



Growth of Tourism and Hospitality Industry: Impact on Environment and Demographic Trend of Chittagong Hill Tracts

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author SC designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors GC and NCN managed the analyses of the study. Author NCN managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to focus on environmental impact and the demographic phenomenon of tourism. Bangladesh is now on the highway to achieve the Sustainable development goals by 2030 after fulfilling significant achievement of Millennium Development Goals. The government has made some ambitious targets to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. It is important to note that sustainable development comprises several criteria. There is a significant need for environmental protection which is one of the three pillars of sustainable development. The other two are economic growth and social progress. Tourism and hospitality sector is seen to have emerged as a new area of sustainable development in recent time to contribute to social development. The scope of the positive contribution of tourism and hospitality is ample and relates to several dimensions such as earning of foreign exchange, employment generation, increasing productivity, hotel accommodation and transportation etc. However, the recent studies reveal that tourism has dramatically affected social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects of hospitality. Especially in Chittagong Hill Tract area; which is a great tourist attraction of the country; experiencing the impacts of unfair

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practice of tourism. The lack of proper policy and lack of awareness about sustainable growth of tourism activities is profoundly effecting the environment and life of the local ethnic groups of that area. Nevertheless, with proper planning and implementation of rules & regulations, the scenario can be shifted to the positive side. The paper attempts to analyze the contribution of tourism and hospitality as a weapon of sustainable development agenda and to assess how it effects on the environment and demographic pattern or local communities of Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Keywords: Tourism; environment; demography; sustainable.

1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations has declared 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. Tourism and hospitality are one of the largest economic sectors in the world that create jobs and prosperity across the world. It has turned into one of the essential and fast-growing sectors in the country over the last decade. Bangladesh endeavors to achieve SDGs by 2030 [1]. So, sustainable tourism industry may be one of the means to fulfill the targets of SDGs. However, there is no way to deny that the tourism industry has both positive and negative impacts. The impacts are multidimensional divulging considerable environmental, social, cultural and economic effects.

The name of the greater district of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (henceforth to be used as CHTs), comprised of three hill districts, signifies vivid distinction with rest of the district of the country. It varies to topography and cultural background to plain land of the country. The uniqueness and spectacular landscape have made the region a destination of tourist from home and abroad. The signing of the CHT Accord of 1997, which put an end of decades-long unrest, paved the way for the growth of tourism and hospitality sectors in the region. Since then CHTs has turned into a popular destination of the tourist. Tourism recognized as an industry by the government is viewed from an economic perspective. It is expected as a result of the expansion of the industry will lead to an increase in earnings of foreign exchange, generate employment opportunities through establishment of a restaurant, hotel accommodation and related wherewithal. Thus it will help boost up economic activity and the living standard of local communities will be improved. These are undoubtedly benefits of the expansion of tourism. But the other side of tourism is related to the cost of degradation of the environment and affect social, cultural spectrum. So, there is no denying that the growth of the tourism and hospitality sector has brought a positive economic activity for the society. While at the same time, it also

incurs costs to the environment and cultural and demographic phenomenon of the locality.

2. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Empirical experiences show that tourism and hospitality facilities grew up tremendously in CHTs over the last decade. Different electronic media, especially social media, contributed to flourishing this industry by drawing the attention of the people about various attractive and mind-blowing picturesque natural spot of the region. This industry is now considered emerging to be financially viable but from an economic and social point of view to what extent it is feasible is yet to be examined.

There are several numbers of reasons to be drawn to justify the undertaking of the study. It is apparent that globally significant thrust has been imposed on environmental and social issues before permitting this industry. The field related to this issue is yet to be explored since most of the writings are on potential and prospects of the industry. While the negative impacts of this industry were not addressed as much, the study will add a different perspective into literature.

Different government and non-government organizations that are involved in the development process in the CHTs region would be able to find the lacking of their approach towards tourism industry through this study. Also, policymakers and the parties involved in the tourism and hospitality industry can use the study to shape their vision [2].

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper tries to focus on environmental impact and the demographic phenomenon of tourism. The other specific objectives for undertaking the study are outlined below:

- 1) To be conversant with existing policies for the development of the tourism industry.
- 2) To examine the impact of tourism on the environment and demographic phenomenon of ethnic people in the CHTs.

- 3) To find out the flaws and put forward some suggestion for the efficacy of the tourism industry in the region.

4. BACKGROUND OF AREA OF THE STUDY

CHTs is a land of diversity within the country in terms of geographical and demographic variation. It is home to 11 ethnic minorities which have distinctive language, culture, social tradition and customs. So CHTs represents a spectacular picture in the country with a unique historical background. The Chittagong Hill Tracts now comprising three hill districts of Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban are located between 21°25' and 23°45' north latitude and between 91°45' and 92°50' between east longitudes. It has a total land area of 13,181 square kilometers [3]. The district was created in 1860 by the Act XXII of that year and renamed Hill Tracts of Chittagong. The region occupies the south-eastern boundary of Bangladesh bordering with Myanmar to the east and south, to the south and east by India and the west by Chittagong district.

Seven main valleys of the Feni, Chengi, Myani, Kasalong, Karnafuli, Sangu and Matamuhuri rivers with their tributaries are found in the region.

The region is blessed with numerous hills, ravines and cliffs covered with green forests and vegetation while the rest of the country is just a few meters above the sea level. The hills are spread to the north-south direction ranging from moderately low to high hills. The highest peak of the country is located in the region. CHTs is different from the rest of the country in surface and soil structure.

The region has a unique topography with mountainous and hilly ranges, river valleys and green vegetation. The hills are mainly composed of consolidated sandstone, sandy shale and shale of recent geological origin. The hills comprising irregular, rounded, continuous and occasionally isolated and hillocks are spread over the entire region.

The altitude of the northern hills ranges from 300-610 meters while southern ones range from 457-884 meters. The hills have mild to the very steep surface, often breaking and ending cliffs. The flatlands located in the river valleys of the region are suitable for agriculture and habitation. Moderately a large portion of flatlands are found in Khagrachari district while hill slopes are steeper, elevations are higher and the land is generally more rugged in Bandarban district. On the other hand, the large portion of the flatlands is reportedly submerged underwater due to construction of the Kaptai hydraulic multi-purpose dam in Rangamati district. There is mostly little flat land in the Rainkhong and the Kasalong valleys in the district [4].

Overall this topography exhibits picturesque scenery of the region with alterations of hills and valleys covered with forests, bushes and vegetations.

The last national census was conducted in 2010 in the country. According to the census total population of the CHTs was 15,67,931. The statistics show that just over 53% of the population consists of 11 ethnic minority groups, while 47% comprise the non-ethnic group or Bengali people. The picture of the population is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Picture of the population

Sl.	Ethnic minority group	Total	%
1	Chakma	4,44,748	52.60
2	Marma	2,02,974	24.00
3	Tripura	1,33,789	15.82
4	Tanchanggya	44,254	5.23
5	Mro	39,004	4.61
6	Bawm	12,424	1.47
7	Khyang	3,899	0.46
8	Khumi	3,367	0.40
9	Chak	2,835	0.34
10	Pangkho	2,274	0.27
11	Lusai	959	0.11
	Total	8,45,541	53.93

Source: Census report, 2011, BBS

Demographically little change is marked in the ethnic population from 2001 to 2010. The ethnic groups of people shown at bottom 6-11 of the table are vulnerable and comprise weakest of the disadvantaged group of the country. They are even on the verge of extinction due to several reasons for undertaking activities in the name of the development program. It is interesting to note that these ethnic groups reside in the vicinity of renowned and well-known tourist spot or location of CHTs.

The ethnic people of the CHTs have been living in the region from the time immemorial with their own history, tradition, customs and beliefs. Most of the ethnic people are Buddhist in religion while few follow Hinduism and Christianity. The ethnic people are generally peace-loving, honest and hospitable. Their lifestyle is fascinating. They are mostly self-reliant and grow their own food. Each of the ethnic communities has its own dialect, distinctive dress and fabulous rites and ritual. They lead an elementary life. Agriculture remains the principal livelihood of the ethnic communities, and Jhum cultivation is the most popular method for cultivation of a variety of products.

The three districts are endowed with unique and exotic natural beauty. The hills covered with green vegetation and colourful flora and fauna has become heaven for hitchhiker, especially the young group of people. Innumerable large and small virgin and beautiful waterfalls throughout the districts attract people like magic. The Kaptai Lake, recently being approved as "branding of the Rangamati district" with unparalleled beauty, has become the destination of tourists of home and abroad. The Sajek valley has already been famous all over the world for picturesque natural beauty. Over the last few years, a significant number of large and small scale tourist spot are mushroomed capitalizing the beauty the Kaptai Lake of Rangamati and hills covered with greenery plants.

5. CONCEPTUAL VIEW OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

The 1960s and 1970s experienced tremendous growth in tourism as an industry. But it was soon realized the industry was not without costs. So, the social, cultural, economic and environmental impact of tourists' growth became the subject of serious study and research [5]. Today the number of tourists around the world somewhat increased significantly, but the view about tourism changed.

6. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study is conducted based on both primary and secondary data. The nature of the study requires data which are compatible with preparing the groundwork of this study. Secondary data are used for this purpose. The collections of secondary data are collected from various sources like research papers, books, journal, website and report of the different organizations. The reports published in the daily newspaper are also consulted.

Besides that, several interviews are also conducted to collect primary data from related personnel of tourism industries and also from local communities. As the study is based on the tourism in Chittagong Hill Tract area, the opinions and awareness about the impacts of such economic activities in that area need to be accessed. The data collected through the interviews has served that purpose.

Related environmental and ecological laws and regulations are consulted to compare and analyze the collected data to find out the impacts on environment and demography in CHT. In the analysis of different issues of the paper, the knowledge and opinions of the indigenous communities are given prime consideration as their views on environment and life is profoundly impacted by the tourism and hospitality industry.

7. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study covers the tourist area of CHTs which are located in few locations of the districts. This study is entirely an academic work. The study was wholly dependent on secondary data, and to some extent, it relies on empirical experiences. During the visit, interviews with local people made are also used as a source of data. The study appears to be challenging because of the lack of proper data available in this connection, and no rigorous or qualitative studies have not done for the region.

8. INSTITUTIONAL PROVISION AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism is assigned with responsibilities to make policies regarding the development of tourism in the country [6]. Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, an affiliate body of the ministry, is given the authority to look after the implementation of the policy. In order to contribute in foreign currency earnings, the

government of Bangladesh recognized tourism as an industry in 1991 and subsequently it was incorporated in industrial policy of 1991. Since then tourism has been recognized as an essential sector of Bangladesh. With a view to fulfil the needs of the tourists and integrate national consensus, a National Tourism Policy was announced in 1992. At present National Tourism Rules of 2010 is in place to guide the establishment of tourism and hospitality enterprise. A National Tourism Council was also formed to encourage private investment in this sector. However, it is needless to mention that despite this attempt tourism has just been started in the recent past in momentous.

It is essential to mention that the tourism policy drafted initially did not integrate any provision regarding environmental issues. The aims of the Parjatan policy:

- a) Increase foreign exchange by attracting foreign tourists;
- b) increase interest in tourism activities among the people and meeting low-cost facilities for them;
- c) Develop and preservation and maintenance of the tourist resources of the country;
- d) Take up steps for alleviating poverty by creating employment opportunities for a higher number of people;
- e) Create a favorable image of Bangladesh abroad;
- f) Open up a recognized field of investment for private capital;
- g) Create recreation facilities for foreign tourists as well as local people;
- h) Develop the handicraft and cottage industries, consolidation of national solidarity and consensus through fostering and development of the culture, heritage and tradition of the country [3].

The researchers and several NGOs are now of the opinion that the natural environment of CHT is under severe threat since long back. Now it has become very vulnerable due to the continuous process of deforestation, land erosion and some other anti-ecological activities. Tourism industry itself has some ingredients of environmental degradation. Existing laws of the country suggest the following consideration before permitting to this thriving industry;

- 1) Protection of environmental health;
- 2) Control of environment pollution and;
- 3) Conservation of natural and cultural resources.

Article 31 and 32 of the Bangladesh Constitution enshrine "right to life and personal liberty" as a fundamental right to life of a citizen. Although it does not explicitly recognize the right to environment civil society of the country as well as the global community have become vocal to ensure a favorable environment for life. So, the government has enacted some regulations and rules to protect the environment. The very ideas of these regulations are reflected in formulating laws or policies regarding tourism development. Based on this platform the government enacted several laws or regulations like; Bangladesh Environmental Conservation Act 1995, Environment Conservation Rules 1997, Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation) Act 1973, Bangladesh Forest Act 1972, the Ground Water Management Rules 1997, the Brick Burning (Control) Act 1989 and so on. These environments related act and rules explicit the genuine intention of the government to preserve the right to life of the people. Nevertheless, the main concern remains about how much of these are being implemented [7].

9. TOURISM VS ENVIRONMENT: SCENARIO OF CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

It is always blamed that the various projects are implemented in CHTs with any Environment Impact Analysis (EIA). Such projects not only adversely affect the socio-economic condition of a large portion of the population, but it also hampers the environment of the region. For example, it can be said that the Karnafuli Multipurpose Project undertaken in 1950 adversely affected and it changed the entire scenario of the region. People still have been bearing an unfathomable loss of that project. It is unpleasantly accurate that decades-long political unrest and tense situation kept CHTs aloof from the undertaking of substantial development. The signing of the CHT Accord in December 1997, which ended decade's prolonged unrest situation paved the way for the inflow of government and private investment in various sectors. Over the last ten years, CHTs witnessed a significant amount of investment in the tourism sector. It is well known that CHT owns single largest forest area in the country. So, the impact of tourism on the natural environment cannot be overemphasized as all most all tourist location has grown up capitalizing fantastic beauty of natural scenery.

The governance structure of CHTs is different from that of the plain district of the country. Three hill district council of the district, as per provision of their separate acts, are vested with the responsibilities to formulate all development planning of the districts. In order to facilitate carry out or implement functions as many as around 30 departments or subjects including BPC have been transferred to these district councils. But in practice, these supreme local governance bodies are hardly conversant about the development scenario of the districts. So the effect of the tourism industry on social and environmental aspects remains beyond imagination and unknown. Nevertheless, it is interesting to mention that these bodies are headed by the people of ethnic minority communities who indigenous knowledge about protection, preservation and maintenance of environment and ecology.

The tourism industry is an industry which relates to socio-ecological planning. It has undoubtedly ethical implications in terms of social and political, environmental and economic issues [8]. UNWTO has specified a Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, a set of principles to guide the stakeholders in tourism development. According to BPC, the tourists who travel throughout the country irrespective of native or foreigner, are categorized into six types. They are- tourism, business, office, study, religion, service and other purposes. Various studies show tourist who travels to CHTs comprise mainly two forms -site tourism and other purpose tourism. It is believed that more than 95% of the tourists fall into site tourism category. Moreover, it is a harsh reality that this is the principal matter of concern with respect to the environment and cultural issues [3].

Many opine that Jhum cultivation or slash and burn method of cultivation followed by the ethnic groups of people as a means of livelihood pose a severe threat to the environment. However, recent studies show indiscriminate felling of trees for business purpose, destroy of the forest to facilitate the establishment of business enterprises, random cutting of hills to set up residences and other severe destructive purposes are appeared to be main causes of environmental degradation [9].

10. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The impact of tourism in CHT cannot be evaluated in a single perspective, as different

parts of the society are directly and indirectly involved with the whole process. All the findings from the study have been analyzed from several perspectives.

10.1 Social and Political Perspective

The social and political implications of tourism industry cannot be ruled out. There are many tourism operations in the CHT region which are operated without consideration of interests of the local community. Even the local communities are not allowed to take part in tourism operations. It is important to note that six communities of the CHTs reside in the vicinity of the renowned tourist locations for years. Their existence is under threat because of the expansion of tourism operations. Social crowding as a result of tourist operations forces communities to dislocate from their ancestral land.

Moreover, local communities are persuaded by the tour operators to sell off their land, offering a handsome amount of money. Without thinking about any consequence, the simple ethnic people take the offer and move into more remote areas. In the long run, this process has led to conflict among local communities, developers, governments and tourists.

10.2 Environmental Perspective

Tourism is consistently reported to exert an impact on air and water quality, erode soils, create noise pollution, expand the built environment, increase transport networks and disrupt species behaviour in a number of ways [10]. There is scarce of plain land in CHTs. So, what is seen is that the tourist locations are being developed on top of the hills or hillside area. Besides, inconsiderate waste management is another detrimental to the sound environment? Evidence shows that environmental policies enacted by the government are not adequately carried out by tourism enterprises. This form of development and degradation of natural resources continues to harm the environment and lead to irreversible damage as well as the species and social processes surrounding it.

10.3 Economic Perspective

The benefits of tourism hardly go to the local communities since they are not either allowed to take part in the ownership of the industry or to

work in the industry on the ground that they lack in educational qualifications and relevant experiences. It is seen that most of the workforce in tourist locations are hired or engaged from outside. Besides, the economic aspects of environmental degradation are hardly considered. Stakeholders need to implement responsible development strategies to help ensure the conservation, rather than just economic gain in the short-term.

11. IMPLICATIONS

The impacts of the study would be an insight for all the parties involved in the tourism sector. The study found several unfair practices of tourism business which are greatly influencing the social and demographic trends of the CHTs. But, unfortunately, very few people from the tourism industry have the realization about these negative impacts.

Introducing special policy regarding tourism may help the local authorities of CHTs to have a proper guideline. Because sometimes their actions are very short-sighted and lack of long term vision.

Participation of the local ethnic group is another major issue which needs severe consideration. There is a huge communication gap between these people and the authority figure. As these people play a significant role in the demography of CHTs; which is a major attraction for tourist; preserving their habitats and ecological balance should be the first step. Ensuring their participation will increase the current political and economic situations also.

As the study suggests, tourism should be environment-friendly, imposing and implementing strict guidelines and limitations over tourism activities would help to alter the negative impacts on the environment. Restricting the uses of lands for tourism purposes where local communities' habitants are situated and introducing proper waste management in those areas will eventually turn the whole scenario into a profitable zone for sustainable development.

12. CONCLUSION

Environmentally-friendly tourism, in other words, "ecotourism" is a famous advertising slogan

nowadays. Sustainable development is a people-centred process be clearly understood by all concerned, particularly by the policymakers and decision-makers at various level of the society. The sustainable tourism is defined as "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities". The present paper put forward some recommendation to boost up the tourism and hospitality industry as well as to protect environmental degradation:

1. Need for special policy
2. Community participation
3. Integrating population and development agenda
4. Need for creating job opportunities
5. Need to take care of environmental factors

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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