in Indonesia. *American Journal of Tourism Management*, 5(1), 9-18.

Nyaupane, G. P., & Poudel, S. (2012). Application of appreciative inquiry in tourism research in rural communities. *Tourism management*, 33(4), 978-987.

Park, D. B., Lee, K. W., Choi, H. S., & Yoon, Y. (2012). Factors influencing social capital in rural tourism communities in South Korea. *Tourism management*, 33(6), 1511-1520.

Perales, R. M. Y. (2002). Rural tourism in Spain. *Annals of tourism Research*, 29(4), 1101-1110.

Petrović, M. D., Vujko, A., Gajić, T., Vuković, D. B., Radovanović, M., Jovanović, J. M., & Vuković, N. (2017). Tourism as an approach to sustainable rural development in post-socialist countries: A comparative study of Serbia and Slovenia. *Sustainability*, 10(1), 54.

Pompl, W., Pompl, W. E., & Lavery, P. (Eds.). (1993). *Tourism in Europe: Structures and developments*. Cab International.

Ribeiro, M., & Marques, C. (2002). *Rural tourism and the development of less favoured areas?between rhetoric and practice. International Journal of Tourism Research, 4(3), 211–220.* doi:10.1002/jtr.377

Saarinen, J. (2014). *Critical sustainability: Setting the limits to growth and responsibility in tourism. Sustainability, 6(1), 1-17.*

Saarinen, J., & Kask, T. (2008). *Transforming tourism spaces in changing socio-political contexts: The case of Pärnu, Estonia, as a tourist destination. Tourism Geographies, 10(4), 452-473.*

Saarinen, J., & Lenao, M. (2014). *Integrating tourism to rural development and planning in the developing world. Development Southern Africa, 31(3), 363-372.*

Shabbir, S., Mughal, H., Iftikar, M., Khan, M. M., Anwar, A., Akhter, F., & Zubir, A.(2020). *The Future of Pakistan Tourism Industry: A Review Paper.*

Sharpley, R., & Roberts, L. (2004). Rural tourism—10 years on. *International Journal of tourism research, 6(3), 119-124.*

Šimková, E. (2007). Strategic approaches to rural tourism and sustainable development of rural areas. *Agricultural Economics, 53(6), 263-270.*

Zaffer,Ahmed Malik. (2016). *Neelum*

Appendix A
Interview Guide

Themes	Questions	Probes
Infrastructure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has tourism caused any major infrastructure development? 2. What has been the most crucial element in these developments? How did it impact an ordinary person's life? 3. Has this infrastructural development impacted the ecosystem of the valley in any way? 	<p>If yes, how and what?</p> <p>Pros and cons of such developments?</p> <p>If yes, how?</p>
Transport	How has transport system changed over the time?	
Market Structure	<p>How has tourism changed market structure?</p> <p>Are there any new avenues of income generation?</p> <p>Has this impacted common man's life?</p> <p>How have businesses been transformed because of tourism?</p>	<p>What are those sources?</p> <p>If yes, how?</p>
Occupational Trends	Has the occupations of the locals been changed with the spread of mass-tourism?	If yes, what are those occupations?
Gender gap	Has tourism reduced the gender gap?	If yes, in what ways?
Education	<p>How the tourism affected education sector?</p> <p>Is there any change in awareness?</p> <p>Is there any change in quality of education?</p>	If yes, how? In what ways?