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CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC): TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT

Economic corridors have become an important driver of sustainable growth and development in many countries. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a major project that connects China and Pakistan via an extensive rail and road network. It covers a distance from Gwadar to Kashgar and provides economic and strategic advantages to Pakistan, while also promoting regional development and tourism. The potential of CPEC to foster tourism development has been evaluated, taking into consideration the cultural and heritage tourism prospects of the project. The study also includes a comparative analysis of CPEC tourism potential with similar infrastructure and economic development projects worldwide, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor. Furthermore, the impact of economic corridors on local communities has been examined, including the benefits and challenges of infrastructure and economic development

initiatives with tourism development. The study highlights the critical role of regional cooperation, tourism development, cultural heritage, political stability, transparency, environmental impact assessment, and debt management in ensuring the success of such projects. Policymakers and stakeholders can draw useful insights from best practices and lessons learned from similar projects worldwide. Overall, the CPEC has the potential to promote tourism and cultural heritage, economic growth and transform the future of the region.

INTRODUCTION

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) aims to improve economic cooperation between China and Pakistan. Developing cultural and heritage tourism along the CPEC has the potential to generate economic benefits and promote cross-cultural understanding. This involves identifying and preserving resources, developing infrastructure, and using technology such as digital mapping and data analytics to enhance the tourism experience. The process of structural development in society or between societies is a crucial factor that requires significant investment and carries risks of failure. In the development sector, both public and private stakeholders have a pivotal role in the idea development, implementation, and commercialization phases. The tourism industry is not an exception to this rule (Mistilis, Buhalis, & Gretzel, 2014). When investing in tourism development projects, the risks and failure rates are also significant concerns that need to be taken into account to avoid redundancies in the implementation of the project. Therefore, it is essential to consider the limitations of time, budget, and process when implementing tourism development projects (Rasool et al., 2022).

The CPEC project has significant implications for the tourism industry in both China and Pakistan. As mentioned, the CPEC project aims to increase revenue and reduce costs, with a focus on mutual benefits between the two countries. This project is significant for Pakistan as it is lagging in various important fields, including technology and social development (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Ali, 2019). The development of infrastructure through the CPEC project can increase connectivity, facilitate trade, and promote tourism in Pakistan. Furthermore, the project can also have a positive impact on the tourism industry in China by reducing the overhead costs of importing oil and petroleum products (M Ibrar, Mi, & Rafiq, 2016). The CPEC project has the potential to create job opportunities, reduce poverty and promote economic growth, all of which can contribute positively to the tourism industry in both countries.

The heavy infrastructural development in China has not only amazed the world but also opened up new tourism opportunities. The development of the railroad system in just three years has made it easier for tourists to travel to various parts of China, allowing them to explore the country's rich history, culture, and natural beauty. The quick development of the railroad system has also made it possible for tourists to access remote areas of the country, which were previously difficult to reach. With the development of the CPEC, there is great potential for tourism to flourish, as it will not only improve the living standards of the local communities but also create more job opportunities,

making it an attractive destination for tourists from around the world. The development of the economic corridor is not just the road to economic prosperity but also the future of tourism in the region.

In this research, a specific project that has recently become a buzzword for millions of people, the CPEC, is analyzed from important and necessary points of view. The CPEC project has resulted in tremendous development for both China and Pakistan and has significant implications for the tourism industry. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the risks and limitations associated with tourism development projects, such as the CPEC, to ensure successful implementation and maximize the potential benefits.

State of the art

The CPEC and the BRI are ambitious development projects aimed at enhancing trade, connectivity, and economic cooperation among countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa. These initiatives have significant implications for tourism development, with the potential to foster cultural exchange, facilitate travel, and create new economic opportunities in the tourism industry (Muhammad Ibrar, Kakepoto, Manzoor, & Khan, 2022; M Ibrar et al., 2016). The CPEC has created new tourism opportunities in Pakistan through the development of new transportation infrastructure such as highways, railways, and airports. These improvements have enabled easier access to tourist destinations across the country and opened up new economic opportunities in the tourism industry (Arshad, Iqbal, & Shahbaz, 2018). The private sector has responded positively to these opportunities, leading to significant investment in new tourist facilities and accommodations throughout the country. Additionally, the preservation of historic sites and monuments has the potential to attract more tourists interested in cultural and heritage tourism (Wager, 1995). Likewise, the BRI has implications for tourism development by fostering new transportation infrastructure, tourism-related infrastructure, and opportunities for cultural exchange (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2022). The development of new transportation infrastructure, including railways, highways, and airports, has improved connectivity and made it easier for tourists to visit multiple destinations along the BRI (MUHAMMAD IBRAR et al.; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Karim, et al., 2018; Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2019). The BRI has also led to the development of new tourism-related infrastructure, such as hotels, resorts, and theme parks, stimulating investment and creating new economic opportunities in the tourism industry in many countries along the BRI. Furthermore, the BRI has the potential to promote cultural and heritage tourism by creating opportunities for cross-border tourism and cultural exchange. Many countries along the BRI are rich in cultural heritage, and the development of new tourism-related infrastructure has facilitated the exploration of these sites. Additionally, the growth of tourism-related industries, including food and beverage, entertainment, and retail, has created new opportunities for job creation and economic growth in many countries along the BRI (Khan, Bibi, Lorenzo, Lyu, & Babar, 2020). CPEC and BRI initiatives have significant implications for tourism development, creating new opportunities for cultural exchange, travel, and economic growth in the

tourism industry. The development of new transportation infrastructure, tourism-related infrastructure, and opportunities for cultural exchange has stimulated investment and created new economic opportunities in many countries along the initiatives (S. Ali, Daud, & Ibrar, 2021; Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2019; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Shah, & Rafiq, 2020). Further efforts to promote tourism and foster cooperation among countries could continue to accelerate the growth of the tourism industry in the region.

China-Pakistan Relations in the Context of tourism development

The CPEC is a large-scale development initiative that aims to connect China's western region with the Arabian Sea via Pakistan, through the creation of new infrastructure and development projects. This has increased economic ties between the two countries, leading to various opportunities for tourism development in Pakistan (Rafiq, 2021). The development of new highways, railways, and other infrastructure projects has facilitated easier travel for tourists across Pakistan. This has led to an increase in tourism demand, resulting in the creation of new jobs and economic opportunities in Pakistan. Additionally, China and Pakistan have cooperated in promoting tourism, with agreements signed to promote cultural and heritage tourism and the development of tourism infrastructure (S. Kanwal, M. I. Rasheed, A. H. Pitafi, A. Pitafi, & M. J. T. M. Ren, 2020b). The efforts to promote tourism have yielded positive results, with an increase in the number of Chinese tourists visiting Pakistan. Both countries have signed agreements to further enhance tourism between them, including streamlining visa procedures and establishing direct flights between major cities (Meo, Chowdhury, Shaikh, Ali, & Masood Sheikh, 2018).

CPEC initiative has had a positive impact on tourism development in Pakistan, through the creation of new infrastructure, economic opportunities, and increased cooperation between China and Pakistan in promoting tourism.

BRI and Tourism Development

The BRI is a comprehensive initiative that aims to create new transportation infrastructure, trade networks, and economic partnerships between Asia, Europe, and Africa. The BRI has important implications for tourism development, as it has the potential to facilitate easier travel, stimulate investment in tourism-related infrastructure, and create opportunities for cultural exchange (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2022; Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, Rafiq, & Buriro, 2018). One of the key benefits of the BRI for tourism development is the development of new transportation infrastructure, including railways, highways, and airports. This has created new opportunities for multi-destination travel and made it easier for tourists to explore multiple destinations. The development of new transportation infrastructure has also facilitated the creation of new tourism-related infrastructure, including hotels, resorts, and theme parks, which has stimulated investment in the tourism industry. Moreover, the BRI has the potential to promote cultural and heritage tourism by creating opportunities for cultural exchange and cross-border

tourism. Countries along the BRI are rich in cultural heritage, and the development of new tourism-related infrastructure has made it easier for tourists to explore these sites. This has led to the development of new tourism-related industries, including food and beverage, entertainment, and retail, which have created new opportunities for job creation and economic growth. Furthermore, the BRI has stimulated investment in the tourism industry and has created new economic opportunities in many countries along the BRI (Mamirkulova et al., 2020). The creation of new tourism-related infrastructure has led to the development of new businesses and has stimulated the growth of existing businesses in the tourism industry. This has led to job creation and economic growth and has created opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises in many countries along the BRI.

BRI has significant implications for tourism development, as it has the potential to stimulate investment in the tourism industry, create new opportunities for cultural exchange, and facilitate the development of new transportation infrastructure. The initiative has created new opportunities for job creation and economic growth and has the potential to create a more connected and dynamic tourism industry in the region.

CPEC and Tourism Development

The CPEC is a large-scale infrastructural development project with the potential to significantly impact the tourism industry in Pakistan. With the improvement of transportation infrastructure, such as highways, railways, and airports, tourists will have easier access to various parts of the country. The development of new tourist destinations, such as the Gwadar Port and scenic routes, will also contribute to the growth of the tourism industry in Pakistan. The CPEC is considered to be the largest project that Pakistan has ever undertaken, with significant economic and political implications. Its development includes the renovation of major infrastructures such as hospitals, national health systems, ICT, and national broadband improvement, as well as the creation and renovation of dams, wind plants, and petrol and gas extraction in various areas of Pakistan (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, et al., 2018). This mega-project aims to generate 4 million jobs directly for the local communities of China and Pakistan, which will improve the economic conditions of the people. The rapid infrastructural development of China from 2005 to 2008 is also worth mentioning. The development of its railroad system in just three years has been hailed as the biggest investment boom in history, with economists claiming it to be the heaviest investment in the development sector by any country. The improvements in China's infrastructure have a positive impact on the tourism industry, making it easier for tourists to travel around the country and experience its rich cultural heritage (S. Kanwal, M. I. Rasheed, A. H. Pitafi, A. Pitafi, & M. Ren, 2020a). The completion of CPEC will not only benefit Pakistan's economy but also create new opportunities for the tourism industry. The development of new tourist destinations and the improvement of transportation infrastructure will attract more foreign investment and boost the growth of the tourism industry. The economic corridor established by CPEC is not only a road to economic prosperity for

Pakistan but also a significant contributor to the future of the world.

Tourism plays an important role in the longstanding friendship between Pakistan and China. Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1951, the two countries have maintained friendly relations and mutual assistance. China has been a significant source of economic assistance to Pakistan, with a particular focus on infrastructure development, energy, and communication sectors. Pakistan's strategic location is essential for China to access the Middle East, Europe, and Africa through the Gawadar World deep sea port, and China has been a vital partner in the development of Pakistan's economy (Muhammad Ibrar et al., 2022). In recent years, the proposed CPEC has further strengthened the ties between the two nations, offering opportunities for tourism and economic growth. The CPEC will connect Xinjiang, China's northwestern province, with Pakistan's Gwadar port through a network of roads, providing much-needed economic infrastructure and power generation plants (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Karan, 2016). This project will enhance the tourism industry in Pakistan, boost the economy, and promote regional connectivity. With a shared history of ancient cultures of peace and hospitality, the two nations welcome visitors to experience their friendly relations and cultural heritage (Kanwal et al., 2020b).

In the context of tourism, the research study's findings on the importance of community support and information dissemination can help promote sustainable tourism in Pakistan. The study emphasizes the need for involving the community in decision-making and disseminating information to gain their support. The study's model also highlights the importance of community attitudes in mediating the relationship between the perceived impact of mega projects and community support. CPEC, with its economic interests and opportunities, has brought significant incentives for Pakistan's different sectors, including tourism (Freeman, 2009). The initiative has created numerous job opportunities for the local people of Pakistan, with over 60,000 jobs generated since 2015, and will create more than 800,000 new opportunities by 2030. Furthermore, CPEC's energy projects will significantly boost Pakistan's current electricity production, doubling it and producing 16,400 megawatts of electricity upon completion. This will help Pakistan's tourism industry by ensuring the availability of reliable and uninterrupted electricity, making it easier to attract tourists and provide them with quality services (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, et al., 2018).

Tourism development through the CPEC has provided significant opportunities for Pakistan's tourism industry. The development of transportation infrastructure, including highways, railways, and airports, has facilitated easier travel for tourists, opened up new tourist destinations, and led to the creation of new economic opportunities (Kanwal et al., 2020a). The private sector has responded to these opportunities by investing in the tourism industry, leading to the development of new tourist facilities and accommodations across the country. Additionally, the restoration and preservation of historic sites and monuments have the potential to attract more tourists interested in cultural and heritage tourism. Furthermore, the

cooperation between China and Pakistan in promoting tourism has resulted in increased cultural exchanges and more international attention to Pakistan's tourism sector. Chinese tourists have been a significant source of tourism for Pakistan, and reciprocal tourism has also increased (Al-hagla, 2010).

CPEC has created a favorable environment for tourism development in Pakistan, with new infrastructure and economic opportunities attracting investment from the private sector. The preservation of cultural and heritage sites has the potential to further enhance the tourism industry. Continued efforts to promote tourism and cooperation between China and Pakistan can further boost the sector's growth in the future.

CPEC, Cultural and Heritage tourism

The CPEC project has the potential to significantly contribute to the development of cultural and heritage tourism in Pakistan. The restoration and preservation of historic sites and monuments are integral components of the project, which has the potential to attract tourists interested in exploring Pakistan's rich cultural heritage. The restoration of the Rohtas Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is one such example, which has become a popular tourist attraction in Punjab province. The development of new transportation infrastructure, such as highways, railways, and airports, as part of the CPEC project, has improved connectivity and accessibility, making it easier for tourists to visit cultural and heritage sites across Pakistan (S. A. Ali, Haider, Ali, Ali, & Ming, 2017). This has contributed to the growth of tourism in the country and provided opportunities for the development of new tourist facilities and accommodations. Private investors have responded positively to the opportunities presented by the CPEC project, and significant investment has been made in the development of new hotels, resorts, and other tourism-related facilities across the country. This has led to the creation of new job opportunities and economic growth in the tourism industry in Pakistan. The CPEC project has also facilitated the promotion and preservation of Pakistan's cultural and heritage tourism (S. A. Ali et al., 2017). For instance, the development of a cultural and tourism corridor under the CPEC project aims to promote the rich cultural heritage of Pakistan through the development of cultural centers, museums, and other tourism-related infrastructure.

The CPEC project has significant potential for the development of cultural and heritage tourism in Pakistan. The restoration and preservation of historic sites and monuments, the development of new transportation infrastructure, and private investment in the tourism industry have created new opportunities for tourism-related employment and economic growth in the country. The promotion and preservation of Pakistan's cultural heritage through the CPEC project will enhance the country's image as a tourism destination and provide new avenues for the growth of the tourism industry.

CPEC's Tourism Potential vs Other Corridors

When it comes to tourism development, a comparative analysis of the CPEC

can provide valuable insights into how similar infrastructure and economic development initiatives have fared in terms of promoting tourism. For example, the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM) is another China-led project aimed at promoting economic integration and connectivity in the region. However, the BCIM has faced several challenges, including geopolitical tensions and border disputes between India and China, which have hindered progress on the project and impacted tourism development (Sapkota, 2017). Similarly, the BRI, of which the CPEC is a part, has faced criticism for its lack of transparency, environmental impact, and debt-trap diplomacy. These factors can impact the success of tourism development initiatives in the region, which rely on a stable political environment and sustainable infrastructure to thrive. A comparative analysis could also involve examining other successful infrastructure and economic development projects in the region, such as the East-West Economic Corridor in Southeast Asia or the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor in India (Muhammad Ibrar, Mi, Mumtaz, et al., 2018). These projects have promoted trade and investment between countries and helped develop dedicated transportation corridors, which can benefit tourism development by facilitating the movement of tourists and supporting the growth of the tourism industry in the region. A comparative analysis of the CPEC and other similar infrastructure and economic development projects in the context of tourism can provide valuable insights into how to promote sustainable tourism development in the region (Nazneen, Xu, & Ud Din, 2021). By examining the factors that contribute to the success or failure of such initiatives, policymakers and stakeholders can learn from the best practices and lessons learned from similar projects around the world and develop strategies to promote tourism development that benefits local communities and promotes sustainable economic growth.

CONCLUSION

The CPEC is a massive infrastructure and economic development project that has the potential to transform the tourism industry in Pakistan. The project aims to promote regional connectivity, trade, and investment through the development of highways, railways, ports, and other infrastructure facilities. CPEC is part of China's BRI, which is a massive development and infrastructure initiative aimed at promoting tourism, connectivity, and economic integration across Asia, Europe, and Africa. A comparative analysis of CPEC tourism potentials with other similar infrastructure and economic development projects, such as the BCIM, the BRI, the East-West Economic Corridor in Southeast Asia, and the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor in India, can provide valuable insights into the factors that contribute to the success or failure of such projects. Cultural and heritage tourism can be a significant beneficiary of the CPEC project, as Pakistan is home to a rich cultural and historical heritage that can attract tourists from around the world. The development of cultural and heritage tourism can also help to preserve and promote Pakistan's cultural heritage and support local communities. The success of the CPEC project depends on various factors such as political stability, regional cooperation, transparency, tourism development,

environmental impact, and debt management. The project has the potential to promote economic development, connectivity, and tourism in Pakistan, but it also faces challenges such as geopolitical tensions and security concerns. Effective planning, implementation, and monitoring of the project can ensure that it delivers maximum benefits for Pakistan and contributes to sustainable tourism development.

FUNDING

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