

Managing Tourism in Pakistan (A Case Study of Chitral Valley)

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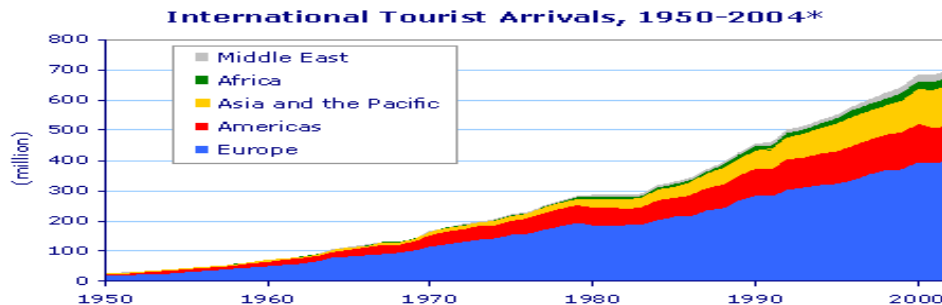
Abstract

Tourism, a multidimensional business activity, was grown to be a multi trillion \$ industry worldwide. Its relevance to country's economic, services, and employment generation performance is vitally recognized all over across the globe. However, in Pakistan, despite its promising potential, the state of tourism affairs is dismal. The paper attempts to diagnose the causes of crawling nature of Pakistan's tourism growth on empirical grounds and suggest ways and means to develop the industry through an optimum use of its natural, historical and cultural resources. For the purpose of focused analysis and empirical evidence Chitral Valley was taken as a reference point for the paper.

Background of the Study

Tourism as an organized, regular and multidimensional business activity has grown to the level of an industry of world wide importance, employing more than 200 million people around the globe and contributing more than US\$600 billion in direct and indirect taxes each year to global economic development.¹ The substantial growth of tourism activity over the years clearly marks tourism as one of the most remarkable economic and social phenomena of the past century that has after three subdued years (2001-2003) bounced back in 2004 with 10.7 % record increase in international tourist arrivals, reaching to a new record value of US 622 billion dollars in 2005.²

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Source: World Trade Organization-2005

Despite Indian Ocean earth quake, Tsunami, earth quake in Pakistan, situation in Afghanistan, floods and draughts in various parts of the region, South Asian performance in tourism sector has been on constant improvement for the last few years however, statistics of 2005 show Pakistan lagging behind in this regard. What to talk of competing world over, Pakistan's present standing as tourist destination is far below than other SAARC countries like India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and even Maldives. Sri Lanka (+24%), Nepal (+22%), Maldives (+16%), India (+15%), and Bangladesh (+14%) all have posted double- digit increase, and only Pakistan and Bangladesh are lagging behind.³ Pakistan's tourism receipts declined by -.2 % from \$ 185.6 million in 2004 to 185.3 million in 2005.⁴ Similarly, scale of mountaineering expeditions, mountaineers, trekkers and trekking parties in 2005 was also lower than 2004.⁵ The situation further deteriorates when Pakistan International Travel Account also goes negative. In 2005 international travel account Pakistan's presents the dismal state as follows:

Payments	Receipts	Balance
\$ 1277 millions	\$ 185.268 millions	\$ 1092.082 millions (-)

Source: State Bank of Pakistan

Objectives of the Study: The purpose of this study was not to score points by criticizing or crying over past mismanagement in Pakistan Tourism. The main aim of this paper was to examine the viability of existing tourism management system in Pakistan so as to plan a tourism management strategy, pulling together tourism management's decisions regarding their objectives, target markets, and marketing mix programs in conjunction with the organization of resources and allocation of responsibilities in carrying out specific marketing activities and managerial tasks. Therefore, the overriding purposes of this research study were:

- To review the existing tourism management structure in Pakistan, highlight its weaknesses and strengths and identify threats and opportunities being offered by the environment.
- To ascertain the efficacy of the existing tourism management system in Pakistan and measure its contributions to in the sustained development of tourism sector.
- To diagnose the causes of crawling growth of this sector and suggest ways and means to develop Pakistan tourism through an optimum use of our natural, our cultural and our historical resources.
- To make suggestions with a view to creating environmental consciousness so as to ensure ecotourism so as to preserve, prolong and enhance the natural strength of the tourist destinations.
- To suggest changes in the existing policies, rules and procedures so as to make them more tourists friendly and facilitate all stakeholders in their respective operations.

- To describes strategies for the forthcoming National Tourism Policy of Pakistan that may be employed for the sustainable development of a sector whose economic potential has, as yet, not been fully exploited.

Research Methodology: The Research was exploratory as well as descriptive in nature and it aimed at discovering general nature of problems of tourism management and variables related with it. The study is based on both secondary and primary data, supplemented by information secured through questionnaires, informal interviews, and the talk and walk around target population. It encompasses both types of sources of data that is, secondary as well as primary.

- Primary data includes the results of the survey conducted in Chitral District to ascertain the ground realities through recording the views of all stake holders of tourism in Chitral including: tourists, locals, tour operators, hoteliers, and officials of the district management Chitral.
- Secondary sources of the data include; reports of World Tourism Organization, annual reports and yearly hand books published by tourism department of Pakistan, Chitral Conservation strategy, and various books, journals, periodicals, newspapers and other publications referring to Chitral, its tourism potential and tourism management structure.

Findings of the Research

Analysis of the data led to a number of findings and conclusions. Some of these important findings are given in succeeding paragraphs.

Ministry of Tourism Headquarters:

- The Ministry in its previous form has not contributed to the development of this sector in any meaningful degree over the last twenty years.
- The Ministry is not fully empowered to tackle the problems of tourists and tourist enterprises because of assigning of most of these responsibilities to other ministries/divisions.
- The Ministry was not computerized until 2005, and was working with outdated procedures and work methods. Internal sources, on the promise of confidentiality informed, that work output and accomplishments is hampered by considerable impediments ranging from administrative bureaucracy, lack of modern day computer technology, lack of funds, lack of experience and professional knowledge, lack of facilities, short working hours and general lethargy.
- The deficiencies in all departments and lack of funding had serious implications in the effective management of the tourism sector so far.
- It has never been a source of effective and meaningful data, and has no worthwhile tourism survey to its credit.

Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC)

- It is top heavy in institutional and administrative costs so much so that in the past a major chunk of its funding from government has been consumed by the administrative staff.
- Its involvement in hotels has been a serious failure in terms of standards and profitability. The experienced staff is difficult to identify. A June 2006 visit (before the upsurge in Taliban insurgency in Swat) of the Malam Jabba resort observed that the resort displays five different names on signboards positioned at strategic places and

three different names in the main entrance lobby. There is leakage into rooms, only 22 rooms were reported functional. No facilities for day-trippers like: drinking water, toilets, parking, resting areas (insufficient seats / benches), children's recreation facilities, Shelter, restaurant/ fast food outlets, telephones.

Planning Flaws

The review of the tourism practices demonstrated so far reveals a dismal picture and calls for the need for better tourism planning, because the poor planning has led to:

- Tourism in Pakistan at the mercy of seasonal booms and slumps leading to rapid human degeneration and a sense of insecurity.
- Missing out the foreign exchange benefits from tourism, with most of it going to foreign companies through special concessions, franchise and package tour arrangements and other forms of transfer pricing
- The over selling of tourist products and cultures at the established destinations, non-exploitation of new areas/ products and non-involvement of local communities. In other words, limited integration of local communities and previously neglected groups into tourism
- Tourism has been inadequately resourced and funded
- Inadequate tourism education, training and awareness
- Inadequate protection of the environment
- Poor service
- Lack of infrastructure, particularly in rural area
- A ground transportation sector not geared towards tourists

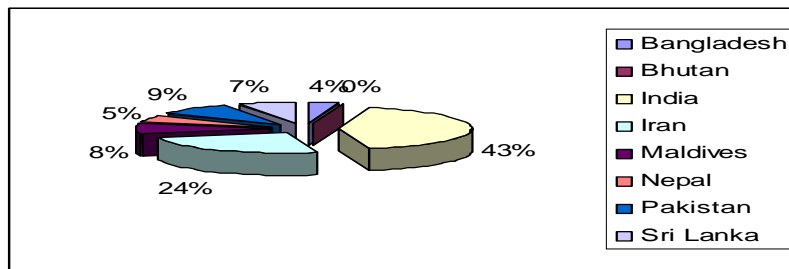
Managerial Flaws

- Continuous planning of adventure tourism in Northern Areas is leading to monotony for the mountaineers and trekking parties. Besides Northern Areas, there are other areas, like Hindu Kush Mountains / Trich Mir (Chitral) – virgin peaks / treks, waiting for expeditions and attention of our tourism management since long.
- Pakistan railway and road transport requires lot of improvement in infrastructure, equipment, and their management. Roads/ tracks leading to tourist destinations need repair, and rehabilitations.
- There is need for provision of telephone booths, bathrooms, mosques, hotels, fast foods, and rest areas to soften the rigors of journey and facilitate tourists in their long traveling.
- Tourist consumer goods are quite expensive at almost all of the tourist resorts in Pakistan.
- None of the university or college is offering any academic programme or professional courses related to tourism. Even student of Business administration or rural development do not have any core course or optional/ elective related to tourism.
- Local communities at destinations are mostly not consulted or involved by the government while planning, or organizing tourism development in those places.
- There is critical deficiency of civic facilities, like hospital, washing sites, clean drinking water etc, in most of the tourists destinations located in hill sites, and far flung rural areas.
- Sport tourism, beach tourism, and culture tourism etc are mostly relegated to lowest priority in Pakistan.

- People of Pakistan are mostly unaware of the benefits of tourism and see tourism as source of invasion of foreign culture and threat to local values and tradition

Low Share in South Asian Market: Pakistan's share in South Asian Tourism is disappointing. Foreign arrivals in Pakistan are much lesser than India, Iran, and nearly equal to Bhutan.

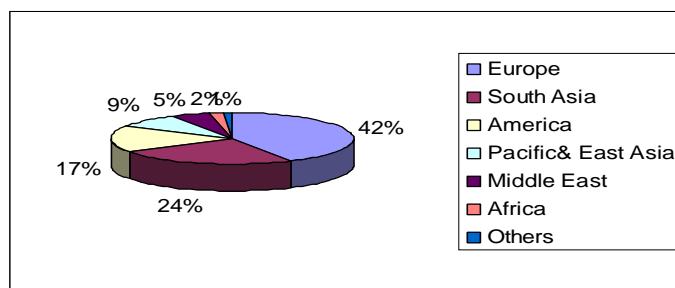
Annual Arrival Share of Countries- %age



Source: Ministry of Tourism-2006

Tourism Generating Markets: Statistics of market wise tourists' arrivals in Pakistan for last four years shows that Europe is the leading region, which occupies a major share in Pakistan's market, followed by South Asia, America and South East Asia. The following graph represents the % of last five years (2001-2005) average share of each region.

Annual Arrival Shares of Various Regions in %age



Source: Ministry of Tourism-2006

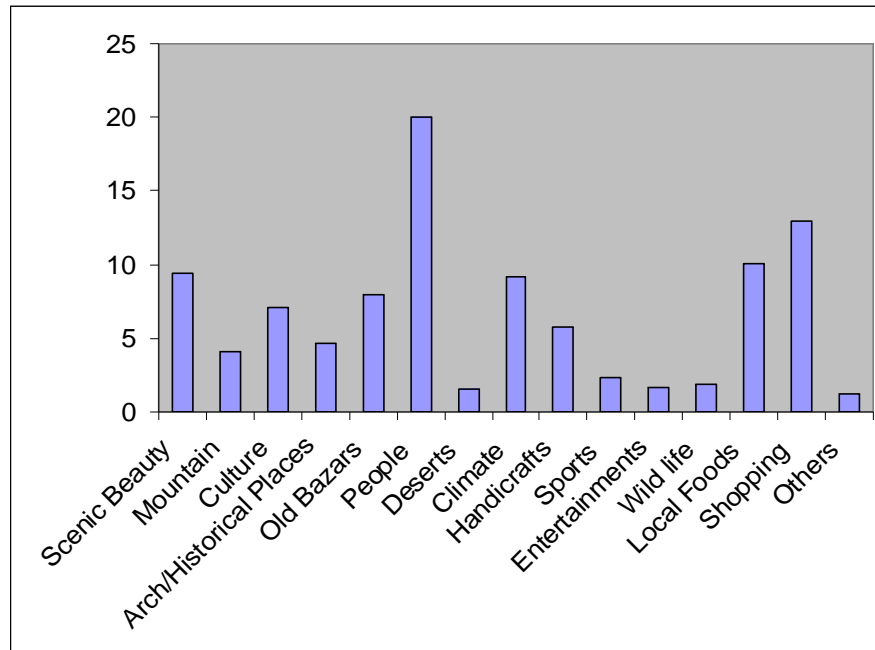
Age & Sex Based Tourists Stratification: Statistical research reveals that foreign tourist can be divided in to two distinct groups on sex or age stratification. Male constitutes the substantial increase over female visitors. In age based strata over 30 years visitors are – to the visitors having age less than 30 years. Therefore, it leads to inferences that our tourism facilities must cater for the needed infra structure in proportion to age/ sex ratio.

Market Constraints:

- Market perception of political instability, regional and local conflicts, and poor ' security and safety
- Lack of investment in correctly targeted and integrated marketing activities, including the provision of information in Pakistan and overseas.
- Erratic standards of service, facility and welcome to foreign tourists.
- Poor quality control of both tourist services and facilities
- Inadequate research, and therefore inadequate information, on core markets, their primary operators and their market needs

Foreign Tourist Arrivals by Motivation: An examination of the motivation for travel in 2005 shows that returning Pakistanis interest to meet friends and relatives is the leading motivation followed by business activities, cultural visits, adventure and so on.

Tourist Arrivals by Motivation-2005



Source: Ministry of Tourism- 2006

Chitral Specific Findings:

Study of Chitral offered following findings:

- High peaks of the Hindukush, with their unspoiled, green valleys and friendly and hospitable population are tourism resource of its own kind, which can become major source of much needed revenue for the people of Chitral.
- Existing abundance of physical and social environment in Chitral constitutes the resource base for tourism and source of prime attraction for tourists. The lack of an environmentally conscious attitude by guides, cooks, kitchen helpers, porters, hotelkeepers, and local residents as a major problem and "turn-off" for tourists in Chitral.

- Neither public, nor private, sector is spending to improve the infra structure base to enhance capacity and capability to attract, hold, sustain and satisfy the international arrivals as well as domestic ones.
- There is a dire need to involve public and private stakeholders in planning, organizing and implementing of tourism plans for managing destinations.
- The most immediate constraint on tourism and conservation of the resource base of tourism is visible trash and pollution.
- Private transport is not clean and regular in timings
- Foreign tourist registration procedure is unsuitable and needs to be changed.

Recommendations

Pakistan holds a lot of tourist attraction. Mountaineering, water support, scenic beauty and archeological and cultural sites like, Buddha, Mohinjo Doro, Harapa, Kalash heritage, have great attractions for the tourists. Despite all of this potential, and one of the commonly recognized sources of earning, tourism in Chitral and most of other spots and areas is not being managed to its optimum. Neither public, nor private, sector is investing to improve the infra structure to enhance capacity and capability to attract, hold, sustain and satisfy the international arrivals as well as domestic ones. There is no denying the fact that if it is properly planned and managed within tourists' carrying capacity it is likely to perform the role of catalyst of development and raise the living standards of the people in the area. Therefore, following is recommended to bring its inbuilt benefits to the people of Chitral in particular and economy of Pakistan in general.

Environment Conscious Culture: To develop the ecotourism in Chitral and other parts of the country, the industry must develop and execute ecotourism training programs, for the domestic tour operators/trekking companies, hotel operators and the locals and officials / care takers of various tourism natural/ man made resources.

Public –Private Partnership: Our research survey recognizes the potential need to involve public and private stakeholders in planning, organizing and implementation of tourism plans by managing destinations in such a way which could increase the tourism turnover / tourist arrivals manifold. This has been proved by the substantial upward trend in tourist arrival since execution of Chitral Conservation Strategy from 2003 onwards.

Handling of Tourist Arrivals: Presently District Government is handling tourists through different Tourist Information Centers established throughout Chitral especially in the tourist spots i.e. Chitral Valley, Kalash valleys, Chitral town etc. These tourist information centers are meant to facilitate tourist registration, tourist guidance; rent a vehicle service, booking of hotels etc. There is no denying the fact that institution of ‘Tourist Information Centers’ was a needed step towards right direction, however, there is still lot to improve the handling process of the tourists.

Resource Management: Judicious resource management is very important for the sustainable growth of tourism. Demand for tourist accommodation, services and resources should not place stress on local environments and should not interfere with local culture and life styles of the people. Our survey of tourists shows that the quality of both the physical and social environment is the single most important factor for tourist likes and dislikes. Necessary brochures highlighting the

attractiveness of various tourist resorts along with their distinctions / interests, their routes, maps, dos/ don'ts etc must be provided to each of the tourist as he enters the Chitral boundary.

Efforts to Increase International Arrivals: Tourists arrivals of 2004 and 2005 show upward trends and indicate that international arrivals / tourism has regained its pace with renewed vigor after severe shocks it suffered due to 9/11, war against terrorism in Afghanistan, devastating earth quake of October 2005 and Taliban's insurgency in Swat. Further, it is also found that major tourist generating / countries for Pakistan & Chitral are Europe and East Asia. Therefore, there is a need to speed up our marketing efforts with right orientation to identified target market. Following are our suggestions in this regard:

- Our embassies in all European and South East Asian countries should launch more concerted efforts to attract people from their host countries to Pakistan in General and Chitral in particular.
- Soften up the image of Pakistan as a peace loving, tolerant, accommodative and hospitable land, endowed with the spirit of co-existence.
- We recommend an early end to the self created insurgency and hostilities as soon as possible.
- Our marketing campaign, embassies and tour operator make it a point to educate our potential tourists with regards our socio-cultural values and religious norms. They are to be told in clear terms that respect of these values and norms is essential for enjoying local hospitality at all cost so as to tape the fruits of enjoyable tours with out confronting any problem.
- Our tourist accommodation/ hoteliers shall provide them quality service of their standard, hygienically fit food of their taste, and

bathroom / washing facilities of their style- not Indian style shit pots.

- Our cell phone companies shall speed up their efforts to provide their mobile coverage in and around the Chitral valley.
- Existing health facilities should be improved and mobile hospital/ dispensaries are to be placed during the season at far-flung areas so as to relieve the tourists from their health worries.
- Sufficient number of guides be trained and employed by the tour operator as ready help to their tourists. Guides must be trained to talk in Urdu and English both to serve effective / reliable guides for their guests.
- Efforts should be made to introduce quality transport, punctual and regular in their schedules. However, road infra structure need to be made matching to the requirements of good standard transports.

Adventure Tourism: High peaks of the Hindukush, with their unspoiled, green valleys and friendly and hospitable population have lot of potential where adventure tourism can thrive and lead to other types of tourism. HinduKush has a number of peaks above 6000 meters and excellent treks to become first choice of the mountaineers and trekking parties. The problem doesn't lie in the potential of the area, rather in ignorance of the tourists and poor planning of tourism management. Our Tourism department has kept focused its attention to the Northern Areas for the adventure Tourism. The research does not intend to under emphasize the potential of Northern Areas, it rather aims to draw attention of the management to include Chitral as well for adventure tourism. This reorientation in managerial approach would create lot of attractions for the mountaineer and trekking parties to unearth new areas

and virgin peaks/ treks. Resultantly, it may provide a major source of much needed revenue for the people of Chitral and help alleviate their poverty.

Improving the Existing Infra Structure: Neither public, nor private, sector is spending to enhance capacity and capability to attract, sustain and satisfy the international as well as domestic arrivals. A look over the Chitral District Annual Budgets from 2002, through 2005 reveals that not a single penny has been allocated for the improvement of tourism in this area. Keeping in view the grey areas highlighted by almost all of the respondents of questionnaires and interviews, following is suggested:

- Construction of Lowri Pass tunnel and revamping / widening up of the main roads connecting Chitral to the outer world.
- Construction of culverts over seasonal nullahs, new roads and tracks, and improving existing ones to ensure smooth traffic and all weather connectivity between different destinations located within Chitral Valley.
- Earmarking and preparing of camping sites alongside the Chitral River and other suitable locations within the Valley.
- Constructions of new hotels of quality standards, in Kalash area, Mastug Garm chashma, Shudur, and Bambote Valley to meet the requirements of tourists.
- Effective human waste disposal systems are also needed to improve existing infrastructure.
- Efforts at all levels should be made to preserve, protect, and promote the civilization heritage, Kalash culture, historic places, monuments, parks, wild life, and biodiversity existing in the Valley.

Code of Conduct for Tourists: Although everyone is happy to see more tourists, but no one is glad to see piles of trash at camp sites, trees cut

down, toilet paper strewn along trails, heaps of plastic bottles behind hotels, villagers angry with tourists for wearing indecent clothing, and trekkers arguing with guides and porters over wages. The key in addressing this problem is to develop a code of conduct to resolve conflict that will be acceptable to all stakeholders. As long as tourists think that disputes can be expected in a certain area, they will not go there, no matter how beautiful the area is.

Pakistan Specific Recommendations

Recommendations offered under “Chitral Specific” can also be applied in other parts of the country as well. Similarly recommendations being made in succeeding paragraphs cannot be isolated from Chitral Chapter, and can be relevant to the tourism authorities of any level operating at Chitral. However, these recommendations are more pertinent to policymaking level /decisions channels at federal or provincial levels.

Tourism Awareness Campaign – Year of Tourism: To promote tourism wide ranging awareness campaign at national level is needed. Declaring 2007 as “*THE YEAR OF TOURISM*” may seem very simple, but has proved to be an upbeat idea in this regards. Tourism awareness and promotion campaign if handled thoughtfully will positively result in recognition of tourism as the most prospective activity, tool for environmental, cultural and social awareness, pursuit for national integration, and international peace.

Introducing New Trends in the Hotel Industry: In cooperation with the International Hotel and Restaurant Association (IH&RA), Pakistan Ministry of Tourism should convene a world conference on the latest developments in the hotel industry. The conference should invite the public and private sector representatives, hoteliers, and tour operators to

contribute. Its proceedings be carried out by means of panel discussions and outcomes must be shared at all levels down to individual destination.

National Committee of Tourism Ethics: A National Committee on Tourism Ethics should be formulated to draw Code of Ethics for Tourism in Pakistan. The Code should also be in line with our socio- cultural responsibilities towards local, regional, national and international communities. The National Code of Ethics should be addressed to all the stakeholders likely to be involved in the process of tourism development.

Religious Tourism: Pakistan's potential for religious sites, especially related to Sikhism, and Buddhism has very high chance of growth and needs further efforts. The area now constituting Pakistan has been the meeting place of various religions of the past, but unfortunately this aspect has never been exploited by our Tourism Ministry. Therefore, the federal government should plan to exploit country's potential of religious tourism and chalk out a strategy to conserve the religious sites and provide facilities to the tourists coming here for visiting the sacred sites. Proper hospitality to religious devotees would also help improve the soft image of the country besides generating revenue.

Beaches and Other Water Sports: Presently almost all of the beaches around Karachi including Sumiani and Manora are polluted and densely populated. If a prompt lesson is not learnt from these beaches and effective law is not enforced then other newly developed beaches at Gawadar, Pasni etc will be replicated with similar type of situation.

Public- Private Sector Collaboration: Pakistan is amongst few countries of the world which have been witnessing twin deficits almost through out its life. Development of tourism needs heavy investment something beyond the scope and capability of the public sector alone. This is only possible, once the investment is reinforced from private

sector of foreign resources. Therefore, research calls for public- private collaboration to develop a sustainable tourism in Pakistan.

Aggressive Marketing: Aggressive promotional campaigns should be launched to persuade foreign tourist to come to Pakistan. Special counters should be opened at Pakistan mission and PIA offices abroad to disseminate promotional literature. Display of documentation and exhibitions should also be arranged in foreign countries.

Academic Value: Tourism should also be offered as subject in the academic curriculum in college and universities in various part of Pakistan. Tourism institutes or department should be opened up in various universities of Pakistan. Tourism can be offered as a specialization in MBA and tourism management & marketing can be taught as a core subject of 4 credit hours in MBA and MPA programs.

Provision of Safe Conditions: Another major problem especially for the foreign tourists is un-safe conditions at airport as well as in hotels. Unnecessary and cumbersome formalities, checking by policeman play a negative role in development of tourist industry in the country. Tourist plays a major role in propagating any country's tourism and when they face these problems they carry a negative impression back home, which discourages other potential tourists. Effort should be made to provide safe conditions for the arrival and stay of foreign tourists and avoid unnecessary checking and delays at various stages of their travel.

Use of platforms like SAARC, ECO, and OIC: Regional platforms like SAARC, ECO, and OIC provide opportunity for Pakistan to have market access to more than 3 billion people. If we plan a proper strategy to tap these markets then the arrivals and receipts are to be promising ones. Pakistan has a variety of attractions to offer to the people of these regions.

Development of Human Resource: Human resource development in tourism and hotel management requires the following measures:

- Upgrading the faculty of all tourism training institutes and setting up new institutes in different provinces and major tourist resorts areas.
- Development of curricula, syllabi and resource materials for the institutes.
- Environmental sensitization should be incorporated into courses and training
- Providing equipment for the kitchens, bakery, restaurant, front office, and housekeeping and computer laboratories of the PITHM.
- Stocking institute libraries with updated books and audio-visual materials

Conclusion

Tourism is a vastly under-rated industry in Pakistan. The role of government in tourism development has never been a pushing one. Over centralization and lacking coordination between center, province and local level and intra-departmental levels have been the hall mark of mismanagement of the industry. Management needs to realize that the availability of quality products, originality of the environments, making of tourist friendly environment through well coordinated private- public sector efforts and a stable socio- political situation, are essential prerequisites for tourism development. To ensure all of it takes place in befitting manner, a well thought out efficient management system is needed on ground. The system must focus on well coordinated integration of all available resources to widen the tourism base and

switching over from bureaucratic culture to corporate one. It must formulate a tourism strategy, which is flexible to meet the shifting demands of the market, without involving much of organizational restructuring and wastage of time. It must encompass a radicalization of approach towards the development of tourism from supply based to demand oriented. Given due attention it can grow into a major economic generator and a labor intensifying industry.

End Notes

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- ¹ "Importance of Tourism Industry". <http://www.tourism-punjab.com/institute.htm> (23rd July 2005)
 - ² WTO, *World Tourism Barometer*, January 2005 - Volume 3, Issue 1. Also see <http://www.world-tourism.org/newsroom/Releases/2005/january/2004numbers.htm>
 - ³ *WTO World Tourism Barometer*, vol.1. 2005
 - ⁴ "General Highlights of Tourism Industry in Pakistan-2005", *Pakistan Tourism Facts & Figures* 2005, Ministry of Tourism, Pakistan, p.1.
 - ⁵ *ibid.*

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