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Rethinking Tourism and Technology as Rural Development Strategy: A Case of Hunza Pakistan – Faheem Ullah Baig (2015-2017)

Based on the views of local inhabitants of Hunza this study explains the relationship between tourism, technology, and rural development for socio-economic development and measures for protection of cultural and natural environment. The study also provides some core evidences to link tourism and technological potentials for framing a holistic development approach and to emphasize on the needs of locals such as skill development, education, health and income which can translate into a long term sustainable policy framework.

Key Findings

1. The study concludes that in order to grow economically and technologically the youth of Hunza have to equip themselves with modern skills in tourism services. The ancient Silk Route and current CPEC is viewed as blessing by the locals if properly implemented considering its socio-economic impacts on local community. CPEC project will also create hundreds of skill based enterprises to entertain national and international businesses and hoteling industry.
2. This study has investigated the socio-economic impact of tourism and technology on living standards of people of Hunza. The traditional models of rural development were unable to recognize the unexplored surfaces of rural development. The study identifies that rural development is a multidimensional phenomenon and process and takes into consideration multiple outlooks and aspects based on untouched potentials.
3. For effective utilisation of tourism resources and technological opportunities quality education, technical skills, infrastructure and well organised policy will play an important role for people of Hunza. The earlier studies and field surveys show the growing socio-economic problems such as, income inequality, environmental degradation, and poor infrastructure which hampered the development interventions either by individuals or public departments.
4. The participation of local community in development interventions is very important. The absence of policy in administrative offices to monitor the infrastructural development, such as hotels and restaurants, roads, electricity, water and sanitation, preservation of local culture and security measures have created fear of loss to the beauty of villages, destruction of local culture and creation of urban centers.

Policy Implications

1. The monthly income of the locals is relatively better, but other modern amenities of life, such as infrastructure, health, entrepreneurial skills, quality education, preservation of natural resources, and cultural values are still in questionable condition and there must be swift key policy response to that on local and national levels.
2. To articulate tourism and technology as rural development strategy there is need of a detailed study on each segment to build a sustainable development policy involving local community and other stakeholders.
3. For long term sustainable development the involvement and empowerment of local people in policy making is critical.
4. The study also suggests that there is need to put a limit on capitalizing local cultural values, traditions, natural resources and unnecessary urbanisation to assess the needs and preferences of local people to avoid adverse impacts of globalisation and modernisation.