

Regional tourism: Exploring themes for Transnational Routes

Oyunchimeg Luvsandavaajav¹ , Enkhjargal Dalaibaatar¹ , Gantuya Narantuya¹ 

¹ Department of Geography, National University of Mongolia; Ikh Surguuliin Street 1, Ulaanbaatar 14201, Mongolia

oyunchimeg_l@num.edu.mn (O.L.); enkhee_jal@num.edu.mn (E.D.); n.gantuya@num.edu.mn (G.N.)

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the potential for developing a thematic tourism corridor linking China, Mongolia, and Russia, drawing on theoretical insights from core-periphery theory, new regionalism, and place branding. Situated between two dominant regional powers, Mongolia faces challenges stemming from its peripheral status - such as limited accessibility and infrastructure deficits - yet these same conditions present unique opportunities for cross-border tourism development. Based on qualitative interviews with tourism experts, the research identifies six potential themes - four cultural and two natural - that could underpin a cross-border corridor model rooted in shared heritage and ecological assets. Employing qualitative research methods, specifically in-depth interviews with tourism experts, this study identifies two natural themes and four cultural themes deemed suitable for the development of cross-border tourism. The findings reveal both opportunities and constraints in advancing tourism collaboration within the China-Mongolia-Russia transboundary context. The study contributes to the regional tourism discourse by proposing context-sensitive strategies that align natural and cultural resources with market-oriented products, fostering inclusive growth, regional integration, and sustainable tourism practices. Based on empirical insights, the study proposes strategic directions to align natural and cultural resources with market-oriented tourism products, thereby enhancing visitor flows and promoting long-term, sustainable growth in the region.

KEYWORDS: thematic routes, tourism, regional integration, economic development, transnational tourism

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