

Tourism Challenge And Opportunities In Gilgit-Baltistan: A Case Study Skardu



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Abstract: *The tourism area is one of the significant supporters of the economy of the Northern Areas. It is considered that more than half of international visitors to Pakistan visit the northern regions. With five peaks above 8000 meters, including the world's second-highest peak, K2, the Himalayas' northern regions are regarded as a trekkers' and mountaineers' paradise. They are located in the confluence of three powerful mountain ranges: the Karakoram, the Hindu Kush, and the Himalayas. Northern districts have an unexpected normal legacy with boundless archeological terminuses and solid designs, this exploration means to give a top-to-bottom concentrate on the travel industry Advancement in Gilgit Baltistan addressing the long, fierce history and different societies of the area. This case study examines " Tourism Challenge and Opportunity in Skardu." The district Skardu is one of the foremost valleys in Gilgit Baltistan. Tourism plays a crucial role in the socio-economic development of areas. The Valley is miraculously grabbing, attracting visitors from all over the world. It is one of the major tourist attractions in Gilgit, located only 199.7 kilometers from Gilgit City. The majority of locals speak Balti and are dispersed throughout the villages. Agriculture and livestock are the primary sources of income. Because there is a lot of agricultural land in the area, tourists can enjoy the free livestock roaming on the farms. The study examines the numerous facets of the region's tourism expansion and its effects on the community, environment, and economy. The Skardu district in the picturesque Gilgit Baltistan region of northern Pakistan is gradually becoming known as a promising tourist destination. This abstract provides an understanding of the tourism potential and attractions of Gilgit Baltistan's Skardu, which draws visitors due to its breathtaking natural beauty. The magnificent mountain ranges, winding rivers, and lush valleys that make up the area make it ideal for adventure tourism, making Skardu a growing hotspot for trekking, hiking, and exploring the outdoors. The travel industry advancement in Gilgit-Baltistan noticed the development and expansion of the area's travel industry-related set-up, administrations, and attractions. It involves accomplishments with the goals of increasing the number of visitors to Gilgit-Baltistan, spreading sustainable tourism practices, and increasing visitor knowledge. House guesthouses, hostels, convenient transportation options, as well as the upkeep and promotion of cultural heritage sites and natural environments, are all examples of this. Also, transportation administrations like carriers, cabs, and visit administrators benefit from the inundation of sightseers, invigorating financial exercises, and pay age. Tourism encourages the expansion of local and small businesses. Craftsmen, artisans, and proprietors of souvenir shops capitalize on the demand for traditional handicrafts, textiles, and cultural artifacts. This helps the region's economy as well as its cultural heritage by preserving and promoting local arts and crafts.*

Introduction

Tourism is the activity of individuals or groups traveling to various destinations for business, leisure, or recreation. It involves participating in a variety of activities, learning about new cultures, exploring natural landmarks and historical sites, and going to places that are not one's usual surroundings. Numerous nations' economies are bolstered by tourism's contribution to employment, infrastructure improvement, and cultural exchange. It promotes understanding and appreciation of diverse global perspectives, as well as social and economic development, while also providing individuals with opportunities for relaxation, adventure, and knowledge acquisition¹.

Tourism plays a significant role in contributing to Pakistan's economy, offering immense potential for growth and development. The nation draws tourists from all over the world due to its diverse natural beauty, breathtaking landscapes, and rich cultural heritage. Foreign exchange earnings are one of the main ways that tourism helps Pakistan's economy. Vacationers get significant unfamiliar money through their consumption of convenience, transportation, food, shopping, and different travel industry-related exercises. The country's foreign reserves increase, the balance of payments improves, and economic stability is supported by these inflows. Additionally, employment opportunities are created by tourism, particularly in rural areas where other sources of income may be limited. Tourism, transportation, handicrafts, tour operators, and cultural heritage preservation are just a few of the industries it benefits. Numerous individuals, including hotel staff, tour guides, drivers, artisans, and proprietors of small

businesses, are supported by the tourism industry. The development of the travel industry empowers foundation improvement. To take care of the rising number of vacationers, the public authority puts resources into further developing transportation organizations, extending lodging limits, improving traveler offices, and saving legacy locales. These improvements to the infrastructure not only benefit tourists but also contribute to the country's overall development, improving the quality of life for the communities that live there. Cultural understanding and exchange are facilitated by tourism. Intercultural dialogue and mutual respect are cultivated as a result of the numerous traditions, languages, and cuisines Pakistan offers visitors. This exchange of ideas and perspectives fosters a favorable global image of Pakistan and helps to build bridges between nations. Pakistan's economy has become increasingly dependent on tourism, which contributes to the creation of jobs, the improvement of infrastructure, cultural exchange, and foreign exchange earnings. Pakistan has the potential to further harness the power of tourism and unlock its economic benefits in the years to come thanks to its natural wonders, historical sites, and deep hospitality². Gilgit Baltistan is a picturesque region in Pakistan that benefits greatly from tourism. Gilgit Baltistan has emerged as a popular tourist destination in recognition of its breathtaking landscapes, towering mountains, and vibrant cultural heritage. Here are some important ways that tourism helps the economy of the area grow. Through services like lodging, transportation, and hospitality, tourism brings in a lot of money. The growth of hotels, guesthouses, and resorts as a result of the rising number of tourists has

¹ Javid khan and Liaqat Ali "A Tourist Perspective. Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research February 2022

² Jiwa Ali "Tourism and Economic Growth Nexus in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research June 2018

provided employment opportunities for the local population. In addition, the influx of tourists benefits transportation services like airlines, taxis, and tour operators, which in turn stimulate economic activities and generate income³. Tourism encourages the expansion of local and small businesses. Craftsmen, artisans, and proprietors of souvenir shops capitalize on the demand for traditional handicrafts, textiles, and cultural artifacts. This helps the region's economy as well as its cultural heritage by preserving and promoting local arts and crafts. The travel industry sets out business to open doors for the nearby populace. The travel industry requires a different labor force, including local escorts, drivers, cooks, servers, and housekeeping staff. This contributes to the overall health of the economy by providing locals with opportunities to earn money and lowering unemployment rates. The tourism industry encourages infrastructure development investment. Better road networks, transportation options, and amenities are needed as the number of visitors rises. The public authority and confidential financial backers frequently put resources into further developing framework, which upholds the travel industry as well as upgrades the general personal satisfaction of the neighborhood inhabitants. The preservation of cultural and natural heritage is aided by tourism. Local communities and authorities are encouraged to safeguard and conserve their natural resources because they are aware of the significance of their distinctive landscapes. This prompts the foundation of public parks, safeguarded regions, and protection drives, which thusly draw in eco-sightseers and nature fans. Gilgit Baltistan's economy benefits greatly from tourism. It supports small businesses,

provides employment opportunities, encourages the development of infrastructure, and encourages the preservation of cultural and natural heritage. Gilgit Baltistan can continue to prosper economically while ensuring sustainable tourism practices for future generations by capitalizing on its natural beauty and cultural diversity⁴.

In recent years, Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan, has emerged as a popular tourist destination for both domestic and international visitors. This case study examines the challenges and opportunities of tourism in the Skardu region of Pakistan's northern regions. Skardu is a beautiful city in northern Pakistan, located in the Gilgit-Baltistan region. It's surrounded by stunning mountains, like the Karakoram Range, and has several breathtaking places to visit. In addition, the Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan, and the roles that local communities, government policies, and various stakeholders play in the sustainable development and management of tourism will be discussed. One of Gilgit-Baltistan's many districts, Skardu, has a lot of potential for the tourism industry. It is honored with spectacular scenes, different widely varied vegetation, and a rich social embroidery. The many valleys in the area, like Shigar and Khaplu, charming are treasure troves of culture and biodiversity, making them ideal for tourists looking for a holistic experience⁵.

Statement of problem.

Tourism plays a vital role in the economic and social development of regions across the globe. Skardu, an attractive town located in the Gilgit Baltistan region of Pakistan, has increased substantial attention as a tourist destination. While Skardu itself has attracted many visitors,

³Akram and waseem "Tourism, Infrastructure Development, and Economic Growth: Evidence from Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan January 2019

⁴ Aisha jabber "Local Reality and Global Aspirations: The Travel Industry Improvement in the Karakoram, Pakistan. Tourism Geographies September 2016

⁵Akhon zada "A Study of Tourists in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan Travel and Tourism Marketing Journal October

2022

has not received the same level of tourism promotion and recognition. This case study aims to address the challenges and opportunities for promoting tourism within the context of Skardu and Gilgit Baltistan. It is imperative to identify and address the key issues associated with this emerging trend of tourism. One of the main problems is the sustainable development and management of tourism in Skardu. The sudden influx of tourists has put immense pressure on the local infrastructure, including accommodations, transportation, waste management, and natural resources. Without proper planning and management, this surge in tourism can lead to overcrowding, environmental degradation, and depletion of resources, thereby diminishing the overall visitor experience and harming the local community. Finally, this research aims to provide valuable insights and recommendations to stakeholders, policymakers, and the local community for ensuring a sustainable and responsible tourism industry in Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan.

Significance of the Study

The study of Tourism challenge and opportunity in Skardu Gilgit Baltistan: A case study, specifically focusing on Skardu, holds immense significance. In recent years, the number of tourists visiting Skardu, which is in the northern part of Pakistan, has significantly increased. There are numerous reasons why it is essential to comprehend the implications of this trend. Gilgit Baltistan's economy has grown as a result of tourism, which has become a crucial source of revenue. Policymakers and local authorities in Skardu can identify the primary drivers of economic development and develop effective strategies to improve the tourism sector by analyzing the impact of tourism on the economy. The tourism research in Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan: enables the recognition of potential difficulties and opportunities. The growth of tourism comes with both advantages and disadvantages, including increased demands on infrastructure, environmental issues, and impacts on social and cultural norms. Stakeholders will be in a better position to take advantage of the positive aspects and mitigate the negative effects by evaluating

these aspects. A case study of the Skardu can shed light on effective tourism management strategies that can be applied to other parts of the world. It makes it possible to find sustainable tourism strategies, community engagement models, and best practices that can help the region grow as a whole. The study of tourism challenges and opportunities in Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan, and its impact on the economy of Gilgit Baltistan, is important because it helps to make well-informed decisions, plan for sustainable development, and maximize the potential benefits of tourism while minimizing the challenges that come with it.

Research questions

1. What are the challenges that are faced by tourists in Gilgit Baltistan
2. What are the major impacts on the economy of Skardu Gilgit Baltistan's economic growth?
3. How sustainable tourism can be possible in Skardu Gilgit Baltistan?

Aim and objective

1. To highlight the opportunities and challenges of tourism in Skardu
2. To examine the impacts of Skardu Gilgit Baltistan's economy
3. To explore the sustainable tourism in Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for the topic the Tourism challenge and opportunity in Skardu Gilgit Baltistan: A case study. The theoretical framework examines the impact of tourism on Skardu Gilgit Baltistan. The goal of this study is to provide an in-depth look at the economic, social, and environmental aspects of tourism dynamics. The theoretical framework looks at the economic impact of tourism on the Skardu economy. It looks at how much the community benefits economically from tourism activities like lodging, transportation, and local businesses. Moreover, it surveys the possible difficulties, like over-dependence on the travel industry and its shortcomings to outside factors. Culturally, the framework looks at how tourists interact with the local community and how

tourism affects customs, traditions, and cultural heritage. It considers the potential threats posed by cultural commodification and adoption as well as the role that tourism plays in cultural preservation. Cycle of Tourism Area Life According to this theory, tourist destinations go through stages of exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and decline throughout their life cycle. Understanding where an objective lies in this cycle can illuminate arranging and the executive's procedures. Community tourism. Local communities' involvement in tourism development is emphasized in this theory. It recommends that the travel industry is more attainable when neighborhood networks effectively participate in navigation, benefit-sharing, and the protection of their social and regular assets.

Research Methodology

The research methodology employed in this qualitative and quantitative method. Tourism challenge and opportunity in Skardu Gilgit Baltistan: A case study with a specific focus on Skardu, involves a multi-faceted approach to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon. A case study design will be adopted to examine the case study of Skardu. This design allows for an in-depth exploration of the topic within its real-life context. Purposeful sampling will be employed to select participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience in the tourism sector of Skardu. The sample will be diverse, including individuals from different professional backgrounds and perspectives. The combination of online survey, interviews, observations, and thematic analysis will provide a comprehensive understanding of the emerging trend of tourism in Skardu, contributing valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge in this field.

Literature Review

The author Manzoor Ali Jiwa 2020 his article that Due to its role in boosting the global economy, the tourism industry is rapidly developing and expanding all through the world. The positive impact that the tourism industry has on the expansion of nations' economies is

abundantly clear. A nation benefits from the influx of tourists from all over the world in several ways, including the creation of job opportunities for young people. Tourism also includes the provision of lodging, entertainment, and leisure activities, as well as the opportunity to shop, particularly for regionally produced goods and food. Arshad, 2018 analyzed the tourism industry in Pakistan It is the largest and fastest-growing sector of the global economy. The travel industry has grown as a result of increased interest in travel for business, leisure, sports, health, religion, culture, and education. In addition to making money, the industry supports the development of a particular nation's way of life. The goal of the travel industry is to visit a place without affecting the people who live there or the climate, as well as to boost the local economy and social design. The travel industry considers all movement-related activities, such as staying in a hotel, going out to eat or drink, or shopping, to be a part of it. It might be for a getaway, a business trip, or a trip with friends or family. In 2018, the global tourism industry generated USD 1.7 trillion in revenue, and the number of visitors increased by 4% to 1.5 billion in 2019. Since records began in 1950, the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 has been viewed as the most significant threat to global travel. Up until August 2020, there would be 700 million fewer guests, which resulted in a USD 730 billion shortfall in the exchange profit associated with the travel industry. The percentage of unfamiliar guests is close to 70%, and the emergency is anticipated to result in a yearly decrease of between 60% and 80% compared to 2022. Pakistan has a lot of potential for travelers despite this, due to its diversity of societies, human advancements, and practices, it has sadly remained hidden. In addition, Pakistan is home to a few authentic, rigorous, daring archeological sites that could attract visitors from all over the world. Various million new visitors came to Pakistan before the pandemic, generally in the Gilgit Baltistan. According to Mujahid Sulaiaam in Pamir Times (2021), the Gilgit Baltistan region has dynamic potential for the tourism industry and offers a variety of travel industry opportunities to domestic and international vacationers. Swashbucklers,

mountain climbers, adventurers, voyagers, and pilgrims are drawn to the area because it is home to the highest mountain peaks and ice sheets in 19 the world. As four of the world's 8000-meter high zeniths i.e.k-2 (8611m), the world's second most critical apex, the Extensive zenith (8060m), Gashabrum-1 (8068m) and Gasmhabrum-2 (8036m) are in Baltistan of GB. Besides the fascinating scene and genuine greatness, the ethno-semantic assortment and anthropogenic is both possible and practicable to thrive the movement business and to propel social characteristics. It wouldn't be wrong to say that strengthening the travel industry in Gilgit-Baltistan will benefit the entire country, not just GB, assuming genuine managerial and political efforts are made at the provincial and public levels. In any case, tragically, despite socio-political advancements, the travel industry has not yet anticipated a significant increase in participation, so travelers and guests must deal with a variety of issues along the way. Even though the administration took steps, new memorandums of understanding and joint venture working plans with other departments and legislatures also resulted in paper change, but only on functional grounds, which misses the mark on regulatory features. Considering that numerous nations certainly advanced their tourism industries, several factors play a significant role in the expansion of the industry. In this way, ensuring the safety of people's lives and property necessitates upholding the rule of law. As beforehand the deteriorated rule of harmony and regulation given sectarian fierceness truly affected the method of the movement business in Gilgit Baltistan for quite a while. Regardless, as a result of the law enforcement that ensured community harmony and created favorable conditions for the expansion of the travel industry. In essence, the travel industry's job framework is also being developed definitively. The more favorable the foundation, the more prominent the potential outcomes of tourist accessibility. Unfortunately, however, a quick look at the various tourist attractions suggests that the public authority still has a lot of work to do to build and equip a framework that ensures guests' easy access. Astore Valley is the hub of numerous eye-

catching lakes and valleys, including Rama, Minimarg, and Deosi designs. However, the deteriorated road conditions make it difficult for tourists to get there. The Astore Valley, like Ghizar and Hunza, was never investigated because it is part of the Minimarg Valley, which is the most well-known. It will also talk about how local communities, policies from the government, and various stakeholders contribute to the sustainable growth and management of tourism in the Gilgit-Baltistan districts of Skardu, Shigar, Khaplo, and kharmang. One of Gilgit-Baltistan's many districts, Skardu, has a lot of potential for the tourism industry. It has stunning landscapes, a wide variety of plants and animals, and a rich cultural history. The numerous valleys in the region, such as Shigar and Khaplu, Kharmang are treasure troves of culture and biodiversity, making them ideal for tourists seeking an all-encompassing experience. In a similar vein, the role of mindfulness also plays a significant role. Individuals should pay attention to advance the travel industry and reveal the hidden valleys and scenes to attract guests' attention and help the travel industry grow. In the study area, 61233 domestic tourists were entertained in the first year of the second decade of this century, with international tourists accounting for 92% of the total number of tourists. Only 28893 locals, or 87 percent of all visitors, visited the GB region in 2012, resulting in a sudden drop in tourist numbers. This year, sectarian attacks on passengers in the Diamer district's Chilas area are to blame for the sudden drop in tourist numbers. Tens of Gilgit and Baltistan division passengers were killed in Diamer at the beginning of 2012 on a religious basis. As a result of this incident, tension persisted throughout the entire year. In 2013, 51914 domestic tourists visited the UK, increasing tourism. This number accounts for 92% of all arrivals. With 50304 tourists, the total arrival percentage increased by 1% from the previous year, and the domestic arrival also remained above fifty thousand. In the year 2015, a record number of local tourists arrived in Great Britain, with 200651 people doing so. In addition, the percentage as a whole reaches 98 percent, a record high. The number indicates that the

temporal arrival more than doubled in 2016 compared to the previous year. This year, there were 439685 domestic arrivals, and when compared to international tourists, 99 percent of those tourists are locals. The GB region saw an increase of over three million visitors the following year, while the overall arrival percentage remained the same. With a total of 1391628 tourists moving to Gilgit Baltistan in 2018, the number of domestic arrivals reached its highest point during the study period. There was no change in the overall arrival percentage, which had already reached 99 percent. More than one million tourists from various parts of Pakistan visited the region once more in 2019. Due to the prohibition on traveling between provinces, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the arrival of local tourists. The region is facing the loss of approximately 4 million local tourists. In 2022, only 633246 tourists visited GB, including those from the districts of Skardu, Hunza, Shigar, Khaplu, and Kahr Mang this year. The travel industry Priest Raja Nasir Ali Khan expressed that upwards of 700,000 sightseers including nearby and unfamiliar had visited the precipitous locale throughout recent long periods of 2023.

Challenges that are faced by tourists in Gilgit Baltistan region

The hotel and convenience industry in Gilgit Baltistan is still growing at a lesser rate than the number of tourists, which is why there aren't enough hotel rooms available. Sightseers visiting Gilgit-Baltistan, especially in the Skardu areas, experience a few difficulties that can affect their movement experience. One noticeable issue is the district's difficult landscape and flighty weather patterns. The mountainous terrain and winding, narrow roads make it hard to get around, especially in the winter when heavy snowfall can make it hard to get around. The difficulties that tourists face are also exacerbated by deficiencies in the infrastructure. Visitors may find it difficult to find comfortable lodging due to the absence of

basic amenities and the limited options available, which can affect the overall tourism experience. The absence of advanced vacationer offices and administrations prevents the district's capacity to take special care of the different requirements of voyagers. Tourists may encounter difficulties due to cultural and language barriers because the local population frequently speaks languages like Shina and Balti and communication in English or Urdu may be limited. Misunderstandings and difficulties navigating local customs and traditions can result from this. The sustainability of the environment is also a concern because more tourists could put pressure on fragile ecosystems and natural resources. The influx of tourists may result in environmental degradation if conservation measures and regulations are not implemented, affecting the scenic beauty that initially draws visitors. While Gilgit-Baltistan, which includes the districts of Skardu, offers stunning landscapes and a one-of-a-kind cultural experience, tourists must contend with transportation, infrastructure, cultural differences, safety, and environmental sustainability issues. To ensure a positive and enriching experience for visitors while also preserving the region's natural and cultural heritage, a comprehensive strategy involving improved infrastructure, community engagement, and sustainable tourism practices is required to address these issues⁶.

Security issues:

He continues executing travelers on KKH which has an unbearable impact while going to Gilgit Baltistan that is the explanation for why most tourists favor trips by than journeying. The disciplinarian struggle in Gilgit city and its premises also endangers vacationers.

Poor infrastructure:

The sluggishness of the streets and KKH makes tourists' and travelers' journeys a strain. The reason is that. Due to the state of the streets, most tourists steer clear of far-flung locations.

⁶ Rizwan, Ali and Saleem Ahmed" Challenges and effects of tourism on Gilgit Baltistan's environment:

Skardu, a district in GB, as a case study November 2017

Lack of tourist guidance

Most tourist destination are distributed in scarce quantities with the majority being concentrated in cities like Skardu and Gilgit thus limiting travelers who would wish to tour remote ones. The problem of land sliding poses a major challenge to tourists travelling along KKH due to blockage of its connecting roads and disrupting communication link between Pakistan and Gilgit Baltistan. This also inconveniences visitors puts them at higher costs and wastes their time. Northern region tourism has been hindered by radicalism and attitude of the nearby religious extremists towards tourists especially foreigners. Both organic and crafted⁷.

Lack of a number of hotels in Gilgit Baltistan:

Considering the shortage of hotels in Gilgit Baltistan, most of the hotels in operation there lack a proper plan or convenience offices. Only a few hotels and resorts like PTDC chain of resorts and Serine hotels that are meant to accommodate international tourists are available; however, they are extremely expensive. Unfortunately, domestic tourists cannot benefit from these hotel facilities since they are being constructed haphazardly which has resulted into mushrooming structures all over GB; hence there is absence of campgrounds, RV parks, theme resorts, inns, winter and summer resorts as well as locally run rooms or houses. There are not many tourist help centers, and there are not many tourist help centers in towns where tourists are not an issue. The lack of access to fuel, power, and a proper waste disposal system poses the most frightening and dangerous threat to the tourism industry in Skardu region. In Skardu district, tourists can be seen crying due to unavailability of watches, network problems, and internet facilities.

⁷ Saqib, N. U., and A. Yaqub. "The effect of the travel industry on nearby networks and their current circumstance in Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan: A community's point of view." September 2019

⁸ Yaqub, A., and Didar Ahmad. "The Effects of Tourism on the Environment and Local Communities in Gilgit

Flight cancelation and lack of flights:

Gilgit Baltistan has only one airline that operates, which is Pakistan International Airline (PIA). Moreover, not all of these airports are equipped with air-conditioning systems; this results in many flights being cancelled due to bad weather conditions. From Islamabad alone there are sixteen domestic flights weekly but they also have an average cancellation rate of 30%. In addition, tourists waiting for their flights may have to spend a number of days here waiting because hotels are⁸.

Environmental Issues:

Throughout the Northern Regions, tourism foundation development is happening without any land use planning or planning (TAC, 2005). The area's natural beauty, which is the bedrock of the whole tourism industry, could be destroyed by this leading to unplanned and unreasonable towns and urban communities. Despite the fact that a specific point might have a communicating capacity of say 1,000 people per hour, there may still be limitless numbers of tourists on their way there. There is no clear restriction on the magnitude of any mass movement of visitors into the North. The vast volumes of solid and liquid waste left behind along all major trekking routes and at base camps not only affect trekkers adversely but also pose a serious threat to the ecology. Other than occasional cleaning campaigns, there may be no appropriate means for disposing off refuse. There are no rules and not a lot of mindfulness undertakings to resolve this issue⁹.

The major impacts on the economy of Skardu Gilgit Baltistan economic growth

Skardu in Gilgit Baltistan experienced a major economic expansion due to tourism. Located between the stunning Karakoram and Himalayas, Skardu attracts a significant number

Baltistan, Pakistan: A Community's Point of View. October 2020

⁹ Muhammad Alam, " The positive and negative effects that tourism has on a nation's social and cultural environment January 2018

of tourists every year by offering cultural diversity and natural beauty. The local economy has benefited from, and for, the tourism sector residents have gained employment opportunities and income. Many locals found direct employment as a result of the expansion of hotels, hotels and other accommodation. According to the aggressive plan, 2.5 million tourists visited Gilgit Baltistan in 2019 and 3.2 million tourists in 2022, contributing Rs 48 crore to the local economy. Tourism sector provides huge economic benefits to the host nation. The tourism industry is one of the fastest growing potential industries for a long time. According to World Bank data, tourism revenue in Pakistan is US\$ 818 million per annum and is growing at a rapid rate of 3.13% per annum. This is one of the major motivators for developing non-industrialized countries as tourist destinations¹⁰ Pakistan is a non-industrialized country, and Gilgit Baltistan in northern Pakistan is an isolated place of arising beauty as a popular tourist target during this period where tourism is a major factor in keeping jobs open, expanding current wages, and forming tourist shops purchased by merchandise and companies. With current high wages, open positions and employment opportunities for nearby goods and services, the tourism industry plays an important role in improving the welfare of the area. The importance of economic benefits of tourism for the adjacent network of Gilgit Baltistan will be examined in this study. Benefits of Tourism for Gilgit Baltistan Economy of Skardu There are immediate and unexpected economic benefits of tourism for local residents of the tourist area. These benefits include increased employment opportunities, increased employment opportunities, and improved transportation and infrastructure. Consequently, it can be concluded that the development of the tourism sector can have a significant impact on the local connectivity in Gilgit Baltistan. Changes in current wages in local jobs and new job openings

are examples of the direct impact of tourism. Local products and services offered in the manufacturing sector benefit from the indirect impact of tourism. People selling vegetables, organic products, dairy products, storytelling and handicrafts also benefit directly or indirectly from the tourism sector. Finally, the tourism sector in Gilgit Baltistan can be used as a tool to raise people's expectations in terms of daily amenities and eliminate poverty through private and public investment in the sector by promoting and fostering a positive environment¹¹.

Economic Growth and Development:

Skardu, a picturesque town in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan place, is predicated heavily on tourism for its monetary growth and development. Here are a few crucial manners with the aid of which the journey enterprise provides to the flourishing of Skardu. In Skardu, tourism generates several employment opportunities. Nearby occupants are utilized in lodgings, cafés, go to groups, transportation administrations, and workmanship ventures, among others. This promotes financial balance and boom by means of producing profits and reducing unemployment prices. The enlargement of Skardu's infrastructure is required via the inflow of travelers. The neighborhood population will advantage from stepped forward roads, transportation networks, and utilities further to assembly the requirements of vacationers. The general pleasant of life is progressed and economic activity is stimulated by those infrastructure traits. The expansion of Skardu's small groups is aided through tourism. Local people can lay out guesthouses, trinket stores, journeying corporations, and enjoy sports activities workplaces to take special care of the requirements of tourists. This entrepreneurial atmosphere empowers the local people and encourages self-employment. Skardu's singular cultural heritage may be showcased through tourism. Guests are eager on encountering the

¹⁰ Ashraf, M., Zaman, K., & Jaffari "The travel industry and Monetary Development Nexus in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan: Evidence from the ARDL Method Tourism Research in the Asia-Pacific Region 2021

¹¹ Altaf, M., Geng, Q., Mirza, M. M. Z., & Ahmad, "Cultural Tourism's Developmental Potential in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan 2016

nearby practices, expressions, and specialties, advancing social safeguarding. As a result, local artisans and craftspeople are supported, traditional abilities are preserved, and earnings is generated. The generated revenue can be reinvested inside the neighborhood economy for infrastructure upgrades, schooling, healthcare, and additional development tasks. By boosting employment, infrastructure, small organizations, cultural maintenance, and revenue era, tourism in Skardu creates a positive economic circle. By outfitting the capability of the travel industry, Skardu can keep on flourishing as a vacationer location while helping its neighborhood populace¹².

Employment Opportunities

The travel industry is booming, and it employs a lot of people, like local experts, hotel staff, restaurant workers, transportation suppliers, and craftsmen. A ton of people visit Skardu to have fun with its awesome scenery, like its huge peaks, calm waters, and rich history. Some local businesses are doing well because they help tourists plan trips and stuff. Tourists depend on transportation services like taxis, rental cars, and tour buses to move around the area, which creates employment opportunities for drivers and maintenance workers. When tourists buy traditional handicrafts like textiles, pottery, and woodwork, it helps artisans and craftspeople because it keeps local culture alive and gives them work. In Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan, tourism provides a variety of employment opportunities, helps people make a living, and helps the region's socioeconomic development¹³.

Diversification of Economy

Tourism is super important for the economy in Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan. The place is a big hit with tourists from everywhere because of its amazing nature, like huge mountains, pretty valleys, and clear lakes. When we make things

easier for tourists, local businesses and entrepreneurs do better, which leads to more jobs and money. When tourists cothey build stuff like hotels, resorts, and fun places, which helps the local economy grow. The craft industry is getting bigger because more people are interested in cultural tourism, which helps keep the regions history and traditional arts alive and well. Furthermore, the money made from the travel industry can be used to fund education, healthcare, and other important things, which will make the people living nearby happier. the travel industry is a big reason why Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan is getting better and making more money.

Income Generation:

In Skardu, Pakistan, tourism is a big money maker. Skardus stunning natural beauty, with its snow-capped peaks, clear lakes, and rugged landscapes, attracts both domestic and international tourists. meh, theres like, a bunch of ways that all these tourists help the local economy. The most important thing about tourism is that it gives people jobs, like tour guides, souvenir sellers, and hotel and restaurant workers. Second, when people stay in hotels, use transportation, and eat at restaurants, it helps bring in money for tourism. the local artisans and craftsmen also benefit from an increase in demand for handicrafts, traditional artwork, and products. The tourism industry wants to build stuff like hotels, roads, and fun places, and that helps the local economy grow. The travel industry fills in as an imperative kind of revenue for Skardu, improving the occupations of its occupants and encouraging monetary development in the district.¹⁴

Infrastructure Development:

Skardu's infrastructure development relies heavily on tourism. The local government is able to make investments in enhancing transportation

¹² Karim, Rehmat, Salma A. Durani, and Azhar Hussain. "Review of Issues Related to Environmental Management, Tourism Policies Regarding and Customary Practices of Tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan 2022

¹³ Yaqub, Ali. And Didar Ahmed. " Their Environment in Gilgit Baltistan and The Impact of Tourism on Local

Communities, Pakistan: A Local Community Perspective 2015

¹⁴ Baumann, D., & Khan Zada, A. "Local Reality and Global Aspirations: Tourism Development in the Karakoram, Pakistan. Tourism Geographies 2019

networks, lodging options, and public facilities as a result of the influx of tourists. Roads, airports, and other infrastructure related to tourism are built and expanded in response to the need to meet the needs of tourists. Additionally, the local community as well as tourists stand to gain from the reinvestment of tourism revenue into the construction of healthcare facilities, schools, and utilities. The presence of tourists also encourages private sector investment, which results in the construction of hotels, restaurants, and other leisure facilities, all of which contribute to the overall improvement of Skardu's infrastructure. In addition to enhancing the tourism experience, this cycle of investment and development also creates employment opportunities, boosts the local economy, and raises Skardu residents' standard of living.

Unfamiliar Trade Profit

Tourism is an important source of foreign revenue in Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan. People from different parts of the world especially travel to this place because of its magnificent landscapes among them being Karakoram Range and calm waters. The locals usually benefit from these increases through purchasing local products such as accommodations, transport services, and foodstuffs among other things from travelers who help them earn foreign income during their stay within this area. Tourism-related services drive a number of industries including hospitality, handicrafts, and transportation, therefore creating availability for locals to get employment. In addition, rising numbers of tourists are able to contribute to escalation of increased infrastructure such as hotels, resorts or transportation means. By putting up money realized in infrastructure, hospitals, and schools, we can improve the life standard of Skardu and Gilgit-Baltistan populations. Additionally, tourism's exposure to diverse cultures and points of view encourages cross-cultural understanding and international cooperation and goodwill.¹⁵

Sustainable tourism can be possible in Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan

Skardu is a region recognized for its stunning natural landscapes, rich cultural history and towering mountains. It sits within the heart of Gilgit Baltistan's spellbinding sceneries. Sustainable tourism is vital for this place's growing popularity to protect its pure eco-systems and unique cultural heritage. This brief focuses on the prospects of sustainable tourism in Skardu. Over the last few years there has been a rise in visitor numbers which is often called the gateway town to some highest peaks on earth like K2 or Broad Peak. The perfect lakes, spacious valleys, and snow-capped peaks are the ingredients that attract people who love nature, tourists, and adventure-seekers worldwide. This surge in tourism however brings about a challenge of striking a balance between economic gains and conservation of the environment and cultural authenticity. Sustainable tourism is about reinstating this fragile equilibrium through advocating for responsible travel that backs the local communities, conserves the cultural heritage as well as lessening adverse effects on the environment. For Skardu to achieve sustainability, there must be a comprehensive approach which involves active participation of neighboring societies, governing bodies and even the tourists themselves. The Pakistani region of Gilgit-Baltistan is the perfect place to learn about how the balance between easy travel and environmentally friendly travelling can best be struck. Skardu holds the key to sustainable tourism and also happens to be home to a number of sites known for their beauty or historical significance among other things. A serious research into what makes the world's most unique culture should always be carried out with reference to identity. According to tradition, the people of Skardu used to pay tribute in the form of labor for the improvement of the country. Therefore, in order for such development projects to succeed they must take into account this tradition. Governments have authority over nature reserves although not all government regulations conform with international standards for preserving forests so

¹⁵ Ashraf, Muhammad. Zaman, Khan. & Jaffar, "Tourism and Economic Growth Nexus in Gilgit-

Baltistan, Pakistan: Evidence from ARDL Approach. Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research 2012

care needs to be taken here too. Setting capacity limits, zoning laws, and rules to guard the environment are necessary for good management of tourism. Furthermore, providing incentives for organizations and individuals to adopt sustainable practices can also help make the travel industry more reliable. For Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan to provide sustainable tourism, there must be a proper mix of economic development, preservation of the environment, and conservation of culture. By working together with local communities, government officials, and tourists, it is possible to unlock the full potential of tourism while safeguarding the region's singular attraction.¹⁶

Community Involvement

To make sustainable tourism in Skardu, Gilgit-Baltistan, the community needs to be involved in a meaningful way. When local people get involved, tourism projects can be made to fit what they want and believe in. When people can get involved in making decisions, they feel like they own and are responsible for what happens. Making local areas better by using the travel industry gets people more involved and helps them contribute to the travel industry in a more effective way. The locals are a crucial part of the real tourism experience because they host, guide, and share their culture with visitors. The district's unique way of living is messed up and there are some money issues going on in the area. People can learn how to be good to the environment and culture by working together. Being part of the community also helps deal with problems like managing how many people visit and making sure everyone gets a fair share of the benefits from tourism. Economically the travel industry in Skardu Area isn't just about saving regular excellence; it's about cultivating mutual respect and long-term sustainability in a symbiotic relationship between the tourism industry and the local community.¹⁷

Infrastructure Development

The development of strategic infrastructure can

promote sustainable tourism in Skardu District. It's really important to have facilities that are eco-friendly, use sustainable power sources, and have good waste management systems. By only building in specific places and making trails easy to find, tourism can stop harming the environment. To make sure that infrastructure projects match the cultural preferences and values of local communities, it's important to involve them in the planning and execution. This approach can help people save money and feel good about taking care of their community's history and culture. Working with global groups and non-profits can give us the skills and resources we need to make a positive impact. Skardu District can create a tourism infrastructure that blends well with its natural surroundings by using green building techniques, saving energy, and reducing waste. This method attracts both regular tourists and safeguards the district's environmental and social integrity for future generations.

Tourist Education

Tourist education in Skardu, Gilgit Baltistan, is crucial for fostering sustainable tourism. Visitors should be informed about the delicate local ecosystem and cultural nuances to minimize their impact on the environment and communities. Providing concise guides on responsible behavior, waste disposal, and water conservation can instill an awareness of the region's fragility. Tourists should be encouraged to engage in low-impact activities, respect wildlife and follow designated trails. Local customs and traditions should be highlighted, emphasizing the significance of cultural preservation. Simple, clear signage and informational materials can be distributed at key tourist points, promoting eco-friendly practices and respectful interactions with the local population by educating tourists about the region's unique attributes and the importance of responsible tourism. Skardu can ensure that visitors contribute positively to the area's sustainability, preserving its natural beauty and

¹⁶ Sakhawat Hussain. "Tourism in Gilgit Baltistan: a case study of districts Skardu 2022

¹⁷ Basharat Hussain "The impact of tourism on local communities and their environment in Gilgit Baltistan 2023

cultural heritage for future generations.

Cultural Preservation

Cultural preservation initiatives can lead to sustainable tourism. It is urgent to shield the rich social legacy of the area by including neighborhood networks in the travel industry arranging and advancing deferential connections among sightseers and occupants. Visitors will appreciate and respect local customs and traditions if guidelines for responsible tourism are implemented. Local area based the travel industry drives engage neighborhood occupants, giving financial advantages while protecting

their lifestyle. Schooling programs for sightseers can bring issues to light about the meaning of social conservation, empowering them to participate in exercises that decidedly affect the neighborhood local area. Moreover, advancing social trade programs encourages common comprehension and appreciation by focusing on social protection in the travel industry rehearses, Skardu can keep up with its extraordinary personality, drawing in guests who are focused on dependable and conscious travel. This strategy not only improves the overall well-being of the local population but also contributes to the sustainability of tourism.¹⁸

Results, Discussion

What opportunities do you see for enhancing tourism in Skardu?

80 responses



The responses were categorized into four main themes: The point to be noted here is that although it is stated that development and proper functioning of the roads are only in the road transport, the job creation, investments in the sustainable tourism, promotion and marking of culture valorization, government incentives for interesting tourists to come and visit the country as well as creation of job opportunities for the locals should be also be included.

Results:

1. Improving Infrastructure:

The answer to be provided to the creditors is in the declarations numbered 40. 9% of respondents believe that improper infrastructure construction as a main disadvantage of the

upgrading of tourist visitations in Skardu. The development and improvement of infrastructure such as provision of buses alone is insufficient and many other issues are to be addressed such as the modernisation of roads, availability of parking and improvement in accommodation together with constant electricity and water supply.

2. Promoting Eco-Friendly Tourism Practices:

According to the survey of eco-tourism. The faith believers cite ecotourism as the first group making up the stakeholders. The implementation of green-steps may help make the local ecology of Skardu a lot sustainable and eco-tourism is another essential pillar.

¹⁸ Kasif and Azhar Husan "Review of Issues Related to Tourism Policies Regarding Environmental

3. Cultural Preservation and Promotion:

Cultural and environmental prospecting too is successful in addition to the maximization of culture production which have been proven. According to the report about 4% of the people are interested in having the local organize a face-to-face donation campaign. The resident's worshipful culture might be exhibiting by way of festivals, events and heritage sites therefore if anyone that purposely wishes to witness the rich culture, he/she should attend those occasions.

4. Government Incentives for Tourism Development:

Build an authentic connection with your

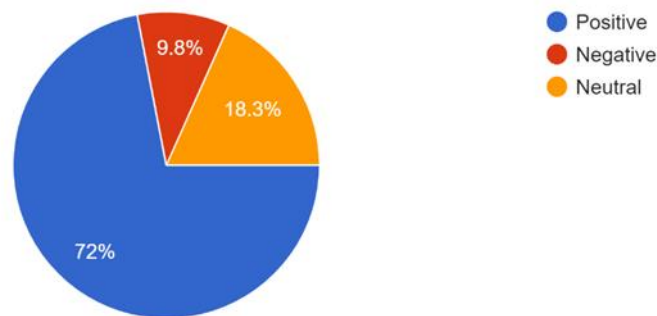
audience by sharing behind-the-scenes glimpses, personal anecdotes, or educational content relevant to the industry. Government Incentives for Tourism Development:

5. Role of the Government in Tourism Development through Incentives:

Next, 30. To sum up the above statement, the 9% of the interviewees pointed out government incentives for tourism development as an option. These regulations are also evident in tax exemptions, investment subsidies, other forms of fiscal assistance, or any other support which hence contributes to the better development of the travel industry.

How do you perceive the economic impact of tourism on the local community in Skardu?

82 responses



1. Positive:

72% of the surveyed local community thought that the economic effect of tourism in Skardu was perceived in a positive way. Such tourists might perceive the positive outcomes of tourism such as job creation, increased income and improved infrastructure and thereby would be willing to come and visit again.

2. Negative:

9.8% of the surveyed people related the economic effect of tourism on the economy of local Skardu negatively. These tourists might have observed or experienced some of the negative consequences of tourism; for instance, inflation, pollution, and cultural practices.

3. Neutral:

18.3% of respondents were neutral about the influence of tourism on the economics of

Skardu's local community. This tourist could blame the good and the bad of mass tourism or miss to see any considerable changes.

Conclusion

The "Tourism challenge and opportunity in Skardu Gilgit Baltistan: A case study particularly in Skardu has had a significant impact on the economy of the region. Through an appropriate analysis inspection, it becomes understandable that the development of this area has given different open doors as well as accessible positive changes that should be tended to successfully. The abundance of travelers has prompted a rush in monetary movements in Skardu. In addition to concentrating unemployment rates, the rise in the number of hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, and other tourism-related businesses has also led

to an improvement in residents' standard of living and an increase in the amount of money they can spend. Besides, the interest in nearby labor and products has invigorated business ventures and limited-scope enterprises, prompting a more differentiated economy. The region's financial stability has been significantly bolstered by tourism revenue. The government has been able to make investments in the development of infrastructure, which is crucial for attracting more tourists and includes airports, road networks, and electricity supply. The travel industry section has turned into a principal underpinning of duty income, allowing the public authority to convey assets for social government assistance programs, medical care offices, and instructive foundations. This has given to the general advancement and prosperity of the nearby local area. The speedy development of the travel industry has likewise introduced specific difficulties that involve mindful administration. Ecological fears like contamination, squandering the board, and the protection of normal assets have become major problems. Feasible the travel industry practices and guidelines should be satisfied to ensure the long haul shielding of Gilgit Baltistan's particular scenes and social legacy. Moreover, the neighborhood local area should be associated with the dynamic interaction to guarantee that travel industry advancement benefits are shared evenhandedly, and their social qualities are regarded. "The tourism challenges and opportunities in Gilgit Baltistan, especially in Skardu every one of the areas of Gilgit Baltistan, shrewdly affects the district's economy. It has created employment opportunities, sparked expansion of the economy, and generated revenue for the government. Sustainable practices and community involvement, on the other hand, are essential if Gilgit Baltistan is to make the most of tourism's potential and mitigate its negative effects. By striking a balance between economic development, environmental preservation, and the benefit of the local community, Gilgit Baltistan is able to maintain its natural and cultural resources for present and future generations at the same time.

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