

6

An Assessment of the Impact and Implications of Mountain Tourism in Hunza

Responses on Tourism Impact

The tabulated responses of 21 interviewees (ten full-time residents, five tourism service operators, and six tourists [4 domestic; 2 foreigners]) to a structured interview requiring responses regarding the impact of tourism on physical plant; economic structure; social, moral, and cultural values; environment; image; and trade-induced government investment are in Annex 3.

All the questions relate directly or indirectly to carrying capacity. The responses relating to impact on physical plant, economy, society, environment, image, and cultural values reveal a generally positive picture.

1. Most of the respondents report rapid to very rapid improvements both in the number and quality of tourist facilities during the last five years; and a still larger number believes that the impact on local infrastructure has been beneficial.
2. Many of the respondents report a moderate to very high increase in incomes in the last five years; and nearly half attribute more than 70 per cent of the income increase to tourism. More than half believe that more than 95 per cent of the tourism income has remained in the area. Tourism has caused a moderate increase in the disparity between rich and poor. Most of the tourist facilities are owned and managed by locals, yet growth in jobs and consumption of local products have been moderate.
3. There has been a moderate to significant impact on local building materials and consumption patterns, clothing styles, and language, but a negligible to low impact on the traditional family and the role of the father. The main change for females is greater education. The majority of respondents had not heard of any case of prostitution. Crime is not perceived as having increased. Most locals are not at all shocked by the lifestyle of tourists, and their general attitude towards tourists is positive to very positive. Most respondents report a negligible impact of tourism on religious beliefs, morality, and drug abuse.
4. The respondents report negligible increases in water and air pollution. Opinions regarding solid waste vary, with 43 per cent reporting a negligible increase, and 38 per cent reporting a moderate to high increase.

5. According to the respondents, there has been a negligible increase in wood-cutting, which is in any case not attributable to tourism.
6. The respondents were not expert biologists, or even selected nature observers, and there were many non-responses to the related questions. Yet some weight may be given to observations that tourism's impact on plants and flowers has been negligible, and it has been low on land animals and fish.
7. Most of the respondents report a sharp to very sharp increase in physical and visual density due to tourism, but less than a quarter report an adverse/very adverse impact on the image of the area due to noise and disturbance.
8. Specifically regarding trekking trails, most respondents report negligible littering, or a negligible increase thereof, in the last five years. Most report that trail litter decomposes in a medium period of time. Trekkers bring along bottled gas and have had a negligible impact on fuelwood supplies and prices. However, for a small majority of respondents, the trails have become crowded to very crowded in the peak season.
9. Most acknowledge that locals have benefitted greatly/very greatly from tourism-induced investment; consequently they think that more tourism would be very good for the area.

What can be deduced from this set of responses ? Two complementary hypotheses are given below.

Hypothesis 1: The generally positive responses reflect real economic gains with a minimal loss of social, cultural, moral, and environmental values.

Hypothesis 2: The few negative responses reflect the loss of image (especially the wilderness image) values as certain reception areas (e.g., Karimabad) and a few trails reach saturation levels during limited peak periods, although most of the potential tourism areas remain grossly underutilised.

Common Inferences

The foregoing analyses lend themselves to the following common inferences.

Inference 1: In the general opinion of local residents, the tourism service industry, and tourists, more tourism would be very good for Hunza, i.e., carrying capacities are far from being exceeded. This is supported by

calculations that, over the whole tourism area of Hunza, current carrying capacities of trails (as per WTO standards for relatively undeveloped areas) are up to one factor of magnitude larger than current peak day tourist flows.

Inference 2: However, the current tourist and trekking volumes as well as the image of Karimabad and other villages in Hunza as calm, serene, and uncluttered places, and of a few trails as wilderness places, are being affected. The number of trekkers per peak day on the trail to Patundas pastures is already close to its objective carrying capacity of 1,120 persons per day. Better tourism demand management, including more temporal and spatial dispersal of tourist flows to/within the area, is already indicated.

Comparison of the Tourism Industry and Its Impact on Hunza and Kalam

The impact of tourism having been studied both in Kalam and Hunza separately, it may be of some interest to present here a comparison of the impact of and attitude towards tourism in the two case study areas.

In Hunza, almost all the tourism industry facilities are owned by locals. Hunzakuts neither sell land nor allow outsiders to build hotels and restaurants on rented land. By contrast, in Kalam, most hotels and restaurants are owned by outsiders. Kalamis also do not sell land to outsiders but enter into lease contracts of 10-15 years' duration. After this period, the developed land and the constructions are expected to revert to the landowners. Meanwhile, Kalamis only obtain menial jobs in the tourism industry. From this difference emerge two vastly different perceptions of tourism.

These differences are depicted in the following results of recent interviews with a selection of respondents in Hunza and Kalam, representing local residents, the tourism industry, and tourists.

1. In Kalam, one-sixth of the respondents interviewed believe the impact of tourism on local infrastructure (e.g., streets, water supply, sewage, and solid waste disposal) has been adverse; *in Hunza, none of the respondents share this perception.*
2. In both Kalam and Hunza, there has been a significant increase in incomes in the last five years; and more than two-thirds of the respondents in both the areas attribute more than half the increase to tourism inflows.
3. In Hunza, more than half the respondents believe that more than 95 per cent of the tourism income remains in the area, *while, in Kalam, the share*

of income remaining in the area is estimated by nearly half the respondents to be below 20 per cent.

4. If one could generalise from this selection of respondents, one would conclude that nearly three-fourths of the Hunzakuts are "not at all shocked" by the behaviour of tourists, one-seventh are "a little shocked", while none are "somewhat shocked" to "very shocked"; *by contrast, 29 per cent of Kalami respondents are "somewhat shocked", "shocked", or "very shocked" by the behaviour of tourists.*
5. Both in Hunza and Kalam, society and morality are in a robust state. In both areas, the majority of the respondents have not heard of any case of prostitution. Crime is not perceived as having increased. The general attitude of locals towards tourists is positive to very positive (Kalam - 74% of the respondents; Hunza - 81%). Most respondents report a negligible impact of tourism on religious beliefs, morality, and drug abuse. *But, in Hunza, education is also seen as the main agent of social change for females.*
6. In Hunza, eight out of 10 respondents perceive a negligible to low increase in water pollution over the last five years; by contrast, nearly half of the respondents in Kalam report a moderate to very high increase in water pollution over the same period.
7. In Hunza and Kalam, opinions vary regarding growth of solid waste, but their distributions are quite different:

Growth of Solid Wastes Place	Negligible	Low	Moderate	Rapid	Very Rapid
Hunza	43	10	19	19	0
Kalam	6	26	19	29	19

8. According to Hunza respondents, there has been a negligible increase in wood-cutting and the destruction of vegetation in the last five years, which is in any case not attributable to tourism. *By contrast, in Kalam half of the respondents perceive a huge to very huge increase in wood-cutting, and nearly one-third of them attribute it mainly to the tourist demand for fuelwood.*
9. Most of the Hunza respondents report a sharp to very sharp increase in physical and visual density owing to tourism, but less than a quarter report an adverse to very adverse impact on the image of the area due to noise and disturbance. *In Kalam, most of the respondents also report an increase in physical and visual density of population, and a similar number further report adverse to very adverse noise and disturbance.*

10. In both Hunza and Kalam, most of the respondents acknowledge that locals have benefitted greatly to very greatly from tourism-induced investment; thus 71 per cent of the respondents in both the areas think that more tourism would be very good for the area.

What sense can one make of the differences and commonalities? Both areas want more tourism for the income it provides, but, whereas Hunzakuts are confident and empowered by their capacity to cater to tourists, Kalamis are largely embittered and alienated. It is clear that local ownership and management of tourism assets result in vastly different capacities for coping with tourism. Further research leading to an in-depth study of the historical, economic, and social causes behind the varying situation in Kalam and Hunza is clearly indicated. Also indicated is priority promotion of more local planning, ownership, and management in both the case study areas.

Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Negligible	Very Low
19	39	19	28	6	0