

Stakeholder's Perceptions of Sustainable Tourism Development in North Western Province, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Sustainable Development Goals are recognized as the outline to approach a better sustainable development in the future. Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as the response to the agenda 30 in 2015. For the successful implementation of the sustainable tourism development, a corporation of stakeholders and the coordination are essential. In 2017 with the purpose of achieving the SDG Sri Lankan government declared a national policy for sustainable tourism development with operating bodies for every sector. It has been found that the issues regarding implementing the national policy throughout many cases such as policy content, policy the nature of the policy process, the actors involved in the process, and the context in which the policy is designed and implemented. Based on that, this research focuses to study the perception of the stakeholders about the initiatives taken by tourism in North Western province to achieve sustainable tourism development.

Comprehensive literature was conducted to identify success factors related to STD implementation. The study was conducted by using the mixed method. Relevant Stakeholders are selected representing the public & private sectors. To analyse the perception carried out the structural interview with close-ended and open-ended questions.

Research found that, there is a good perception of sustainable tourism development to the government stakeholders when compared with the private sector stakeholders on STD as a concept. When implementing the STD success factors private sector statements were good, all the STD factors somehow, they implemented to their business and even their perception of the basic indicator of STD is in good condition. Both sectors are facing various challenges when implanting the STD policies and projects. Therefore, in the future public and private sectors require two different strategies for the successful implementation of STD.

Keywords: *Sustainable Tourism Development, SDG, Stakeholder Perception, National & Regional Policies*

1.0 Introduction

Tourism industry contributing to the economy of the country and therefore, most of developing countries show their interest on tourism as a continues operation of yelling foreign exchange. As the developing country, Sri Lankan tourism industry has taken the part of develop the country with adding value to the overall sector in the country providing jobs, generating income, diversifying the economy, protecting environment and the social development. However, Tourism delivered the positive impacts, but also tourism development is occurring negative impacts on the economy, society and for the environment as well (Schmuecker & Postma, 2017).

The concept of sustainable tourism has risen against such as all detrimental tourism development (Aslam, 2012). It has derived by the broader view of “Sustainable development”. “Sustainable development defines by the World Commission of Environment and Development (WCED) as “development that meet the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs” (WCED, Our Common Future, 1987). As the result of growing awareness of the concept, has persuaded on Converting the MDG (Millennium Development Goals) to the SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) in 2015. Sustainable Development Goals are recognized as the outline to approach a better sustainable development in the future. Sustainable tourism development (STD) is aligned with the sustainable development goals (SDG) as the response to the agenda 30 in 2015. For the successful implementation of the sustainable tourism development, a corporation of stakeholders and the coordination are essential. In 2017 with the purpose of achieving the SDG Sri Lankan government declared a national policy for sustainable tourism development with operating bodies for every sector. It has been found that the issues regarding implementing the national policy throughout many cases such as policy content, policy the nature of the policy process, the actors involved in the process, and the context in which the policy is designed and implemented. To the implementation of sustainable tourism development, need of the participation of all the stakeholders to the one flat form in each destination. Stakeholders, are the individual or group of people which are having common interest on specific decision or course of action (Freeman & Mcvea, 2001). The different understanding of sustainable tourism development and the perception on the own interest of different stakeholders. (Guo, Jiang, & Li, 2019). The commitment of public stake holders for sustainable tourism is not enough. There is no proper guideline for rural tourism development of every province in Sri Lanka (Aslam M.S.M, Awang K.W.B, 2016). Observing the cases related to the issues of sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka, it is clearly visible the issues regarding the implementation of sustainable tourism development. In to the same degree, 2017- 2020 strategic plan for tourism is disclosed that “Limited systematic implementation of existing plans and projects” as one of major barrier to develop sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka. (Strategic plan in Tourism 2017-

2020). Based on that, this research focuses to study the perception of the stakeholders about the initiatives taken by tourism in North Western province to achieve sustainable tourism development and recommend strategies to implement successful sustainable tourism development. The paper consisted with literature review explaining the basic definitions and successful SDG implementation. Then explain the methodology adopted to derive analysis, discussion and finally conclude the research with recommendation.

2.0 Literature Review

Changes of global direction towards sustainable development, was huge effect on tourism as other every sector in the world. At the beginning of the tourism, people used to travel on their foot or back of animals to one country to another for various reasons specially trade and overthrow the enemies (Duminduhewa, at al, 2020). Advancement of the industry has created the high demand of the resources, demolish the biologically and culturally most sensitive areas are caused to serial damage for local community and to the environment (Bruner , Sweeting , & Rosenfeld, 2013) influence of the factors were the root cause of uncontrollable growth which were the result of lack of organization and the guidance ((Jayawardena, Patterson, Chris, & Brain, 2008).

Considering above overall negative impacts from the fastest economic process after the industrial age in every sector has raised the awareness of sustainable development at the first time in the world history in 1987 by world commission on environment and development. After five years in 1992 is there was a small consideration given to the tourism on 11 chapter of the “Agenda 21” at the earth summit in Rio de Janeiro. It stimulated to generate foreign income by forest in most appropriate way such as “eco-tourism” under the description of action should be employed to take maximum usage of forest as well as about the multilateral trading system (GAAT) to protect natural resources collaboratively.

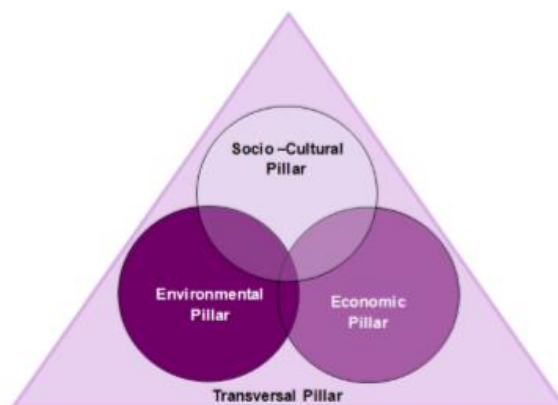
Further it has described the key dimensions which are ensuring the long run of the sustainability of environment, economic and social- cultural, towards tourism development:

- 1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural resources and biodiversity.
- 2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- 3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation. (A Guide for Policy Makers, 2005, pp. 11-12)

Sustainable Tourism Development

The highest result of practicing the sustainable tourism can be seen in 2015 with launching agenda 30 by UN which was declared 17 sustainable development goals and corresponding 169 targets for the better future for all based on millennium development goals at the 22nd general assembly of UNWTO. adapted to this transformation by declaring 2017 as the international year of sustainable tourism for development till 2030 (Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030, Highlights, 2018) There were three goals which are having very strong contribution to covering up all 17 goals. 1. economic growth and employment (Goal 8), for the opportunity to achieve 2. sustainable consumption and production (Goal 12), and its importance in 3. providing sustainable livelihoods in coastal areas (Goal 14) out of 17 goals. But there should be an international body for implanting SDG as well the national policy formulation to achieve the expected outcome of the SDG. when the SDG become the meaning of the sustainable tourism development, there should be a way to approach those SDG while in the tourism operation.

Figure 2.1 Pillars of sustainable tourism



Source: UNEP, Making tourism more sustainable. A guide for policy makers, 2005

Successful factors for sustainable tourism development

The main factor here is there is no any country able to apply all SDG. It is most important to identifying the successful factors in SDG implementation generally, to understand the common successful influences to implement any policy. When this common scenario applies to the tourism industry there can observe many strategies used by several countries. However, the researcher selected the reliable success stories of the SDG application to the tourism industry by countries in worldwide. Through the examination of numbers of cases, researcher found many factors followed by identified numbers of countries for success sustainable tourism development. Those are recognized as the STD policy success factors in the research. It will

further have revealed the factors should practice for successful sustainable tourism development in the international standard.

There are numbers of factors identified through the 10 cases (1- Ljubljana, Slovenia,2- Egypt,13- Ecuador,8- Lanzarote, Spain,14- Peruvian Amazon, Peru,3- Ruwanda,9- Bangladesh,15- Panama,6- Bohol province, Philippine,7- United States of America). Observed above factors influenced for success SDG implementation can be organized under the several themes by removing repetitions as follows.

1. Socio cultural
2. Business Management
3. Government rules and regulations
4. Technology and education
5. Marketing

The objective of referring the STD success factors to understand the global sustainable tourism development how aligned with the tourism.

Table: 2.1 STD Success factors

Socio Cultural	1. Cultural and ecological management 2. Local awareness raising session 3. Help to develop local community 4. Enhanced the population's positive attitude 5. Collaboration with local communities 6. Contributed to enhanced employment 7. Provide opportunities to Women to earn 8. Local cultural empowerments 9. Encouraged appreciations of the area.
Business Management	1. Assist of government partners 2. Develop a crisis management plan to maintain activities 3. Financial modality 4. Overcome cross cutting challenges 5. Aligned with the principle 6. Good governance 7. Involved stakeholders in the process 8. Collaboration with local communities and authorities 9. Recruiting local people 10. Locally owned management committee. 11. Strong leadership through the provincial governor 12. Followed their lead to build communication, trust and effective partnership 13. Village meetings before and during the project development 14. All operations detailed management plan

	15. Adversary committee with government, university and village representative 16. Frosted collaboration through local associations 17. Moving predatory practices to sustainable tourism 18. Offering a successful model 19. successful modes of impacting the understanding and behaviour of guests 20. Corporate with rural development 21. Use technology online system
Government / Rules and regulations	1. Overcome, crosscutting challenges 2. SME management 3. coordination meetings and workshops were arranged for all implementing partners 4. Develop a crisis management plan to maintain activities 5. Involved stakeholders in the process 6. Aligned with the principle 7. Frosted collaboration through local associations 8. Startup funding 9. Offering a successful model 10. Corporate with rural development 11. Locally owned management committee 12. Good governance 13. Destination management capacities among public administration the privet sector and surrounding communities 14. Provincial government provides a strong overall policy 15. Village meetings before and during the project development 16. Government secured its creditability, convinced, stakeholders to supports its effort 17. Collaboration of government/ NGO and privet tour operators 18. Joint Planning and decision making, sharing, responsibilities and having a common Direction 19. Network of the government 20. Collaboration with local communities 21. Infrastructure development of government 22. Regulatory framework 23. Improvement in infrastructure connected to tourism 24. Use technology online system
Environment	1. Protecting natural resource 2. Link between Environmental conservation and community benefit 3. Reservation natural resources while raising awareness

	4. Environmental education programs 5. Check on Carrying capacity 6. Waste management 7. Relationship with nature
Technology & Education	1. Local awareness raising session 2. Arrangement of workshop for all implement parties 3. Capacity building 4. Awareness raising of long-term site maintenance 5. Awareness raising activities for quest and public 6. Renovation studies 7. Provide training to local people in hospitality, cooking, hygiene, health, accounting, English 8. Opportunity for women to learn
Marketing	1. Regular participation in exhibition and trade

(UNWTO, Tourism for Development – Volume II: Good Practices, 2018, pp. 9,13,19,23,101,93,97,81,77,49,53,61),UNWTO & Organization of American State, Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals-Good Practices in the Americas, 2018, pp. 28,42,44

After the identification of employing the STD in tourism industry in globe scenario, gradually researcher needed to refer the adoptaion of the STD in nationaly and provincial level in Sri Lanka. At the same time researcher will employing these factors to identify the stakholder perception of STD in the NWP.

3.0 Methodology

Comprehensive literature was conducted to identify success factors related to STD implementation. The study was conducted by using the mixed method. Relevant Stakeholders are selected representing the public & private sectors. Total sample size that was considered in the study is 89 stakeholders. 78 are privet stakeholders and 9 of them are government stakeholders selected by using simple random sample techniques. Open ended and close ended questionnaire was conducted and descriptive analysis adapted to analysis data. Through the study, researcher analyze the perception of both private and government stakeholders, found undiscovered areas in the NWP tourism under the descriptive and qualitative data analysis.

4.0 Discussion

The concept of the Sustainable development bloomed in 2015 and tourism industry obtained to its practice from 2017. Referring the data regarding to the experience in the relevant field, even most of stakeholders are having more than 5 years' experience in field did not aware about sustainable tourism development in NWP. Perception of awareness on sustainable tourism development, 37% of the privet stakeholders were never heard about the concept and 29% of them even haven't good awareness. To get clear understanding about the awareness of

stakeholders towards sustainable tourism development, it was asked a question which is further elaborating the basic concept (indicators of sustainability in which level important to their business) of the sustainability.

Even 37% of privet stake holders never heard the concept and 29% haven't good knowing about the concept, more than 60% of them ensured that those basic factors of sustainable tourism are very important to the Business. It is generated an idea about the stakeholders who did not recognize the concept in the name of the sustainability, are implementing those while they operating the business. When considering the higher percentage of the awareness on sustainability and the sustainable development in the tourism planning, perception of the awareness of Privet sector stakeholders are very low.

It is revealed that there is an issue with delivering and the application of absorbed knowledge of the government stakeholders in a basic stage. Considering the status of implementing sustainable tourism development, most of STD success factors are implementing by both stakeholders. Implementing means they have certain knowledge about the sustainable tourism development even they did not recognize it as a concept. But the percentage of implementing some factors by the stakeholders are very high than implementing other factors. Highest percentage of government stakeholders are implementing following factors.

1. Coordination meetings and workshops were arranged for all implementing partners (88%)
2. Involved stakeholders in the process (88%)
3. Directing stakeholders with common provincial strategic plan aligned with national plan (100%)
4. Frosted collaboration through local associations (100%)
5. Collaboration of government/ NGO and privet tour operators to the development of tourism (88%)
6. Infrastructure development of government (88%)
7. Arrange Capacity building for tourism development (88%)
8. Arrange training programs for tourism promotion in the province (100%)

It does mean that most of government stakeholders have certain extended of perception on sustainable tourism development.

In the same way, there are some factors practiced by privet sector stakeholders in highest percentages follows.

1. Use Financial techniques (88%)
2. Overcome inter sectoral challenges affects for business (96%)
3. Aligned with some certain principle unique to the business (84%)
4. Collaboration and communication with local communities (99%)

5. Recruiting local people (89%)
6. Prepare detailed management plan about All operations business (93%)
7. Fostered collaboration through local associations and committees (85%)
8. Understanding the behavior of guests (94%)
9. Ensuring the excellence of the tourist experience (by feedback forms, guest book, reviews, complain handling) (96%)

Given percentages shows the perception of private sector stakeholder regarding above factors. Even they did not concern of the concept of sustainable tourism in their operation they are practicing the core of sustainable tourism development.

When considering the analysis of qualitative data on prospect and challenges for sustainable tourism development by the private sector stakeholders, researcher was able to identify all the challenges under two key areas.

Figure: 4.1 Summary of the prospect and challenges for sustainable tourism development



Perception of government stakeholders on prospect and challenges for sustainable tourism development by referring all the respondents, researcher found all the responses under key main areas as follows.

1. Internal conflicts and the issues of integrity of the government bodies.
2. Poor relation with privet stakeholders
3. Issues of service quality
4. Lack of integrated planning for the destination development
5. Lack of physical availability of the Privet stakeholders.

Researcher was able to find the key main areas by referring the overcome the challenges by both government and the privet stakeholders.

Figure: 4.2 Summary of the recommendation for sustainable tourism development in NWP



5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

Research found that, there is a good perception of sustainable tourism development to the government stakeholders when compared with the private sector stakeholders on STD as a concept. When implementing the STD success factors private sector statements were good, all the STD factors somehow, they implemented to their business and even their perception of the basic indicator of STD is in good condition. Both sectors are facing various challenges when implanting the STD policies and projects. Therefore, in the future public and private sectors require two different strategies for the successful implementation of STD.

The study of the stakeholder perception on STD in the NWP is a showcase how importance the perception towards STD of both private and government stakeholders to a province. It also revealed the numbers of hidden areas and the need of address issues in the province. Researcher understood which type of factors can concern as the STD success factors generally and how it can be localized. Considering the findings of the study in several stages, it could be provided a clear statement that, there is perceptual gap between the private and stakeholder in the NWP towards the development of tourism.

Perception on implementing status of sustainable tourism development in the province, researcher found that all the STD factors are implementing by less or more percentage by both stakeholders while they operating the business. As the final stage, about the prospect and the challenges for tourism development, researcher found that there are some specific challenges faced by both stakeholders. Further, it was found that there are some challenges specified to certain category of private stakeholders. In general aspect, researcher identify all the prospect and challenges faced by the stakeholders are related to certain theme. Finally, researcher revealed the perception on the strategies for tourism development in the province by both stakeholders, are related to certain specified themes.

As the recommendation provided to increase the both parties when concerning the strategies, they given to the researcher., Government (both of national and provincial) has a major role in the planning and implementation the concept. There should be a proper connectivity of the SLTDA with provincial government. The responsibility of delivering the knowledge of sustainable tourism development to the private sector is upon to the government stakeholders. When researcher following the international success stories about sustainable tourism development to find the STD factors, identified that already even without knowing of the concept, stakeholders are practiced those in the NWP. Government should learn the lesson from international success stories on sustainable tourism development. Keep the continuous dialogue with stakeholders in the province is necessary. Considering the private stakeholders.

The study opens the door for many new areas. This will show the light for the several key areas which is based on sustainable tourism. This study can be extended as a national level perception analysis for both government and private stakeholders in all the nine provinces. There is a potential to conducting research to analysis the prospect and challenges faced by the water sport center considering complicated prospect and challenges faced by them. Simultaneously the same analysis can conduct on Guest house in NWP.

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