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Impacts of crises and communication media on place image: A case study of Chilas, Pakistan

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a b s t r a c t

Com-media can become part of the anthropogenic crises that some tourist destinations face.

   The positive practices of communication media are well rehearsed in social science research: however, the destructive impacts of communication media, specifically in destinations in crisis in less-developed countries, is less clear. This paper considers the role of communication media for tourism development in a remote area: Chilas, in the north of Pakistan. Chilas has many features – a dynamic historical, cultural and environmental background consisting, for example, of a unique landscape and ancient rock carvings – that make it an attractive tourist destination but it has yet to reach its full potential in this respect. The area has suffered from a number of natural and anthropogenic crises with many of the latter being on-going. This paper, which usies Chilas as an example, explores some of the issues with respect to the marketing of a destination that is in crisis, including, for example, the region being categorised as a seismic zone, suffering from such natural occurrences as landslides, poor infrastructure, including negligible emergency services and poor quality roads, and issues relating to terrorism. Comparisons are made with the neighbouring destinations of Gilgit, Chitral and the Hunza Valley, and the more positive media representations they receive. It will also consider the reasons why such geographically close areas should fare so differently in terms of marketing. The paper then goes on to make recommendations as to how to develop the image of a destination under crises while safeguarding the security of the destination, tourists and the local community.

Keywords: Com-media, Natural and anthropogenic crises Under crises destinations, Place image Marketing

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore the role of communication media in shaping the image of in- crisis destinations. In particular, it will focus on the way in which one area of northern Pakistan has received less favourable media attention compared to neighbour-ing destinations. In so doing, the paper will consider the reasons why such geographically close areas should fare so differently in terms of marketing. It will be noted that some of the more 'ne-gative' coverage focuses on the social place of women. The paper will go on to make recommendations as to how to develop the image of a destination in crisis while safeguarding the security of the destination for tourists and the local community.

The entire Diamer region of north Pakistan has suffered from a number of natural and anthropogenic crises (NACs) with many of the latter on-going. This paper – which uses the valley and town of Chilas, in Diamer, as an example – explores some of the issues with respect to the marketing of a destination while in crises, with a particular emphasis on face-to-face communication channels and media representations of the area. While there is research re-garding media and tourism (Hays, Page, & Buhalis, 2013), the role of communication media (com-media) in in-crisis destinations (ICDs) still requires attention, especially in relation to face-to-face communication, and especially with regard to obtaining the views of local people. This paper explores the issues faced by one ICD, in particular its negative portrayal in the media and by word-of-mouth. Although an ICD faces many problems, these can, on oc-casion, be used as a beneficial catalyst in terms of development generally, and tourism development more specifically. This paper outlines the positive correlation between crises, place image and the development of a destination and community.

The paper proceeds in the following manner. The following section will proivide some background infromation on the the area under study, including its geography and tourism potential. The following section will give an overview of relevant literature, which will be followed by a section describing the research methodology. This will be followed by a discussion of the results of this study, first there will be a review of the tourism situation in Pakistan followed by the results derived of the case study. There will be an explanation of why the area can be termed an ICD. The section will explore the negative com-media that contributes to Chilas's poor image and its continuing crisis situation. It will be noted that the lack of the visibility of women is particularly da-maging to the representation of the valley and town, although women have an important role in the tourism economy of the destination. The final section will draw together the conclusions from this study.

2. Background of tourism in Pakistan

At the time of data collection (2011–2015), the tourism industry of Pakistan was under the threat of shutdown due to a series of NACs and the accompanying 'negative' media coverage. In parti-cular, Pakistan and Afghanistan have experienced much tension and instability due to national and international conflicts, includ-ing the attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001 (Ali, 2011; Hassan, 2011). Before 9/11, Pakistan had suffered just one suicide bombing, in 1995: an attack on the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad (Pakistan's capital) that killed 15 people. In the last decade, suicide bombers have struck Pakistani targets more than 290 times, killing at least 4600 people and injuring 10,000. The country averaged nearly six terrorist attacks of various kinds each day in 2010 ac-cording to a report by the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (Scoblete, 2011).

Since 9/11, the social and economic conditions of Pakistan have worsened and the war on terror has adversely affected the tourism industry and related human resources of Pakistan very badly. The most

affected guest houses and hotels are those known for re-ceiving foreigners and due to a lack of overseas visitors many are on the verge of closure (Hassan, 2011: 21).

A national terrorism advice is a warning issued by a govern-ment to dissuade its citizens from visiting certain countries. Such a warning has been issued by many national governments against travelling to Pakistan, which Hassan (2011) claims has added to the difficulties that the country faces. This situation is not unique to Pakistan for as Bach notes, '[t[]he first action that governments typically take when faced with a crisis is to close their borders. States seem intent on gaining security by stopping the world from moving', followed by complex passport and visa issues (Bach, 2003 as cited in Bianchi, 2006: 66-67). By issuing warnings against travel to Pakistan, national governments contribute to the creation of negative place image.

In the area under consideration, the Northern Area of Pakistan (NAP), which is in the frontline of the war on terror, hundreds of guest houses have been shut down and the area has has suffered from a number of setbacks (Hassan, 2011). After assuming the role of a front-line supporter of the war on terror, Pakistan's economy suffered from disruption to its normal trading activities. The cost of trading increased because of higher insurance costs, while growth slowed down resulting in a decline of income from tax collection and foreign investment. The cost of Pakistan's involve-ment in the war on terror is esimated to amount to US$67.93 billion or Rs5037 billion, which has affected the country's budget and hit areas including education, health and nutrition, and con-ditions relating to sewage and water sanitation projects. Since the start of the war on terror, Pakistan's investment-to-GDP ratio has declined from 22.5% to 13.5%. The instability the country faces also means that it is less able to deal effectively with natural disasters when they occur and the commonly held view that: 'Pakistan is facing serious problems in almost all the sectors … lack of governance, corrupt leaders, inadequate and faulty planning, and non-availability of speedy justice' (Masood & Shah, 2012: 231) means that the ability to attract international tourists and overseas in-vestors is severely limited.

As Pakistan's image is of a country where a continual war is occurring it is therefore seen as a place which is not safe for travellers. According to Schwab and Brende (2012: 14), '[an]y manifestation of violence can potentially damage a country's image and have a major impact on tourism, as fear can lead tourists and travellers to cancel, postpone, or change their plans'. In addition, as Bianchi (2006: 65) notes, 'global (in)security' is a threat to tourism activity in certain places. Therefore, anthropogenic factors and natural crises are inter-related factors with regard to the study of tourism marketing and development. The tourism infra-structure of the destination under study will be considered in the section which outlines the area of northern Pakistan, which is being considered in the paper. The next section, however, provides the background literature to understanding NACs and the importance of com-media in marketing.

3. Literature review

The connection between tourism, destination marketing and com-media is well established. This is particularly so in relation to research regarding terrorism, political instability, risk and crime. These areas of study have grown in importance since the bombing of the World Trade Centre in 2001 (Kovari & Zimanyi, 2011), and the increasing number of terrorist-related attacks in Egypt, Indonesia, France, Pakistan and Afghanistan (Yang, Sharif, & Khoo-Lattimore, 2015). In addition, as well as studies that have emerged in response to terrorist attacks, research has also explored the connection between tourism and NACs. For instance, De Saus-marez (2007: 277) argues that due to the 'globalisation of busi-ness' and the growth of 'international communication', crises and disasters have gained increasing importance in the world. Al-though crises and disasters have always impacted tourist destinations (Beirman, 2006; Huang, Tseng, & Petrick, 2008), the emergence of their study in tourism scholarship is relatively new (Causevic, 2010; Novelli, Morgan, & Nibigira, 2012; Ritchie,

2004, 2008). In addition, the role of 'tourism in post-conflict societies' remains under-explored in the academic tourism literature (No-velli et al., 2012).

The term 'tourism crisis' is used with increased frequency by destinations suffering from an immediate drop in visitor arrivals (Glaesser, 2003). Sonmez, Backman and Allen (1994: 2) define tourism crises as:

> Any occurrence which can threaten the normal operations and conduct of tourism related businesses; damage a tourist destination's overall reputation for safety, attractiveness, and comfort by negatively affecting visitors' perceptions of that destination; and, in turn, cause downturn in the local travel and tourism economy, and interrupt the continuity of business operations for the local travel and tourism industry, by the reduction in tourist arrivals and expenditures.

Studies by, for example, Jha (2010) and Medair (2011) maintain that crises compound negative impacts at destinations. Consequently, due to the incapacity to cope with the losses caused by natural crises there is 'serious disruption in the functioning of a society and widespread damages to life, property, infrastructure and environment' (Jha, 2010: 2). Jha (2010) further states that anthropogenic crises occur due to human negligence, error, failure of man-made systems, crime, corruption, civil disorder, terrorism and war. Moreover, the effects of NACs have different impacts depending on the wealth of the country concerned. For instance, richer nations can overcome financial, physical and intangible losses faster than poorer countries. Added to this is that financially poor countries tend to be more vulnerable to NACs. The reason for this vulnerability is low capacity, in terms of technology, skills and expertise to promote development which would help with the ability to prepare for, react to, and manage crises situations as they arise (Jha, 2010). As will be discussed, Chilas has been subject to NACs that have combined to impact on the destination financially, physically and intangibly. The intangible impact refers to perceptions of Chilas as a tourist destination.

Research regarding anthropogenic crises is not new. For ex-ample, Sonmez, Apostolopoulos, and Tarlow (1999) and Aschauer (2014) have all investigated responses towards terrorist incidents. In relation to place image in the light of NACs, the role of tour operators has been explored by Aschauer (2014) has examined the reactions of potential tourists to destinations in the immediate aftermath of an attack. Economic, social, and political crises have also received specific attention (for example, Hall, 2000; Hitch-cock, 2001). Similarly, post-crises recovery, for the purpose of tourism development, is also well rehearsed. For instance, Hitch-cock and Putra (2005, 2006) examined the recovery of Bali following terrorist attacks. As well as anthropogenic issues, the area is also subject to natural crises.

Rittichainuwat (2013) explored the perceptions of tourists and tourism suppliers towards natural crises. He argued that the Asian region is more prone to natural disasters than other parts of the world, noting that 'understanding perceived important safety measures is helpful to ensure the confidence of tourists and local residents by increasing safety standards at tourist destinations and effectively allocating money for a safety budget' (Rittichainuwat, 2013: 12) . Hamzah, Hilmi, and Alias (2012) attest that crises have a significant effect on both tourists and communities irrespective of the economic and political situation. However, as Richie (2004, 2008) observes, disasters and crises have different scales of impact on different communities and tourists. Moreover, when a crisis occurs it can cause stress, insecurity and anxiety to tourists resulting in the destination (usually an ICD) being avoided (Coombes & Jones, 2010).

Post-crises recovery processes can take a significant amount of time. As Arain (2011) noted, 'the complex and multi-faceted pro-cesses of post-disaster recovery and reconstruction extend well

beyond the immediate period of restoring basic services and life support infrastructure' (Arain, 2011: 68). However, crises can provide an opportunity for a network of organisations working to support recovery to engage with the ICDs in an attempt to achieve development goals in a sustainable manner. That is rehabilitation and reconstruction which includes the involvement of the local community. In terms of tourism, the way in which a ICD is portrayed becomes even more important. Indeed, with increasing discussions about NACs, the value of the role of place marketing and com-media has been developed, as De Sausmarez (2007: 281– 282) argues:

Regaining the confidence of both the international and domestic markets may be considered of primary importance to post-crisis recovery…The importance of the part played by the media during and after a crisis must not be underestimated… The public's perception of an incident is strongly influenced by how the media report it and exaggerated and inaccurate in-formation may sensationalize or confuse the situation…The involvement of stakeholders from both the private and public sectors and full cooperation between them is essential for a complete and cost effective recovery…The speed of recovery depends not only on the extent of the damage caused by the disaster or crisis but also on how quickly the status quo can be re-established.

It is well known that under-developed areas attract a large number of tourists interested in cultures and environments different from their own (Scheveyens, 2003). However, despite possessing these traits, ICDs do not necessarily attract many tourists (Morakabati, 2007), in part due to poor place image as conveyed through com-media.

Com-media comes in several forms – including print and electronic – and has the power to influence place image (Paris, 2012). In addition, word-of-mouth is important and this paper argues that this channel of communication is the most influential for creating the image of Chilas as a tourist destination. The role that com-media can have on destination images is especially important during and/or after crises. The power of com-media over remote places has increased, as it has combined with other social forces to shape place image (Gao, Zhang, & Decosta, 2012). For example, technology, leading to new and faster forms of com-media and word-of-mouth communication, along with improvements in transport, means that once isolated and remote places become more easily accessible tourist destinations, and under-standing of what these places are like can be more rapidly communicated (Mansson, 2011; Mascheroni, 2007). As Paris (2012: 18) asserts, 'the global visibility of previously remote destinations and small businesses is increasing as they engage [with] social media'. However, image and reality do not necessarily match. Indeed, the situation at a destination is often portrayed differently from actuality by com-media (Mansson, 2011), which in turn influences perceptions of peoples and places (Holloway, 2007; Paris, 2012).

Furthermore, tourists' own experiences also influence perceptions and decisions to travel to a specific place. Even as early as the writings of De-Kadt (1979), and more recently by Mozer (2011), it was observed that tourists' decision-making abilities and future tourism plans are influenced by their previous experience of a place. In addition, Diamond (1977) argued that the plans and perceptions of tourists are affected by both personal experiences with the local community, and information they receive through any communication channel.

As suggested, NACs can undermine the development of tourism in a destination (Morakabati, 2007; Pizam & Mansfield, 1996: 29). At the same time, the development of tourism has a role to play in post-crisis recovery (De Sausmarez, 2007). With regards to the role of the media in tourism development Putra and Hitchcock (2009: 84) note in relation to Bali that 'the press has a particular role to play in helping alleviate the fears of travellers […] media is seen as being a major force in the creation of images of safety and political stability in destination regions'. Thus, during a crisis, positive com-media can play a key role in assisting recovery.

Gao et al. (2012: 198) argue that 'imaginings of a place reflect the individual's psychological needs in terms of future hopes or memories of the past'. In addition, personal imagination is built with information from various communication channels. There-fore, if com-media does not work to promote positive views of a place there could be nothing positive to shape the imaginations of the followers of that com-media. For instance, as the proceeding discussion will show, in Pakistan only a few places are affected by security issues, but the image portrayed is that the entire country is experiencing problems. As this research demonstrates the overall perception of international tourists was not only that Northern Pakistan was unsafe, but that also the people would be hostile to outsiders. As one Japanese tourist [male: 47] advised, ''my friends presume that Pakistani people are very stringent, they don't encourage foreigners on their land and don't take them as friends'.

Similar views were noted by Troconis (2014: 2) who argues that 'usually when people hear the word "Pakistan", negative ideas and images instantly come into their heads. Some people have even gone as far as coining ridiculous advice like, "if a country name ends with "tan," you shouldn't go there"'.

The relationship between tourism and media is crucial as the information conveyed can directly affect the decision-making process (Lee & Joh, 2010). In addition, Smallman and Moore (2010: 399) argue that, 'many choices are based on contextual "facts". Many more are based on perceptions or evaluative judgements of relatively high-risk decisions'. Therefore, perceptions and judgements are based, in part, on how the media project the image of a destination. In a situation of crisis, as Hitchcock and Putra (2009) argue, negative press and media coverage can be an obvious threat to the tourism industry of a country. Therefore, media is an essential element in the representation of a destination (Bandyo-padhyay & Morais, 2005). Tourism and development in any place then, but especially less-developed countries, is highly dependent upon what is portrayed to the potential tourist. The next section outlines, in brief, the data collection methods.

4. Method

The fieldwork was conducted in three different phases over different periods. A visit in 2008 was conducted over two weeks. The second phase, in 2010, lasted for four weeks. The final phase was in 2011 and lasted for 12 weeks. The purpose of the first visit in 2008 was to select the field site in NAP. The Diamer region was selected as the most suitable for tourism research as the region has major tourist attractions. Studies conducted by Felmy (2006) on the development of mountainous regions were taken into account where they highlighted the importance of education and skill-development programmes for local communities in order to take an active part in the development of the region. As part of this preliminary study there was a consideration of the factors to be re-evaluated in the process of reconstructing the place image of an area from a marketing perspective.

As outlined in the preceding discussion, this study revolves around the investigation of people's perceptions, their behaviour and reaction to image issues in the context of development and tourism. Ethnographic research methods were determined to be the most appropriate for the purposes of this research because they would allow in depth data to be collected from a variety of informants. Five key stakeholder groups were identified.

1. Local community

2. Tourism, media and law-enforcement officials

3. Tourists (on spot and who have already been to NAP)

4. Educationists (teachers, students especially from Department of Tourism and Hospitality, Archaeology and Arts and Design) and members of non-government organisations (NGOs)

5. Tour operators/guides (both government and free-lance)

A detailed breakdown of the composition of each group is provided in Table 1.

The use of participant and non-participant observation afforded the opportunity to engage with local people directly. Being able to speak to informants in the field was a key element of the research that was underpinned by the desire to give local people a voice. As the field work progressed, semi-structured interviews were held with government officials, members of the Department of Media and Marketing, Department of Archaeology, and the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation. Local people participated in two focus groups, one consisting of women and the other of men. As well as gaining insights from the local community, the direct interaction with its members allowed the information from the various government departments to be cross-checked. The interview data was subsequently transcribed and analysed using a thematic schema. The next section sets the scene in terms of outlining the area of study.

Table 1

Research participants.

Categories of respondents	No. of respondents
Interviews from local community (informal and semi-structured):	
Men	12
Women	16
Formal and structured interviews	
Tourism officials	5
Tourism educators/archaeologists	4
Semi-structured interviews from misc. tourism stakeholders	
Tourists/visitors, nationals/foreigners	8/6
Tourism facilitators/media and marketing sector, hos-pitality sector, security and law enforcement unit	5
Mountaineers	2
Total interviews	58
Focus groups ¼ 3 settings	
Pakistan tourism development corporation and media sector	8 participants
Members of local community (male, age group be-tween 18 and 70)	6 participants
Members of local community (female, age group be-tween 18 and 70)	16 participants

5. Area of study

The research for this paper is based on a remote valley in northern Pakistan called Chilas. The Chilas valley is in the district of Diamer, which in turn is situated in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). The Chilas valley is small and, located along the centre of the ancient Silk Road (Dani, 1983; Tourism Division Pakistan, 1971), on the left bank of the Indus River, it experiences extremes in temperature and precipitation. Chilas is connected to the Chinese cities of Kashghar and Tashkuragan via the Gilgit, Sust and Khunjerab Passes. It can be reached by the world's highest road, The Karakoram Highway : the ancient Silk Road (Travel & Culture, 2011).

The population of the Diamer District is approximately 300,000. More than one language is spoken and understood in the area. Literacy levels are low compared to other places in the region (Rao & Marwat, 2003). The Chilas valley consists of a largely un-spoilt natural environment, and a hierarchical but closely-knitted community structure. In addition, the local population works mainly with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and is involved in wood crafting and home-based businesses.

In terms of natural resources, the area is known for its gold, and maruts (gold washers) can be seen panning along the Indus. The Chilas community owns naturally growing montane forests and receives a grant of timber and firewood from the government of Pakistan (Rao & Marwat, 2003). The valley is surrounded by one of the highest mountain ranges in the world; to access them visitors pass through Chilas, but rarely stay, apart from repeat visitors (Mock & O' Neil, 2006a, 2006b).

In addition to its natural attractions, Chilas is also home to ancient rock art, which not only interests national and interna-tional researchers, but also tourists (Baseer, 2009, 2010; Buddhist Channel, 2008; Khalid, 2009; Mujtaba, 2009). This unique art has received attention from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2012–2013, 2014–2015) and scholars based in Germany interested in its preservation (Balochistan Times, 2009). The tremendous diversity of the carvings not only provides in-sights into the history of the different socio-cultural, political, and religious traditions and beliefs associated with the region, but also demonstrates the area's strategic importance (Balochistan Times, 2009; Dani, 1983; Tourism Division Pakistan, 1971). Other features of cultural interest include the remains of an ancient Buddhist university found in the village of Phuguch, in the Darel, a valley adjacent to Chilas (Kalhoro, 2011). Also to be found in the Darel Valley is an early school of arts, which has been restored by archaeologists as part of the valley's cultural heritage.

Further to the natural and cultural ecology of the area, the Government of Pakistan, with help from the United Nations World Tourism Organization, planned to establish an open-air museum in Chilas with 3D replica displays of the rock art (Balochistan Times, 2009; Ali, 2008). However, due to a lack of funding and some political complexities the project has yet to be opeationalized (Singh, 2015). The Balochistan Times is an English language daily newspaper, published in the province of Balochistan. It does not have a wide readership locally because it is not accessible for those who do not speak English or have no Internet access.

The preceding discussion has outlined some of Chilas's unique geography and history. Given what the place has to offer in terms of providing attractions which would operate as tourist pull factors, it is curious as to why Chilas is not as popular for visitors as its neighbouring towns and valleys. Although it is well known in the study of tourism that the development of tourism can have drawbacks for a destination and its peoples, the potential to benefit from tourism still exists. Chilas is an area which has suffered a number of NACs and could be assisted to emerge from this scenario if the local community could benefit (and not just financially) from tourism. The research data shows that among the factors which hinder tourism development in Chilas are negative place image and com-media. The next section outlines the tourism infrastructure of Chilas.

5.1. Tourism infrastructure in Chilas

In terms of local information, there is no written material available either for tourists or locals; nor is there information or maps showing routes to various visitor attractions, making it difficult for tourists to reach their desired destination on time or without having to rely on the help of others. There is no functional tourist information office in the Chilas valley, and there is a lack of training and skills available for those who have started their own firms to guide tourists. There are no services available in the region for interpretation meaning that international tourists need to book in advance with agencies located in Islamabad, which incurs extra charges.

There are some NGOs working to promote education, skills, training and tourism; however, due to political instability most of them have non-functioning offices in the area. There is little in the way of tourism development or place promotion in Chilas, with the exception of the advertising of one tourist resort by the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation.

With regards to other tourism infrastructure, there is a short-age of both accommodation and a developed transport system. There are no public toilets or roadside bins, and clean water is not available. The condition of the Silk Road passing through Chilas is poor due to landslides and delays in the removal of debris. Outside of private homes there are no provisions, and women and men are catered for separately, which discourages tourists with families who want to stay together. There are only a few well-equipped resorts, namely Shangrila Hotel, Hotel Chilas Inn and Panorama, all of which increase their prices during the high season. Hotels and resorts with lower prices are not well maintained. Electricity supplies are unreliable and there is an increasing number of power cuts in the area, as well as in Pakistan more generally.

Due to the higher than national average rates of illiteracy in Chilas, Chilassi people have minimal representation at official levels in the tourism industry or other government institutes. By contrast the neighbouring destinations specifically Gilgit and Chitral have higher rates of literacy, and therefore enjoy greater representation on official bodies. As a result, they are in a stronger position to direct tourists, researchers and funders to their home areas. For example, during data collection, the researcher was directed to Gilgit by an official of the area working in the Ministry of Tourism in Islamabad, and was told not to visit Chilas by stating, 'you wouldn't be able to see any woman in the region'. In addition, the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation was unable to provide any data about tourism in Chilas. Due to the apparent lack of interest from national government and 'negative' representations of the area from tourism officials, the Chilassi community feels neglected. The next section gives an overview of the crises that Chilas faces and explores in more depth the problems of its representation by com-media.

6. Discussion and findings

6.1. Destination crises

In Pakistan, especially in the north, at the time of the field re-search political instability and terrorism were at the root of the decline in tourism. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2011) maintained that if the security situation in KPK remained stable, or improved, then it would be possible to improve the economy and standards of living. However, along with the political instability, the weak tourism infrastructure – including poor transport networks – the lack of marketing and the low priority given to the tourism sector by the government means that Pakistan is in an increasingly weak position in terms of its ability to compete in the world tourism market. Along with these issues, continuing economic instability, rising inflation and poverty are further inhibitors to the development of tourism in the country, and especially NAP (Hassan, 2011). Since the bombing of the World Trade Center in 2001, Pakistan has faced a fall in tourist numbers. Following 9/11, the country's tourism industry was damaged further by a disastrous earthquake in 2005, which devastated almost half of North Pakistan. Prior to this the area was the most visited region in the country. Another major blow was the floods in 2010 (Asad, 2011). More recently, the Taliban's control over the Swat Valley (known as the Switzerland of Pakistan) and the military operation against terrorism in that area has also damaged the tourism industry. Moreover, as Raoul (2008) and World Travel Market (2011) have noted, Pakistan is perceived as a hotbed of terrorism, which is creating obstacles to the growth of the tourism industry.

A major concern is security. Pakistan's image is of a country where a war is on-going and is not, therefore, safe for travellers. As Schwab and Brende (2012: 14) state, 'any manifestation of violence can potentially damage a country's image and have a major impact on tourism, as fear can lead tourists and travellers to cancel, postpone, or change their plans'. Chilas's problems resulting from the natural crises of earthquakes and floods are compounded by the anthropogenic factors (and vice-versa) to hinder tourism development.

Negative com-media becomes part of the anthropogenic crises influencing under and post-crises communities. This has been the case for Pakistan and is keenly felt in Chilas where the anthropogenic crises are thought to be, in the words of one interviewee, 'aggravated by media' [male: 46: businessman]. This was attributed to the idea that 'our media is not free. In certain cases due to political issues media is not allowed to uncover the lies other media tell'. One of the biggest threats to tourism in Pakistan, then, is the media, as a comment posted on TR. News (2009), an online magazine, remarked:

Terrorism does affect tourism badly – but at the same [time] the wrong information by the media is even worse. For example the northern part of Pakistan is a huge area – it is as big as Austria and Switzerland put together and this is the most peaceful and the most beautiful part of Pakistan. The trouble area is the North West. But when the media gives information, it does not specify the particular area and only mentions 'North', it does not realise that this misinformation causes da-mage to the country.

Pakistan has huge potential for tourism development compared to other parts of the world in terms of its so far unspoilt natural environment. Positive com-media is therefore needed to mitigate the various effects of a negative place image. With regard to Chilas, the research showed that the image of one part of Pakistan was taken to be representative of the whole. For example, the negative publicity arising from the anthropogenic crises in the Swat and North Waziristan border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan has been applied to the whole country. Tourists, mainly from Europe, have developed a fear of visiting Pakistan for security reasons (Aqeel, 2008). At one time the country received more than half a million tourists annually, but the figure is now nearer to zero, especially as many countries have declared Pakistan a dangerous place to visit (Sikandar, 2012). The reputation of Pakistan as unsafe was highlighted by one informant [Male: 34: army: Eastern Pakistan] who remarked:

Even though we are fighting against terrorism on the front line, which is affecting our families … despite all these efforts we are after all [called], "terrorists" and the most dangerous nation on the globe … This is yet another disaster we are facing that the image of a peaceful nation is connected with terror.

Both Asad (2011) and the Ecotourism Society of Pakistan (ESP, 2011) have highlighted that countries that have faced anthropogenic disasters, but increased their budget on tourism promotion and publicity, eventually recovered from a downward trend. However, Pakistan is faced with a situation where it is essential to allocate resources to security, rather than public welfare. In this regard one interviewee [Male: 46: political agent] stated:

The Government is also helpless, what else can we do other than to allocate most of our budget to security matters at this crucial stage … most of our budget, which is supposed to establish universities in far flung areas of KPK, and hospitals, parks, dams and be for the welfare of the general public, goes to feed our army which is fighting against terrorism not only for Pakistan but other countries such as America and Afghanistan.

Another respondent argued that 'the Government pretends that a major portion of funds goes to the budget for war against terror-ism … Nothing is left to develop other sectors. Does this mean that the rehabilitation and education of the sufferers is not important?' [Male: 34: teacher]. Attention to social needs, such as psychological support in the shape of opportunities for post-NAC counsel-ling, and education, skills, and job opportunities for ICDs, is not at the forefront of policy-making.

In Chilas, the issue of resistance towards the development authorities and their plans came up during the field research. Op-position against encouraging outsiders to the region and towards development in Chilas by the Chilassi community was the basis of a comment from a tourism official who described Chilas as a 'backward area [with] rigid people living in the dark ages [male: 47]. At the same time, communication between government institutions, NGOs and local communities is negligible, contributing to clashes between the groups and causing the ICD to suffer more. One informant [male: 44: retailer] observed, "it is seen that all institutes pay attention to the obvious sufferers of crises or who have power to influence them to get appropriate compensation.

The rest are left with nothing or packets of biscuits and juices'. The lack of coordination between development agencies, government and ICDs contributes to inadequate planning making it difficult to overcome the physical and psychological effects of crises. The slower development processes and resistance from ICDs following NACs has left the tourism sector of Pakistan in a weakened position, which, in turn, has adverse impacts on Chilas.

Pakistan has suffered from negative press, as Goldberg and Ambinder (2011), writing in The Atlantic (a UK based magazine) under the heading 'The Ally from Hell', argue that 'Pakistan is an unstable and violent country located at the epicentre of global jihadism'. The same understandings of Pakistan have been propagated by unskilled and biased com-media: for example, the article in The Atlantic, which has negatively affected the image of the country and places within it. Therefore, places such as the grassland area known as Fairy Meadows in Chilas, once portrayed as 'paradise on earth', are no longer considered safe and secure for tourists. This, in turn, affects the socio-economic lives of the people who live in such places. In the words of an informant [male: 47: teacher]:

> World's detestation of Pakistanis is the perception that Pakistanis are terrorists [and] it is assumed by mostly developed countries that terrorism has been generated by Pakistan. Whereas if we see Pakistanis with unbiased eyes, we are fighting upfront to control terrorism [but] we are actually the ones who are suffering the most.

The information about Pakistan spread by com-media has provided potential tourists with a negative image of the country. For example, a UK-based informant [female: 31: law student] commented that:

> From what I have heard in the news it is fair enough to know Pakistan as an unsafe country for international tourists… though I know Pakistan is a heavenly place to be visited but no-one would want to go for holidays at the possible cost of his or her life.

A UK-based travel agent [female: 30s] advised 'I personally won't go to Pakistan for holidays…they [Pakistani travel agents, com-media] do not sell Pakistan as a tourist destination … No-one has ever enquired about Pakistani tourist destinations either'.

One example of the creation of a negative image is a news item by a Pakistani News Channel, the ARY News (2014), which presented the town of Chilas as haunted. The views expressed by these informants demonstrate the role com-media has in shaping people's perceptions of place. Chilas then, faces a two-fold image problem. Firstly, the image of Pakistan as a whole, and secondly the image of Chilas itself. This issue was well understood by one informant, a representative of the Chilassi government [Male: 46] who commented, albeit with a highly gendered metaphor:

> If there is no social interaction with the rest of the world then no one would ever know about the actual facts and figures about some particular situations because most of the time media creates misunderstandings … Media channels act like two wives of a man where one complains about the other … Suppose one is quiet in nature while the other is expressive,

tell me who you will pay attention to? … You will make your mind up according to the one who is telling loudly whether she is right or wrong.

6.2. Stay away from Chilas

'I hear that Chilas is a ghost town these days … For me, it has always been
a creepy place where women are nowhere to be seen and bearded men
carry guns and stare at you with hostility – I always avoid stopping there
while going by road to Gilgit or Hunza
from Islamabad on the KKH' (Khan, 2013).

Such a view, as expressed by Khan, was not unknown in the areas surrounding Chilas. Indeed, before commencing fieldwork, the researcher was advised against travelling to the area by two informants from cities outside of the region. One specifically claimed 'it wouldn't be easy for you to contact women … you won't be able to mobilise to conduct interviews due to rigidity within the Chilassi community' [male: tourism official based in Islamabad]. In addition, the research data revealed that not only is the tourism sector of Pakistan not taking an interest in Chilas, but also tourism officials, who act as marketing agents, actively dis-courage tourists from visiting Chilas. The reason they give is that there is a generally unfriendly environment but that it is particularly unfriendly for women. Tourists with families tend to take the official advice and instead visit the Gilgit and Hunza valleys further to the north. The negative perception of Chilas is reinforced by the tourism representatives for these neighbouring destinations who also direct tourists away from Chilas.

During the research another factor was noted that has implications for tourism in Chilas: the affiliation of regional and national government, tourism officials, and media personnel with neighbouring destinations. As mentioned in the preceding discussion, the literacy rate in Chilas is lower compared to neighbouring areas which means it is difficult and highly unlikely for Chilassi people to reach the higher levels of government and media organisations.

It is also worth noting that although it is the case that the women of Chilas were seen infrequently outside of their homes, as they are allocated the duties of the internal domestic sphere, women visitors to the area are warmly welcomed into those homes by the Chilassi men. The hospitality provided by these households has not yet been commodified and offers of free accommodation, food, and baby-sitting are not uncommon. How-ever, despite such welcoming attitudes the area still receives a 'negative press' and the lack of skilled com-media and problems with power cuts, which interferes with the use of electronic communication systems, means that the promotion of Chilas to tourists remains problematic. As one male student informant (aged, 22) explained:

They [the international com-media] ask questions and find answers within themselves, people who tell the stories about us are mainly the ones who have never visited Chilas … We are held up because of no reliable resources and electric supply … no ways to be active and truthful on social media to share our own view point. The trust issue and communication gap be-tween the local and national governments, marketing agencies and local community has widened..

As well as encouraging tourists away from Chilas, officials in the Ministry of Tourism also tend to direct development and in-vestment authorities to areas from which they themselves originate. As one informant [male: Army: Eastern part of Pakistan] explained about the distribution of financial resources: 'the non-allocation or utilization of the budget to its appropriate place has caused prejudice against Chilas and the Chilassi community, and com-media is making it worse'. Another informant [male: 33: Southern Pakistan] says of the media and government agencies, ''they are just earning money by exaggerating the real situation.

The uneven distribution of resources was a concern echoed by another informant [male: 44: retailer] who claimed that 'all institutes [NGOs and government] pay attention to the ones who have power to influence them to receive compensation. The rest are left with nothing'. In addition concerns were raised about corruption as another respondent [male: 34: teacher] contended 'most of the budget goes to politicians' private accounts. There is no accountability to the government for the increasing rate of corruption'

In a discussion about terrorism a respondent [male: 38: social worker] explained, 'media has not played its appropriate part to deliver the real situation. Even we Pakistanis do not know what is going on in other cities, what has caused a young boy to go for suicide attack in bazaars, who Taliban actually are and what their motive is'.

The situation is compounded by the lack of a reliable mobile phone signal, Internet connection, and TV and radio signals. Similarly, the lack of attention to com-media in Chilas has contributed to the decline of tourism and as one informant advised, 'the destination and people have not been projected by skilled or unbiased media' [female: 76: international tourist].

The information circulated by com-media warning tourists against travelling to Pakistan is among the reasons for the decline of Pakistan's tourism industry. Therefore, during crisis situations, the messages by com-media need attention to ensure that accurate and positive information is being communicated. In addition, it is necessary to encourage outsiders/tourists to penetrate the destination and communicate with the local people. This can be achieved with the help of appropriate tourism promotion and planning strategies, which involve local communities. By involving local communities they have the potential to take part in their future development, rather than being left out, which has been the case with the Chilassi community, as one local retailer [male: 54] commented about the national com-media:

> We have never had any established media department here so how come they say that the area is not safe to travel to, how come one can assume that the local community is very hard to interact with or that very tough people live here. These are all misconceptions and misunderstandings about the area and us.

6.3. The problem of women in Chilas as a conflict-ridden destination

As noted, Chilas has been portrayed as a place where women are nowhere to be seen (Khan, 2013): and yet they are crucial to the welcome offered to both national and international visitors. Their lack of a role in com-media is not exclusive to Chilas, and Mehdi Hassan (cited in Khattak, 2012: 167) has noted, of Pakistan, as a whole, 'Pakistan needed more women … in media as gate-keepers.' It was a common thought among the women informants in Chilas that their contribution towards development, and their role in tourism, has never been properly projected by com-media at either an international or national level. Given the contribution that women make to welcoming visitors, as well as taking on the work of those who have left the community for better employment prospects elsewhere, accurately presenting their role could act as a catalyst for their further involvement in development activities, as well as countering the negative image of women in the area.

When tourists do visit the region Chilassi women have the chance to earn money by selling their products directly to the tourists. During the summer, the Chilassi community migrates to the Babusar valley to escape the heat of Chilas. Babusar valley is one of the most popular tourist destinations in NAP and thus presents a great opportunity for Chilassi women to sell the handicrafts they have made in the winter. In addition, during their stay in Babusar the women were seen guiding and interacting with tourists, including extending free hospitality in the form of cooking meals for tourists to eat. The

encounters with 'outsiders' offer the Chilassi women opportunities to gain knowledge and under-standing of life apart from their immediate community. As one woman (30s: farmer) explained:

> I had a chance to learn a lot from visitors while grazing my livestock here. I have learnt and can understand a little bit of many languages … I came to know a little bit of what my rights are as a woman … My friend [a visitor from Abbottabad I met in Diamer] guided me about what else I could do to earn my livelihood other than working on farms and grazing livestock. I am saving money now to open a shop inside my house for which I have allocated a room already … I am much more confident after seeing Clark [a lady from Florida] as how they go alone for work, education … and you know she drives her own car as well.

In addition to direct interactions with tourists that the summer allows, women were also involved in tourism in an indirect manner supporting their male family members by doing the laundry for the hotels where the men were employed and cooking for visitors invited to the family home by the men. However, the role that the women play is not acknowledged. As another respondent [Female: 30: housewife] noted, 'they [men] are known as hospitable people but what if we [women] don't cook and re-fuse to look after their guests? Their hospitality will be nothing without the active contribution from women'.

That the reputation of Chilas is one in which women are seen as hidden com-media has a key role to play in helping to address this misrepresentation, especially given that women play a key role in the tourism-related services available. As one informant [Male: 33: army] observed, 'if our media departments do their jobs honestly then, I am pretty sure we can be in the list of developing countries, if not amongst fully developed countries in 5–10 years' time'.

Not only is it the case that com-media should make accurate representations, but, in so doing, there is an argument for suggesting that in under crises and post-crises situations this can act in a positive way for the community. As Noy and Vu (2010: 345) state, 'several recent studies have found a positive correlation between the frequency of natural disasters and long run economic growth and have interpreted that as evidence that disasters pro-vide opportunities for reconstructing the capital stock to make it more productive'. The next section will explore how NACs can become positive.

6.4. NAC-derived development

Morakabati (2007) argues that post-NAC recovery depends upon the destination's strength and stage of development. Re-search in Chilas suggests that recovery is highly dependent upon the efficiency and adequacy of skilled and fair com-media. In Chilas informants from the local community reported that tourist arrivals – especially women and children – have fallen in number in recent years. The local community had been accustomed to earning some tourist-related income, but this has declined in parallel with the decrease in tourism. Com-media is blamed for the decline due to the negative image of the area and local people that it propagates. As one interviewee [Male: 34: teacher] explained, 'if media channels do their work in a constructive way, rather than propagating to take control over other competitors [other media channels] disasters could be the source of generating more income and tourism to the country'.

As demonstrated in the foregoing discussion, crises, whether natural or anthropogenic, may change the entire situation of a country's social, economic, environmental and physical life. However, some studies, for example Williams and Balaz (2013a, 2013b), have shown that risks and crises can become part of a tourism package. Similarly, Cater (2006), Dickson and Dolnicar (2004), and Quintal, Lee, and Soutar (2010) have all noted that risk-taking can contribute to the excitement and positive

experience of travel. As such there are not only negative impacts derived from NACs, but also positive development opportunities for an ICD. For instance, in the case of Pakistan some NACs have brought attention from national and international charities and development organisations to the ICD. This focus has minimised the gap in communication between the ICD and development authorities, which in turn has positive results for development. For example, following the major earthquake of 2005, and the floods and epidemics in 2010 and 2011, affected areas received a lot of attention from development institutes, NGOs, the United Nations organisations, and many national and international charities. These organisations contributed to providing rehabilitation, and training to those affected (BBC, 2010; IFRC, 2012). Many of the international organisations and NGOs initiated measures to provide financial and social support in the form of teacher training, hospital and nursing staff, schools for local girls, water and sanitation, and the provision of medical equipment (IFRC, 2012). Work remains on-going in the earthquake afflicted area in the form of building new houses (Dawn, 2014; ERRA, 2007, 2010).

There is a significant budget allocated to facilitate tourism in the Diamer region from the Annual Development Programme (ADP, 2012) of the government. At a meeting in November 2010 the Government of KPK concentrated on the further development of the whole province. Working with the World Bank and United Nations Development Group, the KPK government sought to gain control over NAC peace building initiatives and undertook a post-conflict needs assessment in order to try to address development issues (The World Bank Group, 2010; UNDG, nd; Pakistan Development Forum (2010); Daily Times, 2010). However, Chilas still suffers from a negative place image despite the efforts made by the Planning and Development government department. This negative image can, in part, be attributed to the lack of effective positive com-media.

7. Conclusion

This paper has explored the role of image and com-media with regard to the ICD and peoples of Chilas, northern Pakistan. It highlights the relationship between image and com-media re-presentations and how this relationship can exacerbate crises, or become part of the crises. In Chilas, it is evident that there is a lack of trust between members of the local community and the marketing and development authorities. The place suffers from a negative place image, and, as discussed, this is often with specific reference to women.

However, despite the problems that Chilas faces, it is not necessarily the case that it needs to remain in this situation, or on a downward trajectory. As noted, crises can lead to development. For example, after the earthquakes of 2005, national and international development agencies turned their attention toward the development of the rural area of Balakot, also in North Pakistan. Post-earthquake Balakot has enjoyed an improved infrastructure, restoration of natural sites, and the improvement or installation of social welfare facilities – schools, hospital, skills development (BBC, 2010; UNISDR, 2009) – all of which help to underpin the development of tourism facilities, which in turn can be beneficial to the local community. Likewise, positive and skilled com-media also has a role to play in supporting communities during and after crises. It may not be the role of com-media to achieve development goals; but nor is it the role of those responsible to hinder those processes. In addition if com-media can assist a destination in crises, especially where there are limited or weak resources, then, for humanitarian purposes, why should it not do so? This is not to say that places should be misrepresented, but that rather there is a need to always keep in mind the conflict between the idea of objectivity and the subjective. If messages sent via com-media are only based on the prejudices of those responsible for media output then this mitigates against the attainment of a so-called objective reality by potential visitors deterred from visiting the place concerned. It is evident that Chilas is in need of help and that com-media has a role to play in achieving development goals.

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