

Blue Nature-Based Tourism to Enhance Sustainable Development in Pakistan Coastal Areas

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Abstract : Pakistan is endowed with diversified natural capital spanning along the 1000-kilometer-long coastline, shared by the coastal provinces of Sindh and Balochistan. It includes some of the most diverse, extensive, and least disturbed reef areas in the Indian Ocean. Pakistani marine and coastal ecosystems are fundamental for the social and economic well-being of the region. They support economic activities such as fishing, shrimp farming, tourism, and shipping, which contribute to income, food security, and the livelihood of millions of people. The coastal regions of Sindh and Balochistan are rich in natural resources and diverse ecosystems, and host also rural coastal communities that have been the keepers of rich cultural legacies and pristine natural landscapes. However, significant barriers hinder tourism development, such as the daunting socio-economic challenges, including the post-COVID-19 scenario, forced migration, institutional gaps, and the ravages of climate change. Pakistan holds immense potential for the tourism sector development within the framework of a sustainable blue economy, thereby fostering greener economic growth and employment opportunities, securing financing for the protection and conservation of its coastal and marine natural assets. Based on the assessment of Pakistan's natural and cultural coastal and maritime tourism resources, a deep study of the regulatory and institutional aspects of the tourism sector in the country accompanied by the SWOT analysis and accompanied by an in-depth interview with a member of the Pakistan National Tourism Coordination Board (NTCB). A market analysis has been developed, and Lao PDR, Thailand, and Indonesia's ecotourism development have been analyzed under a comparative analysis length to recommend some nature-based tourism activities for the sustainable development of the coastal areas in Pakistan. Nature-based tourism represents a win-win option as it uses economic incentives for the protection and cultural uses of natural resources. This article stresses the importance of nature-based activities for blue tourism, aligning conservation with developmental goals to safeguard natural resources and cultural heritage, all while fostering economic prosperity.

Keywords : blue tourism, coastal Pakistan, nature-based tourism, sustainable blue economy, sustainable development

Conference Title : ICSBE 2024 : International Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy

Conference Location : Rome, Italy

Conference Dates : July 22-23, 2024