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Social Responsibility for Tourism Development in Bangladesh

Research Paper

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Abstract

Tourism is considered as an important contributor to economic growth, job creation and social upliftment. At the same time there is a negative side to the 'balance sheet'. Uncontrolled conventional tourism (mass tourism) poses potential threats in the form of depletion of natural resources, increase in pollution level, ecological imbalance and social aggression. To prevent or minimize the negative impact of tourism, it is vital to control the acts of human beings through appropriate laws. There are a few numbers of tourism laws in Bangladesh. Also, there are some other environment protection laws, regulations, policies and strategies covering tourism issues. Bu no law gives specific guidelines to handling negative socio-economic impacts of tourism; or to slowing down the environmental and ecological degradation because of tourism. Tourism itself cannot do harm to the environment, the human beings are rather responsible for that. In order to minimize it, the local grass-root level stakeholders will be best actors to train the tourists to take care of the ecology, environment and bio-diversity of that destination. Creation of Destination Management Organization (DMO) in the tourist destinations has become important tool towards this end. Creation of CBT and DMOs could be started immediately by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism (Mo CAT) in popular and over crowded tourist destinations of the country. Related ministries, tourism practioners, academicians and the local stakeholders could be involved in this process. The study suggested a framework for Sustainable Responsible Tourism is needed for tourism policy implication. Tourism policy development is not an isolated planning process.

Keywords: Social responsibility, environmental conservation, tourism value chain, stakeholders' 3Rs

1. Introduction

The phenomenal growth of tourism is amazing and as per the UN report, the world population has been predicted to hit 9.7 billion by 2050; and it is predicted that 4.17bn or nearly 50% or half of the world's population will take an international holiday by 2050 (Yeoman, 2010). On the other hand, against this phenomenal growth of tourism, the policy makers and the experts of tourism environmentalists are concerned about the Environment, ecology, and

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biodiversity degradation because of the huge influx of tourists in different parts of the planet. Tourism and travelling have some proven negative impacts on environment. Tremendous growth of both domestic and international tourism coupled with mass and unrestrained traditional tourism continuously creating threats to our environment and ecological system. Negative impacts from tourism occur on environment when the level of visitor's use of resources is greater than the environment's ability to cope with this use. Uncontrolled conventional tourism poses potential threats to many natural resources. The main sources of environmental pollutions are increased air pollution level, water crisis, soil erosion, natural habitat loss, depletion of natural resources, discharges in to the water bodies, increased pressure on endangered species and others. Mass tourism has contributed to the prosperity of some countries' economy; however, at the cost of environment as well. People make tourist spot by destructing the ecology.

Bangladesh is having the largest unbroken sandy sea beach (120 kilometers) from Cox's Bazar to Teknaf, the largest Mangrove forest in the world – the Sundarbans, and world's largest Buddhist Monastery at Paharpur. Bangladesh is also having more than 400 lakes, swamp forests and wet lands (*haor, baor, bils*). In addition, there are about 700 large and small rivers. Bangladesh is known around the world because of its lakes and wetlands, sea beaches, green hillocks, dense forests, mangroves and archaeological remains. However, huge influx of tourists in specific destinations, negligence from the authority, absence of proper tourism policy, gaps in different laws protecting the environment, lack of awareness of the local and national level stakeholders, absence of integrated approach among ministries and departments, too much business motive of tour operators and many other reasons have already created a big threat for environment, ecology and bio-diversity.

St. Martins island, Cox's Bazar sea beach, south east part of Sundarban, Jafflong, part of Bandarban, some big swamp forests like Lalakhal and some water bodies like Hakaluki, Tanguar haor etc have been identified as the most vulnerable touristic areas of Bangladesh. We cannot stop visitation by the tourists to destinations. In fact, more and more people will travel in years to come. In this backdrop, we have to think for appropriate policies and laws to prevent the harm, be it negligible, done by tourists and tourism industry. The question on "how tourism is responsible for environmental degradation' has to be reversed in this way, "How tourism can contribute to environmental conservation?" Hence different models, philosophies, concepts were developed to identify the actors and factors related to degradation and conservation.

2. Background Information

Tourism related policies and laws were reviewed for the present study. Some of the most important policies and laws related to tourism have been reviewed. Most of the acts and laws and policies do not directly mention about tourism and tourism trade. It seems that the policy makers are not aware about the unprecedented prospect of tourism as an economic force; as well as the immense threat created by unplanned conglomeration of mass tourists. On the other hand, the scope and extent of tourism ramifications are increasing in such a fastest rate that tourism now encompasses almost all the components of our lifestyle. For this reason, now it has become imperative to include tourism component in all the development plans of the country. Consequently, tourism has become very pertinent element in construction of roads and high ways, high rise buildings, bridges, office buildings, satellite townships, smart cities, deep seaports, airports, harbors, and what not? Unfortunately, our policy makers do not take into cognizance of the importance of inclusion of tourism component in all the development construction projects. Any construction entity becomes an aesthetical masterpiece when tourism is taken into consideration. In most of the acts, laws and legislations much have been discussed

on the modus-operandi, provisions for punishments, definitions and others. We feel, as presently tourism has become an important social and economic phenomenon having both positive and negative sides, the concerned and related laws should contain a directional proposition for tourism development causing minimum harm to the environment

There are some policies for Sustainable tourism development. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development all UN Members have committed to "pursue policy coherence and an enabling environment for sustainable development at all levels and by all actors" (UNWTO, 2008). The concept of sustainable tourism is applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including the mass tourism and various niche tourism segments. Sustainable Tourism Development vision will require an integrated process engaging government at all levels, international organizations, businesses, NGOs, local stakeholders and consumers (ITF-STD - Marrakech, 21st April 2009). For successful Sustainable Tourism Development Policy implication, a clear idea should have been developed on (i) who are the stakeholders (ii) what are Tourism Stakeholders' Relationship, Role, and Responsibility (3Rs) and (iii) what is specific (iii) Framework Model for Sustainable Responsible Tourism Development and (iv) Developing mechanism to control and monitoring the negative effects of tourism.

3. Methodology

The study was analytical. Information were collected from different secondary sources like books, critical review and research reports, journal, internet etc. Different policies and acts were considered to analyze different aspects of tourism and social responsibility for it.

4. Discussion and Analyses

4.1. The Concerned Stakeholders from Tourism Viewpoint

Tourism Stakeholders: The term "stakeholders in tourism development" includes, according to UNWTO, the following players:

-national governments;
-local governments with specific competence in tourism matters;
-tourism establishments and tourism enterprises, including their associations;
-institutions engaged in financing tourism projects;
-tourism employees, tourism professionals and tourism consultants;
-trade unions of tourism employees;
-tourism education and training centers;
-travelers, business travelers and visitors to tourism destinations, sites and attractions;
-local populations and host communities at tourism destinations
-other juridical and natural persons having stakes in tourism development including non-governmental organizations specializing in tourism and directly involved in tourism projects and the supply of tourism services (UNWTO, 2005).

Tourism stakeholders can be at two levels: at the national level and at the local level. In Bangladesh, at the national level, under the aegis of the Ministry Civil Aviation and Tourism, government has formed a stong wing called Bangladesh Toursim Board (BTB). At the Grass root level, that is at the destinations, the DMO (Destination Management Organiozation) type of local entity has to be formed who will take care of all the tourism related activities, plans, strategy formulation, marketing and ensuring flow of tourist expenditure to the local people. The DMO will have to take responsibility of maintaining sustainability of the environment, culture and protect bio-diversity of the concerned area. It is a matter of happiness that the

Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs, with the help of Hill District Councils, is initially planning to create BANTAC (Bandarban Tourism Activities Committee)– a type of DMO.

4.2. Proper Policy Guidelines: Policy and Institutional Arrangements

Bangladesh has a few number of laws in tourism arena. However, our Tourism Policy 2010 which should serve as the source of guideline for developing tourism and maintaining the environment, has miserably failed in giving specific ways to develop tourism and avoid the disaster made by tourism.

A number of laws are in operation since long to handle the hazards and damages to the environment, eco system and bio diversity. Unfortunately, no law encompasses even a para on the damages created by tourism and preserve the natural environment and sustainable use of tourism resources. Sustainable Responsible Tourism policy will be meaningful if the existing tourism and other environment related laws, rules, and regulations etc. are revised and modified specifying provisions of the Sustainable Responsible Tourism policy.

After identifying the Actors (where it applies), successful policy implementation requires understanding of the core values of sustainable tourism strategy.

Actors: Actors needed to implement Policy Framework are the basic institutions, activities, and grass root policies. Whenever the question of tourism sustainability comes, the following actors/activities appear to be the real driving force:

Creation of DMO (or any other suitable name),

Drive to develop awareness and motivation among the local community,

Formation of activity-based organizations,

Developing a trained guide force in the destinations,

Development of Demarketing tools for discouraging visitations by the tourists (to already damaged and critically vulnerable destinations).

4.3. Stakeholder roles and relationships in sustainable tourism development: a multi-faceted activity

Many different stakeholders are potentially engaged in the sector or are affected by it, directly and indirectly. The following Table identifies the main types of stakeholder and their roles and responsibilities in the delivery of sustainable tourism. In the following Table, Tourism Stakeholders' Relationship, Role, and Responsibility (3Rs) have been shown vividly:

Table-1: Tourism Stakeholders' Relationship, Role, and Responsibility to Destinations

Stakeholders	Relationship	Role	Responsibility
Outer Circle Stakeholders, not directly involved in destination Activities (No Significant Relation)			
1. International Development Agencies/partners • UN, UNDP, UNEP, ILO, other UN Agencies, •International Development partners •Others	No Significant Relation	• Integrating tourism in development policies and agreements. • Financial and technical assistance to sustainable tourism	• Uplifting the lifestyle of the poor people of developing countries. • Help developing countries to use tourism as a development tool
Semi Outer Circle Stakeholders, involved with destination Activities (Moderate Relation)			
2. Government • Ministry • Different related ministries • Govt. Departments	Moderate Relation	• Tourism policy and strategy development and implementation • Legislation, standards and regulation relating to the sector • Infrastructure planning and development • Resource management	•Make the projects successful • Improve lifestyle of the community • Monitoring the tourism activities.

		• Communication, information and marketing	
3. Private sector businesses • Local and national tourism services providers like tour operators, hoteliers, transport companies and others. • Suppliers of essential products like food. • Investors		• Operation of tourism services • Link to domestic and international markets • Product development, investment and improvement • Employment creation and generating local income • Ensuring economic, social and environmental sustainability	• Sharing profit with the local community • Employment generation for the local people. • Ensuring sustainability of the tourism attractions as well as environment • Train up local people to generate skilled labor from within.
4. NGOs: International, national and local • Environment, conservation and cultural NGOs • Social and community NGOs		• Engaging in strategic planning and development • Stakeholder coordination and supporting implementation • Capacity building and provision of expertise	•Awareness building programs and making the people aware about good and bad sides of tourism. • Enhance skill of local people by imparting training
5. Education and training bodies • Universities, colleges and teaching bodies • Research institutions • Tourism Training Institutes		• Knowledge gathering and dissemination • Supporting policy and strategy development • Capacity building and training • Specific advice and expertise	• Acting as bridge between the local entity and the policy makers at the top. • Finding problems and suggest ways to overcome • Infusing new ideas and products.
Inner Circle Stakeholders, heavily involved with destination Activities (Very Strong Relation)			
6. Local community • Destination Management Organization (DMO) • Local govt. Administration wings • Local elected Representatives (Parishads and councils) • Traditional structures –e.g. tribal chiefs/bodies • Organized groups, e.g. women, youth • Local formal & informal traders • Individual households	Very Strong Relation	• Engaging in planning and decisions on tourism at a local level • Representing and communicating local community interests • Pursuing equitable benefit sharing within communities • Interacting with tourists to mutual benefit • Receiving income from tourist spending	• Keeping the environment and ecology sustainable at the acceptable level. • Ensuring equitable distribution of tourist money among the community • Encouraging local people to engage in tourism activities. • Motivate people to behave properly with the guests.
7. Tourists/Consumers •Group/Individual tourists • Consumer networks, clubs and societies • Social media users		• Providing the main source of income to the sector • Behaving responsibly towards the environment and local communities. • Communicating information and opinions on destinations and sustainability issues accurately and fairly	• Keep in mind, "Our spending improves their lots". So, try to help the local people in exchange of services. • Respect the local culture, environment and ecology. • Positively disseminate good experiences

Replicated with modifications, from UNWTO's model on Stakeholders' Roles (UNWTO 2005)

4.4. Policies for Sustainability

While framing the policies for sustainable development, we probably get three stages of policy formulation: Sector policy, Core policy, and the Theme policy. Synchronization of these elements may ensure a sustainable development policy.

Sector policy: Departmental or sectoral policies for development. Example: Different ministry's development plans.

Core Policy: Generic policy. It will be reflected in all the development plans of the country. Example: No harm to society, environment, people, culture, bio-diversity, occupation, human right, freedom of speech etc.

Theme policy: Thematic issues like local traditional aesthetic sense and values, indigenous design, layout and standard, preservation of indigenous lifestyle, social and economic upliftment in line with the local culture, tradition and values.

If tourism becomes an integral part of any development project, we add value to the project, we ensure local community involvement, protect the ecosystem and increase income of the community. Therefore, we have to prioritize inclusion of responsible tourism concept in all the development plans be it in the land, in the ocean or at the top of mountains.

4.5. Base of Framework and Framework Model for Responsible Tourism Development

In any sustainable development policy, the aims must be clearly defined. The traditional concept of development must be changed. Mere infrastructural development is not real sense development. The philosophy of development must be human oriented. The common aims of sustainable development policy are (UNWTO Sustainable Dev Goals, 2018):

-Ensure Economic Growth
-Preservation and Conservation of natural resources and critical ecosystems
-Community involvement and empowerment
-Political commitment and able leadership
-Minimization of income disparity

4.6. Framework Model for Sustainable Responsibility for tourism development in Bangladesh

Tourism policy development is not an isolated planning process. For successful tourism development, involvement of 12 to 15 ministries are needed, either directly or indirectly. Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry's solo efforts to developing tourism is hardly to get success. Presently, while formulating any development plan, society's benefit becomes top most priority. In any planning process, involvement of Community is inevitable. Further, for ensuring responsible tourism, community is the main working instrument.

4.7. The National Committee to control and monitoring the negative effects of tourism

A long-term program is needed to ensure sustainable tourism management system in Bangladesh. Tourism will not remain confined only in the four geographic boundaries of the Bangladesh territory. In years to come, we have to start exploiting the resources in the ocean under the banner of 'Blue Economy'. A new tourism horizon will open up with the concept of 'Blue Tourism' where human beings will try to explore amusement and relaxation at the cost of marine ecology. Therefore, we have to find a holistic approach where the principle of 'maximum benefit at minimum loss' can be ensured. To control and monitoring the negative effects of tourism, a powerful national committee is needed.

The committee may be termed as the 'National Sustainable Tourism Management Committee (NSTM)' and headed by the Minister for Civil Aviation & Tourism ministry.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Tourism is emerging as one of the greatest global forces which tremendously contribute to the economic development of many countries. At the same time there is a negative side to the "balance sheet" of tourism. It has to be controlled; otherwise it will turn on the nations as the Frankenstein. The development policy makers should be aware of the end results of severe ignorance and/or negligence in understanding the power of tourism. The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism will have to take the leadership role in this crusade. For successful tourism development, involvement of 12 to 15 ministries are needed, either directly or indirectly. Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry's solo efforts to developing tourism is hardly to get success. In any planning process, involvement of Community is also inevitable. To save the environment from the activities of tourism, a strong national committee has to be created by the MoCAT with representations from the ministries and departments whose daily business and specific development plans may have some type of relation with tourism activities and entities. Initially it could be formed at the national level and subsequently at regional levels to controlling and monitoring the negative effects of tourism.

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The following relevant laws, regulations and ordinances which seemed to be directly or indirectly related to tourism and tourism industry have been examined:

a. BPC Ordinance
b. Bangladesh Tourism Board Act
c. Bangladesh Biman Corporation Ordinance,
d. Bangladesh Hotel and Restaurant Act.
e. Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation Ordinance appendix
f. BD Wildlife Preservation Order
g. The Coastal Zone Policy (CZP) 2005
h. Environment Policy '92
i. Environmental Conservation Act 1995 (Revision up to 2012)
j. Environmental Conservation Rules, 1997 (ECR'97)
k. The Environment Court Act, 2000
l. National Forest Policy (1994)
m. Wetland Policy, 1998
n. Tourism Policy
o. National Water Policy (2012)
p. Government Jalmahal Management Policy 2009