

Introduction to the Case Study Area -- Hunza

Hunza -- Its Past and Present

Hunza has its roots deep in history. It has been mentioned in the chronicles of the Chinese travellers Huang Tsang and Fa Hien and in those of Marco Polo. It has been host to the hordes of Alexander the Great on his trek to India, to Buddhist pilgrims who crossed through on the way to and back from Gandhara, and, much later, to the forces involved in the 'Great Game' of the 19th century. And though it has been at the centre of so many crossroads, it has nonetheless maintained an isolation of its own and remained tucked away far back into the rugged mountains.

The opening up of the Karakoram Highway in 1978 ended this isolation and saw a rapid pouring in of tourists. With an altitude of over 2,400m, Hunza receives an annual average rainfall of 145mm. April, May, July, and August are the wettest months and October to March is the area's dry period.

Hunza is today one of the three sub-divisions of Gilgit, which itself is one of the five districts of the Northern Areas. Eric Shipton, a famous mountaineer, described Hunza as "*the ultimate manifestation of mountain grandeur -- rich, fecund, and of an ethereal beauty*". The valley is divided into three regions -- the lower (Shina) region, the central (Burushal) region, and the upper (Gohjal) region. It is inhabited by a number of tribes, each speaking a language of its own. In the summer, the valley is visited by a sizeable number of Kyrghiz nomads from the north who earn money by performing certain specialised jobs.

Hunza is a tourist destination for mountaineers and adventure tourists and possesses a series of breathtaking mountains, the important ones among these being the snow-capped peaks of Rakaposhi (7,388m). There are innumerable treks available here waiting to be discovered and frequented. The magnificent mountains and scenery, along with the isolation, make it a unique place for those seeking adventure.

White-water sports are also possible in Hunza on the Aliabad-Gilgit route.

Hunza abounds in wildlife, and it is known for such animal species as the Marco Polo sheep, Himalayan ibex, orial, or the blue sheep, snow leopard, brown bear, Tibetan wild ass, alpine weasel, markhor, musk deer, lynx, wolf and fox. The area also shares the bird life of the Northern Areas, and species found here include the monal pheasant, snow partridge, *chikor*, ram *chikor*, eagles, vulture, and falcon. To protect wildlife, the government has established the Khunjerab National Park over an area of 870 square miles (or over 2,200sq.km.), a game reserve of over 921 square miles (or nearly 2,350sq.km.), and five game sanctuaries of over 716 square miles (or over 1,800sq.km.).

The two towns of Aliabad and Karimabad contain a number of modern amenities such as banks, post offices, and telephone exchanges. Hotel accommodation is also available at Karimabad, Aliabad, Gulmit, and all along the Karakoram Highway. The PTDC has a motel at Hunza with 27 rooms. Another place which is fast catching the tourist's eye is Sust, the last village in Pakistan before China.

Socioeconomic and Demographic Features

Population and Diet

The population of Hunza is around 40,000, and is growing at 3.8 per cent per annum (this figure is in fact for the whole of the district of Gilgit). The staple diet of the people is fruits and cereals. This diet, together with a pollution-free environment and the general lifestyle of the people, seems to be responsible for the well-known longevity of the Hunzakuts.

Education and Health Facilities

The average literacy ratio is over 14 per cent (better than 24% for males and slightly more than 3% for females). Elementary educational and health facilities are available in the area, and Hunza is involved in the overall public sector development programme for the Northern Areas.

There are schools run by the government, but the Agha Khan Education Service (AKES) also provides educational facilities to the region - the so-called Diamond Jubilee Schools, all of which are mixed schools.

There is a government hospital in the region, along with the Agha Khan Health Centre, which is essentially meant for mothers and children. There is an acute shortage of lady doctors and lady health visitors in the government programme. Family planning programmes in the government sector are virtually non-existent.

Migration and Employment

Due to lack of income-generating activities, there is a high rate of migration of able-bodied men in search of jobs. Lack of employment opportunities is acutely felt by educated youths in particular. Tourism is expected to provide jobs, but the major job categories available for the locals are those of porters and guides. This is because non-locals are unable to undertake these jobs due to their lack of familiarity with the mountain terrain. The other jobs available are in the service sectors (domestic servants and transport- related jobs). The hotel and catering industry also provides some jobs. These are essentially seasonal in nature and last only for the tourist season. There is a considerable potential for jobs in the wildlife development sector, and the Khunjerab National Park aims at creating such jobs.

Female Participation

Female participation is visible; women help in farming and in looking after the livestock. However, their direct participation in tourism activities is not visible.

Due to high rates of male migration, the major work in agriculture devolves upon women, who not only work in the fields but also take decisions regarding the type of crops to be grown, and so on.

The Economy

Production Base

The traditional crops of Hunza are wheat, maize, barley, potatoes, peas, beans, and other vegetables. From the months of March through May, the Hunza Valley is famous for its apricot, apple, pear, peach, and plum tree blossoms, with grapevines festooning the trees and terrace walls. The Hunza River, which is fed by glaciers and mountain streams, irrigates the orchards of these fruit trees. Until as late as the mid-70s, the people of Hunza - landlocked and isolated as they were - depended upon what could be done and produced

in the valley itself. Now that the area has been opened up, new activity has taken root and imports into the area have grown, in spite of the fact that people have started moving out of the area in search of employment. Hunza has no industrial base. However, its commercial role as one of the stopovers on the silk route may augment once trade on the route reaches its full potential with the extension of traffic to nearby Central Asian markets.

The Hunza area is supposed to be rich in gems and minerals. However, only rubies and a few other precious and semi-precious stones are commercially exploited at present.

Agriculture and Irrigation

Economically, the area is underdeveloped and agriculture is developing at a slow pace. This is essentially due to the poor communications' system and a narrow resource base. Hunza possesses a good irrigation system, with the water that feeds central Hunza coming from the Hyderabad (Bululo) River and from the Ulter Glacier in nine channels. The earliest channels were originally built many centuries ago. These channels also provide water for the households.

The distribution of water follows a pattern similar to that of other irrigated areas of the NWFP, namely, on the basis of a certain number of hours or days of water per area. There are supervisors who are responsible for ensuring the equal distribution of water and the maintenance of channels, while the villages elect representatives to control the distribution of water to individual farmers. There is no irrigation during the winter up to February, when it recommences with a ceremony featuring prayers for a good harvest.

The area is deficit in wheat and other cereals, and these are brought in from other areas of the country by private traders. Wheat and flour are subsidised by the government. The Department of Agriculture is making efforts to develop high-quality potato seeds in the area which can be supplied to other parts of the country.

Forests

The Northern Areas, where Hunza is located, are rich in forest resources, most of which are government-protected property, though there are privately-owned forests. There are nurseries and forest plantations, but they are insufficient. The AKRSP is involved in social forestry activities to develop additional forests

and improve pasture and rangelands. However, until some alternatives are found to the free grazing of sheep and cattle, forest development will remain a problem area.

Transport

Hunza is connected with Gilgit through public wagons and jeeps that ply daily. The Northern Area Transport Company (NATCO) buses ply up to Sust (on the border with China). Local Suzuki vans also ply on the Karakoram Highway.

Linkage with Other Programmes

Agha Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP)

Hunza, like the rest of Gilgit district, is covered by the Agha Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), which helps to improve the quality of life of the villagers. Its focus is on income generation, on assisting in promoting social sector programmes, and on evolving sustainable, long-term strategies for the productive management of natural resources.

The programme also contributes towards raising income levels through enterprise development, whereby help is provided in processing and marketing local produce. The programme helps to generate credit through savings. Community participation in all activities, including decision-making, is the outstanding achievement of the programme. The project has made a major impact on the lives of the people, on the natural resources, and on the area as a whole. It has opened up the remote areas, and there is an indirect linkage with tourism through otherwise inaccessible areas being made known and accessible to tourists and other visitors. The AKRSP has also contributed towards improving the social indicators for both men and women. The women's component of the programme has been as successful as the others in reaching out to and changing the lifestyle of the women living in this area. The AKRSP has also contributed to the development of infrastructure and institutions for the local people. These types of intervention can form the prerequisites for the success of tourist-related activities.

The Khunjerab National Park

The Khunjerab National Park is also located in Hunza and was established for the conservation of endangered species of animals and birds. The area was

used as grazing ground by the locals, and the two objectives came into conflict. Measures are now being taken, as part of the project, to provide jobs for the local people, particularly those who give up their grazing rights. Efforts will also need to be made to involve the community more closely in the management of the park for the sustainable use of resources and to balance human needs with biological and species' renewal.

Tourism Assets, History, and Main Features

Tourism

Since the opening of the area in the late 1970s, Hunza has grown in popularity as a tourist destination. The main tourist attractions of Hunza are as given below.

- (a) Karimabad: This is the capital of Hunza. It offers an awe-inspiring view of the 7,788m Rakaposhi peak.
- (b) Fort Baltit: Located at Baltit, the former capital of Hunza, Fort Baltit is about 1.5km from Karimabad. This castle was rebuilt a number of times during the thousand-year reign of the Mirs of Hunza. The present structure was constructed some 600 years ago, and the architecture reflects a marked Tibetan influence.
- (c) Fort Altit: This is situated in the village of Altit. About three kilometres from Karimabad. It has been built on a sheer rock cliff that drops 300m down to the Hunza River and is much older than Fort Baltit.
- (d) Buddhist rock carvings: The rock carvings and inscriptions around Ganesh village, near the Altit Fort, are proof of the Buddhist influence in the area. The inscriptions are in four different scripts; Kharoshti, Gupta, Sogdian, and Tibetan; and are accompanied by human and animal figures. The most famous of these is the Hunza Rock.
- (e) Ruby mines: The ruby mines of Hunza are a popular tourist attraction. Precious and semi-precious stones may be bought at the sales' centre in Aliabad.
- (f) Technical mountaineering (ice climbing): Mainly the Rakaposhi (7,788m; Grade D+) and the Rashpari peak climb (5,058m; Grade D).
- (g) Trekking and hiking: including Batura Glacier trek (Grade A), Hopar and Hispar glaciers, and Patundas Meadows (Grade B).
- (h) Pony trails and yak safaris: Ponies are widely available while yak riding is found mainly along the Batura trek.

- (i) White-water rafting: for professionals, as the Hunza River rapids are Grade III-VI in some stretches.
- (j) Mountain bicycle tours: are being promoted by the tourism industry.

While all kinds of tourists flock to Hunza, its choice as a case study area has been made on the merit of its attractions for trekkers. As our survey shows (see Table 8.1), the major tour operators have handled nearly 1,900 trekking parties to Hunza in 1994. With an average party estimated to number 7.5 persons, they have thus handled over 14,000 foreign trekkers this year alone. Add to this another 3,800 domestic trekkers, and there emerges the impressive figure of nearly 18,000 trekkers finding their way this year to treks in Hunza.

Tourism Infrastructure

Tourism infrastructure has witnessed considerable progress lately. In addition to the two Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) motels, one at Karimabad and the other at Sust, with a combined capacity of 47 rooms, there are a number of hotels/motels/inns in the private sector. Karimabad on the KKH has six hotels with a combined capacity of nearly 100 rooms, Gulmit on the KKH also has six lodging places with a combined capacity of 63 rooms, and Sust on the KKH has four hotels with a total of 52 rooms.

Recent Trends in Annual and Seasonal Tourism

Growth of Tourism

Figure 2 shows the annual trend in overall tourism flows to Hunza (and for comparative purposes to Kalam) over the period 1981-93, as estimated by the Ministry of Tourism, Research and Statistics Wing.

The salient features to note are as follow.

- (a) A rising trend throughout the period, but especially between 1985 and 1989, as a result of which total flows increased from around 10,000 tourists in 1981 to nearly 167,000 in 1993.
- (b) The rising trend was sharper during the middle 1980s, but slowed down during 1989-93 (especially compared to Kalam).

This objective-normative approach may be supplemented by the local knowledge of residents and the tourist service industry. Figures 8 and 9 illustrate the recall of local residents and the tourism industry, respectively, regarding the annual trends in tourist traffic, mapped by individual respondents on a ratio scale for the past decade, including 1994. The combined recall provides a picture of the modal perception of the respondents.

The salient features to note are as follow.

- (a) The perception of both sets of respondents broadly matches the data provided by the Ministry of Tourism. Most respondents map a generally rising trend.
- (b) However, for 1993, a significant number of respondents recall a decline in the number of tourists, with a return to the normal in 1994.

Seasonal Concentration

Figure 10 depicts the seasonal flow of tourists of all categories to Hunza, as estimated by the Ministry of Tourism. The following features may be particularly observed.

- (a) A peak tourist season during June, July, August, and September, accounting for 50 per cent of the annual flow, with more than 17 per cent in the month of August alone.
- (b) An unchanged pattern of seasonality during the period 1991-93.

Figures 11 and 12 illustrate the combined recall of local residents and the tourism service industry regarding the seasonality of tourism flows. The following are the main features of local knowledge.

- (a) A summer peak season in both sets of perceptions, which broadly coincides with the Ministry of Tourism data.
- (b) In contrast to the MoT data, August is not exceptional, but one of the four peak months.
- (c) A low (winter) season with very limited tourism, in fact considerably poorer than that estimated by MoT.

Specifically, regarding the trekking sub-sector, July to September are the three peak months, with a rising trend in June and a falling away in October.

**Figure 8: Recall of Tourism Trends
 Hunza (Local Community)**



**Figure 9: Recall of Tourism Trends
Hunza (Tourism Industry)**

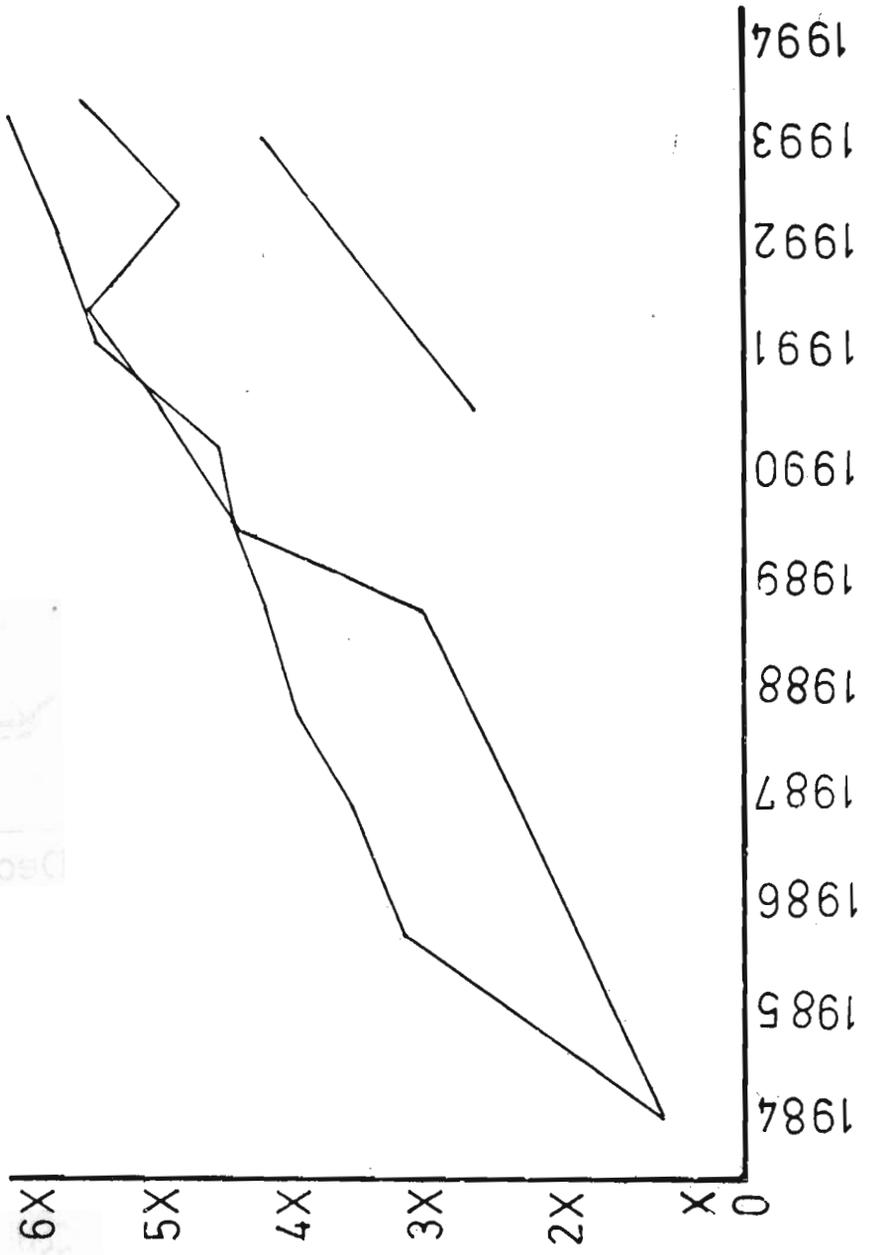
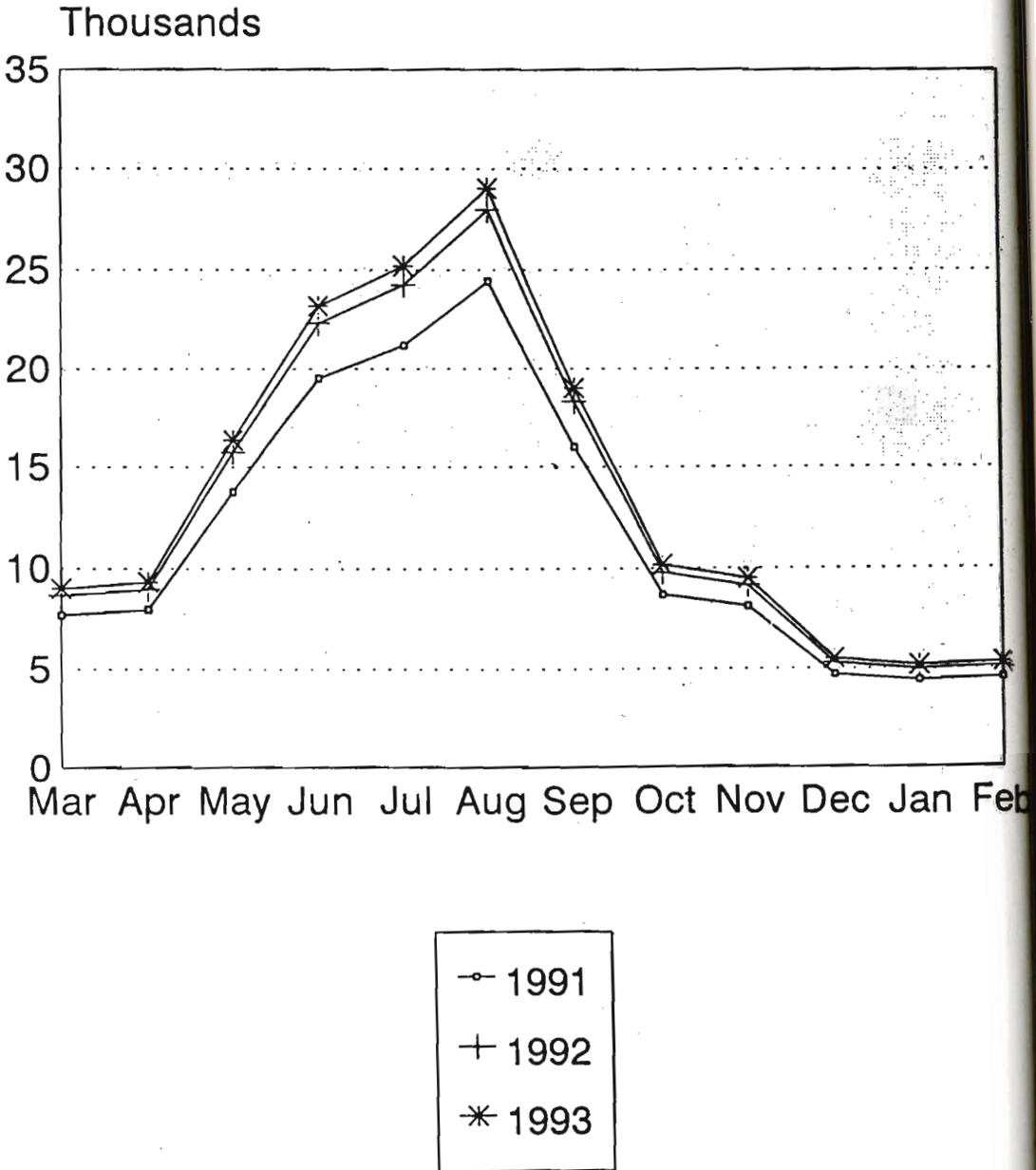
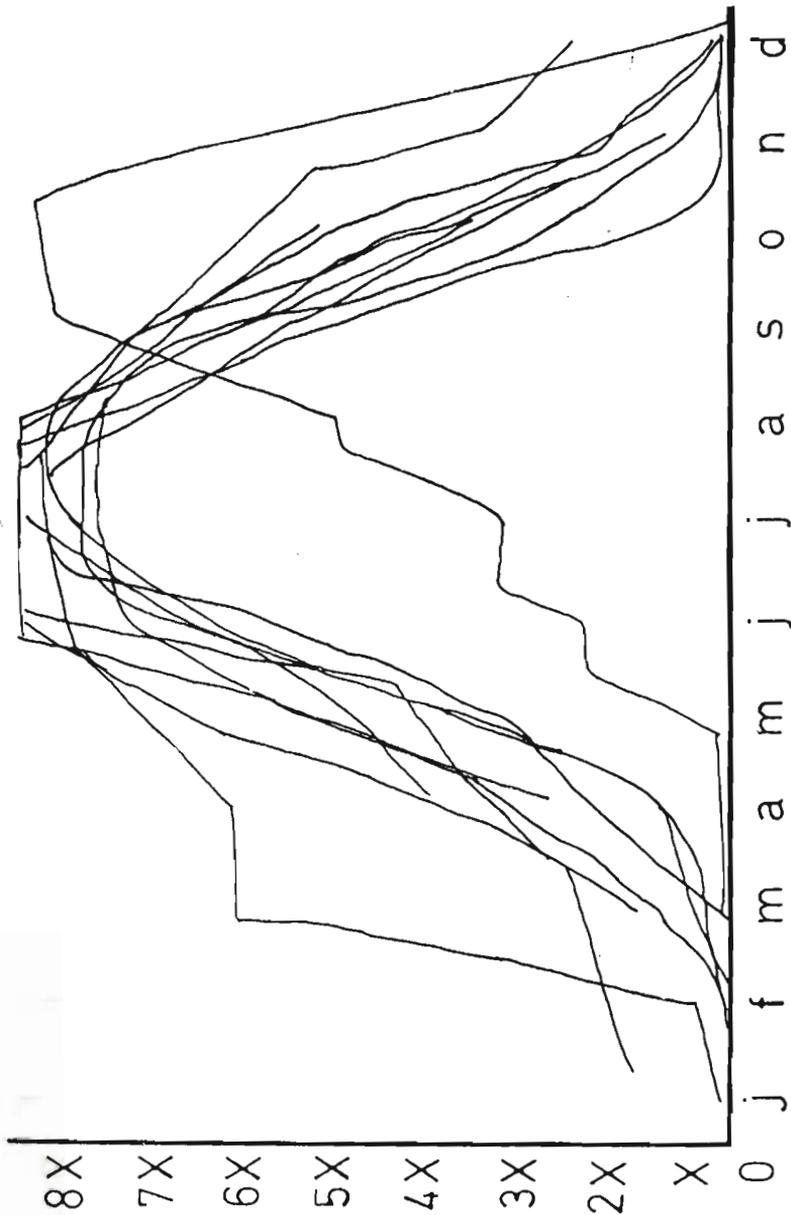


Figure 10: Seasonal Flow of Tourism to Hunza



source: Ministry of Tourism, Research & Statistics Wing

**Figure 11: Recall of Tourism Seasonality
Hunza (Local Community)**



**Figure 15: Recall of Tourism Seasonality
Hunza (Tourism Industry)**

**Figure 12: Recall of Tourism Seasonality
Hunza (Tourism Industry)**

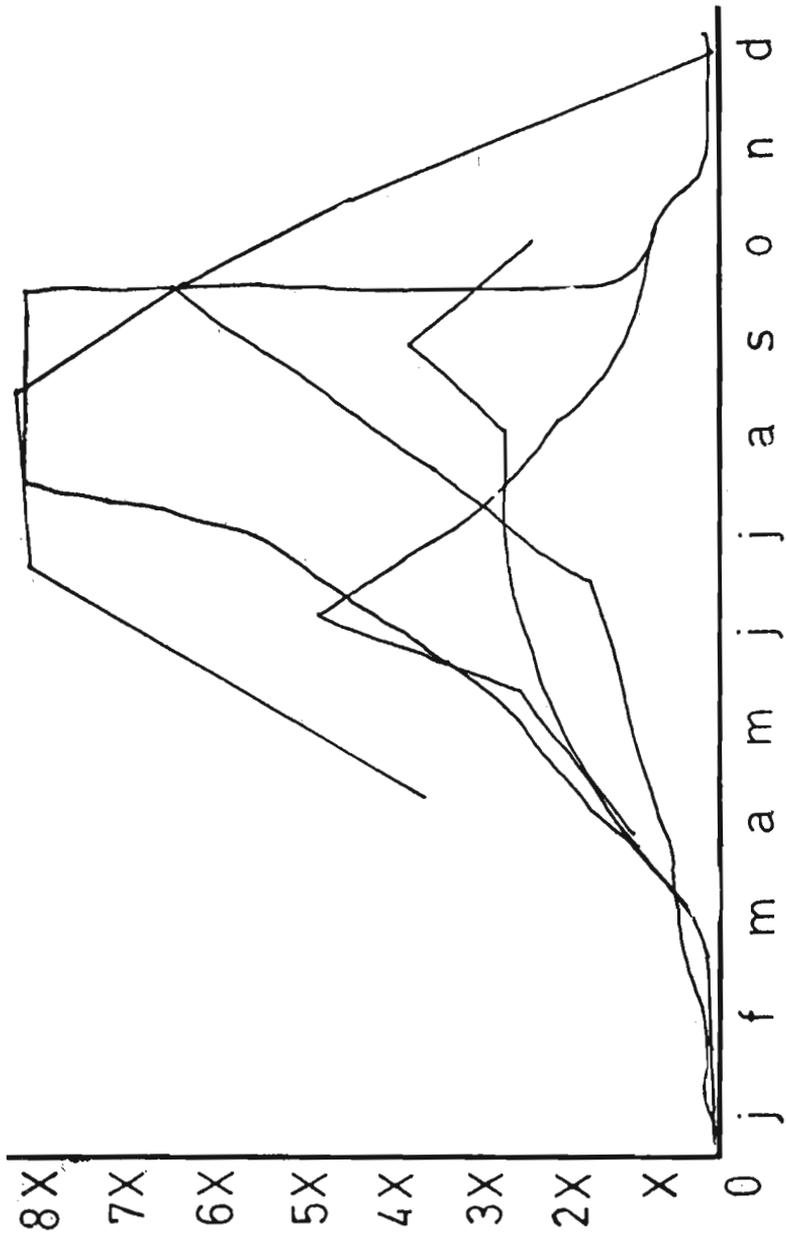
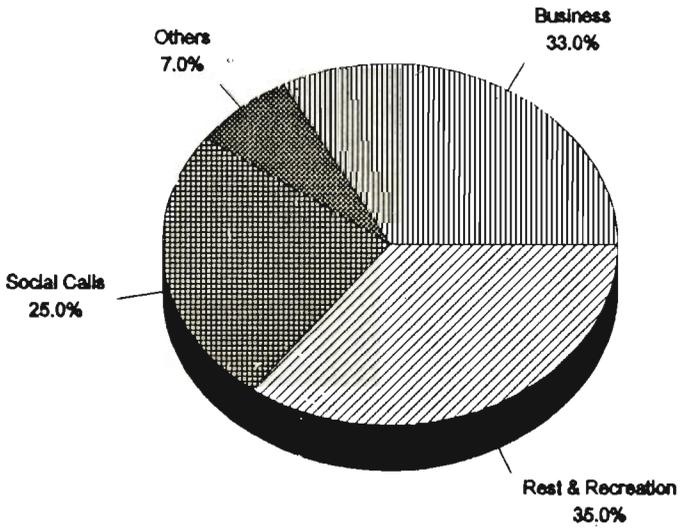
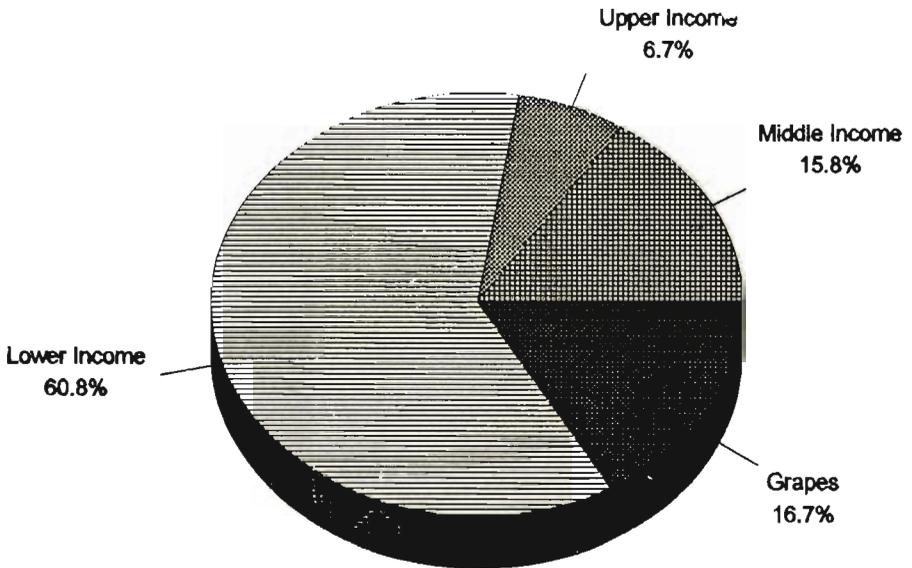


Figure 13: Components of Tourism to Hunza for years 1990-93



by activity



by socioeconomic class

Source: MoT, R&S Wina, Tourism on KKH: A Survey Report