

Tourism downfall: sectarianism an apparent major cause, in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Pakistan

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Abstract

A study survey was conducted in Gilgit-Baltistan, to investigate the major cause of rapid turn down in the inflow of tourists, which has adversely affected the tourism sector, since last decade. We analyzed tourists' inflow data, obtained from Foreign Registration Office, Gilgit. A significant reduction, in tourist inflow data, was observed since 1998, when inflow was 1, 13,399 tourists, with minimum inflow i.e., 2,000 tourists in 2002, and 2,544 in 2009. Further, the linkage of this reduction in tourist inflow with sectarianism, was investigated by conducting surveys on cultural diversity; influences of sectarian clashes; war and terror; and consequent changes in the ratio of incoming tourists, to reach the final conclusion. The findings of our study showed, that the prolonged local sectarian clashes seem to be the major causes of tourism down fall. In addition to the sectarian clashes, political instability; and war against terrorism in country, are the apparent causes, which contribute to unconstructive marketing for the distressed area. Revitalization of collapsed tourism sector and opening of sustainable community-based ecotourism initiatives through reformed policies, that address the mountain concerns and cooperative action of all stakeholders, can tackle challenges for tourism, which will ultimately root out unfavorable circumstances that cause tension in this region.

Key words: Sectarianism, Gilgit-Baltistan, terrorism, tourism, Pakistan

Introduction

Northern mountainous region of Pakistan, known as Gilgit-Baltistan, covers 72,496 km² area, which comprises Karakorum, Hindu Kush, and Western Himalayan range. This region, blessed with abundance of natural resources, attracts millions of tourists every year. Having three huge mountain ranges, GB enjoys an important geographical location (Figure 1), as it links Pakistan with China in the northeast, Afghanistan in northwest, Azad Kashmir in south and southeast, Indian occupied Kashmir in south and, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the west. This region is the source for most of the fresh water, biodiversity, gemstones, and mineral resources. Gilgit is the administrative capital of this region. GB is famous for cultural diversity, mountain ranges, world's largest

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glaciers outside polar region, and unique biodiversity (Bansal, 2008; DTESC 2007; GCIC 2009). It is heaven for mountain-lovers, explorers, adventurers and researcher, from all round the world; however, besides this region's global significance, tourism potentials are also poorly understood at local and national levels.

The widespread sectarian clashes, relative remoteness, and political instability, that lead to prolong curfew; emergency; closure of the market; target killing; business loss; and exploitation of natural resources, seem to have altered the tourism sector to an alarming rate. Sectarian aggression in GB, is not accidental, it has deep roots in history associated with religious, political, geopolitical and social intentions. The clashes first evolved, during the Afghan clash (Grare, 2007; Lakshman, 2003), have quickly acquired a form of international terrorism, drawing attention of politicians as well as extremists from all over the world, with different motives in this area. In Pakistan the sectarian clashes were uncommon prior to 1947, but started frequently after 1980s, as a result of mass killings for Islamisation by Zia ul-Haq, and violent stand against the Shias by Jamaat Ulema Pakistan, and Jamaat Ulema Islami (JUI) (Grare, 2007). The Islamization strategy of General Zia-ul-Haq, 1980s Afghan crisis, and Iron insurgency in 1979, had a collective effect on sectarianism proliferation. Sectarianism is getting more threatening shape with the passage of time, due to the persistent ignorance of the region by government of Pakistan. Besides sectarianism, terrorism "a violent act that countries swap" (Chen, *et.al*; 2004) against innocent human beings, has evolved from riots, conflicts, and sectarian clashes, in Pakistan. In 1, 813 different incidents of sectarian clashes and terrorist activities in Pakistan, from 1989 to 2003, about 1, 468 people were killed and 3, 370 people injured. These riotous activities have strapping connection with 'madrassas' (traditional schools and institutions for Islamic teachings). The madrassas, although not all but many, actually propagate the sectarianism, and train extremists. The madrassas in Pakistan, have increased in an exponential rate since 1960s, contributing extremely to the sectarianism, creating an ambiance of abhorrence, violence, insurgency, and terrorism (International Crisis Group 2002; Grare, 2007).

It is very essential to understand the symbiotic linkage between sectarian clashes, terrorism and tourism, to reach the conclusion regarding halted tourism in GB. In fact, an appraisal of complicated multi-acts of sectarianism and terrorism on tourism sector, has become a challenge for tourism scholars and practitioners (Wilks, *et. al*; 2006). Sectarian clashes in GB (Bansal, 2008), have created unfavorable conditions for tourist activities.

To assess the tourism downfall in context to sectarianism, which is considered to be an apparent major cause in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), we conducted a study from 2007-2011, in the expeditions to GB. The overall objective of this study was to explore, whether the widespread sectarian clashes are major causes of tourism downfall in GB.

Materials and Methods

This study was based on the surveys conducted in GB, during time to time expeditions from 2007-2011. This was done by probing and analyzing tourist inflow data, obtained from Foreign Registration Office, Gilgit and its association with sectarianism. Further, the linkage of sectarianism to fluctuation in tourist inflow, was investigated to reach to the final conclusion. Surveys were conducted to gather data from a sample of 500 respondents. It was achieved by selecting a broad sample of different stakeholders such as tourists, locals, tour operators, hoteliers, and officials of the area. Survey questionnaires contained different sets of questions to measure cultural diversity; influences of sectarian clashes; war and terror; and consequent changes in the ratio of incoming tourists, to reach to the final conclusion. Secondary data was collected from different departments in Gilgit Baltistan, such as Directorate of Tourism; Environment; Sports and Culture; Foreigner Registration Office Gilgit; WWF Gilgit Office; annual reports and yearly hand books published by Northern area Tourism Department; Gilgit Conservation & Information Center; various books; website of Tourism Ministry of Pakistan; newspapers; and other publications referring to Pakistan's tourism potential, tourism management structure, and terrorism in Pakistan and at international level. The collected data was analyzed by developing charts, graphs and tables. The linkages between cultural diversity (ethnic groups), sectarianism, terrorism and finally their impacts on tourism, were discussed. Results were drawn from analysis of yearly and monthly differences in tourist flow, interviews and questionnaires.

3. Results

3.1. Cultural Diversity and Sectarian Clashes in Gilgit- Baltistan

GB is unique entity, as it directly connects Pakistan with China, and indirectly provides linkage to Central Asia. It is divided into six administrative districts, with over all two million residents, from diverse ethnic groups (Table 1).

For centuries, people with different ethnic origins, (Warikoo, 2009; Mange, 1999), were interacting in harmony and calm environment, regardless of their varying aptitude towards religion. However, religion, that has always remained priority source in people identification, seemed to be the fundamental reason of tension in GB. In addition GB, any region with different religions, seems to have the high risk of local conflicts. Recently the religious revitalization has caused religious clashes resurgence (Ellingsen, 2005) not only in GB but in the whole world. Gilgit is cosmopolitan city, with different ethnic groups, and it provides most of the socio-economic facilities and administrative control. Most of the sectarian clashes start in this city, and later on spread in all over the area, due to the impatience for co- existence, in people. Under such condition of tension, all the social, economic, and environmental developmental processes have become ceased or paralyzed. Sectarian clashes that significantly trigger terrorist activities, have influenced

the tourism market in GB, changing the choice of tourists due to security measures.

We observed a significant reduction in tourist inflow, after 1998 (Figure 3), and religious conflicts seemed to be the major causes of this downfall, according to the interviews taken from the respondents and analysis of over all data. According to 70% respondents, sectarian clashes and tourist security measures were the major factors of this tourist inflow declination; while 12.6% blamed political instability for turndown; 7.4% pointed lack of tourism management and marketing; according to 5%, region's isolation was the major factor; 4% people pointed the finger at lack of transport services; and only 1% accused destination destruction for this failure in tourist flow. From these ratios, it can be drawn, although there may not be a single reason, responsible for the turndown in tourists inflow, rather, all of the reasons highlighted by people, seem to have their contributions towards the tourism failure, but sectarian clash always remained at the top, in our survey.

Generally, the political vacuum and law and order crisis are thought to be the major reason of sectarian clashes. Sectarianism has grown vigorously in this region after 1988, when eight hundred innocent people were killed as a result of Islamization strategy of General Zia-ul-Haq in GB. This massacre has caused serious political and social polarization fueling sectarian clashes, riots, target killings, and assassinations of religious and political leaders. The failure of peaceful resolution of this constant issue, caused the direct involvement of religious discourse in local politics. As a result, every year, sectarian clashes; army hold; intermittent curfews; sniper activities; and general feelings of terror and insecurity, are reported, which do not seem to be resolved (Warikoo, 2009; Mange, 1999). In January 2005, another major sectarian clash caused emergency, a six months long curfew, and loss of more than two hundred lives (Sering, 2009), leading to a series of such clashes in 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011, causing long lasting and nastiest results on the tourism. According to the general public, foreign elements such as CIA, Indian intelligence, Sunni Wahhabi movement and Hizb-ullah, are invoked as insurgents, for different reasons (Mange, 1999). After, Kargil operation in 1999, Lashkar-e-Toiba introduced in this area fanning violence (Warikoo, 2009). Administrative dichotomy is also thought to be the one of the major reasons of sectarian violence in GB, as this is disputed area between Pakistan and India (Bansal, 2008).

3.2. Impacts of sectarian clashes on Tourists inflow

Although there is no valid data available on number, categories, and classes of tourists; however, according to the tour operators, mountaineers; trekkers; adventure tourists; cultural tourists; business and commercial tourists; researchers; sport hunters; volunteers; and job seekers visit the area. In spite of sectarian clashes, pathetic tourism strategy, and danger of terrorism, tourists have continued to visit Pakistan. Tourists can enter via five possible

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ways in GB, which include Karakorum Highway (KKH), Pakistan International Airline (PIA-Gilgit), PIA-Skardu, Sost, and Shandoor. During the month of September 2009, total inflow of tourists, was 762. The highest number of tourists inflow, was via Sost (319), followed by KKH (215), PIA Skardu (145), and PIA Gilgit (69); whereas, only 14 tourists entered through Shandoor (Figure 2). The highest number of tourists, who visited the area in September 2009, was from China, probably, because of the Pak-China peaceful relationship. The tourists' visitations are very significant, in share of income by tourism sector. The over all share of income of tourism, has remained 8%, and the profit ratio 19%, while the investment remained 10%, which can not be considered sufficient. According to a sample survey 1999 by IUCN, this tourism sector has a share of approximately 2% in overall employment rate in the GB. However, no further studies have been conducted till date. The required data for proper planning, is still shrouded, and require integrated and authenticated surveys (DTESC, 2007).

To investigate the root cause of downfall in tourist inflow, we collected data from Foreign Registration Office Gilgit, from 1998- 2009. The monthly and yearly data analysis of incoming tourists, showed a rapid turn down in the number of tourists after 1998. The highest inflow of tourists was in 1998, followed by 2008, 2007, 2001, 1999, 2005, 2004, 2000, 2003, 2009, and 2002 (Figure 3). The number of tourist in 1998 was 1, 13,399, whereas in next year (1999), this ratio sharply declined to a number of 10,124, which may be due to the Kargil incident, when the area was not considered secure for tourists. Different countries not only prohibited, but also quickly removed their citizens from Pakistan. The ratio further reduced to 8,976 in 2,000.. In 2001, a little improvement to a number of 15,685 tourists was observed; but in 2002, the number drastically declined to a number of 2,000 tourists only. What might happen at end of 2001 or start of 2002? The area analysis does not show any major sectarian conflict from 2,000-2002; however, it might be the September 11, incident at the end of 2001, which terrified the tourists all over the world. A similar study regarding impacts of terrorism, conducted by Chen, *et.al*; (2004), showed that the incident of September 11, caused a significant harm to the United State's domestic travel market. The condition was not different in Pakistan. In 2003; 2004; 2005; 2007; and 2008, the number of tourists, was 5,051; 9,191; 9,944; 33,218 and 61,988 respectively, showing gradual improvement despite of the sectarian clashes in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2008, which points that sectarian clashes although have worse impacts on tourism locally, but other reasons such as war and terror, might add to the global wide spread negative impacts. In 2009 the number again declined to 2, 544. What might be the reason behind? This declination might have connection back to 9/11 incident. As after this incident, an incessant series of measures such as attacks of United States on Afghanistan in October 2001, and after that, attack on Iraq (Jakobsen and Jakobsen, 2009), not only upset the countries under operation, but the adjacent country Pakistan also became badly affected, when Taliban fled from Afghanistan to Pakistan. America pressurized Pakistan to ally US against terrorism. Pakistan assisted America's war on terrorism. In this

regard, Pakistan banned different jihadi and militant organizations, in 2002 (Grare, 2007; Momani, 2004). For its involvement in war against terrorism, Pakistan became victim of serial suicide bombing in 2008, 2009, 2010, and about 2,450 lives were claimed to lose in 1,306 terrorist attacks (Tan, 2011). Drone strikes in Pakistan, were started in 2004. The highest number (n53) of Drone attacks, (from 2004-2009), was reported in 2009, and in reaction, the ratio of suicide bombing and strikes (n60) by Taliban, Al Qaeda and other such groups, increased in this year. In addition, Pak- India relation became such worse after the terror attacks on Mumbai in 26 November 2008, that war was expected between them (Gupta, *et.al*; 2009), which created an atmosphere of fear in Pakistan. Although, there are numerous interlinked events, but US invasion in Afghanistan and Iraq 2003; Mumbai attack in 2008; 53 frequent drone attacks by US; and their resultant 60 strikes by terrorist organization, in 2009, seem to contribute significantly, to the turn down in tourists' flow in 2009, besides the apparent major reason of sectarian clashes in GB.

The monthly analysis of 'foreigner and local tourist flow' for years 2007 and 2008, was used to trace the association between tourist inflow pattern, tension in GB, and war and terror at national and international level. The analysis of this correlation finally helped to reach the major cause of tourism downfall in GB. In monthly analysis of inflow data, the highest inflow of 'foreigner tourist' in 2007 (Figure 4), was in June (n=2,071), and lowest in January (45), whereas the highest inflow of 'domestic tourists' in 2007 (Figure 5), was in June (4,261), and lowest in December (318).

In 2008, the highest inflow of 'foreigner and domestic tourists' (Figure 6 and 7), was in July (1,553), June (11,216); and lowest in February (24), and December (1,006) respectively. The monthly data analysis of 2007 and 2008 showed significant difference between foreigner and domestic tourist flows. In 2007 the highest flow of foreigner tourist, was 2,071 in the month of June; while the number of domestic tourist, was 4,261 in same month with a difference of 2,190 (Figure 4 & 5). In 2008 the highest ratio of foreigner tourists, was 1,553 in July, and number of domestic tourist, was 11,216 in June with a difference of 9,663 (Figure 6 & 7). The difference remained high in 2008, probably because of series of events this year, such as Pak-India worse relationship due to Mumbai terror attacks, sectarian clashes, increased drone operations, and their resultant strikes by terrorist organizations. These differences in 2007 and 2008 showed that the 'foreigner tourist flow' was more affected as compare to 'domestic tourist flow' perhaps because of insufficient security measures for international tourists.

The total inflow in 1998 was 1, 13,399, and in 2009 it remained only 2, 544, showing a drastic reduction. The difference between two years (1998 & 2009), was noted as 1, 10,855. This significant difference or reduction indicates alarming condition of tourism sector in this area. This shocking

declination after eleven years, is questioning the reasons for this turn down. The results indicate a significant drawback in tourism sector in Gilgit-Baltistan. These results strengthen the views of people that sectarianism may be the major cause of turn down in tourist inflow, along with the terrorism in Pakistan.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the findings of our research, we estimated significant reduction in tourist flows (both domestic and international) (Figures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) last decade. The prolonged sectarian clashes seemed to be the major cause, besides the different international events regarding terrorism, which contributes to unconstructive marketing for the distressed area. The tourism sector has faced economic losses since 1988. The major events such as massacre of Shias in 1988; sectarian conflicts in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2010; Kargil incident in 1999; Sep.11 incident; drone operation from 2004-11 and their resultant strikes by terrorist organizations; US invasion in Afghanistan and Iraq 2003; and Mumbai terror attacks 2008, all seem to have a combined adverse effect on the business of hoteliers and tour operators, and inflicted huge financial losses on the economy in GB. However, according to our findings, the sectarianism in GB, contributes more than the other elements, in creating a hostile environment for tourism. The number of incoming tourists, has not been restored yet, due to the persistent sectarian clashes. Revitalization of sound tourism needs definite measures and management. A general idea generated from evaluation of tourism crisis management by numerous papers, is that political aggression (such as Kargil operation), troubles the tourism destination image; therefore, innovative 'recovery marketing' strategies and planning (Sonmez, 1998), are required, for tourists safety and sustainable tourism. According to Sonmez *et al*; (1999), in the case of destinations, crisis management and advertising plans should be given importance in development policies. Further more, violent acts have more negative impacts on tourist thoughts more than natural adversities, particularly when such fanatic trials are constant. Frequent sectarian clashes and terrorist activities have affected tourism sector in GB worriedly. Hence, efficient integrated approaches, which focus on all the aspect of ecotourism, are essential to control the negative impacts on tourism. Llorca-Vivero (2008) investigated "the impact of terrorist activity on international tourist flows" in G-7 countries, and found the variation in tourist flows during terrorist activities, as compare to normal days. Likewise, the results of our study indicated, that both local and foreigner tourist inflow has been negatively influenced, due to **unpropitious** condition in Pakistan. To control the sectarian clashes and terrorism, the root causes should be identified and treated. Some of the important interrelated issues, which may act as root causes of sectarian clashes in Gilgit-Baltistan, have been identified under the light of study results (see table 2). These issues require urgent attention. For example, the relative remoteness of the area, has made it isolated from rest of the country; and unclear political status leads to political instability, which causes lack of intentional direction and

approachable decision-making; lack of commitment to community; good governance; comprehensive and holistic policy absence for community issues resolutions, and the other issues listed in table 3.

A clear political status, political stability, and public awareness, are basic elements for the abolition of sectarianism from GB. The dichotomic administration and public unawareness appear to be the major causes of the all critical situation. Therefore, clear political status of the area, should be settled by peace dialogues between public leaders of this area, and governments of Pakistan and India.

Secondly, the lack of intentional direction, absence of approachable decision-making, integrated and holistic policy for community issues resolutions, contribute to typical pitfalls. Mostly non-local political leaders and officials are elected by federal government, for this area, who do not show commitment to community governance. Local leaders should be elected, to serve for their own community, through elections. In this regards, President Asif Ali Zardari's government has tried to empower Gilgit-Baltistan, through 2009 self-governance ordinance, and the people of the area, were assured to provide full political independence by reforming the legislative system. However, this so called self-governance ordinance is not sufficient to treat the real dilemma of Gilgit-Baltistan, but it would be fanning sectarianism in the region. For real self-rule, powers should honestly be transferred to the voted leaders of the region.

GB is enriched with cultural diversity, which is worth mentioning attraction for tourists, but lack of patience among ethnic groups for co-existence, is another major 'central hindrance' for tourism sector, as it causes tensions and riots in the area, which, can be tackled through promotion of education. The establishment of Karakorum International University in the area, was an intentional or unintentional logistic step of President Pervez Musharraf, in 2002, which attracted the youth from all over the area, decreasing possibilities of their involvement in sectarianism, and improving awareness. Further more, policy improvement for better education, can be best tool to root out all the problems of this area.

Constrains to sustainable tourism, also include unawareness of public and religious monopoly. General public is unaware of religious, political and social rights, due to which they can not understand causes and effects of on going invoked sectarianism. The societal backwardness of the area, certainly contributes to sectarian violence. Most of the people, due to poor economic conditions, prefer to send their children to madrassas (which are considered to provide place and set of conditions for the propagation of sectarianism) rather than to send them to schools, as these madrassas provide free education. Since 1988, public of this area has been indulged in sectarian clashes, and the role of madrassas, in this regard is considerable (Grare, 2007). Under such tensed circumstances, long-term plans for tourism,

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appear to be impossible. The upgrading in economic status of the area, through policy implementations and self-governance, would certainly help to work out this issue.

Tourism education is the key tool to develop innovative development and awareness in tourism sector. To control sectarianism and promote sustainable tourism, there is need for up to dated and issue- focusing curriculum modules in educational institutions, academic occupational and key transportable skills, and the boosted employability. Government of Pakistan should track down the institutions (madrassas), which are fanning extremism. Such strategic and decisive action will definitely contribute to restore the peace and tourists flow.

War against terrorism by USA, although has cracked down extremism, yet it is a short term solution, as it will actually provide a requisite break, for the apparently calmed extremists, to reunite in more stronger form. The long term solution, for the settlement of these issues, is not in war, it should be resolved by dialogues, agreements, long term planning, strategy development, and awareness raising.

Tourism management skill is another important aspect, which should be considered to address the challenges in tourism sector. It is not easy to categorize the important skills or aspects, require to make sure the success in tourism; however, there are a few aspects such as management of economic, human resources, operation, communication, problem solving capability, decision making, and strategy have emerged all the way through research on management skills (National Occupational Standards, 2009; Business Link, 2008; VocMat, 2006; Wilson et al; 2000).

The significance of skill improvement in the current management employees, is getting international attention. To accomplish the demands of eco-tourists, who at a time require entertainment, education, comfort, adventure and security, compel the marketers, for better management in tourism industry, to maintain the interest of tourists and significance of destination. This can be achieved by innovative management skills. The barriers in management skill and training development, should be explored locally (Foster, 2010), so that strategies for training and management skill development, could be established and implemented. Mountain areas have typical limitations and possessions that pose particular challenges to skill development and sustainable tourism in the absence or little functional management.

The concept of sustainable tourism (ecotourism), should be essentially considered for restoring tourism sector in this region. Lack of sustainable indicators and benchmarks, inaccessibility due to poor infrastructural facilities, and inadequate transportation system, are major challenges for sustainable development as communication, co-ordination and interaction between stakeholders, is impossible without proper transportation system. Besides these, other constrains for sustainable tourism, include lack of

locally affordable and accessible lodging for service employees and tourists. For sustainable tourism, an innovative approach should be taken by all stakeholders, under the umbrella of integrated and comprehensive policies, strategies, actions and tools, which ensure community active participation. Control of sectarianism conflicts, terrorism and community integrity, should be given preference. However, the current state of mountain tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan, is neither secure nor community-based. The tourism is often controlled by private and non-local organizations, seeking temporary advantage and conflicting with the preservation of local rights. On the other hand, competition for revenue from tourism, increased while maintenance and reinvestment in the community, may be low on the priority list.

Accordingly, new policies and strategies, which focus on traditional roles of stewardship of mountain communities rather than devices and remote control, are very popular. These strategies are also focused on Chapter 13 of 1992 at the Earth Summit Agenda 21, entitled "Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development", reveal the worldwide attention on the conservation and sustainable development of mountain areas, to promote preservation and sustainable development of mountain areas. The application of sustainability indicators to measure welfare and development at local scales, is strategic to evaluate the short and long term effects of strategies developed through the European Charter participatory process (Castellani and Sala, 2010). Many of the challenges and barriers such as sectarian conflicts, war against terrorism, and terrorist activities in Pakistan, have created unfavorable conditions for sustainable development in tourism sector. Besides, a large part of financial benefits, is leaked out, leaving the people of the mountain with exhausted resources with low local prices. Given that sustainable eco-tourism can be used for the welfare of mountain people. Worldwide attention is given to initiatives, which combine aspects of tourism development of the community reinvestment of income, cultural inheritance, and conservation. The rate of extraction of mountain resources, has increased with small or no reinvestment, either in ecosystems and communities, which are the conventional stewards of this mountainous region.

Directorate of Tourism, Environment, Sport and Culture, Northern Areas (DTEESC), is handling tourism management. Pakistan Ministry of Tourism, could not effectively add to the development of this area of interest over the last twenty years, as this was not given a separate status. It was not computerized before 2005. Department worked with outdated methods, and insufficient funding has severe implications for the effective management of the tourism sector. So far, it has never been an important and efficient source of data, and has no tourism survey applies to its credit (Baloch, 2007). These conditions are not different in 2011. Therefore, this tourism department should be given urgent consideration, for future concerns. The sources for security of tourists, accessibility to international market and human resources stock, business culture, and publicity of eco-tourism

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potential areas, must be explored. The Government of Pakistan, is now responsible for law and order concerning the situation. Government should fully understand the seriousness of the circumstances. Furthermore, the sustainability of the tourism sector in any area, depends upon proper innovative integration of peace, tourists' security, marketing strategies, managerial structures, traditional knowledge, gender, and profits reinvestment. A policy reform is needed from the national level to local level. Policy instruction is the prime responsibility of the Government. Considering the specific needs of this mountainous area, it is crucial, that firm components should be incorporated within the policy. Good safety measures are major elements for sustainable tourism. To encourage the tourism trade in the Gilgit-Baltistan, the concerned local and federal government authorities have to take serious measures with regards to foreign tourists.

Community-Based Mountain Tourism (CBMT) in Gilgit –Baltistan, is essential. Policies and strategies at local and national level, are required for CBMT, that engage the indigenous peoples in the sustainable tourism for the long term welfare of society. Policies contracting regional and national welfare, need special attention of all stakeholders. Community awareness-training, education for sustainable and equitable distribution of tourism resources and income, are crucial for sustainable tourism. If this is not achieved, there will be irreversible negative impact on tourism sector, such as permanent loss of tourist destinations. Practices and tools should be identified to address the problems that pose negative impacts on tourism sector. Now, there is hope that the Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Tourism, and Gilgit Baltistan Administration will take necessary actions to overcome mishaps in Gilgit –Baltistan, and promote community based-ecotourism rather than tourism.

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