

Cultural tourism and wellbeing of local citizens: Examining the mediating role of cultural conservation in Northern Pakistan

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Abstract

Cultural tourism has become an increasingly visible trend in the tourism industry over the last few decades. The current chapter is one of the first academic studies to specifically analyze the possible impacts of cultural tourism on the culture and wellbeing of rural areas in the Himalayan Gilgit Baltistan region in Northern Pakistan while highlighting cultural conservation as a mediator. The region has experienced a significant rise in cultural tourism due to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), where it is a key transit hub. As a result, there has been a significant and visible development of touristic facilities in the region. Hence, there is a visible shift from earlier tourism, which was mostly linked to mountaineering adventure, to more relatively mass cultural tourism. The results suggest that cultural conservation serves as a partial mediator in the relationship between cultural tourism and wellbeing. The study further shows that cultural tourism tends to positively and significantly influence the host community's wellbeing while cultural conservation partially mediates this relationship.

Keywords: Tourism, Cultural Conservation, Gilgit-Baltistan, Mediation Analysis and Pakistan

1. Introduction

Tourism is frequently viewed as a threat to the preservation of local cultures and cultural sites. Tourism is, in reality, a platform and a vehicle for exposing heritage to the masses, protecting it, and ensuring its economic and social sustainability. As a result, tourism is frequently a balancing mechanism that preserves and protects the culture of a society.

Cultural tourism has clear economic advantages. It is of crucial importance for many mountain communities in developing countries, where there is a lack of economic opportunities due to harsh geographic and climatic conditions (Wester et al., 2019). Tourism has emerged as one of the key sources of economic activities for these mountain communities, as building large industrial infrastructure is not viable in these regions in most cases (Nepal, 2020). Cultural tourism is quickly expanding in the Himalayan Gilgit Baltistan region in Northern Pakistan, and this has been

strongly linked to culture conservation. On the one hand, cultural heritage is a fundamental resource for attracting visitors in cultural tourism. Cultural tourism, on the other hand, can provide the financial base for the protection of culture.

Cultural tourism has been referred to as one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world tourism market (UNWTO, 2005). Some scholars have found that cultural tourism has both positive and negative socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts on residents of host communities (Fang, 2020; Richards, 2007; Richards 2018). The commodification of cultural resources for attracting tourists and consumption by these tourists has burgeoned in the recent years. However, not all communities are able to translate the benefits of tourist arrivals into development; though, tourism being an economic activity can be an effective strategy for regional economic development (Fang, 2020; Yang & Wall, 2009). In their study, Perdue et. al. (2010) stressed that the usefulness of cultural tourism is that it expedites and sustains wellbeing such as reducing poverty in host communities, the renaissance of heritage and community culture and the preservation and protection of both cultural and natural resources. In this context, sustainable cultural tourism has been stressed as being useful in avoiding immoderate abuse of resources and encouraging preservation of culture and heritage for the next generation (e.g., Boniface, 2013; Asmelash and Kumar, 2019).

Against this backdrop, the current chapter focuses on a mountainous region in the north of Pakistan that borders China's West (Gilgit Baltistan). The region is rich in cultural heritage in the form of arts and crafts, archaeological heritage, as well as the world-famous rock carvings and inscriptions discovered in the area, which date back to prehistoric times.

Currently, the Gilgit-Baltistan region is experiencing an exponential increase in tourist arrivals (and especially cultural tourists) due to the improvements in infrastructure under the multi-billion dollar China Pakistan Economic Corridor [CPEC] (Baig & Zehra, 2020; Baig et al., 2020). Tourism plays an important role in the local economy as the majority of the population is solely dependent on tourism for their livelihood. Due to poor infrastructure and security conditions, this industry has never flourished in the past as a viable commercial venture. Previously, most of the tourism in this region was based on relatively few mountaineering and nature adventurers. Along with famous mountains like K-2, Nangaparbat, Gasherbrum and Rakaposhi, the region is also home to National parks like Khunjerab National Park, Deosai National Park and the Central Karakorum National Park, which have attracted such adventure tourists from both within Pakistan

and abroad. However, in the recent years, cultural tourism has been on the rise, which makes the analysis of its influences on local communities interesting from both academic and practical perspectives. Cultural tourists are attracted to monuments like Baltit Fort in Karimabad, the Altit Fort in Altit, Old Ganish settlements in Ganish or the Nagar Fort and an old mosque in the Nagar district, Shiger Fort in Shiger Baltistan, and the Khaplu Fort in Baltistan. Apart from these cultural sites and monuments, cultural tourists are also attracted to the old silk route settlements along the modern Karakorum Highway. Despite this significant importance and increased visibility of cultural tourism in the Gilgit-Baltistan region, the literature review reveals that specific influences of this rise in cultural tourism on local communities in this specific context are significantly underexplored academically. Due to this visible contextual gap in the extant literature, as well as potential practical implications, this chapter aims to: i) analyze the effect of cultural tourism on the conservation of the culture (language, lifestyle, food, values, social practices, and values) of the host region; ii) specifically examine the role of cultural conservation on the wellbeing of the residents of this region; iii) analyze the mediating role of cultural conservation in the impact of CPEC influenced cultural tourism on the wellbeing of the residents in Gilgit-Baltistan.

This study is one of the first attempts to examine the direct and indirect impact of CPEC influenced cultural tourism on the wellbeing of the residents in selected districts of Hindu Kush Himalayan Gilgit-Baltistan region of Northern Pakistan. We contribute to the extant literature by establishing a direct link between cultural-tourism and wellbeing of the local residents in the Pakistani context. Secondly, we introduce cultural conservation as an important mediating variable that influences the relationship between cultural tourism and the local residents' wellbeing.

The rest of the chapter is organized as follows. The next section presents a literature review followed by a presentation of conceptual framework and methodological details. After that, results are presented. The paper concludes with a presentation of implications, limitations, and future research directions.

2. Literature review

2.1. Concepts of Cultural Tourism and Cultural Conservation

Many existing studies have tried to define the concept of cultural tourism. For instance, according to Liu and Shu (2020) cultural tourism is distinct from recreational tourism in that it aims to obtain a better knowledge or appreciation of the nature of the destination. Likewise, Mousavi et al. (year, p...) argue that the “cultural tourism involves the consumption of a wide range of cultural manifestations like heritage, art, folklore etc. by tourists. Cultural tourism can be generally seen as a sociocultural relationship between people which is promoted, moderated and mediated by a range of various actors including, planners, politicians, researchers, marketing professionals, travel agencies and so on”. Cultural tourism, according to this definition, encompasses not just "heritage tourism," which is the consumption of historical cultural items, but also modern culture, or the "way of life" of the people or place (Liu and Shu, 2020).

In the line of agreement with Liu and Shu (2020), Robinson and Picard (2006), suggest that tourism brings individuals and human communities together and has an important role in facilitating dialogues between cultures, which in turn enables the preservation of human heritage, improves living conditions, and reduces poverty. The linkage between cultural tourism and cultural conversation merits attention because historic monuments and places are essential resources for attracting visitors; and therefore, cultural conservation and tourism are inextricably linked.

2.2. Effects of Cultural Tourism on Wellbeing of Host Communities

However, tourism can have a positive or negative long-lasting effect on natural heritage and culture, as well as on the environment, cultural diversity and creativity, and the balance of societies. Zadel and Bogdan (2013) added that it is an arduous task, to capture the economic impacts of cultural tourism because most countries do not have statistical systems to analyze and monitor the individual cultural tourism factors. In cultural tourism, cultural resources are transformed into cultural-tourism products. Pandey et al. (1995) attempted to show the effect of tourism on Nepal's environment, economy and culture. Since tourism is an important sector in Nepal's economy; it serves as a source of foreign exchange, generates employment and contributes to GDP. The tourism sector can play a major role in eradicating poverty by generating employment in developing countries (Fang, 2020).

It is an established fact in the tourism literature that tourism directly affects the local economy in multiple ways (Cheer & Lew, 2017). According to many scholars, this direct effect is linked closely to the wellbeing of local populations (e.g. Kim, 2002; Wood, 2017). It has been argued

that a key element of CPEC is to improve the economic condition and wellbeing of people in Pakistan, and specifically Gilgit-Baltistan, which lies at an important intersection of this infrastructure development plan (Malik, 2018). Scholars have stressed the factors pertaining to quality of life and material wellbeing like income levels and stability, educational opportunities in the community, living conditions of the residents, the quality of the natural and social environment, and safety. In particular context of tourism, Kim (2002) specified five attributes of wellbeing as material wellbeing, community wellbeing, health wellbeing, safety wellbeing, and emotional wellbeing. These aspects have been linked to people's overall quality of life in touristic regions (e.g. Aref, 2011; Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017). This paper incorporates all these elements of wellbeing in the analysis of cultural tourism in the Gilgit-Baltistan region

Brohman (1996) indicated that the developing world's tourism industry has been growing fast, but it has also been encountering many issues that are shared with other outward-oriented development approaches, which includes the formation of separate areas, unnecessary foreign dependency, and also the fortification of dimensional inequalities and the social and economic factors, increasing cultural isolation and environmental devastation. To escape such issues, institutional structures need to be built to boost vigorous state and community participation in tourism strategies. Similarly, Soutsas et al. (2006) argued that tourism activities and leisure that are perceived to be a part of some specific area's developmental procedures can add to their economic growth at varying degrees of intensity so that they can be achievable and desirable.

Dwyer, Forsyth, and Dwyer (2010) argue that there are direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts of cultural tourism. Money spent by tourists that constitute direct effects include expenditure on food, transportation, and communication services. Likewise, Saarinen and Manwa (2008) suggest dividing the impact created when tourists encounter social and cultural experiences. The impact of tourism on culture can be termed as changes in material culture, for example, crafts, and changes in non-material culture that is tradition, customs, and the acculturation processes. On the other hand, the acculturation process can be termed as the indirect long-term change caused by tourist action in the host culture. In contrast, social impacts can be divided into different categories like individual and social relations, religion, language, moral and ethical values, and health.

2.3. Cultural Tourism and CPEC

In 2015, Pakistan and China signed a multi-billion-dollar economic agreement under the aegis of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Analysts and researchers consider this mega project as a lifeline between the two all-weather strategic partners (Baig & Zehra, 2020). As the megaproject includes investments on infrastructure and energy, it has been argued that the investments under CPEC will transform Pakistan's economy and help overcome its power shortage. In the years after the initiation of CPEC projects especially the expansion of Karakoram Highway (KKH) and construction of seven tunnels along the KKH has resulted in unprecedented inflow of tourists to the northern region of Pakistan. It has been argued that the CPEC has created an environment that fosters tourism in the study region that has a 450km alignment along the CPEC route (Khan, 2019).

Analyzing cultural tourism in the specific context of the CPEC initiative, Khan et al. (2018) identified the potential development of cultural Tourism in Pakistan and, more specifically, in Peshawar. They recommended that it should be used as a tool to improve local people's socio-economic conditions through job creation and business opportunities. CPEC has already been termed as an economic and geopolitical game-changer for the whole region (Malik, 2018). It has already been mentioned that the Gilgit-Baltistan region's location along the main corridor of the CPEC and its proximity to China has increased its importance, resulting in significant development and plans for further development of infrastructure (Nigar, 2018). These developments have made this region accessible to many cultural tourists for whom arriving in this mountainous region in the past was difficult due to connectivity issues and lack of touristic facilities. Therefore, the change from limited mountaineering and adventure tourism to cultural tourism is significantly visible now in the region.

Studies that were undertaken in different parts of the world and contexts, have found that cultural tourism elements include beliefs and faith of local communities and associated touristic attractions (Olsen, 2011). Some other scholars have referred to the elements of lifestyle (Boniface, 2013; Richards, 2007), local cuisine and food (Fuste-Forne, 2019), and architectural sites (Boniface, 2013), as being depictions of the cultural attractions of a destination. Finally, the works of local artisans including handicrafts (Ratten et al., 2019), music and art (Boniface, 2013) and local ethical traditions (Smith, 2009) have been stressed by some scholars as being important in relation to cultural tourism. Due to the importance of all these elements in the context of cultural tourism, this

chapter aims to analyze them in the specific context of CPEC influenced cultural tourism in the GB region of Pakistan, as further depicted in the conceptual model in the next section.

2.4. Cultural Tourism and Cultural Conversation

It has further been found in some studies that cultural tourism specifically results in the improvement of cultural elements in local societies, as preserving them becomes an economic need (Boniface, 2013). Even though some researchers have been arguing that mass cultural tourism can negatively influence the culture of a destination, UNWTO (2005) suggests that this can be avoided by properly planning and managing the whole cultural tourism experience. The extent to which the host community's local culture is incorporated into the experience of the tourist has been debated significantly by scholars from a range of perspectives. It has further been highlighted that some indigenous communities may not wish to share their culture with the tourists and isolate themselves from the tourists (Ruhanen & Witford, 2019). On the other hand, it is also possible that many of such communities may not even know the economic worth of sharing their culture with tourists. Tourists are more interested in knowing the culture of host communities. It seems impossible for communities to isolate themselves from others and avoid other cultural invasions in this highly globalized world. When such indigenous communities allow tourists to visit them and share their unique culture, they can earn their living by commodifying their cultural products and attracting culturally curious tourists. This can result in significant economic and wellbeing outcomes for those communities (Boniface, 2013; Richards, 2007). UNWTO (2005) highlighted the importance of cultural conservation to the promotion of cultural tourists by stating that "culture needs to be rooted in the community in order to be authentic". In this context, cultural conservation has been highlighted as an important factor related to cultural tourism. Some scholars argue that an increase in cultural tourism can potentially affect the conservation of cultural assets in the specific tourist destination including both tangible and intangible aspects (Richards, 2007). These cultural products act as a pull factor in attracting culturally curious tourists who are interested in experiencing and learning different cultures. Therefore, it can be argued that it is important to incorporate cultural conservation in any analysis of cultural tourism, as it is strongly linked with the long-term viability of such cultural tourism in an area. This paper also incorporates cultural conservation while analyzing CPEC influenced cultural tourism in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region, as depicted in the conceptual framework in the next section.

3. Methodology

The Region

Gilgit-Baltistan is a quasi-province in the north of Pakistan. It is endowed with natural beauty, highest peaks, glaciers, fresh water, lakes, and valleys. The region is also home with to several cultures and ethnicities. It has been a center of attention for tourists from around the globe. Moreover, Gilgit-Baltistan is located at a junction of neighboring countries including Central Asian countries (e.g Tajikistan) and China. Besides its natural attractions, historically, the region has been strategically important, being the gateway to Central Asia. Today, as the gateway to CPEC, the region is witnessing improved road infrastructure and better communication systems and this has led to an exponential increase in tourist arrivals as argued by Baig et al. (2021).

3.1 Conceptual framework

Based on literature review presented in the preceding section, a conceptual framework for the study is presented in figure 1.

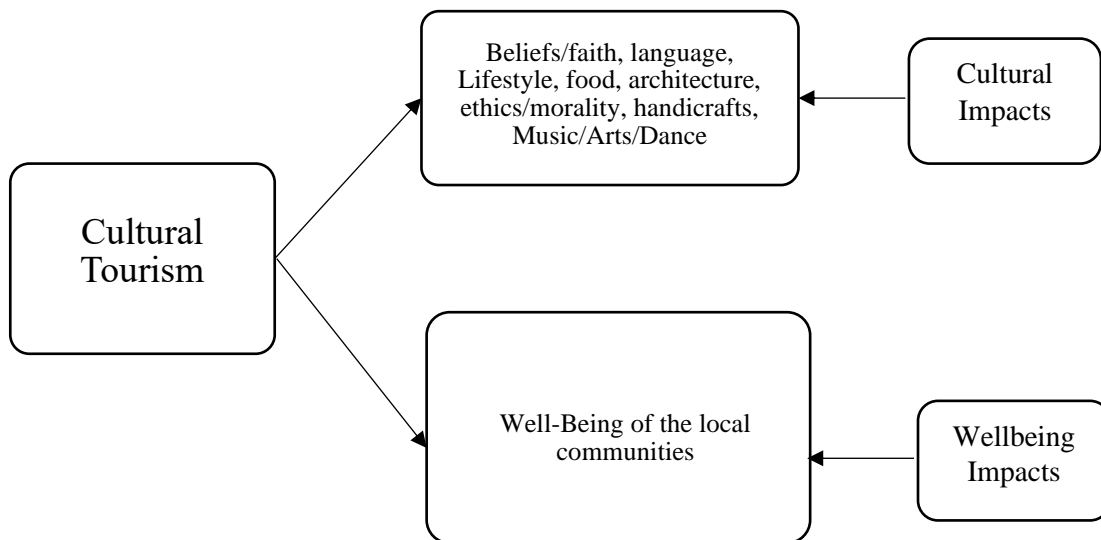


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Many studies including Borowiecki and Castiglione (2014), Cellini and Cuccia (2013), and Zieba (2016) have found the existence of a strong relationship between tourism flows and cultural

participation in Italy and Austria. In the same line of argument, this research presents the interaction of culture, tourism, and well-being as presented in figure 1. During the interaction of these three components: cultural tourism, cultural impacts, and wellbeing of residents, a by-product is produced due to each component's interaction. The by-product produced due to the interaction of cultural impacts and cultural tourism can result in either cultural conservation or cultural degradation. According to the available literature these cultural changes include changes in the lifestyle, beliefs/faith, language, food, architecture, ethics/morality, handicrafts, and arts/music/dance. It means that when cultural tourists visit a tourist destination, they can influence the host community's culture either positively or negatively. These cultural tourists either influence the residents to conserve their culture in order to attract more culturally curious visitors or adopt the culture of tourists. Furthermore, in the next stage culture tourism influences the wellbeing of the residents of the host community resulting in either wellbeing or ill-being of the residents as a result of the interactions cultural tourists have with the people of that region (Ahebwa et. al., 2016; Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017). When cultural tourists arrive in a region, they need services and facilities such as transportation, food, accommodation, and handicrafts. The host community's engagement by providing tourists with these services, in turn, provides employment opportunities and potentially increases their wellbeing by increasing their income. At the same time, cultural tourists can also cause harm to the local residents' wellbeing by invading their personal or community life as well as degrading the environment, which we term as ill-being.

Although Kim (2002) suggests five indicators of wellbeing fostered by tourism as discussed in the preceding sections, this research considers only economic measures of well-being which include indicators on material wellbeing and educational wellbeing following the tradition of Alartartseva and Barysheva (2015) and Mathew and Sreejesh (2017). Since the scope of this study is limited to economic wellbeing, we examine the influence of culture tourism on employment and income as well as on education. Unlike Kim (2002), limitation of resources and time compelled the authors to consider only two measures of wellbeing: material wellbeing, and education wellbeing. These two indicators were chosen according to their visible influence on the host communities.

3.2 Model construction

Following the conceptual framework proposed in figure 2, this research uses mediation analysis explained by the following two models in figure 3. Model A in this path analysis shows the perceived total effect of CPEC-Culture-Tourism on the wellbeing of the residents while Model B shows both the perceived direct and indirect effect of CPEC-Culture-Tourism on Wellbeing of Residents using Cultural Conservation as a mediator.

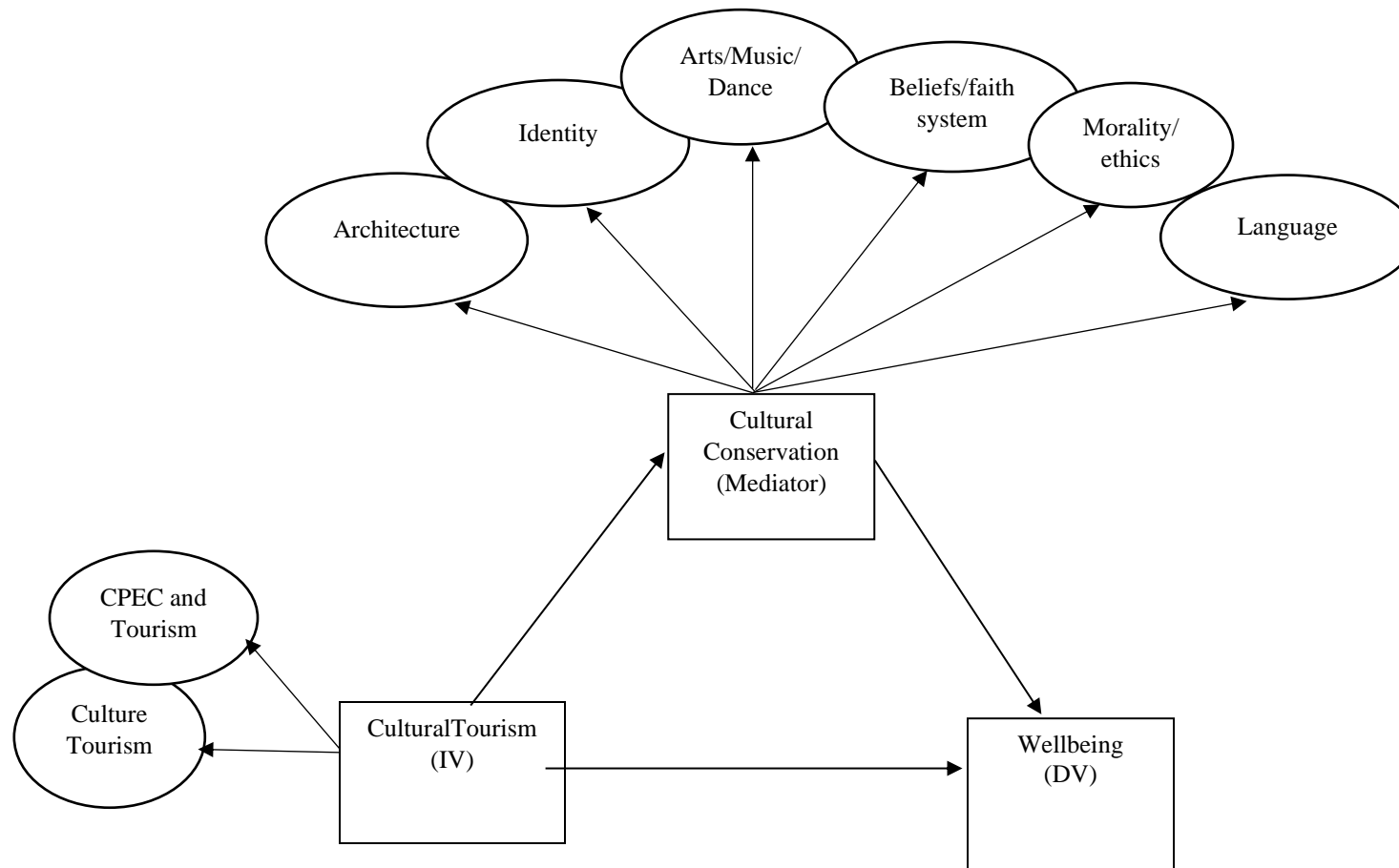


Figure 2: Conceptual framework of Cultural Tourism, Culture Conservation and Wellbeing along with their components from which they were derived.

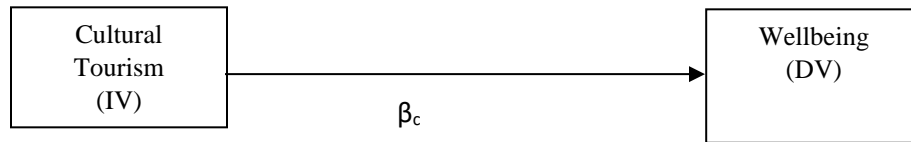
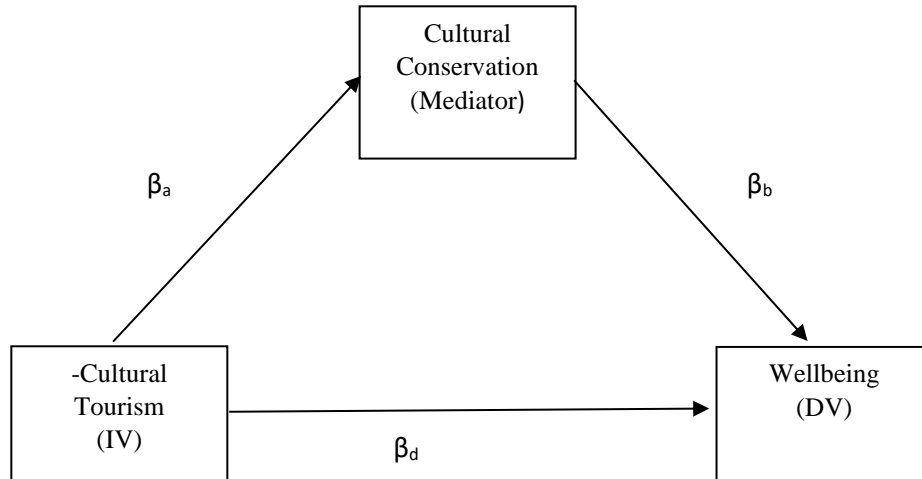
Model A**Model B**

Figure 3: Mediation analysis for Cultural Tourism, Cultural Conservation and wellbeing.

This model has three variables; an independent variable (IV) which we denote by CT, a dependent variable (DV) which is denoted by WB and a mediating variable (MV) denoted by CC. CC plays a mediating role between cultural tourism (CT) and wellbeing (WB). Figure (3) further explains the paths leading to the dependent variable: Model A depicts the total impact of the independent variable represented by the coefficient β_c . Further in Model B, the direct effect of independent on dependent variable represented by the regression coefficient β_d , there is another path showing the relationship between independent variable and mediator represented by the regression coefficient β_a and the path showing the relationship between mediator and the dependent variable represented by the regression coefficient β_b .

According to Baron and Kenny (1986) the following are the criteria for a variable to function as a mediator: (i) variations in the mediating variable are accounted for significantly by the variations in the independent variables (ii) variations in dependent variable are elucidated by the variations in independent variable (iii) variation in the mediator significantly accounts for variations in the dependent variable when controlling for independent variable, and the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable decreases greatly once the mediator is engaged with the independent variable as a predictor of the dependent variable. Further, Kenny et.al. (1998) explained that the criterion (iii) will be satisfied only if the first two are satisfied. Hence referring to Model A and model B these prescribed criteria require β_c β_a β_b to be significant whereas β_d should be less than β_c . Nonetheless, some authors have rejected the idea of having a significant total effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable to be a necessary condition for the mediation to occur (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Henceforth, the regression equations following these three criteria are listed below:

$$WB = \alpha_i + \beta_c CT \quad (i)$$

$$CC = \alpha_{ii} + \beta_a CT \quad (ii)$$

$$WB = \alpha_{iii} + \beta_d CT + \beta_b CC \quad (iv)$$

Where, α_i , α_{ii} and α_{iii} are the intercept terms and β 's is the regression coefficient from the respective regression equation. The succeeding section shall describe the descriptive statistics of the socio-economic and demographic indicators of respondents as well as the detailed results and discussion of the relationship among CPEC-cultural-tourism and objective wellbeing of residents of these respective regions i.e. mediation analysis. Also, it describes the role of Culture Conservation as a mediator in effecting the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

3.3 Data collection and sampling

This research uses primary data collected in the form of a questionnaire from local residents, where residents have been classified into different categories. The questionnaire consists of questions about socioeconomic and demographic indicators and questions regarding the variables of culture, wellbeing, culture of youth (aged 15-25) and CPEC fostered tourism with reference to previous

studies by Gursoy and Rutherford (2004), Ratz and Michalko (2011), Aref (2011), Allis (2016), Zadel and Bogdan (2013). Following Soontayatron, (2013), the stratified random sampling technique was used. The population was divided into different subgroups (strata) and then respondents were randomly selected from each group. The selected strata for this research are:

Strata 1: local people having direct and regular contact with tourists, who depend on tourism for their incomes (e.g. tour guides, tour operators, hotel management).

Strata 2: local people having regular contact with tourists arriving at their localities but their income is not dependent on tourism activities (Management of fort, guide etc.). as well as those who had an indirect or no continual contact with tourists and their income is partially dependent on tourism. (Shop keepers, restaurant).

Strata 3: local people having no contact with tourists (teachers, workers, etc.).

The sample was collected from the areas including Gilgit city, Danyore, Sultanabad, Hoper, Karimabad, Aliabad, Altit, Ganish, Gulmit, Passu, Chillas city, Raikot, Jaghlot, Guro. A questionnaire survey was undertaken to evaluate the impacts of CPEC influenced cultural tourism on the well-being of the residents and the role of Cultural Conservation in mediating this relationship. A sample size of 385 was determined with a 95% confidence interval and 5 percent margin of error. The target population was approximately 50,000 individuals. The following formula was used to determine the sample size:

$$n = N * X / (X + N - 1),$$

where,

$$X = Z_{\alpha/2}^2 * p * (1-p) / MOE^2,$$

where $Z_{\alpha/2}$ is the critical value of the Normal distribution at $\alpha/2$ (e.g. for a confidence level of 95%, α is 0.05 and the critical value is 1.96), MOE is the margin of error, p is the sample proportion, and N is the population size. After taking out the incompletely filled questionnaires 336 useful responses remained. The field survey was completed in three months from December 2018 to February 2019. The questionnaire was structured using a 5-point Likert scale with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 "strongly agree". Before conducting the actual survey, a pilot survey

was performed in November 2017. Data was collected from Gilgit city, involving a sample size of 40. This data was used to check the reliability of the questions in the questionnaire using Cronbach's Reliability test. After checking for the reliability, the questionnaires were filled by the residents of all four districts. All segments of the questionnaire had a Cronbach alpha value greater than 0.55 recommended by Yurdugul (2008). According to Yurdugul (2008), for sample sizes between 30 and 50 the alpha value should be greater than 0.55. The reliability test was run again on the data collected for the analysis and the results are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Results for Chronbach's alpha for the reliability of data

Sr. No.	Instruments	Cronbach's alpha	No. of items
1	Culture Tourism	.55	3
2	Culture	.720	31
3	Wellbeing	.799	26
4	Culture of Youth	.670	9
5	CPEC	.771	21

Source: Primary data

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Variables Construction

The reliability analysis on the data from the 336 questionnaires comprised of the first part of the index construction. Principal Component Analysis is used to reduce the number of indicators to a single index. The first index that is CPEC-Cultural Tourism is obtained by using PCA, extracted from two principal components. These Principal components were derived from the rescaled rotated component matrix loadings multiplied by the responses of their respective indicators. Then these principal components were multiplied by the total variance explained by the extracted sum of square loadings to provide the final index value as suggested by Suhr (2005) and Abeyasekera (2005). Also, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.671 shows that the sample for the indicators of cultural tourism is 67.1% consistent and adequate. Table 2 shows the indicators, their mean and standard deviation for the respective components. Whereas, the variable Culture Tourism is perception about the trends in culture tourism to their region and also the perception regarding the impact of CPEC on the cultural tourism. Residents were asked questions about these respective issues to help construct the index which has been termed as CPEC influenced cultural tourism.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of Indicators of-Cultural Tourism

Indicators of Cultural Tourism	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourists appreciate the culture (lifestyle, food, music, dance, language etc.) more than any other object.	3.76	1.23
Tourist arrivals to this region has increased only because of cultural attractions.	2.89	1.30
The cultural attractions of this region are unique to tourists than any other region in Pakistan.	4.03	1.14
CPEC helps promote the culture of GB through tourism and advertisements	3.74	1.12
CPEC helps promote tourism in GB.	3.85	1.11
CPEC helps facilitate tourism through tourism information desks	3.74	1.18
CPEC helps make this place an easy and safe to go tourist destination.	3.58	1.27

Similarly, table 3 shows the list of indicators, their mean and standard deviation used to obtain cultural conservation index. Cultural conservation index was derived from 5 components derived through a PCA using fifteen indicators. Similarly, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's (KMO) of 0.63 shows that the dataset is 63% consistent and adequate which is fairly good according to the previous literature. Further, these impacts of tourism on culture were derived from previous researchers including Brunt and Courtney (1999) and Besculides et. al. (2002).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Indicators of Cultural Conservation

Indicators of Cultural Conservation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourism helps us strengthen our belief/faith	2.78	1.391
It helps us understand belief/faith of others too	3.21	1.380
Tourism is promoting the native/local language of the region	3.35	1.380
Tourism is promoting the arts and crafts of the region	4.04	.939
It helps handicraft evolve over the time according to the need of tourists.	3.77	1.031
It is bringing positive moral values and ethics to the region.	3.03	1.301
Tourism is helping in the promotion of traditional music of the region.	3.95	.991
It improves and encourages residents to show off their traditional dance.	3.92	.997
Tourists are more attracted to objects like arts/music/dance.	3.96	.982
Tourism helps improve the architectural structure.	3.77	1.059
It is encouraging local residents to adopt modern architecture and the traditional or cultural architecture will soon be extinct.	3.63	1.122
It gives us a sense of pride regarding our culture	3.69	1.087
It helps improve the image of our community and country	3.84	.987
It gives us a stronger sense of ethnic identity	3.74	1.016

It helps eliminate stereotypes/ bad image of other cultures and countries and ours too.	3.64	1.165
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In the same manner, the index for the wellbeing of residents was derived by using PCA and following the procedure as described above. Estimating the index from 9 principal respective components explaining the maximum variation in the data. Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviations of the indicators which derive the principal components of the wellbeing index. Similarly, the KMO value of 0.72 shows that the data is 72% sufficient and consistent for this study which is higher than the benchmark value of 0.60.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Indicators of Wellbeing

Indicators of Wellbeing	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourism has increased your income at your current job	4.12	1.051
It has increased employment opportunities	4.41	.817
It gives economic security of your job	4.14	1.112
Your family income has improved	4.13	1.078
You get more pay and fringe benefits	3.91	1.115
It improves the educational standard of the region	3.80	1.169
It brings awareness and competition which makes the people of this region more diverted toward education	3.79	1.091
It helps bring innovative ideas specifically the entrepreneurial education, and gives a platform to practically experiment them	3.80	1.102

Finally in deriving a framework for this study based on the theoretical framework in the previous section and hence describing the relationship between CPEC-cultural-tourism, cultural conservation and objective wellbeing using mediation analysis. Following the framework explained in the previous section, the path diagram (figure 2) shows the details of the components of the indexes from which they were derived, hence providing a complete picture of the relationships among the variables.

4.2. Results

Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach was adapted to test for mediation of cultural conservation to impact the relationship between CPEC-Cultural-tourism and wellbeing of residents. Several regression analysis and bootstrapping were used to estimate the result for the relationship and the mediation effect. Hitherto, the most common technique used is these strategies was described by Baron and Kenny (1986). The results of the mediation analysis through bootstrapping (by using

process macro in SPSS introduced by a psychologist Andrew F. Hayes) is discussed in the table 5. It reveals both standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients, standard error, t-value and the BootCI (the boot generated upper and lower confidence intervals).

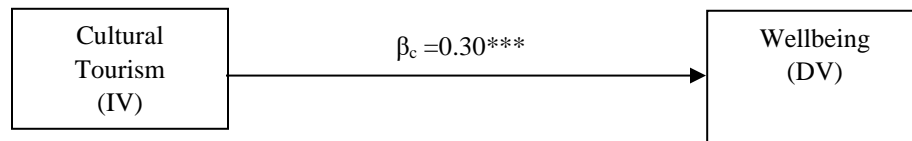
Table 5: The regression results for Mediation Analysis

Regression	Regression Coefficient β		SE	t-value	BootLL CI/BOO TULCI
	Unstandardized regression coefficient β	Standardized regression coefficient β			
β_c (OWB-CT)	0.30***	0.22***	0.05	4.03	0.19/0.43
β_a (CC-CT)	0.17***	0.32***	0.03	5.45	0.11/0.23
β_b (OWB-CC)	0.62***	0.33***	0.10	6.25	0.43/0.82
β_d (OWB- CT.CC)	0.20***	0.18***	0.06	3.37	0.08/0.32

*Note: OWB, objective wellbeing; CT, CPEC-Culture Tourism; CC, Culture conservation. The sign * shows the level of significance (** shows significance at $p < 0.05$ & *** shows significance at $p < 0.01$)*

The results from mediation analysis is explained in both table 5 above as well as in the figure (4) below.

Model A



Model B

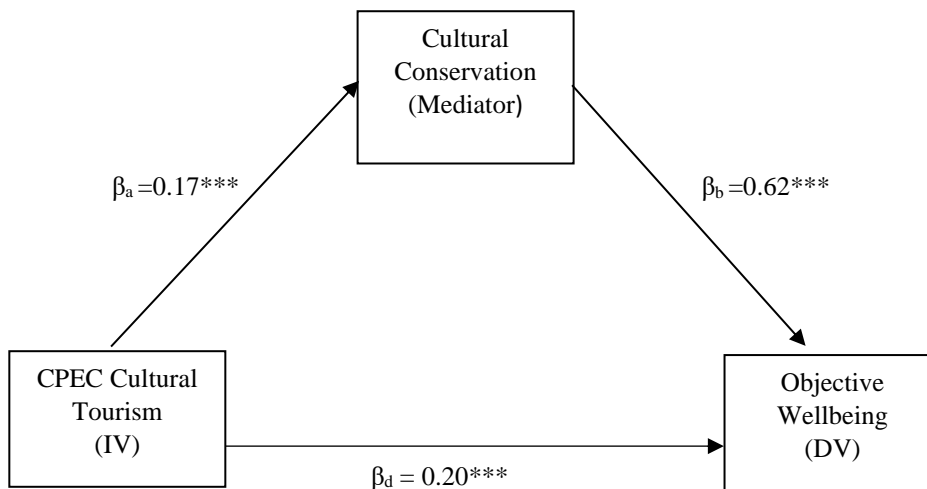


Figure 4: Results of the Mediation Analysis

These results based on a 5000 bootstrapped sample (as suggested by Preacher & Hayes, 2008) show that the total effect of Culture Tourism on objective wellbeing was positive and significant showed in step 1 of table 5 (total effect=0.17 se=0.03, $p<0.01$). Step 2 and 3 of the regression analysis in table 5 show a positive and significant relationship of independent variable with the mediator (IV-> M=0.32, se= 0.03, $p<0.01$) consequently, showing a positive and significant relationship of mediator to the dependent variable (M->DV=0.62, se=0.10, $p<0.01$). Meanwhile, the direct effect (indicated by step 4 in table 5) was not significant (direct effect =0.20, se=0.06, $p<0.01$). Hence giving an insight that cultural conservation partially mediated the relationship between culture tourism and objective wellbeing of residents (step 4 in table 5). In addition, with reference to Baron and Kenny (1986), complete mediation happens when the path from the independent variable to dependent variable is reduced in absolute size and is insignificant when the mediating variable is introduced otherwise it partially mediates the effect.

4.3. Discussion

This study shows that increased cultural tourism fostered by CPEC has a significant and positive impact on the wellbeing of the residents in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan. Hence, our findings support that of previous studies that linked cultural tourism with residents' wellbeing (Aref, 2011; Kim, 2002; Mathew and Sreejech, 2017). These results further support the argument that increased cultural tourism is linked with the demand for tangible and intangible depiction of the local culture (Richards, 2007; UNWTO, 2005). The study further shows that the market for local arts and crafts, entertainment/music/dance, cultural food, architecture, and museums is linked with increased cultural tourism.

The results further show that there is a positive and significant relationship between cultural tourism and cultural conservation. Therefore, our study supports the notion of positivity in this relationship (Boniface, 2013; Richards, 2017), rather than concerns about potential negative impacts as feared by some scholars (Besculides et al., 2002). These results suggest that cultural tourism encourages the cultural conservation as well as interest in preserving that specific culture (Bec et al., 2019; Richards, 2017). It is further noted that as culture tourism increases, the residents of the tourist destination try to grab these tourism opportunities by promoting their indigenous

culture, hence commodifying both tangible and intangible objects associated with their culture (Robinson and Picard, 2006; Young and Markham, 2020).

The study also reveals that a positive and significant indirect impact of CPEC influenced cultural tourism on residents' wellbeing is mediated by culture conservation. This finding is in line with some prior studies analyzing similar relationships in different contexts (eAllis, 2016; Ahebwa et al., 2016 UNWTO, 2005). Culture conservation playing the role of mediator states that cultural tourism plays a positive role in increasing the host community's objective wellbeing in the presence of cultural conservation. Since cultural assets, including tangible and intangible objects as well as expression of a society's values, play an important role in attracting tourists i.e., they play a role of pull factors for the tourist attraction (Bec et al., 2019; Young and Markham, 2020).

It has been referred by Bandarin et. al. (2011) that the relationship between culture (and cultural tourism) and development can be very collaborative, hence creating a pragmatic circular path. Based on this and other similar studies like Yang and Wall (2009) it is argued that as culture conservation increases, the wellbeing of the host community increases which in turn brings about development in the region. Due to increased development (and economic empowerment of locals), facilities, more specifically road, transportation, accommodation and food, improve hence attracting more cultural tourists to the region. Most of the tourists who visit these tourist destinations are more interested in the history of the place and its people, they therefore visit historical sites, forts and museums, local handicraft shops, cultural sites, national parks and patronize locally prepared organic food. Such activities encourage residents to commodify their cultural objects to improve their living standards and hence increase their wellbeing. When tourists arrive in these regions, they consume these commodities available at these sites, which will help the community either directly or indirectly to improve their objective wellbeing.

The cultural history of Gilgit-Baltistan is of great interest to visitors since it is located in the far North of Pakistan with mighty mountainous ranges, different National parks, including Khunjerab National park, forts and mosques including Baltit Fort, Altit Fort, an old mosque in Nagar Khaas, fairy meadows, and more importantly the old silk route along the Karakorum Highway. These heritage and other tourist attraction sites must be given an international recognition like their inclusion in the World Heritage Monuments list of the UNESCO. This will give international recognition to these cultural sites as well as to the region, as stated by Ryan and Silvanto (2011).

5. Implications, limitations and future research directions

This chapter has both theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, a key theoretical implication relates to the need for the context-specific theorization of issues like cultural tourism and wellbeing. The available definitions and constructs have been used to address these topics. However, it is an established fact in the extant literature that cultural perceptions concerning wellbeing tend to differ between different societies, where some aspects of wellbeing may be perceived more important than others (Dalziel et al., 2018). If scholars in the field of cultural tourism incorporate such sensitivities in their theorization, it will be beneficial for the emerging research stream, focusing on cultural tourism in developing countries, where the cultural paradigm is collectivistic. A key practical implication relates to the urgent need for skills development concerning the commodification of local cultural aspects in the Gilgit-Baltistan region. As cultural tourism is an emergent phenomenon in this region, the development of vocational training programs and hands-on guidance to the local entrepreneurs will increase the wellbeing of local residents and contribute to overall social value creation. Social value creation through (vocational) skills development has been highlighted in some recent studies as very important by scholars to ensure the viability of operations in any business field (e.g., Golgeci et al., 2021). Hence, this aspect should be taken seriously by the relevant policymakers to help develop such vocational skills in the region. Specialization in different cultural products like local art, cuisine, music, and heritage can significantly enrich tourists' cultural experiences. So far, there is a lack of such skills development and training initiatives at the policy level in the Gilgit-Baltistan region. Although there has been a visible improvement in infrastructure in this region due to CPEC, due to the mountainous nature of the region, more needs to be done to increase access to culturally attractive sites and valleys as well as ensure all-year-round access, rather than only seasonal access in summer or spring.

It is further important to mention that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced every aspect of life, including tourism in mountainous regions, where the economic dependence on tourism is very high (Nepal, 2020). Policymakers in the Gilgit-Baltistan region need to think about incorporating technological elements to enhance the cultural tourism experience in the region by offering interested tourists, different options like virtual tours and developing 3-D tour programs. For this they can benchmark on initiatives undertaken in different

western countries since the start of COVID-19. Availability of such options while the world still waits to return to normality will help keep the tourism sector functional and offer new possibilities for commodification of local cultural products.

This study however has several limitations. Firstly, it is based on data collected from selected parts of the Gilgit-Baltistan region, and findings cannot be generalized to other parts of Pakistan, due to significant variation in geography, climate, and cultural dynamics. However, the aim of the paper was to focus on this significantly under-researched region, and the findings provide a bases for future studies to build on this research. In particular, there is a need to undertake in-depth and qualitative research where specificities of different cultural tourism elements should be analyzed in relation to particular types and categories of cultural tourists (e.g., individual or family tourists from Pakistan, international tourists and group tourists). Such in-depth research is expected to offer specific insights concerning the development of tailor-made cultural tourism experiences for different groups, which is expected to strengthen further, local residents' wellbeing engaged with the tourism business. Finally, so far, there is a lack of research on tourists' cultural adjustment strategies when they visit indigenous communities in the region, who may have specific local customs and cultural sensitivities. Future researchers should explore this avenue, as their findings will be beneficial to both visiting tourists in the adjustment process while exploring and immersing themselves in the local culture and local touristic entrepreneurs to understand the process of adjustment of visitors and limitations associated with it.

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