

Coastal Tourism & CPEC: Opportunities and Challenges in Pakistan

Zia Ullah, Jehangir Khan and Zahoor Ul Haq

Abstract

Coastal tourism has been recognized as an economic booster in several developing countries around the globe. However, in Pakistan this vital role of coastal tourism is hardly realized. Now with the inception of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), coastal tourism has been in the limelight for socio-economic development of the country. Although, coastal tourism is a complicated activity that cuts across many sectors, levels and interests; hence, its' sustainability demands a comprehensive planning framework. Keeping in view the immense value of coastal tourism in CPEC, this study has attempted to identify the potential opportunities and challenges in its development in the country. Following a semi structured interview schedule, the data for this study is collected from 37 coastal tourism stakeholders (organisations). The data collected is then analysed through STEEP (Socio-demographic, Technological, Economic, Environmental and Political) analysis. The STEEP factors were found interrelated that constantly interact with each other in the macro-environment and hence creating opportunities and challenges for coastal tourism development. Both the opportunities and challenges are discussed within major areas like: stakeholders' collaboration/partnership, biological diversity, strategic management planning, political circumstances and the national interest in coastal tourism development. In order to exploit the opportunities and overcome the challenges in the macro-environment, this study recommended strategic interventions for sustainable coastal tourism development. The proposed interventions can integrate coastal tourism with the national economy, society and environment. Furthermore, this study is on time effort to inform the relevant policy makers for achieving the target objectives of CPEC in coastal zone of Pakistan.

Keywords: CPEC, Coastal, Tourism, Pakistan.

Introduction

According to United Nations Environment Programme (2009), the exclusive blend of resources at the border of land and sea provide foundation for coastal tourism. These resources include beaches, scenic grandeur, biological and cultural diversity etc which support a broad range of tourism activities. The coastline of Pakistan extends 1050 km along the Arabian Sea, 350 km falling within Sindh province and 700 km in the Balochistan province. The coastal zone of the country is blessed with natural and cultural tourism resources.

*Authors are Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism & Hospitality, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, KPK, Assistant Professor, Institute of Business & Leadership, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, KPK and Professor, Department of Economics, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, KPK, Pakistan.

The coastal region of Balochistan has cliffs, occasionally with rock head-lands and a number of sand beaches with shifting sand dunes. Mirza et al. (1988) reported a total of 7, 340 hectares of mangrove forests in the province. The coastal wetlands are important sites for resident and migratory waterfowl. Miani Hor, Pasni, Jiwani, Ormara and Hingol Hor are rated by ornithologists as the most important sites for migratory birds (Ahmad et al., 1991). Astola Island and Jiwani beaches provide nesting grounds for internationally endangered green turtles, while, the Ormara nesting site is of international importance (Groombridge, 1988). Hingol National Park and Buzi Makola (Wildlife Sanctuary) are protected areas of the region, while, Astola (Haft Talar) Island, Jiwani, Miani Hor, Ormara are recognised as Ramsar Sites (Ramsar Convention Bureau, 2001). The cultural heritage of Balochistan is exhibiting glimpses of the beginning of Stone Age man and its' steady development. Stone tools of Pleistocene period have been reported in the province. Architectural resources also exist in the form of forts, tombs, graves, mosques, and other historical monuments (BCS, 2000). Biological diversity, a number of internationally important protected areas, sand beaches, mangrove forests and globally renowned Indus Delta constitute potential coastal tourism resources of the Sindh coast. Mangroves offer an ideal environment for marine and terrestrial wildlife. Likewise, sand beaches along the Karachi coast provide habitats for survival of Green and Olive Ridly turtles. The history and civilization of Sindh is strongly associated with River Indus. According to Pirzado (2002), Indus valley civilization was thrived on the bank of river Indus in the 3rd millennium BC. World renowned heritage sites namely Mohen-jo-Daro and Makli are also located in Sindh province.

Regardless of the enormous coastal touristic opportunities, the coastal tourism development in the country is still facing a number of challenges. Some of these challenges are cross-cutting, whilst, some are sector-specific which collectively affecting the overall development of the sector. Amongst the sector's specific issues one of the most important is the lack of integrated planning and management strategies for developing coastal tourism. Keeping in view the pivotal role of coastal tourism in CPEC for boosting the national economy and uplifting the socio-economic status of the coastal inhabitants, this study has attempted to highlight the major opportunities and challenges for coastal tourism development and devised recommendations for sustainable coastal tourism development.

Literature Review

Honey & Krantz (2007) reported that tourism contribute about 83% of foreign exchange within developing countries. In contrary, a number of research studies have also been conducted which highlights issues related to tourism, in particular context of developing countries (for example, Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008; Cater, 1993; Dodds & Butler, 2010; Romati, 2007; Ryan, 2001; Scheyvens, & Momsen, 2008; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Edwards, 1988; Pearce, 1989; Clark, 1996 and Orams, 1999). The coastal area has been regarded is a zone of extreme activities and an exchange zone both within and between social, cultural, physical, biological and economic progression. In order to reduce tourism related problems and ensuring sustainability of tourism industry, efforts are required to integrate tourism in coastal development. Integrated planning is an essential component in ensuring the success of tourism in coastal settings (Inskeep, 1991; Gunn, 1988; Boyed and Butler 1996b; Hall and McArthur, 1998; Heath and Wall, 1992).

The lack of synchronization between tourism promotion and coastal management programs has been well documented (Hudson, 1996; Hall, 1988; Smith, 1994). Hall (1988, 2000) reported that strategies for solving environmental issues often failed at implementation stage due to the lack of recognition of interdependencies of stakeholders in the coastal area. Hence, integration of tourism within the overall coastal management program is one of the biggest challenges for coastal managers (Orams, 1997; Cicin-Sain and Knecht, 1993, 1998; Hall, 2000). Resolving similar conflicts would be of immense value in countries like Pakistan where sectoral management approach is employed to the management of coastal areas. Strategic interventions and inclusive planning are essential components for attaining sustainability in tourism. The strategic planning intends to balance the uncontrollable (external) and controllable (internal) factors of the macro and micro environment of the organization respectively. The major goal is to take advantages of the opportunities and overcome the challenges (Haywood and Walsh, 1996). According to Ginter and Duncan (1990), macro or external environmental factors served as an early warning system to plan appropriate strategies.

In 1989, the Pakistan Government upgraded the tourism sector to the status of an industry. However, the coastal zone of the country, regardless of its immense tourism potential (Ullah et al, 2006 & 2009), has never been taken seriously as part of the overall tourism planning & development process. Therefore, this study was carried out with the intention to explore potential opportunities and challenges in the macro-

environment of coastal zone of the country and subsequently devised strategic interventions for developing sustainable coastal tourism in the country.

Methodology

Methods Used for Data Collection

A subset of core stakeholders namely Defense Housing Authority Karachi (DHA), City District Government Karachi (CDGK), Port Qasim Authority (PQA), and Karachi Port Trust (KPT) were initially identified through the Snowball method. Stakeholders identified were then investigated through semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1). At the end of the interview each stakeholder was asked to nominate other relevant and important stakeholder. Nominated stakeholders were subsequently interviewed and asked to nominate others. The process was repeated until a comprehensive list of stakeholders was identified and investigated. The required information (factors that affect coastal tourism) was collected from 66 individuals representing 37 coastal stakeholders of Pakistan. In order to overcome the complexity of the factors in external environment this study filtered the collected information into five major areas: Socio-demographic, Technological, Economic, Environmental and Political (STEEP).

Methods Employed for Data Analysis:

According to Evans et al. (2003, p 157) STEEP factors are “interrelated and constantly interact with each other”. This interrelationship creates both opportunities and threats for the organisation, its industry and market. The macro-environment of the coastal tourism, Pakistan was assessed through STEEP analysis as follows:

- The information collected from coastal stakeholders were analysed manually for particular issues under STEEP factors;
- The relative importance of each issue was shown as % age of the total responses and finally,
- The interactions among highly responded issues and their relative importance then used as a major criterion for making decisions in the STEEP analysis and described as opportunities and/or challenges for coastal tourism development in the country.

Methodological Critique

- There are two major inherited problems in dealing with the massive amount of information collected for the external environment analysis i.e. logical organisation of data and selecting the most desirable information.
- The macro-environment is extremely complicated and continuously changing. Therefore, it needs continuous analysis through updated sources of information. However, the result, analysis and conclusion of this study are based on information gathered during the operational time frame of the research i.e. August 2005 to March 2009. Attempts have been made to keep this as up to date as possible but inevitably some information may now have been changed.
- Keeping in view the limitations and basic objectives of the study, the coastal tourism stakeholders were only investigated in Sindh Province.

Results and Discussion

STEEP forces are interrelated and constantly interacting with each other in the macro-environment, hence, exploring and understanding their relative values as opportunities and threats or challenges would be of strategic importance. For example, lack of community involvement in coastal projects (social issues); hostile relationships between coastal stakeholders (political/legal issues); lack of public-private partnerships (economic issues) and finally, lack of strategic tourism planning (technical issues) are some of the major issues interacting with each other in the macro-environment and creating both threats (for example, turbulent situation) and opportunities (for example, stakeholders' collaboration) for sustainable coastal tourism development in the country. Such interactions were recorded within major areas like: stakeholders' collaboration/partnership, biological diversity, strategic management planning, political circumstances, and the national interest in coastal tourism development of Pakistan. These are elaborated below:

Stakeholders' collaboration/partnership:

Stakeholder collaboration is receiving global attention in tourism but, in Pakistan the importance of collaboration in tourism is not yet recognised. Tourism agencies at Federal, provincial and local government levels working individually without any collaboration among themselves or with other interested organisations in the public/private sector, for example, coastal tourism projects are mostly designed in isolation and controlled by individual organisations that lead to a less sustainable and

undesirable outcome. Similarly, the Tourism Policy, 1990 has been formulated by the Ministry in isolation (Tourism Master Plan, 2000) and therefore, lacks the consensus of other ministries, public and private sector organisations and community groups. The Policy, although providing incentives and concessions for tourism projects, lacks clear objectives and directions for tourism development. Coastal communities, the real custodian of coastal resources, are not involved in any coastal tourism projects. Anger and protest of coastal communities and environment conscious citizens against the Diamond Bar Island City and Water Front Projects along Sind coast, suggests a lack of consultation with these groups. Furthermore, this lack of community involvement is a potential threat for future conflicts and dissatisfaction on coastal tourism projects. On the other hand, coastal communities' tourism initiatives have never been appreciated by tourism agencies, nor are the possibilities of alternative forms of tourism, such as, community-based ecotourism, being explored as an opportunity. Field organisations of the Tourism Ministry are legally responsible for tourism development. However, in the case of coastal provinces these organisations have no direct access to coastal land and have limited expertise in coastal tourism development. 'Collaboration' might be good opportunities through which the organisations can increase their competence level so that they can facilitate and obtain access to coastal land and build technical capacities in coastal tourism developments.

Biological diversity

The rich biological diversity of the coastal region (Section 1.1) provides opportunities for nature based tourism. However, degradation of mangroves' forests, use of harmful nets for fishing, illegal hunting, mass coastal tourism along the Karachi coast, sea intrusion in Indus Delta, illegal coastal land grabbing, rapid infrastructure development and lack of enforcement of environmental legislations in coastal areas are some of the detrimental impacts which are destroying the coastal biological diversity and hence threatening the basis of nature based tourism.

Strategic management planning

The country lacks a strategic planning framework that can integrate tourism, national economy, society, and environment. For example, in case of coastal tourism projects negligible attention has been given to integrate tourism with environmental and other developmental issues. The KPT-Port Fountain Jet Project is established in polluted water; similarly, the DHA- Water Front Project and Diamond Bar Island City projects are paying little attention to environmental and biological resources conservation issues. The coastal zone represents an inter-organisational and interdependent domain.

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However, coastal tourism projects are managed sectorally and mostly in an ad hoc fashion which often compromises on environmental issues. For example, key players in the coastal tourism of Sindh province are actually responsible for other major tasks, with coastal tourism merely constituting a part of their overall developmental projects. The major responsibilities of these organisations are more pressing so they are unable to pay the required attention to coastal tourism development. Similarly, coastal land falls under the administrative jurisdiction of Federal, Provincial, and Local Government organisations. The scattered nature of administrative jurisdiction greatly influences the overall conservation efforts. For example, coastal mangrove forests fall under the authority of Sindh Forest Department, Port Qasim Authority, Karachi Port Trust and Sindh Board of Revenue. These organisations variably prioritise mangrove forest conservation which ultimately affects the overall ecosystem (personal observations).

Political Circumstances

Since its establishment in 1947, the country has had a long history of political turmoil which contributes to its' international negative reputation. The international image of the country in terms of its poor safety and security, political instability and regional conflicts, cannot be separated from its international image as a tourism destination. The country has a strong domestic tourism sector with potential for further development, especially, in coastal areas. However, ongoing political instability is a major threat for this sector. Tourism development projects designed by previous political entities are mostly of less interest to newly elected rivals. For example, one of the major reasons for the failure of the implementation of the Karachi Coastal Recreation Development Plan 1999-2000 was the change in political governments (informal discussion with officials at CDGK). The same reason can be also presumed as a major threat to the sustainability of coastal tourism projects in CPEC.

National interest in coastal tourism

Pakistan is well known in the tourism world because of its northern mountainous ranges, and historical civilizations. This fact has been proven by the economic contribution of these tourism sectors in the country's economy. Foreign tourists visiting the coastal provinces of Sindh and Balochistan accounted only for 33.5% and 1.5% respectively (Pakistan Tourism Facts and Figures, 2006). Culture and adventure tourism were recorded major sectors of tourism interest. Karachi Coastal Recreation Development Plan 1990-2001, jointly formulated by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Karachi Development Authority (now City District Government Karachi), exhibits the vital role of coastal tourism in the country's

economy, however, until recently this sector has not been seriously taken. The only recommendation made by the National Tourism Policy, 1990 for sustainable coastal tourism is the establishment of a Beach Development Authority, which is not yet implemented. Finally, a lack of legal framework within The National Environment Act, 1997 for tackling environmental issues in coastal tourism (Assistance on Tourism Development and management, 2000) is an obvious example that shows government's lack of interest in sustainable coastal tourism development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Tourism has an industrial status in Pakistan, however, coastal localities and its associated natural and cultural resources are rarely considered as part of the tourism development process. Macro or external environment offered both opportunities and challenges. However, an integrated planning framework can only assist to exploit the opportunities and overcome the challenges and can subsequently ensure sustainable coastal tourism. Furthermore, coastal tourism initiatives through CPEC can certainly open new venues for investments which can subsequently enhance the socio-economic situation of the country. Keeping in view the essential role of coastal tourism in CPEC, this study recommends strategic interventions for sustainable coastal tourism in the country. These are:

- Sustainable coastal tourism should be taken as a priority sector for investment in CPEC.
- The country should develop a planning framework that can integrate coastal tourism, national economy, society, and environment.
- In order to discourage mass coastal tourism and environmental degradation the possibilities of alternative forms of tourism, such as, community-based ecotourism should be explored;
- Serious measures should be taken by the government to rebuild the international image of the country as a tourism destination.
- Coastal communities' should be involved as key stakeholders at both planning and implementation stages.
- Inter-sectoral and multidisciplinary collaborative approach of institutions should be considered for coastal tourism planning and development.
- With respect to CPEC, Government should provide incentives to local and foreign investors in coastal tourism projects.
- Public private partnership should be encouraged in coastal tourism projects.

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Appendix 1

Semi-structured interview schedule for Coastal Stakeholders of Pakistan

1. What are the current aims and objectives of the organisation?
2. How is the organisation structured?
3. What are the major acts and commitments of the organisation? (as a step towards coastal tourism development and/or towards Coastal Zone Management?)
4. What are the major collaborative projects/process with other coastal stakeholders?
5. (if none go to question 7)
6. How this process of collaboration will be maintain for the sake of sustainability beyond the lifetime of the specific projects/process?
7. As this process of collaboration have a legitimacy and power (Authority) to either make or strongly influence the planning decisions?
8. What are the major dependencies (interdisciplinary and intersectoral) of the organisation on other coastal stakeholders?
9. What are major issues of concern (internal/external) affecting the proper functioning of the organisation and, its interactions with other coastal stakeholders?
10. Your comments on existing coastal tourism of Pakistan?
11. What do you proposed (sites, resources) for a sustainable and environment friendly coastal tourism in Pakistan?
12. Your views about community based ecotourism (in general)?
13. Problems and potential for developing coastal tourism in Pakistan?