

Impact of the Haramain High-Speed Railway on Saudi Arabia's Transportation Sector

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Dedication and Thanks

To the University's founder, His Excellence the Counselor **Nasser Al-Hamid**:

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1. Introduction:

The Haramain high-speed train is a high-speed rail service that connects the holy cities of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, covering a distance of 450 kilometers (280 miles). The train began operations in 2018 and is one of the fastest trains in the Middle East, with a top speed of 300 kilometers per hour (186 miles per hour).



There are five stations along the Haramain train route, including two terminal stations and three intermediate stations. The terminal stations are located in the cities of Mecca and Medina, while the intermediate stations are located in the cities of Jeddah, King Abdullah Economic City, and Rabigh.

2. Study's theoretical framework:

2.1 Study's Problem and Relevance

Any nation's economic growth is significantly boosted by the improvement of its transportation infrastructure. Mecca and Medina are connected by the Haramain High-Speed Railway (HHR), an important piece of Saudi Arabia's transportation infrastructure. It is yet uncertain how this project will affect the local economy, particularly in terms of tourism and business growth. By examining the effect of the HHR on the local economy, identifying difficulties and possibilities that emerged during its implementation, and assessing whether it was successful, this study seeks to fill this knowledge vacuum.

The significance of this study resides in its ability to offer insightful information on how the HHR project would affect the regional economy. The study's conclusions can help Saudi Arabia make judgments on future infrastructure development projects and policies. The study is noteworthy because it adds to the body of information on infrastructure and transportation development and helps to clarify the economic, social, and environmental effects of the HHR project on the local economy.

2.2 First Variable

In Saudi Arabia, tourism is a crucial part of the regional economy, generating income, jobs, and economic expansion. The HHR project was intended to help the region's tourism industry flourish by expanding the transportation system. However, it is still unclear how the HHR project will affect the amount and kind of tourists in the area.

Al-Ahmadi (2019) reports that tourism has increased in Saudi Arabia recently, with the Vision 2030 project of the nation targeting the industry as a vital engine of economic growth. By enhancing the transportation system and easing travel between Mecca and Medina, the HHR project is anticipated to have a positive impact on the tourism industry. To comprehend the advantages and constraints of this infrastructure project on the growth of tourism in Saudi Arabia, additional research on the influence of the HHR project on the tourist industry is necessary.

2.3 Second Variable and Correlation

Another crucial element in Saudi Arabia's economic growth is the local business climate. The HHR project is anticipated to enhance the transportation system, allowing the growth of business and luring outside investment. But it's still unknown how the HHR project will affect the local economic climate.

Al-Shammari et al. (2020) assert that several stakeholders, including local businesses, must be involved in the execution of infrastructure projects like the HHR project. The study emphasizes the significance of stakeholder involvement in completing infrastructure projects successfully and promoting economic growth. In order to fully grasp the advantages and constraints of such projects in promoting economic growth in Saudi Arabia, the research also underlines the necessity of assessing the impact of infrastructure projects on the local business environment.

It is also important to consider the relationship between tourism and the local business environment. Since local companies offer visitors the amenities and services they require, the success of the tourism industry is frequently correlated with the growth of the local business community. To fully assess the effect of this infrastructure project on the local economy, it is essential to comprehend the effects of the HHR project on both tourists and the local business environment.

The overall goal of this research is to ascertain how the HHR project has affected the Saudi Arabian local economy, with an emphasis on the tourist industry and the business environment in the region. The research aims to add to the body of knowledge on infrastructure and transportation development by offering insightful information that may guide Saudi Arabia's future infrastructure development projects and policy choices.

3. Methodological Aspects of Practical Study:

3.1 Methodological Procedures

This study will employ a mixed-method research design, which entails the confluence of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The present study shall utilize the quantitative methodology to thoroughly analyze the publicly accessible government reports on the Haramain High-Speed Railway (HHR) initiative. The reports under consideration primarily consist of financial records and environmental impact assessments, along with other pertinent data. The present study will adopt a qualitative approach that involves a comprehensive evaluation of the extant literature related to the domains of infrastructure and transportation development. This will facilitate the establishment of a robust theoretical framework for the research endeavor. The present research methodology endeavors to ascertain the comprehensiveness, reliability, and validity of the study outcomes. This is achieved through the utilization of a rigorous and evidence-based approach incorporating scientific research and government reports.

3.2 Study Findings

An analysis of government reports on the Haramain High Speed Rail (HHR) project shows that it has resulted in a significant increase in transport capacity between Mecca and Medina. The HHR project in particular provides an additional capacity of 60 million passengers per year, according to the Saudi General Investment Authority (2018). Additionally, the HHR project has helped reduce travel times and provide more convenient and efficient travel options for tourists and residents. According to Al-Tamimi et al. (2017), the HHR project reduced the travel time between Mecca and Medina from 5–6 hours to just 2.5 hours.



Comparison travel times from Mecca to Medina in Rome2Rio's

Additionally, government reports show that the HHR project has also contributed to the development of the region's tourism industry (Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, 2018). The HHR project has created new travel opportunities for tourists visiting the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, attracting more tourists to the region. The results suggest that infrastructure development projects have the potential to promote and support the growth of the tourism industry, which contributes significantly to the economic development of the region as a whole.

Increased transport capacity and efficiency of the HHR project could have a positive impact on the tourism industry and the local economy. Based on insights from existing literature on infrastructure and transport development, it is suggested that transport infrastructure can have a positive impact on economic growth. The HHR project has the potential to attract more tourists to the region, boost the growth of local businesses, and contribute to the region's economic growth in the long term. al-Shamali et al. (2020) argues that the HHR project has the potential to fundamentally transform the region's transportation and tourism industry.

Additionally, government reports on the HHR project show that the project has created numerous employment opportunities during the construction and operational phases (Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, 2018). The HHR project has provided employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers and has contributed to the economic development of the entire region. The results suggest that infrastructure projects can have a positive impact on local population employment rates and living standards.

3.3 Analyzing the Findings and the Proposed Perception

The Hameen High Speed Rail (HHR) project has resulted in significant infrastructure improvements, particularly between Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, according to an extensive analysis of numerous government reports on the project. According to a 2018 report by the Saudi General Investment Authority, the project significantly increased transport capacity, adding an additional 60 million passengers annually. Additionally, the HHR project has been successful in reducing travel times, giving both visitors and locals a more convenient and effective travel option. Al-Tamimi and others. According to reports from 2017, the HHR project was successful in cutting the travel time between Mecca and Medina from 5 to 6 hours to just 2 and a half hours.

It has also been noted that the HHR project has had favorable effects on the local tourism sector. According to the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (2018), the HHR project has expanded travel options for visitors to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, drawing more tourists to the area. According to this finding, infrastructure development initiatives may help to foster and sustain the expansion of the tourism sector, which is crucial to the overall economic development of the area.

The literature on infrastructure and transport development has highlighted the potential of the HHR project to increase regional tourism, foster the expansion of small businesses, and support long-term economic growth. Al-Shamali and others. (2020) contend that the HHR project has the potential to significantly alter the transportation and tourism sectors in the area. This project has the potential to increase employment opportunities and the standard of living for the local population. The development of effective transportation infrastructure can positively affect economic growth.

According to government reports, the HHR project also produced a large number of employment opportunities during the construction and operational phases, promoting the regional economy as a whole (Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, 2018). Infrastructure projects may improve the employment rates and living standards of the local population by creating employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers.

The region's overall level of road safety has increased as a result of the adoption of cutting-edge security measures to ensure both tourists and locals are safe while traveling (Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority, 2018). The advantages of infrastructure development projects go beyond economic gains and may also foster social and cultural growth in the area.

In conclusion, the Haramain High Speed Rail project has played a vital role in transforming the transportation system in the region and has been instrumental in driving economic growth. By enhancing road safety, creating employment opportunities, and boosting the local tourism sector, the project has made significant contributions to the overall development of the area. Existing literature highlights the potential of the HHR project to promote tourism and stimulate economic growth, underscoring the importance of effective infrastructure development and meticulous planning and evaluation of such projects.

Furthermore, the Haramain High Speed Rail project aligns with the vision of the Saudi Railway Company, which seeks to establish an integrated and sustainable transportation system in the country. The project's successful implementation is also a reflection of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which aims to diversify the country's economy and reduce its dependence on oil revenues. The HHR project's impact on the region's economy, tourism sector, and transportation system is an example of how infrastructure development can help achieve the country's ambitious economic and social goals.

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5. Abstract in Arabic:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة مشروع السكك الحديدية عالية السرعة التي تربط مكة المكرمة والمدينة المنورة في المملكة العربية السعودية. نظرا لأهمية مشاريع البنية التحتية في التنمية الاقتصادية والاجتماعية للمناطق، يركز هذا البحث على مشاريع البنية التحتية. باستخدام تحليل البيانات والمعلومات من التقارير الحكومية الصادرة عن المشروع، تسعى الدراسة إلى تحديد كيفية تأثير هذا المشروع على السياحة والتوظيف والاقتصاد المحلي والثقافة. إن زيادة قدرة المشروع وكفاءته في مجال النقل ، بالإضافة إلى تحسيناته على سلامة الطرق والتأثيرات الاجتماعية والثقافية على المنطقة ، هي نقاط التركيز الرئيسية للتحليل. كما يشمل البحث دراسة قضايا المشروع وصعوباته وآثاره على البيئة. تهدف الدراسة إلى توفير إطار مفيد لفهم كيفية تأثير مشاريع البنية التحتية على التنمية المحلية وتحديد النتائج والتوصيات المطلوبة لزيادة الاستثمار في هذه المشاريع وتحسين النتائج

6. Abstract in English:

This study aims to examine the effects of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's high-speed rail project linking Mecca and Medina on tourism, employment, the economy, and regional culture. This study uses data analysis from project-related government reports to evaluate the effects of infrastructure projects, which are essential for the economic and social development of regions. The project's increased capacity and efficiency for transportation, enhancements to road safety, and the project's social and cultural effects on the area are the main topics of the analysis. The project's difficulties and environmental impact are also examined in the study. The study offers a helpful framework for comprehending how infrastructure projects affect local development and identifies the essential recommendations to increase investment in such projects and enhance outcomes.