



**Investigate the responsibility of the stakeholders to build a
community friendly sustainable destination: A case study on Sajek,
Bangladesh**

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Abstract

This study focus on the sustainable community-based tourism in Sajek, Bangladesh. Focusing on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in fostering a community-friendly tourism environment. Qualitative research methodology are used in this study to investigates how tourism can used to support environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and economic growth which ensuring long-term benefits for the local community. Moreover, interviews and thematic analysis used in this research highlights the critical role of local communities, government bodies, tourism businesses, and non-governmental organizations in developing sustainable tourism practices. The findings of the study suggest that collaborative efforts and inclusive planning are essential to address the challenges of sustainable tourism. For example environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and economic inequality. Finally, it will be hope that the study contributes to the understanding of sustainable tourism development in rural destinations and provides recommendations for stakeholders to enhance tourism sustainability in Sajek.

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction and Problem formulation

1.1 Sustainable community-based tourism development

Travelling is when people visit for fun, relaxation, work, or holidays. It also means visiting different locations, checking out their sights, and learning about their culture. Living briefly in places like hotels, spas, or rental homes is also called tourism. Tourism includes many activities, from adventure and tourist tourism to cultural trades and eco-tourism. It is a big part of the economies of many places (Dangi and Jamal, 2016). Tourism brings in money, creates jobs, and helps people learn about and share other cultures.

A sustainable tourism-based community approach to tourist development, putting social justice, economic growth, environmental protection, and cultural preservation. Community use tourism to protect the community's natural resources and cultural history. Also, social structure is essential for future generations (Giampiccoli et al., 2020). Tourism-based communities work for the betterment of the environment. This includes tree plantation, building roads, and giving safety to tourists. Community people are aware of the development of the place. They work for green energy sources, properly manage waste, and protect areas from fragility. They ensure that their natural resources, often the main draws for tourists, will be around for a long time; they prioritise protecting wildlife, ecosystems, and beautiful scenery (Dangi and Jamal, 2016).

On the other hand, preserving culture is another important part of making a tourism-based community. They know how important their cultural history, customs, and personalities are and work hard to keep them from being used for profit (Muller et al., 2020). These communities ensure that tourism honours and celebrates local practices and customs by running programs. This encourages cultural exchange, gives indigenous communities more power, and keeps physical and intangible cultural assets safe (Muller et al., 2020).

Social justice is an essential idea for social tourism development. It ensures the happiness of local people and tourists. They are ensuring that tourism's benefits are shared somewhat and helping to reduce poverty (Rose, 2020). Bringing people together, giving communities more power, involving local communities in decisions offers people a sense of ownership and pride in social development. Diversifying the economy is also essential for towns that depend on tourists. Even though tourism is their primary source of income and jobs, these places want to make their economies more diverse by supporting other industries (Hazaea et al., 2024), such as farming, crafts, and small businesses. The community becomes more robust and self-reliant by returning money from tourism to social services, building changes, and local development projects.

Communities dependent on tourism encourage visitors to behave responsibly through education, efforts to raise awareness, and rules of conduct. Visitors should follow local practices and customs and buy from local businesses (Hazaea et al., 2024). They are concerned about good things for the community. These places ensure that tourism stays a good thing by encouraging responsible tourism. This helps both tourists and locals' unique characters to be alive for future generations.

Moreover, tourism is a big part of the growth of economies worldwide. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) says that the travel and tourism industry added \$8.8 trillion to the world's GDP in 2019. This contributes 10.4% of all GDP (Hoeaira, 2020). The money that comes in comes from spending on things like lodging, transportation, food, sights, and wellness, which helps businesses in all fields by attracting investors.

Tourism creates employment opportunities both directly and indirectly for millions of people worldwide. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) said that in 2019 the tourism business supplied 334 million jobs worldwide. This portion is 10% of all jobs in the world. The jobs include transportation, hospitality, shopping and entertainment (Hoeaira, 2020).

Moreover, international tourism helps many countries balance their economy. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) said that 1.5 billion foreign tourists visited in 2019. This tourist brought money to \$1.5 trillion. This money helps keep national economies ahead and builds up foreign currency reserves used for the country's development. Tourism encourages people to spend money on transportation systems, places to stay, and leisure facilities. Building up infrastructure makes the experience better for tourists and helps locals by making things easier to get to and improving life (Hoeaira, 2020). According to the World Economic Forum, the tourist business worldwide spends more than \$1.4 trillion on building up infrastructure.

Tourism helps people from different countries understand and share cultures. It encourages respect, understanding, and tolerance between people. This builds the cultures of both tourists and host towns stronger. According to UNWTO, cultural tourism accounts for about 40% worldwide. This shows how important it is to promote cultural heritage protection.

Overall, Tourism can help community development by giving locals more power, keeping traditional trades and skills alive, making money for community-based projects, and getting people involved in planning and running tourist events. This makes sure that everyone benefits and helps the host towns stay healthy. These projects can help everyone of the society.

1.2 Sustainable development in Bangladesh and advances in transportation

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015 ensure the end of poverty and protect the planet and all people with peace and Prosperity (Biermann et al., 2017). According to the Daily Star, we must work together across sectors to solve the problems affecting business, society, the environment, and politics. Realizing how these parts work together is essential, as is taking action to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This (SDGs) is ensured by keeping environmental, social, and economic goals (Biermann et al., 2017).

According to the principles set out in the 2030 Agenda, Bangladesh needs to find a world road that fits its needs and goals to achieve sustainable growth. This needs to ensure good governance in both the business and government sectors. This is very important for reaching this goal. All stages of government see implementing the SDGs as a goal. This shows the importance of decision-making processes to be open, responsible, and include everyone (Fukda-Parr, Kanie and Kim 2016).

Bangladesh's national, regional, and local governments should all be responsible for developing tourism in a way, but more is needed. The central government can manage tourist policy, planning, and foreign marketing. Regional and local governments, on the other hand, are charged with putting together programs. For tourism to grow viable, government agencies, business sector partners, and civil society groups need to work together (Rahman & Rahman, 2020).

Bangladesh has almost achieved sustainable development goals despite various challenges. For example, population density, poverty, and vulnerability to climate change. The country has recently achieved remarkable progress in reducing poverty levels. The poverty rate declined from 49% to 24% within the four years. Additionally, it is resilient in addressing environmental sustainability issues with initiatives. This includes afforestation programs and renewable energy. The governments of Bangladesh are committed to achieving Sustainable development goals by removing poverty (Rahman & Rahman, 2020).

However, the country has gained remarkable success in transportation, aiming to improve connectivity and promote economic growth. The expansion of the road network, with the construction of new highways, are milestones of success—the bridges facilitate smoother movement of goods and people across the country. Funded by domestic and international help, the Padma Bridge project plays a significant economic role. This bridge connects the southwestern region (Barishal division) to the capital region (Dhaka). Giving quick transportation facilities enriches economic activities in the area (Saurav et al, 2023).

Bangladesh now applies integrating transportation systems to address environmental concerns. This promotes energy efficiency. Adopting cleaner and greener technologies includes

compressed natural gas (CNG) buses. Electric vehicles aim to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions (Chowdhury et al, 2023). However, Bangladesh's transportation systems could be better for economic development and tourism. Still, it faces many challenges, such as rapid urbanisation, population growth, and inadequate infrastructure. This hinders the progress of the country. Also, vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change hamper the development of the transformation (Biermann, Kanye and Kim, 2017). This is alright; these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and investment in sustainable transportation solutions. By leveraging technology, embracing renewable energy sources, and adopting integrated planning approaches, Bangladesh can pave the way for a more sustainable and resilient transportation future (Biermann, Kanye and Kim, 2017).

1.3 The case of Sajek and the destination place for sustainable development

The mountains of the Kasalong range surround the Sajek Valley, which is in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh (Bhuiyan, 2018). This valley is in the Rangamati district, about 70 kilometres northeast of Rangamati town. It has vast natural scenery and a lot of cultural heritage.



Figure 1: Sajek valley (BD Tourism Board, 2024).

In Sajek, many indigenous tribes, Tripura, Marma, Chakma, Pankhoa, Lusai, live in this valley. There are almost 30,000 people present. Most of the people who live there make a living in traditional ways. For example, farming, logging, and making crafts. This used to be the primary source of income for the people of this village. Recently, Sajek has been empowered with infrastructure and tourist services. It is now more accessible for people because of improvements to road networks, public transportation, and school education.

The eco-lodges and homestay programs have also sprung up to meet the needs of tourists (Afroz and Mahmud, 2017). The beautiful scenery and variety of environments in Sajek Valley make it a significant place. Moreover, the Valley has misty hills, thick woods, and streams that fall over rocks. It has a lot of time for leisure and enjoying nature's beauty. Sajek has its cultural programs, craft, and identity, which gives it more value. This makes sajek an appealing place for tourists (Afroz and Mahmud, 2017).

Sajek Valley has natural scenery and incredible diversity, making it more widespread. Hills, grass, and streams in the valley attract tourists. The peaceful atmosphere and beautiful views make it popular for photographers and people who love nature. But, sajek needs some help. There needs to be more than just transportation systems and the safety of the people. Food, waste management, and sanitation are not safe for tourists, hindering the prosperity of the sale. However, people who live there still follow their traditions. There are a lot of ethnic people living in the Sajek. So, many tourists visit the area to meet the locals and see traditional dance. Tourists eat tasty food from the area's long past of culture (Afroz and Mahmud, 2017).

There are many ecotourism options in Sajek Valley for people who like to go on adventures, such as trekking on rough trails. Also, going to beautiful lookouts and birding in clean woods are just a few of the outdoor activities. People who want to have exciting experiences in nature, the valley's peaceful atmosphere and cool weather make it a great place to relax and recharge (Roy and Sharmin, 2021)

Homestay programs let tourists live with local families and learn about their customs as well as their daily lives. This adds to the cultural exposure and authenticity of the experience (Roy and Sharmin, 2021). This helps people from different cultures connect in meaningful ways.



Figure 2: Nature of Sajek (BD Tourism Board, 2024).

Sajek Valley is embraced by natural beauty and an exciting culture. It is also an excellent place for photographers to take fascinating pictures. There is a picture-perfect moment in every part of Sajek, from the morning over misty hills to lively events. Tourists come to Sajek Valley because it has a great mix of natural beauty, cultural variety, excitement, and peace. They want engaging experiences that will help them connect with the land and its people (Roy and Sharmin, 2021).

1.4 Problem formulation

This study aims to make the tourist industry more sustainable in Sajek, a popular tourist destination of Bangladesh known for its rich local culture, iconic hill views, indigenous events, traditional crafts, and foods. Sajek has the potential to foster positive international relations, promote community involvement, and drive sustainable practices in tourism. It also shows problems like the transportation system, waste management, and event management at Sajek. According to Ahmed and Shamsuzzoha, Sajek has become one of the most visited destinations in Bangladesh within the last ten years. However, there are many bad practices present. Unsafe transportation, guests' safety and security, and community discrimination are matters of concern.

The research questions guide the research in the right direction. This paper aims to observe two things. First, we must protect and support what makes Sajek a community-friendly tourist destination. Second, to find solutions to the problems that the tourism industry in Sajek faces, focusing on deforestation, waste management, and mass tourism. By pointing out these problems, the study gives stakeholders important information about how they can make effective policies and regulations. Finally, providing recommendations on how Sajek, Bangladesh's tourism sector, can overcome these challenges and obstacles.

1.5 Research question

What is the responsibility of the stakeholders to build Sajek, a community-friendly sustainable destination in Bangladesh? A descriptive case study on sustainable practices at the destination of Sajek, Bangladesh.

1.6 Research Objectives

- Investigate tourist priorities when visiting the destination and the main challenges for facilitating tourism.
- Study the push factors for sustainable development and the complexities that could lead to challenges in achieving community-based tourism.
- Highlighting tourism stakeholders and how they understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Examine tourism strategies and explore what is being declared by the Bangladesh Tourism Board and the main tourism stakeholders.

Chapter 2

2. Literature Review

2.1 Tourist Priorities and Accommodation Preferences in Sajek Valley

2.1.1 Impact of Events and Festivals on Tourist Numbers

Events and festivals have a significant impact on tourist numbers. These events and festivals are vital catalysts for attracting visitors and stimulating local economies. It provides unique experiences often tied to the destination's cultural, historical, or natural aspects.

According to Lopes and Hiray (2020), Cultural events and festivals shape the inner cultural world. The author said that events and festivals contribute to a region's economic vitality by increasing tourist influx, enhancing the destination's image, and promoting culture. According to Amara (2017), Different kinds of cultural events make a place appealing, and they are becoming an increasingly important part of branding a place. To bring guests and build their brand, many places worldwide have created event collections. Not only should the amount of money an event brings in be considered, but also how well it fits with the values of the location.

On the other hand, Hernández-Mogollón, Duarte, and Folgado-Fernández (2018) believe that Events are potent tools for destination branding. It creates memorable experiences that can elevate a destination's profile. The spot blend of natural beauty and cultural richness offers a fertile ground for event-based tourism. According to Brownett (2018), festivals play a role in fostering community pride and identity. Festivals contribute to a more authentic and engaging tourist experience. However, community involvement is crucial in destinations like Sajek, where

local culture and traditions are integral to tourism (Amin, 2021). During such events, the tourists and local communities lead to a deeper appreciation of the destination's heritage visitation and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

However, According to Muiruri (2017), the impact of events and festivals on tourist numbers has a few challenges. More tourists strain local infrastructure and necessitate increased waste management, potentially leading to environmental degradation. Balancing the benefits of increased tourism is essential for the preservation and sustainable development of the country.

2.1.2 Preferred Tourist Facilities and Accommodations

Tourists' preferences regarding facilities play a role in shaping the overall travel experience and customer satisfaction. Customers' expectations of tourists necessitate a continuous assessment of what constitutes preferred tourist facilities.

According to Han (2019), modern tourists seek more than just a place to stay. Tourists desire an experience reflective of the destination's character, offering comfort and convenience. Crouch and Ritchie (2013) argue that accommodations are no longer mere amenities. They are integral to the tourism product, enhancing the destination's attractiveness.

Environmental sustainability has emerged as a significant factor in tourists' accommodation facilities. Besides, Gashi et al. (2023) highlight a growing segment of eco-conscious travellers who prefer accommodations demonstrating environmental stewardship. This is particularly pertinent in natural destinations like Sajek Valley.

Tourists increasingly value the integration of local culture into the accommodation experience. According to Jape and Suleiman (2010), tourists are drawn to accommodations that offer a culturally immersive experience, reflecting the local heritage and lifestyle. This enriches their understanding and appreciation of the destination.

Moreover, the advent of digital technology transformed tourist expectations regarding connectivity. Das (2023) points out that modern tourists expect seamless digital services from online booking to in-room technology, which enhances their experience.

2.1.3 Critical Challenges in Ensuring Tourist Satisfaction

According to recent literature, ensuring tourist satisfaction in today's travel landscape has many challenges. Many factors, such as service quality and expectations of authenticity, influence tourist satisfaction. According to Agustian et al. (2023), they manage tourists' evolving expectations, increasing the demand for personalized and unique experiences. The rise of digital technology and social media drives this. Tourists now seek comfort, convenience, and immersive experiences and use of local culture and environment.

On the other hand, maintaining service quality across the tourism value chain emphasizes the need for consistent service delivery (Tasnim et al., 2023). The author also believes that tourist satisfaction is contingent on the cumulative experiences, from accommodations to attractions.

According to Miller and Torres-Delgado (2023), Sustainability issues challenge tourist satisfaction. The growing awareness of environmental and social impacts has increasingly made tourists scrutinize sustainability practices. Failing to meet these expectations can result in dissatisfaction and negative perceptions of tourists. Additionally, integrating technology into tourism services has challenges in ensuring reliability. Technological failures can frustrate tourists, as stated by Al-Rubaye (2023).

2.2 Challenges and Drivers for Sustainable Community-Based Tourism

2.2.1 Economic, Environmental, and Social Pillars of Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism has garnered significant attention today. It emphasizes three foundational pillars: economic, environmental, and social. These pillars are critical in guiding the tourism industry for long-term viability and community benefits.

According to Rahimbaya (2023), from an economic perspective, sustainable tourism is seen as a vehicle for promoting local economic development and reducing poverty. Horvath, Kupi and Happ (2018) believe sustainable tourism should contribute to the local economy by generating income and creating jobs. Besides, it stimulates local businesses by ensuring the economic benefits equitably among community members.

Nguyen, Costanzo and Karatas-Ozkan, 2023 said sustainable tourism necessitates conserving and protecting natural resources. The author emphasizes the importance of minimizing the environmental impacts of tourism. This includes waste, saving water and energy, protecting biodiversity, climate change, etc. The literature advocates for the implementation of environmental management practices. It ensures destinations retain their natural appeal and biodiversity, which attracts customers.

Socially, sustainable tourism involves preserving communities' cultural integrity and social fabric. It is essential to involve local communities in tourism development and ensure they influence decision-making processes. It promotes cultural exchange and mutual understanding between tourists and residents (Huo et al., 2023). This approach helps prevent cultural erosion and ensures intercultural understanding of tourists and their stakeholders.

2.2.2. Community Involvement in Tourism Development

Community involvement in tourism development is now essential to sustainable tourism practices. Their participation is empowering local communities to have a meaningful role in the tourism sector. However, it enhances the tourism experience and ensures the benefits.

Rijal (2023) stated that many essential aspects of community participation in tourism planning and decision-making processes exist. This ensures that tourism development aligns with the community's values, needs, and aspirations by enhancing local well-being and fostering a sense of ownership among residents. The stakeholders and participants play essential roles in the development of tourism enterprises.

According to Hezfezi et al. (2019), Positive outcomes of community-based tourism (CBT) directly and indirectly help the community. CBT encourages tourists to engage with local cultures and ecosystems. Community-based tourism creates a more authentic and enriching experience for visitors and hosts.

However, community involvement in tourism has challenges, such as power imbalances, conflicts of interest, uneven distribution of tourism benefits, etc. Rosalina et al. (2023) stated that community engagement efforts should be undermined. Effective communication, transparent governance and capacity-building are essential for faster stakeholder collaboration.

2.2.3 Barriers to Achieving Sustainable Tourism Goals

Achieving sustainable tourism goals has many barriers. These barriers are multifaceted, spanning economic, environmental, social, and institutional domains.

One perceived barrier to most tourism operators is the cost of maintaining sustainability practices. According to Thacker et al. (2019), the high costs of sustainable infrastructure and practices, especially those perceived by businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises, are high. This cost can be a barrier to the broader adoption of sustainability measures. Sustainable practices are often perceived not to bring immediate financial benefits but also potential long-term benefits.

However, the challenge remains how the environment will balance promoting tourism for economic development and safeguarding natural resources (Thacker et al., 2019). Bhattacharya and Jeong (2018) establish that the problem of the carrying capacity of the destination involves the dilemma wherein an invasion of tourists could result in resource depletion, pollution, or loss of biodiversity in the environment—undermining the very first attractions drawing tourists. Socially, the lack of community engagement in tourism planning and development poses a

significant barrier. Uduji and Okolo Obasi (2023) state that tourism development not conducted through partaking by the local community in making up their minds stands disadvantaged in fostering social unrest, cultural erosion, and increasing feelings of alienation among residents. This lack of engagement can lead to a misalignment between tourism development and community values.

Institutionally, the need for coherent policies and frameworks supporting sustainable tourism is a notable barrier. Rosalina et al. (2023) opinion that sustainable tourism is bound to lose coherency and thereby represent a failed policy program without strong policy support and stakeholder coordination. The added challenge is multi-stakeholder participation, comprising governments, businesses, and communities, including tourists. Whatsoever, all has to work together to achieve shared sustainability goals.

2.3 Roles and Responsibilities of Tourism Stakeholders

2.3.1 Stakeholder Communication and Collaboration

Communication between stakeholders and partnerships is essential for maintaining the sustainability of tourism. Multi-stakeholder synergy is vital for achieving common goals and finding solutions to the multidimensional problems presented in sustainable tourism.

Park and Kohler (2019) agree that shared understanding and joint efforts are prerequisites for sustainable tourism outcomes. The centre of collaboration is effective communication, creating a link through which stakeholders exchange knowledge and interests and negotiate toward a solution.

According to Rosalina et al. (2023), stakeholders could be involved in tourism planning; the author recommends transparent, inclusive, and ongoing communication processes that can fully involve local communities in decision-making processes. This inclusivity ensures that tourism development is aligned with local needs and sustainability objectives.

Moreover, the research by Rahimoya (2023) delves into the dynamics of multi-stakeholder networks in tourism. It points out the complexity in the management of diversified interests and the clear need for governance structures to aid efficient collaboration and conflict resolution. The author suggests that efforts that generate collaboration would be improved if mechanisms were

developed to create trust and respect between the stakeholders and the process moved from constant communication to shared activity.

Regarding technology, the stakeholders could use digital platforms to communicate and collaborate with others in any tourism-related initiative. Tools are provided to share knowledge, real-time feedback, and organized action, making their stakeholder involvement more effective and efficient.

2.3.2. Defining Stakeholder Roles in Tourism Management

The roles of stakeholders in tourism management become a prerequisite for coordinated efforts and effective implantation of sustainable tourism practices. Besides, the boundary of duties has to be very clear between all the parties so that they get maximal benefits from tourism with the least possible harm.

Governments are portrayed as regulators and facilitators in the tourism industry. They are responsible for determining and enforcing policies and regulations that will bring about sustainable tourism development. According to (Huo et al., 2023), the government is expected to deliver rules and regulations to tourism stakeholders. The provision of infrastructure and ensuring funds for tourism-related projects ensure congruence with the overall economic and environmental objectives.

Equally, sustainable practice's role is critical for tourism operators and businesses—for example, hotels, tour companies, and attractions. They are at the frontline in delivering sustainable products and services to tourists while reducing their environmental footprints, all to ensure the positive, authentic experience of the tourists. Serravalle et al. (2019) argue that businesses ought to be capable of adopting sustainability actions that could include waste reduction, energy savings, and responsible marketing to elevate the levels of competitiveness for the eco-conscious traveller.

Local communities are integral stakeholders in tourism management, as they are directly affected by tourism activities. Their involvement promises inclusivity and the benefit of local-level tourism development. Eyisi, Lee and Tress (2021) highly recommended the participation of the

community in any decision-making process that ensures tourism reflects and respects the culture of local people and traditions while simultaneously being a source of local economic development. The tourist himself has a role in managing sustainable tourism. His travel choice and behavior toward any destination can considerably affect it. Indeed, there is an excellent need to inform and involve tourists in responsible tourism practices, such as respect for local culture, minimizing environmental footprints, and letting the local economy benefit by spending money on local products and services.

2.3.3 Initiatives for Promoting Sustainable Tourism Practices

They would adopt certification programs and standards that help guide tourism businesses in adopting the most environmentally friendly and socially responsible best practices.

Programs of this kind offer a framework for continuous improvement, setting the benchmark to stimulate tourism operators to acquire sustainable management practices (Fadil et al., 2022). Certification helps businesses in the area to reduce their environmental footprint. Further, it contributes positively to the community, apart from working as a marketing tool for them to attract sustainability-conscious tourists.

Technology plays a crucial role in advancing sustainable tourism. Roxas, Rivera and Gutierrez (2018) discuss the potential of digital solutions to enhance sustainability in the described sphere. This includes different aspects, from energy-efficient smart buildings to data analytics that might be used when managing visitors flow to reduce possible environmental damage. Technology also presents room for increased engagement with tourists by offering platforms to educate them on sustainability issues and more responsible travel behaviors.

Community-based tourism (CBT) can be one of the most vital initiatives that further sustainability. Streimikiene(2021) identified that in CBT, the local community participates in the tourism development process, decision-making, and ways to share the benefits from tourism, which will be divided equitably. It empowers the community, ensures the protection of cultural heritage, and guarantees the preservation of its development in a manner that will be sympathetic to local needs and values.

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According to Fadil et al. (2022), strategies are designed to cover all dimensions of tourism: environmental, economic, and social. They aim to harmonize the guests' needs with those of the industry and host community to ensure sustainable tourism development. Along the same lines, the role of educational programs and awareness campaigns in strengthening sustainable tourism practices must be recognized. That is, to increase both awareness and understanding among various stakeholders, from tourists to the industry, of their roles in working toward sustainability (Roxas, Rivera and Gutierrez, 2018).

2.4 Assessment of Tourism Strategies in Sajek

2.4.1. Objectives and Goals of Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)

Goals of Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) influence the change of the tourism landscape, heavily banking on the objectives and goals evolving to change with the dynamics of the industry. However, changes in strategies by DMOs are similar to the broader trends within tourism that require sustainability, inclusiveness, and technology enhancement.

Recent studies have also delineated that the overarching goals for DMOs are increasing the brand of the destination and its competitive positioning. Sorokina (2020) asserts that DMOs must create a robust and distinctive brand that resonates well with potential visitors to affect their destination choice. This is possible through promoting the destination features and storytelling, including experience and cultural elements (Gowreesunkar et al., 2018).

Greztel(2022) outlined that the number of visitors, length of stay, and spending for local economic development benefits are essential to DMOs. This is further strengthened with an increase in appreciation for the need for a balance between the financial objectives and the

sustainability goals; tourism growth is supposed to not be at the expense of environmental resources or the well-being of communities.

DMOs are increasingly focusing on how these promote collaboration among stakeholders and the community. The approach perhaps underscores that over the years, give or take, DMOs have shifted their strategic focus toward inclusivity; DMOs increasingly include cooperation with local businesses, residents, and other stakeholders to ensure that, firstly, the development of tourism indeed has taken place on behalf of community interest and, secondly, it does contribute to a better quality of life (Sotiriadis,2020).

By turning to digital platforms, social media, and data analytics to stay in touch with travellers, DMOs make their marketing operations individual while knowing visitor behavior and preferences.

2.4.2 Alignment between DMO Strategies and Stakeholder Priorities

The alignment between Destination Marketing Organization Strategies and Stakeholder Priorities are the topics of conversation nowadays. It highlights the necessity for cohesive and collaborative approaches to tourism development.

Fragidis and Kotzaivazoglou (2022) said that DMOs understand and deal with the differences in interest and expectations of various stakeholders, including local communities, tourism businesses, public and governmental institutions, and even the tourists themselves. However, in terms of alignment, it contends with the importance of an integrated, compelling destination brand towards broader sustainability goals and marketing strategies that effectively lure their target markets (Dias et al., 2022).

Dias et al. (2022) go deeper to look at the role of digitalization in DMO strategies in that it is used to enable better interaction and alignment of stakeholders. Digital platforms allow DMOs to collaborate more effectively with their stakeholders, understand the insight, and develop strategies in a real-time flow for improved responsiveness and practical marketing efforts.

This also sets the stage for potential difficulties in aligning DMO strategies with the priorities of stakeholders because friction can be created by differences in the form of values and perceptions of what constitutes successful tourism development, as stated by Gretzel (2022). This clearly states that overcoming these barriers and making a more integrated approach to destination

marketing needs are necessary as well as clear communication, participatory planning processes, and joint goal-setting.

2.4.3 Challenges in Implementing Tourism Strategies and Initiatives

Implementing tourism strategies and initiatives faces multifaceted challenges. This emphasizes the complexity of stakeholder interests and the dynamic nature of the tourism industry.

The alignment of interests among diverse stakeholders is challenging when implementing tourism strategies. Pan et al. (2018) discuss the complexities of stakeholder engagement in tourism planning where power imbalances can hinder effective collaboration. The author advocates inclusive governance structures that facilitate meaningful outcome. Also, it helps with consensus-building among all tourism stakeholders. Gao, Jiang and Li (2019) stated that financial, human, and infrastructural resources are crucial for successfully executing tourism strategies. He said insufficient resources give suboptimal outcomes, impacting the quality of tourist experiences and sustainability.

The rapid evolution of the tourism market is operated based on technological advancements. Tourism strategies must be adaptive and responsive to these changes, which require ongoing monitoring and evaluation (Sheehan, Grant and Garayan, 2018). According to Dubey et al. (2019), Environmental sustainability becomes a central concern in tourism strategy implementation. The challenges of integrating sustainable practices into tourism development indicate that short-term economic interests often overshadow long-term environmental considerations today.

Chapter 3

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Philosophy of Science

Tourism research is a popular subject amongst researchers. Also there have been many discussions about different methodologies (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004). Tourism is often considered as an industry or business which is to be imagined, supervised and organized (Cooper, 2002). Tourism Studies research identifies what it sees as a mechanical approach by pointing out the benefits of psychological methods. On the other hand, Tourism management research is based on materialism and natural science rules. Our paper uses an inductive research method to answer our research question: What is the responsibility of the stakeholders to build Sajek, a community-friendly sustainable destination in Bangladesh?

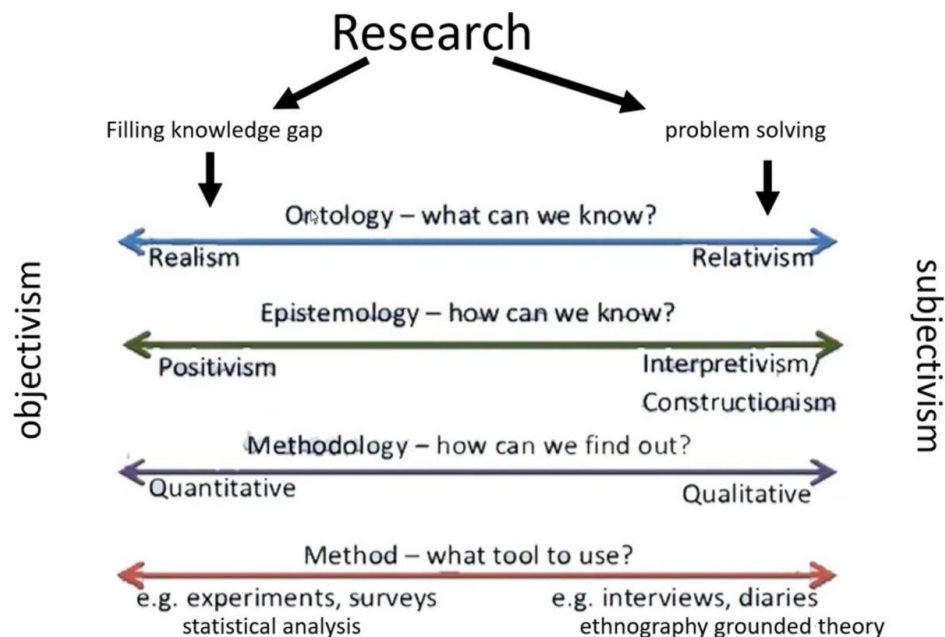


Figure 3: Element of Research Process (Badewi, 2023).

Epistemological Considerations

Interpretivism

Interpretivism is a way of thinking about how we know things, which is different from positivism. Writers from different academics have used this term to describe their points of view.

Interpretivism encompasses writers' perspectives influenced by various intellectual traditions of using the scientific method to study the social world (Duggleby and Williams, 2016). They all agree that the social sciences study people and their systems, while the natural sciences study things like space and matter. Because of this, exploring the social world needs a different way of doing research that considers how people are different from the natural order.

In interpretive study, the focus is on getting people to share their ideas about what happened or how they behaved. To do an interpretive study, the researcher tries to understand how the subjects think and see the world from their various points of view. This means a more flexible way of gathering information, which is usually qualitative (Walther, Sochacka and Kellam, 2013).

However, interpretative research method uses opinion about the subject. This type of research aims to understand and empathize with the research subjects' points of view. Instead of starting with an assumption and trying to prove or disprove it, an interpretative method lets the investigation results come up independently. This shows that experts value human acts, times and places where they happened.

The goal of the interpretive method is to get a better sense of the subject and problem. The focus is now on the wording and proof of those predictions instead of the researcher's statements, which differs from most other ways of collecting data and researching. It looks at all the information gathered through cultural values, social structures, and the connection between the researcher and the subject. There is a link between the researchers, how the research is done, and the study problem. This is one of the main ideas behind the analytical method. We have been using the analytical process to make sense of our collected data and try to answer our study question, 'What is the responsibility of the stakeholders to build Sajek, a community-friendly sustainable destination in Bangladesh?'

3.2 Research Design: Inductive Approach

The research aimed to determine who manages tourist facilities and how to make a long-lasting tourist spot that benefits everyone. The paper used an inductive method to do this. It can help cut down and understand long texts by getting to their core meaning. Instead of just using what they

already know about the study, scholars should look at social reality and collect data to come up with new, deeper, and more up-to-date meanings (Tjora, 2018). A lot of people were involved in long, deep talks about how they felt about cultural tourism and the problems that come with it.

However, when an inductive approach is used to comprehend those data, they must be unambiguous and pertinent, irrespective of their potential utility in a research article (Hammersley, 2017). Consequently, scholars must initiate their investigation by scrutinizing the facets of the topic that arouse their curiosity. Establishing a correlation between the collected data and the research question facilitates understanding qualitative data in a way that produces significant discoveries. An interview, or otherwise interaction with the participants in their natural habitat, this section has been delving into the inductive technique, a qualitative research instrument utilized in social life that has the potential to provide insights into the interior experiences of the participants. Researchers assessed the level of indigenous knowledge regarding heritage and heritage administration in the Sajek area. This information contributes to the researchers' comprehension of Sajek Valley's tourism, which is vital to the study.

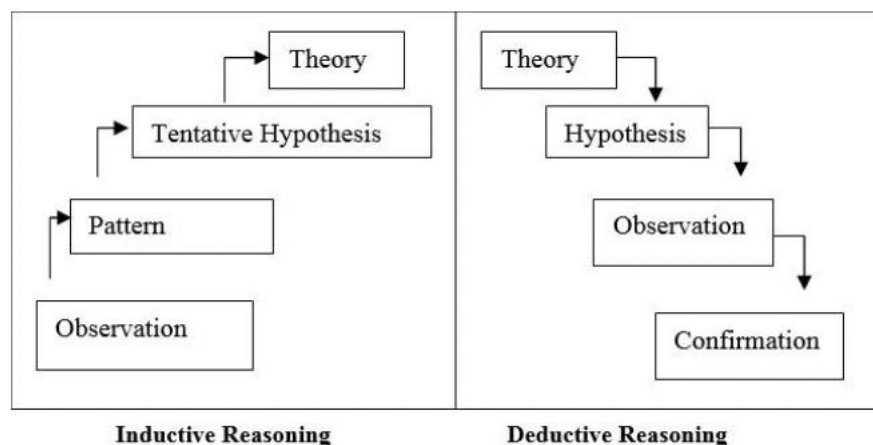


Figure 4: Research Design induction & deduction approach (source: Aliyu et al., 2015).

3.3 Research type: Descriptive case study

A descriptive case study is all about an in-depth look at and record of a particular event. It talks about an event in its natural context. For tourism research in Sajek, a detailed case study would

provide a complete picture of many things connected to tourism. This includes how tourists behave, how it affects the economy, and how efforts are made to protect the environment.

Researchers would gather data through various methods by completing a descriptive case study approach. These methods are interviews, observations, and document analysis. To show a clear picture of the tourism spot, a descriptive case study allows researchers to explore the complexity of the phenomenon under study and capture the nuances of the local context (Yin, 2018).

In the case of Sajek, researcher might investigate the following aspects through a descriptive case study:

1. **Visitor Demographics and Behaviour:** Examining the characteristics of tourists visiting Sajek. Tourist motivations, preferences, and spending patterns.
2. **Economic Impact:** Define the financial benefits of tourism activities in terms of revenue and job creation.
3. **Sustainability Initiatives:** implemented initiatives by local authorities and stakeholders to promote sustainable tourism practices. These are conservation efforts, waste management, community engagement, etc.
4. **Community Involvement:** Investigating the involvement of residents and businesses in tourism development to find out their perceptions of the impacts of tourism on their lives and the environment.

By conducting a descriptive case study, researcher gets detailed insights into tourism dynamics in Sajek. This provides valuable information for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and academics interested in the stakeholders.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

Qualitative Method

The qualitative method analyses the critical responsibilities of managing tourist facilities to create a sustainable destination. It is possible to find out what people like when visiting a place by doing a detailed case study. Find out who has a stake in tourism and how they see their jobs and duties. Understanding the roles and tasks of parties is why the qualitative study method is best. The term "qualitative methodology" means a study that uses detailed data, like people's spoken or written words and actions that can be seen or heard. Quantitative research, on the other hand, collects and analyses data by numbers, while qualitative research draws on words. Participation, interest, and contact are all parts of tourism. Researchers use the links between tourists and stakeholders to understand better how people connect in different travel areas. The ethnographic and interactive methods used in this study require the researcher to think deeply about how people connect, feel, and act. By taking interviews, one can get information by interviewing people. It's not just about the methods that qualitative tourism research can offer; it can also help people talk to each other and work together to study society and gain new knowledge. So, using qualitative methods lets the researcher get more thorough, meaningful, and surprising answers. Qualitative research gets people involved, and it fits with using applied and socially responsible analytical methods to help people understand situations where facts aren't

clear and values are being argued. We use an open-ended interview to gather qualitative data. Stakeholders in Sajek and people in the nearby neighborhoods have participated this interview.

Data collection strategy: A qualitative research strategy is used in this study. The chosen study method was interview research used in social science to learn more about specific communities. The interview is conducted to understand the stakeholders and local peoples' perceptions of key stakeholders' responsibilities in managing tourist facilities and creating a sustainable destination. Data was collected for the interviews of 6 people. This technique ensured thorough and dependable findings by offering a regulated and uniform approach to data collecting.

Sampling process

In qualitative research, sample sizes are limited as each case has a lot of information (Boeije, 2009). In this research, three types of sampling are used to conduct the data collection process: purposive, snowball, and convenient. According to Bryman, purposive sampling is a non-probability sample where the researcher collects the data according to the research questions (Bryman, 2012). Snowball sampling is a non-probability sample where the researcher connects to the precise number of people connected to the research topic, and these people help find another (Bryman, 2012). Convenient sampling is another type of non-probability sample that was chosen because it is helpful for the researcher (Bryman, 2012).

In qualitative research, sampling tries to gain more experience and viewpoints rather than generating statistical numbers of the population (McPherson & Ziebland, 2006). Invitations were sent to many stakeholders to take the Interview. However, the affirmation needed to be made more explicit. Researcher's assistant, Lamia Nowshin helped to reach the first participant, Ratna Sree, a travel agent executive in Sajek Valley what is a manner of purposive sampling, and snowball sampling helped to reach 5 more participants. Snowball sampling was used after completing the first Interview, and her referral significantly attracted other participants. All the participants and researchers are Bangladeshi by born and they can speak Bengali, the language of Bangladesh. So, the interviews were conducted in Bengali to receive more information as possible. Later, the interviews were coded into English to conduct the analysis.

Secondary Data

The use of current data for research is becoming more and more valuable (Andrews, 2012). This study is supplemented by secondary data from publicly accessible sources, including news, articles, the internet, and libraries. Previously collected information helps to gain more knowledge as it can include various empirical forms, such as data acquired from systematic investigations, large-scale database findings, and documentary analysis.

Documents, photos, chats, ethnographic reports, interviews, and other methods can all be used to get qualitative secondary data. Adopting this kind of material has the benefit that most studies have previously undergone investigation and are widely accessible to the general public. Still, a few frameworks can assist academics in secondary data analysis (Andrews, 2012).

Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing subjects is a compelling method for qualitative research. According to Bryman (2012), interviews are often semi-structured or unstructured. As a researcher, I designed the research tool to gather the necessary data (Bryman, 2012). In this study, semi-structured interviews are conducted, and an interview guide is developed. We used the interview guide as a research tool to steer the interviews in the right direction and provide room for follow-up questions to arise from our respondents' replies. More follow-up questions are asked based on the participant's background and replies.

Interview Profile

Name	Age / Sex	Occupation	Hometown	Religion	Ethnicity
Ratna Sree	23, Female	Tour Operator, Naria Travels & Tours	Rangamati, Chittagong Hill Tracts	Buddhist	Chakma
Swapan Barua	29, Male	Restaurant Businessman,	Chittagong Town	Buddhist	Chakma

		Seni Lusai Restaurant			
Otulal Chakma	53, Male	UP Chairman, Sajek, BD Government Official	Khagrachari	Buddhist	Chakma
Durthan Kima Pankhuwa	53, Male	Headman, Lusai Community Sajek	Sajek, Khagrachari	Lusai	Lusai
Major Khan	37, Male	Bangladesh Army, service in Sajek camp	Dhaka, the Capital city	Islam	Bengali
Suporno Deb Barman	41, Male	President, Cottage Owners Association of Sajek	Chittagong	Buddhist	Chakma

3.5 Ethical Consideration

The rights of those who participated and the study's validity must always come first in research. To ensure participant welfare and research validity, this inquiry has used the following ethical measures: In this instance, as with every interview, obtaining the interviewee's consent is crucial to the conversation's success. In addition, dealing with issues when they arise becomes much easier when one adheres to societal norms. I knew how quiet and reserved the locals were, so I was cautious when approaching them for conversation. I aimed for clarity in asking the question so they could understand and answer it quickly. Since they were worried before the interview, I made a concerted effort to put them at ease and win them over before we broached the subject of their culture, economics, and community issues. In the past, researcher visited Sajek Valley with the family; so previous knowledge was available about their cultural background. Furthermore, a local hill tracts buddy, Aninda Antu, assisted me in arranging phone conversations using

Facebook Messenger. The interview agreement form was read out to them before starting the interview.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

When a study's validity and reliability are high, it lends credibility to the findings of other studies. Because the researchers' decisions impact the interpretation of the data and the study's design, these components are crucial in qualitative research. The study may be considered credible if the data used to conclude are authentic and acquired correctly. An essential indicator of a research study's significance is its internal and external relevance. Internal validity is all about comparing the findings to reality, while external validity is all about other groups. The dependability of a study report is contingent upon the data's repeatability, consistency, and stability, in addition to the researchers' proficiency in data collection.

The research report places a premium on the study's validity and reliability. Researchers employed various methods to ensure the study's validity and reliability. To ensure the data was consistent, researchers examined a specific issue that reveals the thoughts of stakeholders and local community members on the duty of stakeholders in maintaining tourism facilities in Sajek.

3.7 Research Position

The ethics of the researchers are an essential consideration in every study. According to Johnston et al., the most important thing is how the researchers reply to and engage with the respondents. As the research author, I am compelled to share my special connection to Bangladesh and its people, which I inherited from my parents. Because I am familiar with the local culture, I also listened carefully and considered their personal space throughout our interviews.

On top of that, I have spent a good portion of my life here. The apparent reason is that researchers are not immune to allegations of bias, but I did my best to ensure it wouldn't color the findings.

3.8 Thematic Analysis

The qualitative data from the interviews were investigated through theme analysis. In qualitative research, this technique is called theme analysis, and it entails examining interview data to find recurrent themes, patterns, and ideas. Unlike other approaches, this enables a thorough investigation of participants' viewpoints and experiences, making it unique. A key component of grounded theory research is theme analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), doing a thematic analysis involves getting to know the data, coding it, and then looking for potential themes to employ in analytical writing. In light of this, fundamental thematic analyses, also known as "themes," seek for and characterize overt and covert concepts within the data instead of only counting words or phrases. It is crucial to accurately categorize and define the terminology and phrases the responders use. This study's thematic analysis depended on these coded phrases (Guest et al., 2012).

3.9 Limitations of the Research

My study is centered in Sajek, Bangladesh. I had been to and stayed at the places as I am a Bangladeshi, but I couldn't go there while I was working on this research. Because of this, my most current ethnographic view of the destination is not included in this research. The Interview would be more accessible and more in-depth if it could be done in person. The talks, on the other hand, happen through Facebook Messenger. Since this is a qualitative study, the answer to my question is flexible. Instead, it includes a lot of different ideas and views. Because of this, it runs the risk of giving a vague answer. Even though this is true, there isn't a single answer that can explain my study. My goal is to see things from the locals' points of view, and a perspective is a group of different ideas.

Chapter 4

4. Theory

Introduction

Stakeholder Theory and Leiper's Tourism System Theory help us understand sustainable community-based tourism. According to Freeman, Harrison, and Zyglidopoulos (2018), it is necessary to identify stakeholders' diverse roles and interests, highlighting the impact of tourism's sustainability as the theory helps understand customers, suppliers and employers related to tourism. This theory chapter helps underscore the importance of aligning stakeholders' objectives with sustainability goals, environmental preservation, and local economic development.

Conversely, Musa, Mohezar Ali, and S. Moghavvemi (2019) also give an opinion that this critical structural analysis of tourism emanates from Leiper's Tourism System Theory, which strongly focuses on the dynamic interactions among the tourist-generating area, the transit route region, and the destination area, Sajek in this case. The paper targets a comprehensive understanding of how systemic factors impact sustainable tourism development in a fashion whereby operations based on the community are integrated.

Combining the theories provides a better approach to understanding Sajek tourism. They point to the importance of stakeholder dynamics in achieving sustainable and focused community-based tourism. This approach to the theoretical framework emphasizes that interdependencies of human and systemic elements provide strategies for increased collaboration among the stakeholders.

4.1 Foundations of Sustainable Tourism

4.1.1 Sustainable Tourism

World Tourism Organization, tourism perfectly accommodates economic, societal, and environmental impacts at present and in the future while meeting the needs of tourists and the industry, including those of the environment and local towns. Thus, the region's promotion is critically tied to sustainable tourism development in such areas as Sajek, where the core natural and cultural resources are at the core of their attraction to tourists. On the other hand, Musa, Mohezar, and Moghavvemi (2016) outline the benefits of sustainable tourism in the long run and leave an appeal to protect the environment and culture of Sajek for economic growth.

4.1.2 Pillars of Sustainability in Tourism

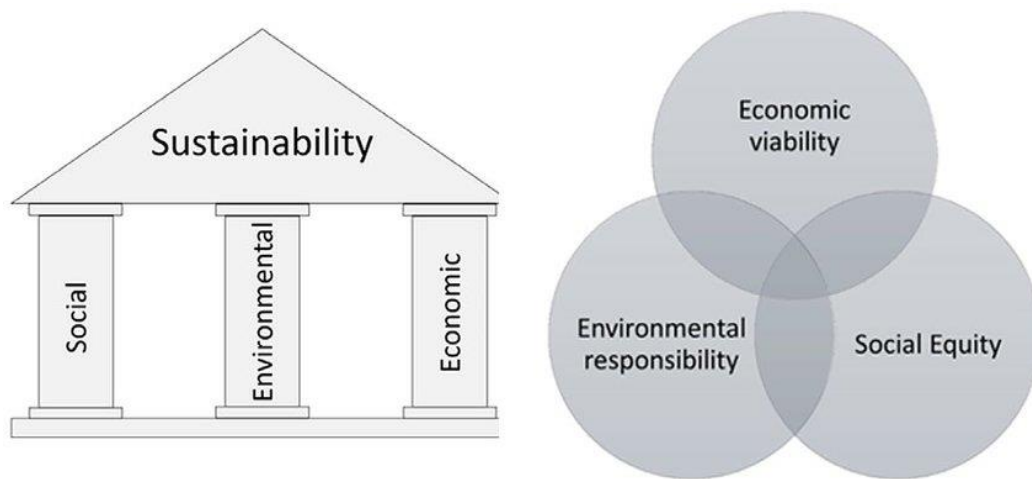


Figure 5: Pillars of Sustainability in Tourism (Tien et al., 2021).

Environmental Pillar

The environmental aspect of sustainability within tourism insists on conserving the natural use of resources, decreasing pollution, having a low carbon footprint, and preserving the location's biodiversity (Rodriguez–Lopez et al., 2019). This includes effective waste management programs, protection of wildlife and local ecosystems, and maybe programs to ensure that the environment is not affected by different tourism-based activities to a certain minimum level. It will also call for encouraging eco-tourism practices by availing renewable energy sources in accommodation facilities and responsible behaviour by the tourists that will not be detrimental to the environment (Tien et al., 2019).

Economic Pillar

The economic pillar focuses on the assurance that the development of tourism in the area results in a positive economic improvement in the lives of the local community of the destination. The same includes employment opportunities, development of local entrepreneurship, and benefiting from sharing among the community members (Tien et al., 2021). This includes supporting local businesses and handicrafts, developing community-based tourism products, hiring priorities, and sourcing at the regional level. The idea is to create an economic model where tourism contributes as a catalyst to prosperity and development but without over-dependency on one industry (Purvis, Mao and Robinson, 2019).

Social Pillar

The social component of sustainability is respect and preservation of cultural integrity, traditions, values, and quality living for the locals. This dimension calls for inclusive tourism, which is based on cultural exchange and improvement in the quality of living for the locals (Rodríguez-López et al., 2019). This touches on the aspect of Sajek, which would ensure that tourism does not eat into the very identity of the native cultures but becomes one that adds to the celebration and protection of the same. This also includes measures to enhance social infrastructure regarding education and health care for the local population. With the achievement of social sustainability rising out of empowering its residents to make sure that tourism development fits within their conditions and aspirations, the engagement of local communities in planning and decision-making about tourism becomes vital.

4.2 Stakeholder Theory in Tourism



Figure 6: Stakeholder Theory in Tourism (Beek and Storopoli, 2021).

According to Stakeholder Theory, organizations should consider the interests and impacts of all stakeholders in the decision-making process (Woo, Uysal and Sirgy, 2018). An organization's actions affect employees, customers, suppliers, local communities, etc. This theory underscores the importance of involving local communities, tourists, businesses, government bodies, and environmental groups in tourism planning and developing Tourist places like Sajek (Beck and Storopoli, 2021).

Identifying Stakeholders in Sajek: The critical stakeholders identified through interviews and literature review encompass diverse entities. They are playing a unique role in shaping the tourism experience and its sustainability in the region. These stakeholders include:

- **Local Communities:** Key stakeholders include indigenous peoples and residents of Sajek, whose cultural heritage and lifestyles form part of the product offered in activities but are the product's key attributes in terms of sustainability.
- **Government Bodies:** Government bodies include local, regional, and national governmental agencies involved in, but not limited to, policy development, infrastructure development, and environmental protection and regulation of tourism. They usually guide and provide the requisite impetus for sustainable tourism development.
- **Tourism Businesses:** Comprising hotels, resorts, homestays, and tour operators in Sajek are this type of tourism business. These businesses are on the frontline of the tourism experience, providing services to tourists.
- **Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and community development are a few of the projects done by these non-governmental organizations in Sajek. Here, the NGOs' project is directly engaged in increasing sustainability, supporting local communities, and protecting natural and cultural resources (Woo, Uysal and Sirgy, 2018).
- **Tourists:** Tourists from Sajek have been consulted, and their preferences, behaviours, and spending patterns are highly instrumental to the dynamics of the place in terms of tourism. In one way or another, the sustainability dimension of the element has been explicitly realised when it comes to involving tourists in the understanding of their needs and responsible tourism.
- **Environmental Groups:** They are actively involved in the conservation of the natural environment in Sajek, advocate practice with sustainability in protecting biodiversity, and make sure that the development of tourism does not mar the ecological balance in the area.

Stakeholder Roles and Relationships: The interaction between the stakeholders includes local communities, government, tourism businesses, NGOs, tourists, and environmental groups. The Stakeholder Theory focuses on the interrelations of these groups and their common influence on tourism sustainability (Pedrini and Ferri, 2019). The local communities' expectations from the governmental bodies are maintained for their cultural and economic benefits.

Challenges and Opportunities for Stakeholder Collaboration: The problems that the Stakeholder Theory would point out for Sajek include divergent interests, communication gaps, and unequal power among the stakeholders. Conflicting priorities also exist between local communities and businesses or the government, for example, relating to economic development. However, effective collaboration is also characterized by opportunities.

4.3 Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and Stakeholder Engagement

Community-based tourism (CBT) involves the local communities in the planning and management of tourism. Its core principles include local empowerment, sustainability, and cultural preservation. Stakeholder involvement in CBT is critical due to the high essence of active community participation in decision-making (Nor Syuhada et al., 2021). This ensures that tourism development is not only for the people and the community's benefit but also dovetailed with interests and local economic development, duly protected and conserved from a cultural and natural resource perspective.

CBT in Sajek



Figure 7: Sajek community (Ranzit, 2023)

Sajek Valley, with its rich cultural heritage and breath-taking natural beauty, has the potential to be a model for CBT. On the one hand, the area exhibits compliance with CBT principles through activities ranging from involvement in local communities in tourism activities, including the household's accommodation, cultural tours, and sale of handicrafts, thus directly bringing economic benefit to the community (Witchayakawin et al., 2022). However, there are areas where Sajek deviates from ideal CBT practices. These challenges include minimal involvement of all the community's sections in tourism planning. They can be seen to have room for improvement in opportunities for building capacity for the locals. Sajek has the potential to enforce CBT principles through community empowerment better to ensure the benefits accrued from tourism development are shared far and wide and in an equitable manner.

4.4 Leiper's Tourism System Theory Applied to Sajek

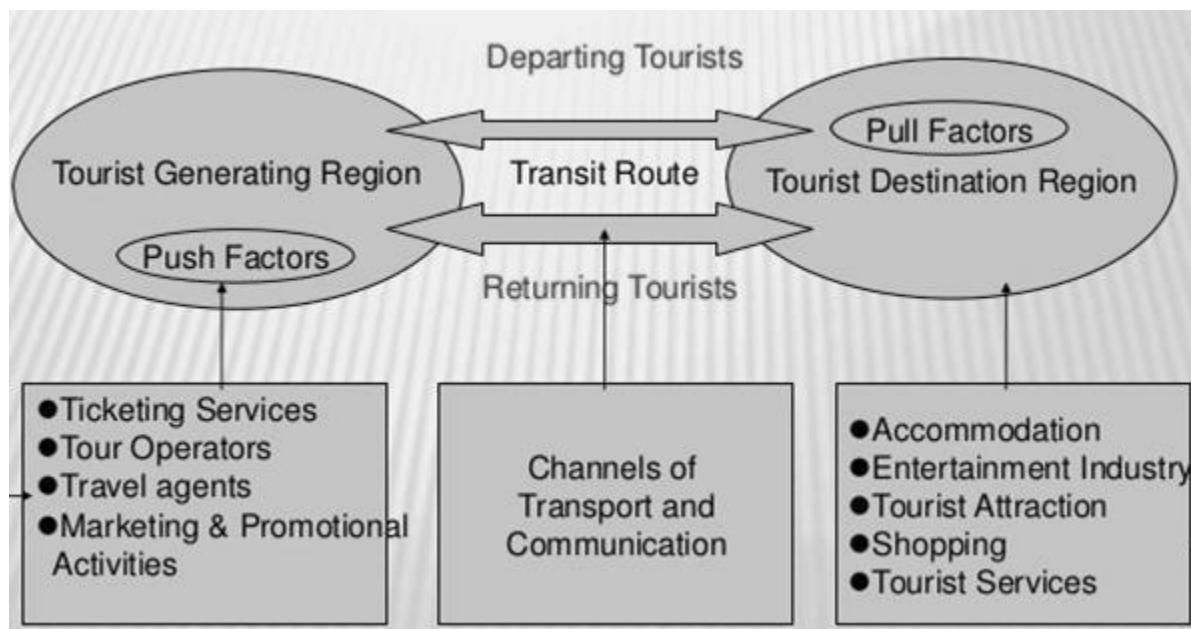


Figure 8: Leiper's Tourism System Theory

- Overview of Leiper's Tourism System:** Leiper's Tourism System Theory divides tourism into three major elements: the area where the travellers come from, which he refers to as the traveller-generating area; the area that the tourists wish to go to; and the route of travel between the two areas. A tourism destination region is where the features, activities, experiences, etc., attract the tourists to move. The transit route region

encompasses all the routes or channels tourists pass or move from the origin to the destination. It embraces all the modes of transit movement, including transit points. This theory means that these three elements are interdependent and, at the same time, contribute to developing the dynamics in an integral way for tourism (Rakib, Pramanik and Hassan, 2021).

Application to Sajek:

- **Traveller-Generating Region:** Sajek, with equal opportunity to serve international guests, primarily attracts domestic tourists from urban areas like Dhaka and Chittagong, as well as the rest of Bangladesh. The urge for natural beauty, cultural experience, and a life away from urban living encourages them. According to Christou (2021), understanding the demographics, preferences, and what would motivate the tourists could help craft the Sajek tourism offerings to meet their expectations, hence seeing them return for another visit.
- **Tourism Destination Region:** Sajek itself, with its stunning landscapes, unique cultural heritage, and opportunities, is the hotspot of tourists. This is popular because it provides an authentic experience of the natural beauties of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the life of the Indigenous communities. Dandelion (2022) denotes that both attractions should be maintained with due care to the environment, while infrastructures for both attractions should be developed to ensure ecology and cultural integrity in the area.
- **Transit Route Region:** Access to Sajek involves navigating through the hilly terrains of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, primarily by road. These routes, including their conditions and safety, such as the provision of transport by both public and private means, have a significant influence on tourists' locational decisions about whether or not to visit Sajek. 'Transportation infrastructure and services' refer to both surface and air transport facilities and services available to tourists by the host country to make their movement more accessible and safer (Wiweka and Arcana, 2019).

The interactions and the interconnectedness of the tour at Sajek Valley are an obvious pointer to the kind of service and experience developed in the tourism destination region that is influenced by the demand emanating from the traveller region.

4.5 Analysing Sajek's Tourism Challenges through Theoretical perspective

In their analysis, Bhuiyan (2018) indicates that Stakeholder Theory identifies the dilemma between social and environmental well-being on one side and economic development on the other. This implies a call for integrated solutions to be sought, all while concerning themselves with the local community's needs in light of the need to conserve the environment. Essentially, Hassan (2021) notes that Leiper's Tourism System Theory denotes how an outstanding balance has to be struck at Sajek for the area to remain attractive without losing much of its cultural and natural resources, which means that current infrastructure is being stressed by tourism.

Roy and Sharmin (2021) suggest that such theories should be used as frames to identify sustainable development paths. They make recommendations toward eco-friendly infrastructure upgrades and community-focused tourism so that economic, environmental, and social objectives can all be aligned. This supports not only the sustainability approach of Sajek but also forms part of stakeholder collaboration that assures benefits are well shared and embraced in sustainable practices across the tourism system.

4.6 Theoretical Framework for Sajek's Tourism Development

Theory	Author(s)	Definition & Application
Stakeholder Theory	Freeman, R.E. (1980).	Stakeholder theory focuses on the roles and interests of stakeholders—for example, local communities, government, etc. The theory encourages inclusive decision-making processes and equitable benefit distribution for sustainable tourism.
Leiper's Tourism System Theory	Leiper, N. (1979).	Leiper's Tourism System Theory describes tourism as a system comprising the traveler-generating region. The tourist-generating region, the transit route region, and the tourism destination region. It also suggests improved accessibility, sustainable preservation of the natural and cultural resources of Sajek, and a sustainable experience.
Sustainable Tourism	(Sajib, 2022)	It stands for sustainable tourism, caring for present tourists and host regions, and protecting and promoting future opportunities.

Development		This applies to Sajek for promoting practices safeguarding its environment, culture, and community livelihoods.
Community-Based Tourism (CBT)	(Kashem and Alam, 2017)	Community-based tourism (CBT) increases awareness and opportunities for learning about the local culture and environment in community-based tourism, which the community owns and manages. Encourage Sajek to start up the practice of tourism development that directly benefits the indigenous communities by involving and empowering them.
Environmental Sustainability	(Kabir, 2015)	This involves retaining processes, time productivity, and biodiversity. This, therefore, in Sajek, will involve conservation initiatives, pollution reduction, and eco-friendly practices in tourism.
Economic Sustainability	(Suchana and Shoeb-Ur-Rahman, 2020)	Economic Sustainability Focuses on maintaining capital over time. This ensures tourism development keeps the resources on which it depends.
Social Sustainability	(Haider, 2023)	It entails maintaining social well-being and peace. This respects local cultures and traditions; ensuring tourism fosters positive community relationships that provide quality of life.

4.7 Conclusion

The deployment of Stakeholder Theory and Leiper's Tourism System Theory throughout this chapter has underscored the essence of collaborative stakeholder engagement while embracing a systemic approach to sustainable tourism development in Sajek. That underlines the importance of managing economic growth, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation through enhanced stakeholder dialogue and community empowerment. The tourism sustainability insight shows that the sustainability of tourism in Sajek is feasible, based on the concept of harmonization with the traveller-generating region, destination region, and transit route, besides local participation and benefit. To further discuss concrete strategies, future research will help to know how to increase collaboration with stakeholders, optimize transit systems for sustainability, and measure the impacts of contributions that community-based tourism initiatives bring toward the areas' local development and conservation efforts in Sajek,

Chapter 5

5. Analysis and Finding

The analysis chapter examines the data gathered from various respondents by conducting Interviews. This dissertation investigates the future possibilities of Sajek Valley as a sustainable community-based tourism destination in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. This study will focus on how the integration of community-driven initiatives in the tourism landscape of Sajek will serve the purpose of sustainable development and preservation of the unique cultural and natural heritage. This research paper aims to understand the dynamics of local community involvement, economic benefit, environmental conservation, and promotion of cultural authenticity in shaping Sajek as a model for community-based tourism.

By interviewing data, it is necessary to break down complicated sentences into words that make sense and convey a message that depends on the whole statement. Long lines from responders that have similar meanings and points of view are put together into a single word to make an idea that will become the subject of the study. Additionally, this section is divided into three sections per the research question. The first section is about understanding and analyzing stakeholder perspectives on sustainable tourism in Sajek, which is divided into another subsection based on the interview findings. Another section about the Challenges and Opportunities in Sajek to ensure sustainable tourism is divided into subsections. The last section gives suggestions and solutions to enhance Sustainable Tourism in Sajek.

5.1 Stakeholders' Perception of Sustainable Tourism in Sajek

This section analyses stakeholders' perceptions of sustainable tourism in Sajek. To understand this part, the researcher asked various questions about tourism facilities, satisfaction, community participation, tourism management, etc., which was helpful to the interviewees. The subsections are based on the answers collected from the interviewee's find the theme of the answers and matching and arranging them according to the theme of the answers.

5.1.1 Roles and Responsibilities Stakeholders in Sustainable Tourism Management

Sustainable tourism in Sajek engages stakeholders such as government and policymakers, local communities, tour operator executives, and restaurant owner headmen 1no. Ward Sajek, etc., each has distinct roles and responsibilities. According to Rosalina et al. (2023), *"Stakeholders could be involved in tourism planning; the author recommends clear, inclusive, and ongoing communication processes that can fully involve local communities in decision-making processes"*—identified these stakeholders as pivotal to fostering sustainable tourism practices, encompassing government bodies, tourism operators, local communities, and tourists themselves. The researcher asked the respondents, "What are your primary roles and responsibilities as a tourism stakeholder? The Interview Responses provided practical insights into how these roles manifest. This reveals the alignment and gaps in stakeholder perceptions and actions towards sustainable development in Sajek. Researchers found a similar response between Ratna (travel agent) and Swapan (restaurant businessman).

"As travel agents, we try to ensure safe transportation even though it is very challenging in the rainy season. We gather the latest news and information so that we can publish it to the tourists."(Ratna)

"We try to ensure healthy foods, tourists satisfaction, growing foods in healthy ways and organic ways, we try to minimize costs so that we can offer a low price to the guests "(Swapan)

The findings shared by Ratna, in common with the answers from Swapan, further focus on improving the tourist experience in Sajek regarding safety and sustainability.

Ratna gives much priority to safe transportation, while Swapan emphasizes the provision of healthy, affordable food. This exhibits the commitment to sustainable practices from both stakeholders and shows satisfaction to the tourists, matching Rosalina et al. (2023) in their stress towards the involvement of inclusive stakeholders in the development towards tourism planning.

Government and Policy Makers

Government officials and the Bangladesh Tourism Board are working to establish a conducive environment for sustainable tourism. A conducive environment for sustainable tourism involves formulating policies that balance development with conservation, providing infrastructure, and ensuring safety and security.

According to (Huo et al., 2023)," the government is expected to deliver rules and regulations to the tourism stakeholders. The provision of infrastructure and ensuring funds for tourism-related projects ensure congruence with the overall economic and environmental objective."

Regarding the rules of Government and Policy Makers in sustainable tourism management, Interviewee Otulal Chakma, a government official, underscored the government's role in ensuring tourist safety and promoting cultural programs and reflecting a commitment to supporting tourism while highlighting a need for more comprehensive long-term development strategies. The researcher asked the respondents about their primary roles and responsibilities as tourism stakeholders. Also, asked Khan, Major, Bangladesh Army (Occupied in Banderban), what initiatives have been taken to make Sajek a sustainable community-based destination.

"We are in service to the government, so we follow the orders from the government level. We focus on safety, security, health service, and other necessary services."(Otulal Chakma)

We want to build a strong community here through local participation and friendly communication. (Khan)

The determination shows a collective effort of government officials and the Bangladesh Tourism Board to foster sustainable tourism in Sajek. Otulal Chakma highlights the government's position in providing safety, security, and health services as part of their responsible act towards sustainable tourism. On the other hand, Khan points out initiatives that will enable a strong community through local participation and communication, thus pointing out a multi-pronged approach in which sustainable tourism is followed up through policy enforcement, support of infrastructure, and community engagement.

Tourism Operators and Businesses

Tourism operators, including tour agencies and accommodation providers, play a crucial role in the direct delivery of tourism experiences. *Crouch and Ritchie (2013) argue that accommodations are no longer mere amenities. They are integral to the tourism product, enhancing the destination's attractiveness.* To understand the views of the tourism operators, the researcher asks the following questions: What are your primary roles and responsibilities as a tourism stakeholder?

We try to ensure safe transportation even though it is very challenging in rainy season. We gather latest news and information so that we can publish to the tourists (Ratna)

There is no limit to my roles, but yes, I will provide proper accommodation, ensure safe stay, document and paperwork, make large event arrangements, answer questions at any occurrence, and so on. (Deb Barman).

The findings highlight tourism operators' role in shaping tourism experiences. Ratna emphasizes the importance of ensuring safe transportation and staying informed to safeguard tourists during challenging weather conditions. Deb Barman explains this by explaining the duties that include offering proper accommodation and safety, managing documentation, dealing with the arrangements of mega-events or occasions, and responding to customer queries. Taken together, these responses mark the multipack of the actors' responsibilities, from logistical concerns to improvement of overall destination appeal.

Local Communities

Local communities of Sajek include Chakma, Tripuri, Marma, Pankhoa, and Lushai. They are integral to the sustainability equation as beneficiaries and custodians of cultural and natural resources. *Eyisi, Lee and Tress (2021) highly recommended the participation of the community in any decision-making process that ensures tourism reflects and respects the culture of local people and traditions while simultaneously being a source of regional economic development. To know what the local community thinks about challenges to sustainable development (economic, social and environmental)*

Researcher asked, what are the challenges to sustainable development (economic, social and ecological)? The response was varied from person to person. Kima, who is Headmen of Sajek expressed concern.

Local rights, land rights, freedom, and flexibility are gone. This is not how we used to live. Yes, some of us have good lifestyles now and accessible transportation, but we are losing our cultural identity. This is the first time we have seen this number of cars; hundreds of them are coming and out every day. So many people and noise sometimes make our lives disturbing (Durtan Kima)

After understanding whether they should participate or not, the researcher asked the question Restaurant Businessman in Sajek (Seni Lusai Restaurant) and Suporno Deb Barman, President of the Cottage Owners Association of Sajek (COAS), what the challenges to developing sustainable development (economic, social and environmental)?

Economically, locals are not gaining due to mass competition. Socially, locals are disturbed by tourists. Environmentally, proper planning needs to be included in cleanliness. Even though

everyone makes their area clean, rules and regulations should be required. Officials involvement towards environmental activities are very limited (Swapan)

Government is the key here. So having a friendly atmosphere is the key. I believe that if we ensure a suitable environment for everyone, we can achieve sustainable development. The challenge is the government's fair insight and a friendly environment for everyone, he added.

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The findings from Sajek's local communities and stakeholders reveal significant challenges to achieving sustainable development. Durtan Kima reflects intense concerns about losing cultural identity and land rights and the disturbances caused by growing tourism activities. Swapan points out the economic challenges brought about by competition and social disturbances from tourists, who are linked to ineffective environmental planning and governance. These proper observations are made for inclusiveness in decision-making, effective management and a balanced approach to preserving culture, the environment, and the local economy in sustained development.

5.1.2 Tourist Tendencies and Satisfaction

The appeal of Sajek Valley as a tourist destination is significantly influenced by its cultural events, festivals, and the unique experiences it offers, echoing findings from both the Literature Review and Interview Responses. These elements serve as magnets, drawing visitors eager to immerse themselves in the area's distinctive cultural and natural beauty. However, the challenge of ensuring tourist satisfaction extends beyond merely attracting visitors to Sajek; it involves addressing several critical issues related to safety, amenities, and the overall quality of the tourist experience.

According to Lopes and Hiray (2020), Cultural events and festivals shape the inner cultural world. The author said that events and festivals contribute to a region's economic vitality by increasing tourist influx, enhancing the destination's image, and promoting culture.

As per the author, decisions enrich the travel experience and promote culture with the local festivals and traditions. On the other hand, *According to Han (2019), modern tourists seek more than just a place to stay. Tourists desire an experience reflective of the destination's character, offering comfort and convenience.*

This happens in the case of Sajek, where tourist tendencies and satisfaction are considered important factors for understanding stakeholders' perceptions of Sajeks' sustainable development. Ratna Sree and Swapon Barua are more interested in this issue. They talk more when the researcher asks, "Do events and festivals impact the number of tourists? What initiatives do you take in busy seasons?"

Yes, tourists come to Sajek on different occasions, particularly during the Eid holidays, Puja holidays, and English and Bengali New Year. Because every festival has 5-10 days of holiday, people love celebrating in Sajek as Sajek is mainly known for its Lusai ethnic lifestyle, which differs entirely from Bengali culture. So tourists come to enjoy something new. At the beginning of Bengali New Year, the 14th of April, ethnic people celebrate boishabi uthsob, where locals arrange water games and invite tourists to their houses to eat lunch or dinner. (Ratna)

Yes, of course. In winter, most tourists visit Sajek because of the school holiday. Also, during summer festivals, tourists come to see the Bizu festival during the Bengali New Year. Hill tract tribes' way of celebration is different from that of the Bengali people and culture (Swapon).

After understanding the need to know the details, the researcher asked Swapon again if they grow foods locally. For example, vegetables?

Interviews with stakeholders like Ratna Sree and Swapon Barua reinforced this perspective. By highlighting the influx of tourists during significant cultural events and the interest in experiencing local customs and lifestyles. "What facilities do the tourists prefer while staying? How do you facilitate them?"

Tourists like better accommodations with iconic views, wifi networks, local produce, and safe transportation. These four facilities are a must-have for tourists. Some tourists want to see around Lusai village and their lifestyles, so we ensure easy access to the Lusai Museum. About local produce foods, we communicate with local farmers about their supplies. Thanks to the Bangladesh Army. Wifi is now available to make roads and electricity accessible. Ten years back, Sajek was a remote place disconnected from the country. Travelling from the nearest market took two days, but now it takes only a couple of hours. (Ratna)

To facilitate supplies, we have to travel a lot, and we need to be very proactive during busy seasons. We have to travel to Khagrachari market every two days to purchase supplies, and the roundtrip distance is around 200km. (Swapon Barua)

The findings combine views from the literature with statements of stakeholders in the interviews, stating that cultural events and festivals have the most significant influence in Sajek Valley and serve as a linchpin for sustaining tourism development. The celebrations of Eid, Puja, and the Bizu Festival are such events that accelerate tourist influx in the region and support what Lopes, Hiray, Amara, and Han had contended—that cultural activities don't just add substantially to brand but also boost economic vitality. These two stakeholders rated some high-rated factors based on the relative importance of meeting tourists' expectations, including accommodation, wifi, local foods, and transportation. Active participation in local customs and festivals comes right along with these two. These, when combined, give togetherness for a wholesome and fuller rich experience to visitors, reflecting a mix of cultural immersion and convenience of the approach as the key strategy in their effort to woo and keep tourists satisfied in Sajek.

5.1.3 Community Engagement and Development

The critical role of community involvement in tourism development is widely acknowledged in sustainable tourism literature. This engagement not only enriches the tourism experience for visitors but also ensures that the benefits of tourism are equitably distributed among residents, thereby contributing to the destination's sustainability. However, as revealed through interviews,

the reality on the ground in Sajek presents a complex picture where the outcomes of community involvement are mixed, reflecting both positive impacts and significant challenges.

Importance of Community Involvement

According to Hezfezi et al. (2019), positive outcomes of community-based tourism (CBT) directly and indirectly help the community. CBT encourages tourists to engage with local cultures and ecosystems. The author highlights that the active involvement of the local communities is an absolute necessity in the planning and decision-making processes of tourism development. In this context, involvement ensures the alignment of tourism strategies with the needs and aspirations of the community to ensure the sustainability of the social, economic, and environmental pillars. Sustainable tourism practices ensure that the local community is empowered enough to derive the benefits of tourism while also getting the opportunity to protect cultural heritage and the natural environment. Regarding the information on sustainable tourism management, the researcher asked interviewees what initiatives they have taken to make Sajek a sustainable community-based destination. Mostly, all of the respondents have similar answers.

We provide brochures about hygiene, clean our premises regularly, and collect our supplies from excellent and healthy resources (Swapon).

However, Streimikiene's (2021) research identified that in CBT, the local community participates in the tourism development process and decision-making, which will be divided equitably. To understand community involvement, the researcher asks the question to another interviewer, Headmen of Sajek, Durthan Kima Pankhuwa said.

We try to contact government officials to take good care of us. We want to enjoy our lives and also participate in the development of Sajek (Headman)

The findings from Hezfezi et al. (2019) and Streimikiene (2021) underscore the pivotal role of community-based tourism (CBT). This promotes sustainable tourism by encouraging active local community participation in the planning. The findings from Swapon and Durthan Kima Pankhuwa emphasize the importance of the community's sustainable practices. They participate proactively in a healthier and much more sustainable environment for tourism by offering hygiene brochures, keeping clean, and selecting supplies with care. Furthermore, the immense

desire is not just to serve the benefits of communities but, on the other hand, to be intermediate sources in the development of Sajek and stay near the government representatives. All these measures reflect an overall commitment to the model of tourism that has to be beneficial for the visitors and, at the same time, sustainable for the local community's future.

Benefits of Tourism to the Community

According to Han (2019), modern tourists seek more than just a place to stay. Contemporary tourists are in search of experiences to meet basic accommodation. This shift signifies a growing preference for travel that offers more profound, enriching encounters with local cultures. Modern tourists want a safe place to sleep; they desire immersive experiences that connect meaningfully with the destination's heritage and natural beauty. This trend highlights the value of a trip, which is increasingly measured by its cultural depth and the authenticity of experiences.

Interview responses indicated that tourism has brought noticeable benefits to Sajek, including improved infrastructure, which enhanced exposure to the broader world. Researchers ask the question of what facilities the tourists prefer while staying. How do you facilitate them?

Thanks to the Bangladesh Army. Wifi is now available to make roads and electricity accessible. Ten years back, Sajek was a remote place disconnected from the country. Travelling from the nearest market took two days, but now it takes only a couple of hours. (Ratna)

Ratna Sree's account of the positive changes in Sajek due to tourism, such as better transportation facilities and wifi access, underscores the tangible benefits that have accrued to the community from the influx of tourists.

Ratna Sree's insights shows significant improvements in Sajek because of tourism, particularly demonstrating that the community has adapted to what modern tourists expect, above basic accommodation. The establishment of wifi, the development of roads, and even a greater extent of electricity access were all facilitated easily by the Bangladesh Army under government. All of those technological developments, reducing the time from days to hours, spoke not just to the tourist's sense of convenience and connection but to the more substantial positive effects that tourism had on local infrastructure and reaching out to the more fantastic world. These changes, therefore, show the movement emerging as a success, responding to the evolving expectations of

the tourists with a growing focus on the role of infrastructure development in improving the tourism experience and benefiting the community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research explores the prospects of Sajek Valley as a sustainable community-based tourism destination. The investigation highlights the collective efforts of various stakeholders, including government officials, policymakers, local communities, and tour operators, toward fostering a sustainable tourism model in Sajek Valley. This collaboration is foundational in addressing the multifaceted challenges of sustainable development in Sajek.

The findings, therefore, indicate the importance of the stakeholders' roles and responsibilities toward sustainable tourism management that makes a special provision regarding safe transportation, healthy food offerings, the preservation of culture and heritage, and essential services. Such efforts are shared commitments not only to improving the experience of the tourists but also to ensuring strong support for the triple bottom line, which encompasses the tourist destinations' economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The latter assesses the opportunities and challenges harbored within the Sajek Valley, ranging from infrastructure provision to cultural and ecological conservation issues, signposting a way through the future to ensure inclusive governance, community involvement, and sustainability practices.

Most importantly, the study reveals a deeper appreciation of the cultural events and festivals that draw tourists to the Valley. It also dawns that, indeed, it is a fact that the festivals must act as a setting that provides the visitors the time to belong and identify themselves with the local setup and lifestyle. Very critical in attracting and satisfying tourists while contributing to the region's economic vibrancy, amenity- and service-assisted cultural immersion builds its dual aspect.

Another essence is that community involvement, through one of the essences, is to be integrated into the equation of sustainable tourism, such that the benefits of tourism reach not just the area of economic development but extend toward the areas of cultural preservation and environmental stewardship. It, therefore, ensures that the benefits of the tourism sector are equitably shared among the local community. To this end, local community involvement in the tourism plan is in line with the development by the community and not a parallel development.

This reconciles the gap between the theoretical discussions and practical insights in demonstrating the dynamic interplays among stakeholders in shaping Sajek Valley to serve as a model of sustainable community-based tourism. The findings, therefore, not only affirm the highlighted themes in the literature review but generally bring more knowledge to sustainable tourism practices through lived experiences. In such a context, this dissertation makes a valuable contribution to the discourses of sustainable tourism through the lens of policymakers, community leaders, and tourism practitioners actively searching to replicate the success of Sajek Valley in other cases. The journey, therefore, towards sustainable community-based tourism in Sajek Valley is much on the way, and what this research has laid down for the foundations speaks of the probable ways that the initiatives could lead to sustained economic prosperity, conservation of the environment, and authenticity of culture for all the stakeholders involved.

5.2 Sustainable Tourism Challenges and Opportunities in Sajek

5.2.1 Economic, Social, and Environmental Sustainability

Sajek Valley tourism development can be sustainable when a healthy balance of economic benefit with social justice and environmental protection is maintained. These form a delicate balance, which the development of tourism requires to live up to the vision of sustainability in the long term. The significant challenges leading to massive social and environmental sustainability are highlighted collectively in the Literature Review and Interview Responses, and the economic benefits of tourism in Sajek are discussed there.

Economic Benefits

Nguyen, Costanzo and Karatas-Ozkan, 2023 said that “sustainable tourism necessitates conserving and protecting natural resources”. Tourism has undeniably contributed to economic growth in Sajek, generating income, creating jobs, and stimulating local businesses. This economic influx has been pivotal in improving infrastructure, such as roads and telecommunications, benefiting tourists and the local population. The researcher asked the question to every interviewee, including Ratna Sree and Swapan Barua, and provided insights into how tourism has transformed the local economy, offering new opportunities for livelihood and enhancing the region's connectivity. “Are tourists aware of sustainability and community

development? What initiatives have you taken to make Sajek a sustainable community-based destination?”

Some tourists are aware; some are not. Some tourists act silly, like throwing bottles on the hills. On the other hand, some tourists are very mindful of cleaning the spots themselves before they leave.

As travel agents, we have limitations when taking initiative. However, we want local people to get their proper rights to living freely, and otherwise, we can feel in the future, we will be a destination without local tribes (Ratna).

Many tourists need to be made aware of community privacy. There are many local houses situated around tourist spots. Many tourists seem to need their permission to visit their homes. They were taking photos of the locals without asking their permission. Taking drone shots above the residential houses makes the locals uncomfortable. In Lusai village, it is expected to have an open roof shower room outside of their home (Swapan)

Ratna and Swapan highlight critical issues raised about tourism in Sajek Valley. Ratna highlighted how local autonomy was needed, fearing the uprooting of indigenous tribes in the face of evil, "irresponsible" tourism. Swapan raises the red flag of privacy invasion, where tourists go into people's homes without invitation and take unauthorized photos and drone footage because of the open-roof shower settings in Lusai Village. Insight confirms the difficulty in balancing economic gain with social and environmental sustainability.

Social Sustainability Challenges

According to Thacker et al. (2019), the high costs of sustainable infrastructure and practices, especially those perceived by businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises, are high. Culture is in the exchange and visibility of local traditions and lifestyles with the festival and the intercultural community with tourists. On the other hand, the other grave challenge is a regional culture of preservation concerns and equal economic benefit sharing of tourism. Interviews demonstrated that while some of the community members could capitalize on the benefits of

tourism, others were scared that it would lead to the loss of cultural identity and faced economic marginalization. This, therefore, provides a variance that there is the need to devise mechanisms that will ensure all the community members benefit from the development of tourism. To learn about the current challenge, the researcher asked the respondents individually: “What are the challenges to ensuring tourist satisfaction?” Khan, a Major in the Bangladesh Army (Occupied in Sajek), gives a favorable opinion.

Sajek is the safest place in the Chittagong Hill tracts. I don't see any challenges now. Tourists are delighted here. In the past, there were many issues, but now Sajek is a tourist's friendly destination, and it's growing day by day (Khan)

On the other hand, Ratna, a tour operator executive, talked about the challenge of tourist satisfaction; however, they expressed worry about the lack of e-safety and security. "Again, the water supply," she says in this case.

There are many challenges to make tourists happy, firstly, safety and security. In hill tracts, it is allowed to consume alcohol, which is banned in Bengali culture. So, a few drunk people can cause damage to other locals or tourists during festivals. Secondly, providing enough clean water and emergency medical services must be included. (Ratna)

Khan sees Sajek as a highly safe and green eco-tourism spot, very satisfied, with no existing problems. On the other side, Ratna highlights a few existing big problems, basically where safety issues are involved during the festivals because of alcohol intake and disturbances. This also points to the poor provision of services on some essential services, like the supply of clean water and emergency medical services. These disparities may call for comprehensive strategies to ensure the safety service availability, and satisfaction of tourists and the support for sustainable development.

Environmental Sustainability Issues

Environmental sustainability was a primary concern reflected in the Literature Review and the interviews. The diversified biodiversity and the natural beauty of Sajek are significant assets that increase the influx of tourists who mainly want an authentic experience with nature. However, such things are related to and brought about by an increasing tourist number, mostly centered on waste management, conservation of natural resources, and preservation of biodiversity. “What

are the challenges to developing sustainable development (economic, social and environmental)?”

Government is the key here. So having a friendly atmosphere is the key. I believe that if we ensure a suitable environment for everyone, we can achieve sustainable development. The challenge is the government's fair insight and a friendly environment for everyone. (Deb)

Deb Barman further noted harmful waste management practices, such as burning waste, which incurs risks to environmental health and sustainability. There is also an issue with the construction of tourism infrastructure, which has damaged local ecosystems' natural scenic beauty and balance.

The sustainability efforts involved in the Sajek tourism development must be well complemented by correspondent efforts in dealing with the economic, social, and environmental challenges to attain sustainable development. Not only would the financial benefits of tourism need to be optimized, but the benefits would also need to be equitably distributed, and development should be undertaken respectfully towards the region's social fabric and environmental heritage. Sajek can only mature to its fullness when it becomes a tourism destination through such a balanced approach.

5.2.2 Waste Management Practices

Comparing insights from the Literature Review and Interview Responses reveals a critical consensus on the inadequacy of current waste management practices in Sajek. The literature review indicates sustainability practices in the accommodations' tourism: waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. It points out the provisions for proper disposal and facilities, which are requirements to maintain the area's natural beauty ability of the area. This stands in line with the travelling world, which is being more and more careful about the environment and, in general, requests that the destinations keep their environmental footprints as low as possible.

In contrast, interviews with local stakeholders such as Deb Barman illuminate the prevailing reliance on rudimentary and environmentally harmful practices like waste burning.

“What initiatives have you taken to make Sajek a sustainable community-based destination?”

We collect waste from various spots once a week, dispose of it, and burn it even though it's not good for us. However, our waste management system could be better, and we hardly have any choice.

In the last rainy season, we faced a considerable flood here; thousands of tourists were stuck here, and we offered them free accommodation until the road was good to move. We want to maintain a clear image of our services, but unfortunately, many things are not in our hands.

This method, while perhaps a practical short-term solution in the absence of adequate waste management infrastructure, starkly contradicts the principles of environmental stewardship outlined in the literature. It exposes a significant gap between the ideal sustainable practices advocated by environmental scholars and the on-the-ground realities faced by tourism operators in Sajek.

5.2.3 Awareness and Education on Sustainable Practices

This variation of the existing knowledge and practices may thus be felt in the Valley for sustainability in Sajek Valley. This very need was realized by the Literature Review itself and poured out in the responses from the interview, where a gap in the understanding and execution of sustainable and community-based practices could be seen among the tourists and stakeholders.

This section emphasizes the requirement of education and awareness programs as crucial factors for sustainable development in tourism practices. An educated tourist group and stakeholders contribute significantly to preserving natural and cultural resources, making tourism development align with sustainability. Developing awareness of the impacts of tourism and inculcating responsible behavior amongst tourists and local businesses are significant aspects of all these programs. “How do you perceive the alignment between the strategies proposed by the Bangladesh Tourism Board and the objectives of other tourism stakeholders in Sajek?”

We respect all tourism board initiatives. Before taking any action, the tourism board and the army conduct meetings with other stakeholders to make peaceful progress. Sometimes, we see disagreements amongst the locals, but as travel agents, we are okay with any decisions. (Ratna)

If anything is beneficial for us, we welcome their decisions. We want them to think about our future generation and our rights so that we can live happily (Durthan kima.)

Interview Responses reinforce the notion of a knowledge gap, with stakeholders like Ratna Sree and Durthan Kima Pankhoa expressing concerns over tourists' and some local businesses' lack of awareness regarding their environmental and social impact.

Conclusion

Specific educational programs must be taken to bridge the gap between this literature review and the interview responses about sustainable tourism in the Sajek Valley. These programs should zero in on the social, economic, and environmental effects of tourism projects aiming at rekindling the community to sustainability principles. And this will also happen by strongly connecting a feedback loop among the researchers, local businesses, and, indeed, the community. This will ensure the synchronization of theoretical frameworks with on-ground realities that provide the practices for sustainability development and draw upon the synthesis of local insights and academic research. The in-depth literature analysis and the stakeholder interviews clearly contrast the envisioned sustainable practice and the existing conditions in the Sajek Valley. Filling these gaps would be necessary to achieve the potential of sustainable tourism in the area. This could only be achieved through collective effort between the government, local businesses, and the people in agreeing upon sustainable infrastructure development, responsible tourism, and parallel economic sharing. These, synchronized with informed strategic planning and community-based initiatives, will serve as the right move for Sajek to proceed towards a more sustainable tourism model, respecting its natural and cultural environment.

5.3 Suggestion for Enhancing Sustainable Tourism in Sajek

5.3.1 Strengthening Stakeholder Collaboration

The comparison of the insights drawn from the Literature Review with the Interview Responses only adds further credence and evidence to a unanimous recognition of the vital need for better communication and collaborative efforts by all tourism stakeholders within Sajek Valley.

Streimikiene(2021) identified that in CBT, the local community participates in the tourism development process, decision-making, and ways to share the benefits from tourism, which will be divided equitably.

Greztel(2022) outlined that the number of visitors, length of stay, and spending for local economic development benefits are essential to DMOs. This is further strengthened with an increase in appreciation for the need for a balance between the financial objectives and the sustainability goals;

This brings to the fore the premise that the sustainable development of tourism is partly predicated on synergistic interactions between the government, businesses other than those that deal in tourism, and the communities where the tourists visit and the tourists themselves. The paper highlights that all these stakeholders need to work under open communication and shared objectives in solving environmental, economic, and social sustainability challenges to execute their respective roles effectively. These dynamics of cooperation are part of comprehensive strategies with different interests and varied capabilities of the other stakeholders to ensure that tourism development goes ahead inclusively and sustainably. To get the response from the

interviewee, the researcher asked the following question: “How do you communicate with other stakeholders?”

We communicate over phone calls and social media and often visit their offices. Bangladesh army usually arranges meetings before or during essential discussions. Sajek is not a prominent place, so communication is not complex (Ratna)

These days, we are very active on online platforms, but phone calls are obvious (Deb Barman)

The responses to the interviews will help to draw clear highlights about the current gaps in stakeholder communication and collaboration within Sajek Valley. It indicates that stakeholders from various sectors want to have more defined, structured engagement processes and more apparent communication channels. For example, these are emphasized by Ratna Sree and Deb Barman in certain instances where there is a need for more effective communication, which leads to operational inefficiencies and missed opportunities for implementing sustainable development initiatives. These interviews are evidence of the challenges described on the ground and the need for more robust mechanisms for collaboration and dialogue with the relevant stakeholders.

5.3.2 Implementing Effective Waste Management Solutions

Implementing effective waste management solutions is one of the approaches towards regional improvement in environmental stewardship and ensuring the long-term viability of tourism industry practices. *Pan et al. (2018) discuss the complexities of stakeholder engagement in tourism planning*, and the findings from the literature review consensus that the need for improved practices of valley waste management is critical.

“What initiatives have you taken to make Sajek a sustainable community-based destination?”

We collect waste from various spots once a week, we dispose of them, and we burn them even though it's not good for us, but our waste management system is inferior, and we hardly have any choice (Suporno Deb).

*“Burning waste and plastics is not suitable for the environment. What alternative can they do”
This is the best they can do. I am still determining what alternative they can do, but we need to
plan better. (Ratna Sree)*

Engaging the stakeholders in the tourism planning brought out by Pan et al. (2018) portrays an emphasis on the need, which in this case is very urgent, for the improvement of waste management practices in the Valley. Nowadays, waste is collected weekly, and most is burned. According to Suporno Deb Barman, such a mode of disposal is unfriendly to the environment, but they have been forced to do it. This is the only means, as there is no infrastructure for waste management. It highlights the need for a structured and sustainable waste management plan, although specific strategies must be made clear (Ratna Sree). This accentuates a significant area of development in making a community-based destination sustainable.

5.3.3 Promoting Local Culture and Participation

Adding intrinsic value to the tourist experience, essentially through the infusion of local culture with the fabric of tourism, would make such an experience a vital dimension of the social sustainability of a tourist destination. These go in the same direction as the research from the Literature Review and insights of the Interview Responses on issues of importance in local cultural preservation and that of necessary community economic rewards. Projects like this can significantly improve the sense of pride and ownership among local people, which are two elements that represent the basis for reaching a more sustainable and, above all, inclusive tourism model. *According to Hezfezi et al. (2019), positive outcomes of community-based tourism (CBT) directly and indirectly help the community. CBT encourages tourists to engage with local cultures and ecosystems.*

The author strongly underlines that local culture has fundamental meaning for sustainable tourism; this means the inclusion of local traditions, crafts, and practices as part of the offer in tourism. This fact presumes the idea that a destination will be able to offer an authentic cultural experience, that responsible tourists will be attracted, and that it will be well-preserved. Moreover, this kind of community participation allows cultural exchange. Further, it ensures that the economic benefits accruing from tourism can be distributed across large sections of residents,

hence supporting the social pillar of sustainability. To know the opinion of the responders, the researcher asks the question:

How do you perceive the alignment between the strategies proposed by the Bangladesh Tourism Board and the objectives of other tourism stakeholders in Sajek?

If anything is beneficial for us, we welcome their decisions. We want them to think about our future generation and our rights so that we can live happily (Durthan, Lusai Headman)

“How do you perceive the development strategies proposed by the Bangladesh Tourism Board?”

We will welcome any development strategies by BTB. We want Sajek to be a happy place where everything should be balanced. Locals should get equal opportunities as Bengalis. Everyone has an equal right to do business, not only those who have better rights who have more political power and capital (Swapam Barua)

These make sure that the local community reaps high benefits from community-based tourism (CBT) through direct, co-, and multiplier effects on their regional cultures, crafts, and practices from tourism products (Hezfezi et al., 2019). This approach is conducive to cultural authenticity and sustainability and promotes sharing equitable economic benefits. The representatives from Sajek, Headman, and Swapam Barua are local stakeholders. Among their responses, most emphasize the principles to be adhered to by the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) from here. They both emphasize the need for development strategies to be all-inclusive and balanced, keeping future generations in perspective and ensuring equal opportunities for all locals.

5.3.4 Strategies for Enhancing Cultural Participation and Benefits

According to Lopes and Hiray (2020), Cultural events and festivals shape the inner cultural world. Cultural events and festivals significantly attract the internal cultural landscape by fostering community engagement, enhancing local traditions, and promoting a sense of identity and unity among participants. On the other hand, According to Amara (2017), Different kinds of cultural events make a place appealing and are becoming an increasingly important part of

branding a place. To bring guests and build their brand, many places worldwide have created event collections.

Amara (2017) further emphasizes the role of cultural events as vital in enhancing the attractiveness of the location and the ever-growing role of the events in place branding. The author points out that the places can build a brand, not only throughout the world, with the help of the development and promotion of a collection of cultural events located at the place. These activities show the artistic aspects of a given place and greatly assist in economic stimulation since they attract tourism and local activity. Therefore, strategic use of cultural events in place branding touches on an understanding of culture as one of the essential capitals that enrich and add to the image and competitive edge of a place in the world.

Community-based Tourism Initiatives: Implementing community-based tourism projects that are designed and managed by residents can ensure that tourism development aligns with community values and aspirations. Such initiatives can also provide a direct income source for local families and support community development projects.

Community-based tourism (CBT) can be one of the most vital initiatives that further sustainability (Streimikiene, 2021).

The alignment of interests among diverse stakeholders is challenging when implementing tourism strategies. Pan et al. (2018) discuss the complexities of stakeholder engagement in tourism planning.

Community-based tourism (CBT) is one of the critical ways in which sustainability can be promoted. This type of tourism maximizes the use of local resources and community interaction in a location, in addition to what is gained for added environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Pan et al. (2018) have focused their attention on the dynamics of stakeholder engagement in tourism, specifically on the problems associated with aligning multifaceted interests in the planning process. They emphasize the type of strategy used that should be all-inclusive, embracing the stakeholders' issues and concerns and embracing their interests.

To know the opinion of the stakeholders, the researcher asks the following question: “Do events and festivals impact the number of tourists? What initiatives do you take in busy seasons?”

Yes, these days, tourists come almost every day, but on special occasions, the flow increases significantly. In busy times, we arrange more people from the local community. We have to arrange many cultural programs, so we involve local people to work with us as per daily wage. (Olatul Chakma)

Not only events and festivals, weekends, and government holidays also impact tourists' numbers in hill tracts and Sajek (Khan).

Olatul Chakma pointed out that tourist arrivals are at a peak on particular days of the year, so there would be more need for the local community to participate in cultural programs, and it is time they get daily wages. Khan argues that not only occasions and festivals but also weekends and government holidays prepare the tourist numbers in hill tracts and, by extension, in Sajek. Both create a direct relationship between specific calendar periods and raising levels of tourism activity, impacting local community involvement and economic opportunity.

Conclusion

In summary, the integration of structured interviews in Sajek has been critically discussed, and there is a need to bridge the operational gap with local stakeholders through practical, sustainable tourism practices. But it served the purpose of being very deep into a diagnostic tool for identifying needs and challenges of the Valley from deficiencies in managing waste to dilution in culture, disparities in the economy, etc. Combining the voices of local stakeholders, from community leaders to business owners, the responses point to emerging actionable insights that stakeholders will need collaboration to engage with community-based tourism and sharing of benefits. It thus ensures excellence in every aspect of the tourist experience but also cares about developing tourism in Sajek in a wholesome manner, respecting local culture and tradition. Last but not least, it positively contributes to environmental and social sustainability. All these interviews displayed great collective consciousness and willingness to practice sustainability, which together would hint at a promising direction to achieve that harmonious balance between the growth imperatives and sustainability objectives of Sajek.

Conclusion

6. Summary

This study of Sajek Valley, Bangladesh, which serves as a focal point, has explored the mechanisms of sustainable community-based tourism development. It engaged in qualitative research methodology and thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, local community members, government officials, and tourism operators. The current state of tourism in Sajek Valley, the various challenges and stakeholders' perspectives on sustainable practices are discussed constructively in this paper. This research mainly focused on the bridging of theoretical frameworks with empirical findings and exposed the balance between economic growth, environmental conservation and cultural preservation. As a successful sustainable tourist destination, this study examined the complex management roles, responsibilities and interrelationships by integrating stakeholder theory and Leiper's Tourism System Theory. The completion of this research about Sajek Valley includes practicable insights and strategies for stakeholders to develop the sustainability and community inclusiveness of tourism in that place.

6.1 Conclusions

Identifying Tourist Tendencies and Challenges: Tourist tendencies in Sajek Valley were found to be driven by the search for authentic cultural experiences and the natural beauty of the region. Visitors often seek immersive engagements with indigenous traditions and scenic landscapes. However, the main challenges in facilitating tourists include inadequate infrastructure, particularly in transportation and safety measures, and a lack of amenities that meet the expectations of modern travellers. These shortcomings hinder the quality of the tourism experience and pose risks to sustaining long-term visitor interest.

Push Factors for Sustainable Development: This research focused on some important push factors such as the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, economic development of local communities and environmental protection for sustainable development. Complexities arise

when it comes to the balance between tourism growth and resource allocation. Besides, aligning stakeholders' interests, investing in eco-friendly practices and balancing the impact of tourism on local lifestyles and ecosystems are the most challenging for sustainable development.

Understanding Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities: Stakeholders include local communities, government bodies, businesses and NGOs in Sajek Valley's tourism. They implement their roles in multiple ways that are surrounded by sustainable tourism, economic development and cultural preservation. However, after so many initiatives there are some noticeable gaps between stakeholder responsibilities and implementation. The practical execution is often inconsistent with the recognized role in the theory of the stakeholders that leads to success in achieving a sustainable tourism model in Sajek Valley.

Examining Tourism Strategies: The Bangladesh Tourism Board and tourism stakeholders outlined some strategies by focusing on enhancing the quality of experience through improved infrastructure, marketing initiatives and community engagement programs. The findings emphasize the need for more integrated strategies that indicate not only economic goals but also prioritize environmental sustainability and social equity. These strategies involve collaborative efforts in policy formulation, and capacity building and also ensure that tourism benefits are equally distributed among all community members in Sajek Valley.

6.2 Recommendations and action plan

Based on this study, it is recommended that stakeholders in Sajek Valley should implement a dual-purpose approach for sustainable tourism development such as improving infrastructure and enhancing community engagement. The roads and transportation network is the prominent factor for the tourist in that place. So, immediate action should be taken by focusing on ensuring safety and accessibility in travel and minimizing environmental impact. To preserve its natural beauty they should invest in sustainable accommodations and amenities which will encourage eco-tourism and reinforce the valley's commitment.

It is crucial to establish training programs aimed at local communities with the skills necessary to participate in and benefit from tourism for long-lasting sustainability. To ensure that tourism development aligns with the community's needs and values it should create an active involvement in decision-making processes. Stakeholders should band together all the marketing

strategies that highlight Sajek Valley's unique cultural and natural heritage and also foster a balanced growth that benefits all.

6.3 Limitations

There are some limitations considered in the study's findings. Firstly, while offering in-depth insights the qualitative nature of the research restricts the general applicability of the findings in different regions or contexts. The focus on Sajek Valley may not compress the other different dynamics of sustainable tourism in other destinations.

Secondly, the perspectives gathered may not fully represent the broader community views and thoughts so the reliance on stakeholder interviews could lead to a potential bias, especially those who are less vocal or marginalized groups. The interviews which are taken by the stakeholders are also dependent on self-reported data which might not always accurate reflections of their actual practices or experiences.

Lastly, the limited time-binding nature of the research shows that the data is a snapshot reflection of time and may not include the rapid changes in tourism trends, policy shifts and environmental conditions that could influence sustainable tourism practices in post-studies. Future research would add more benefit from the diverse methodological approaches, long-term data collection and wider geographical focus to enhance the robustness and applicability of the findings.

6.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Considering the current work it is recommended that future research should consider a mixed-method approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative data. A mixed-method approach would enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Mainly surveys can quantify tourist satisfaction, economic impact assessments and ecological footprint analyses. It can provide a more comprehensive view of sustainable tourism impacts and emphasize sustainable development.

Further investigation is also needed to evaluate the perspectives of the broader community such as minority groups and non-participating residents. It will ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the community's reception of tourism initiatives. It will evaluate the economic

benefits and challenges for local residents of Sajek. Long-term studies could explore valuable insights into tourism's impact on Sajek Valley and help to identify sustainable tourism trends.

Subsequent research might focus on the gaps which were identified and implement the suggested strategies, monitor their effectiveness and adaptability in different seasons and socio-economic contexts. A comparative study could be an effective way to between Sajek Valley and other similar destinations that have successfully implemented sustainable tourism models. This could help to adapt in drawing new lessons and best practices.

6.5 Final Thoughts

This research journey through the hill tracts and the cultural heritage of Sajek Valley has been as enlightening as it has been challenging. It has outlined the interplay between nurturing the growth of the community and safeguarding its heritage as well as the environment. This paper emphasizes the need for collected effort among stakeholders to foster a tourism model that not only influences the local economies but also protects that place from unpleasant events which makes Sajek Valley a precious gem of Bangladesh.

Reflecting on this process, the personal significance is profound. The engagement with diverse stakeholders has not only enriched the academic pursuit but also a deep appreciation for the complexities and resilience of community-based tourism. The experience has sharpened a sense of responsibility toward advocating sustainable practices that align with the delicate balance of nature and culture. Hopefully this research would contribute to a growing body of knowledge that will inspire more sustainable and exclusive tourism practices, not just in Sajek Valley but in similar destinations worldwide, ensuring that these communities flourish their thinking.

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Appendix

Audio file 1



Ratna sree sajek travel agent interview.mp4 (Command Line)

Audio File 2



khan BD army officer in sajek interview.mp4 (Command Line)

Audio File 3



swapan barua sajek businessman interview.mp4 (Command Line)

Interview Agreement Form

Title of your thesis: Investigate the responsibility of the stakeholders to build a community friendly sustainable destination: A case study on Sajek, Bangladesh

Dear Participant,

I'm inviting you to take part in a research study of my thesis at Aalborg University (Master in Tourism), this research Investigate the responsibility of the stakeholders to build a community friendly sustainable destinationin Sajek.

Information about Participants:

It is completely up to you to participate. The information will be kept confidential. The information data will only be used for the research purpose.

Withdrawal: You are free to leave the study at any moment without mentioning a reason.

Contact Details:

You can reach me at khasib21@student.aau.dk if you have any queries or worries regarding the study.

Consent:

I acknowledge that I have read and comprehended the material above. I willingly consent to take part in this research.

Name of the Participant:

Signature of Participant:

Semi-structured Interview

Interview : 1

Date: 10 march 2024

Name : Ratna Sree

Age: 23

Sex : Female

Hometown: Rangamati, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

Ethnicity/ Religion: Chakma

Occupation: Tour operator Executive

1. DO events, festivals impact the number of tourists? What initiatives do you take in busy seasons?

Ratna : Yes, tourists come to sajek in different occasions, particularly in Eid holidays, Puja holidays, English and Bengali new years. Because of every festivals have 5-10 days holidays, so people loves to celebrate in sajek. As sajek is mostly known for Lusai ethnic lifestyles, which is completely different from Bengali culture. So tourists come to enjoy something new. In the beginning of Bengali new year, 14th april, ethnic people

celebrate boishabi uthsob, where locals arrange water games, also invites tourists to their houses to eat lunch or dinner.

In busy seasons, as tour operator we make sure the transportation facilities is smooth as we all know road accident is very frequent here. So, we aware car drivers to ensure safe driving. Also, we try to communicate local people, army, business persons to ensure everything is well settled. We try to be the first to know any news.

2. What facilities do the tourists prefer while staying? How do you facilitate them?

Ratna: Tourists like better accommodation with iconic views, wifi network, local produce foods and safe transportation. These four facilities are must have for tourists. Some tourists want to see around lusai village and their lifestyles, so we make sure to easy access to the Lusai Museum. About local produce foods, we communicate local farmers about their supplies. Wifi is available now, thanks to Bangladesh Army to make roads, electricity accessible. 10 years back, sajek was a remote place and disconnected from the country. It took 2 days to travel from nearest market, but now it takes only couple of hours.

3. What are the challenges to ensure tourists satisfaction?

Ratna : There are many challenges to make tourists happy, firstly, safety and security. In hill tracts it is allowed to consume alcohol which is banned in Bengali culture. So in the time of festivals, few drunk people can cause damage to other locals or tourists. Secondly, providing enough supply of clean water, also providing emergency medical services are missing.

4. Do tourists buy from locals? How do you engage locals with tourists?

Ratna : Tourists buy local attires, pickles most. However, attire rent service alslo available to those who want to take pictures, the resnt costs 500 bdt (5 usd) for one hour.

Enagement with locals and tourists is getting worse day by day. We can see locals number are decreasing day by day. Those who are participating in business, restaurant service it is easy to interact with tourists, but those who are living themselves,are hard to communicate aas they have struggling lifestyles and they are busy with farming, cultivation and so on.

5. Are tourists aware about sustainability and community development?

Ratna : Some tourists are aware, some are not. Some tourists act silly like throwing bottles on the hills. On the other hand some tourists are very aware to clean the spots themselves before they leave.

Follow-up question: Who cleans the spots? How waste management is controlled there?

Ratna: Once In a week, resort owners association take initiative to clean areas, they collect waste, packages and burn them.

Follow-up question: Burning wastes, plastics are not good for environment. What alternative can they do?

Ratna: This is the best they can do, I have to idea what alternative they can do, but we definitely need to make a better plan.

6. What are the challenges to develop sustainable development (economic, social and environmental)?

Ratna: Economically, sajek is generating money but I think locals are not gaining much from here. Around 5%-10% locals who had money and capital they are able to survive in the business market. But Bangladeshi businessmen are gaining a lot.

Socially, young lusai people are leaving sajek to Mizoram, India for better education and life as sajek is very close to the india border.

Follow-up question: So do you think that Lusai ethnicity are in danger of identity crisis?

Ratna: yes, if this process continues, we might not see any lusai people in next 15-20 years.

Follow-up question: What do you think, whom to blame?

Ratna: I think cultural barrier, communication barrier and competitive business environment are major reasons.

Follow-up question: Do you think government is playing any role to make sajek a better place for both locals and Bangladeshi?

Ratna: Bangladesh army is in charge of every action taken here. They have an army camp here. Army controls all the action.

7. How you communicate with other stakeholders?

Ratna: We communicate over phone calls, social media, often visits physically to their offices. Bangladesh army often arrange meetings before occasions or in important discussions. Sajak is not a big place, so communication is not hard.

8. What is your primary roles and responsibility as a tourism stakeholder?

Ratna: As travel agent, we try to ensure safe transportation even though it is very challenging in rainy season. We gather latest news and information so that we can publish to the tourists.

Follo-up question: Do you aware tourists, do you have any awareness program? Do you have any plan to work on waste management in the future?

Ratna: We don't have any programs about awareness and cleanliness, but hopefully we will consider these facts in the recent future.

9. What initiatives have you taken to make sajek a sustainable community based destination?

Ratna: as travel agent we have limitations to take initiatives, however, we want local people to get their proper rights of living freely, otherwise we can feel in future sajek will be a destination without local tribes.

10. How would you describe the primary goals of your Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) in Sajek, for example, Bangladesh tourism board?

Ratna: Tourism board focuses on safety issues most, they also publish many news regarding promotional activities. In their websites they promote Chittagong hill tracts tourism.

Follow-up question: do they aware about sustainable development goal 2030?

Ratna: I am not sure about that, but of course they have certain plan but I am not aware about it.

11. How do you perceive the alignment between the strategies proposed by the Bangladesh Tourism Board and objectives of other tourism stakeholders in sajek?

Ratna : We respect all initiatives by tourism board. Before taking any actions, tourism board along with army conduct meetings with other stakeholders to make a peaceful progress. Sometimes we saw disagreements amongst the local people but for us as travel agent, we are fine with any decisions.

12. What are some of the main challenges you encounter when executing new initiatives for your destination?

Ratna: During festivals, we try to emphasize on volunteer participation to ensure tourists safety and satisfaction. If we see any new projects, we make ourselves ready to tackle any issue occurs.

Interview : 2

Date : 12 march 2024

Name : Swapan Barua

Age: 29

Sex: Male

Hometown: Chittagong

Ethnicity/ Religion: Chakma/ Buddhist

Occupation: Restaurant Businessman in Sajek (Seni Lusai Restaurant)

1. DO events, festivals impact the number of tourists? What initiatives do you take in busy seasons?

Swapan: Yes, of course. In winter, we see most of the tourists visit sajek because of school holiday. Also during summer festivals, tourists come to see Bizu festival during Bengali new year. Hill tracts tribes way of celebration is different from Bengali people and culture.

As restaurant owner, in busy days we ensure enough workers to facilitate tourists demands. Tourists during their visit to sajek loves to eat local foods, so we collect produce from locally and sometimes we go to Chittagong town to bring supplies. Some tourists can not eat local flavours, so we try to keep varieties of foods to make them happy.

Follow-up question: Do you grow foods locally? For example, vegetables?

Swapan: Some vegetables we grow in our farms but they are very little amount. We have chicken farm in a nearest village, we collect fish from local rivers but for beef we need to go outside of sajek.

2. What facilities do the tourists prefer while staying? How do you facilitate them?

As a restaurant owner, we noticed tourists want to taste something new. They want to eat what they never tried before. They want to create memories, so we offer local foods and fusion foods which is mixed of tribal and Bengali food.

To facilitate supplies, we have to travel a lot, we need to be very proactive during busy seasons, we have to travel to Khagrachari market in every 2 days to purchase supplies and the roundtrip distance is around 200km.

Follow-up question: How you maintain hygiene?

Swapan: We make sure our staffs are aware of cleanliness, waste management is proper, toilets are clean, foods are monitored well. I took a diploma course on cooking, so I have proper knowledge of hygiene.

Follow-up question: Do other restaurant follow as same as you?

Swapan: Honestly I can not tell about others but these days hygiene is very well maintained here.

3. What are the challenges to ensure tourists satisfaction?

Swapan: I feel, these days price hike has been a major problem for us. We wanted to sell in cheap price to attract more guests in our restaurant. However, recently all of the items are expensive. Besides, ours is a small restaurant with traditional arrangements to give tourists more authentic vibes. Unfortunately some of the tourists do not like our arrangements of decoration and food menu.

4. Do tourists buy from locals? How do you engage locals with tourists?

Swapan: Tourists love to buy local souvenirs but most of the businesses are running by Bengali. Some locals who have political support and enough capital they can run business here.

Follow-up question: How many locals are involved in percentage?

Swapan: 30%-40% locals are somehow involved in tourism sector. We don't try to engage locals with tourists that much.

5. Are tourists aware about sustainability and community development?

Swapan: Many tourists are unaware of community privacy. There are many local houses situated around tourist spots. Many tourists seem to visit their house without taking their permission. Taking photos of the locals without asking their permission. Taking drone shots above of the residential houses make the locals uncomfortable. In Lusai village, it's common to have open roof shower room outside of their house. So taking a drone shot damage their privacy and makes them angry very often. Many locals are fed up of it and sometimes they act arrogantly, even though they are gentle in nature.

6. What are the challenges to develop sustainable development (economic, social and environmental)?

Swapan : economically, locals are not gaining due to mass competition. Socially, locals are disturbed by tourists. Environmentally, proper planning is missing to cleanliness even though everyone makes their area clean but the rules and regulations should be needed. Officials involvement towards environmental activities are very limited.

7. How you communicate with other stakeholders?

Swapan: We have a restaurant owners association committee, where we tell our problems and demands, the committee actually communicate with other stakeholders. We often see meetings of stakeholders.

8. What is your primary roles and responsibility as a tourism stakeholder?

Swapan: we try to ensure healthy foods, tourists satisfaction, growing foods in healthy ways and organic ways, we try to minimize costs so that we can offer cheap price to the guests.

9. What initiatives have you taken to make sajek a sustainable community based destination?

Swapan: We provide brochure about hygiene, we clean our premises regularly, we collect our supplies from good and healthy resources.

10. How would you describe the primary goals of your Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) in Sajek, for example, Bangladesh tourism board?

Swapan: BTB has very limited interest in destination planning, but their goal should have been facilitate friendly relationship with locals, tourists, businessmen. Also to make policy where locals should be empowered but we saw that tourism board is not community friendly. Otherwise, locals number should have been more than outsiders here in sajek.

11. How do you perceive the development strategies proposed by the Bangladesh Tourism Board?

Swapan: We will welcome any development strategies by BTB. We want sajek to be a happy place where everything should be in balance. Locals should get equal opportunity as same as Bengali. Everyone has equal right to do business, not only those gets better rights who has more political power and capital. We want to keep diverse sajek alive. Many young lusai people going out of the country for better life and are not coming back, we don't want to let endangered an ethnic tribes. We want them to live here generation after generation.

12. What are some of the main challenges you encounter when executing new initiatives for your destination?

Swapan: Executing new initiatives is not easy here. Sajek geographically very hostile place. India border is very near, influence of the border is very common. Locals are disturbed in many cases, they want development but they want their privacy. Before taking new initiatives, we need to solve old problems. Government fair contribution is required. That's the most important thing.

Interview no. 3

9 march 2024

Name : Otulal Chakma

Age: 53

Sex: Male

Hometown: Banderban

Ethnicity/ Religion: Chakma, Buddhist

Occupation: UP Chairman in Sajek (Govt. Official)

Confidentiality: Asked to take interview off record

1. DO events, festivals impact the number of tourists? What initiatives do you take in busy seasons?

Otupal: Yes, these days tourists are coming almost every day, but in special occasions the flow increase significantly.

In busy times, we arrange more people from local community. We have to arrange many cultural programs, so we involve local people to work with us as per daily wage. Besides, there are many government order to follow to make tourists safe, we facilitate village police as a part of volunteer program.

2. What facilities do the tourists prefer while staying? How do you facilitate them?

Otupal: Tourists demand changes with different seasons and occasions. In winter, when maximum tourists time, they want iconic view, relaxation, night music, BBQ grill, peaceful sleep. We make sure tourists get all of these. We ask cottage owners about their operational activities, we ensure security guard to patrol all night from 10pm to 4am.

In moonson times, when tourists flow is low, we make sure transportation and road is clear to travel as road damage is common in rainy season in hill tracts.

3. What are the challenges to ensure tourists satisfaction?

Otupal: Tourists who travel sajek are different types, some are budget friendly, some want excellent service. To ensure everyone's demand is a challenge.

Follow-up question: What you do for budget friendly travellers?

Otupal: At night, when all the rooms are occupied, we tell the cottage owners to give some rooms for discount to let the budget travellers stay in resorts. We don't support tourists to live in tents for security reasons.

4. Do tourists buy from locals? How do you engage locals with tourists?

Otupal: Yes, tourists buy what they are attracted to buy. There is a market where tourists do shopping. Apart from local things, these days many products are coming from other hill tract districts (Rangamati, Banderban) as tourists are more here.

We encourage locals to work with tourists. Interact with tourists will give locals more opportunity to earn more and find a good job in tourism sectors, for example, hotels, restaurants.

5. Are tourists aware about sustainability and community development?

Otupal: Tourists come here to enjoy this destination. As far I have talked to some of the tourists, they seem educated and I feel educated people must have known about sustainability development.

6. What are the challenges to develop sustainable development (economic, social and environmental)?

Otupal: (after thinking a while), long term development program needs to be done. So many new projects is making congested of the views, this is my opinion.

7. How you communicate with other stakeholders?

Otupal: We talk in mobile, we have phone number of everyone.

Follow-up question: what you do in terms of taking an important decision?

Otupal: we arrange meetings in our office, we invite everyone related to the decision and we discuss.

Follow-up question: Do you also invite community headmen?

Otupal: Yes, they are also included.

8. What is your primary roles and responsibility as a tourism stakeholder?

Otupal: We are in service to the government, so we follow the orders from government level. We focus safety, security, health service, other necessary services.

9. What initiatives have you taken to make sajek a sustainable community based destination?

Otupal: We have schools to educate local children, we educate them in a way so that they can learn how to communicate with tourists effectively.

10. How would you describe the primary goals of Bangladesh Tourism Board in sajek?

Otupal: Tourism board are central office but they do promotional activities, their primary goal should be highlighting sajek as safe destination as it is the safest amongst other destinations in hill tracts.

11. How do you perceive the strategies proposed by Bangladesh Tourism Board?

Otupal: We work for the government, so we will follow what proposals and orders come from highest level.

12. What are some of the main challenges you encounter when executing new initiatives for your destination?

Otupal: We have seen so many new initiatives in last 10-15 years in sajek. But now we feel government is doing well to control all challenges. If new initiatives are good for everyone, then everyone will understand and make it possible.

Thank you.

Interview no. 4

Name : Durthan Kima Pankhuwa

Age: 53

Sex: Male

Hometown: Sajek, Khagrachari,

Ethnicity/ Religion: Lusai/ Buddhist

Occupation: Headmen 1no. ward Sajek

Confidentiality: Asked to take the interview off record

1. DO events, festivals impact the number of tourists? What initiatives do you take in busy seasons?

Headmen: Yes, we have different customs and culture from Bengali culture. So people come here to see nature and experience something new. In busy times, my duty is to protect my tribes from any danger, it is not only in busy times but always.

2. What facilities do the tourists prefer while staying? How do you facilitate them?

Headman: Tourists want to see our nature and culture, we have a museum where tourists can visit and learn our traditions. We have well facilitate hotels, I hope tourists stay happily there.

3. What are the challenges to ensure tourists satisfaction?

Headman: Tourists attitude has to be developed (tourist gaze model). If tourists demand something unusual we can not allow them. We have our customs.

4. Do tourists buy from locals? How do you engage locals with tourists?

Headman: Yes, many of us make crafts and clothes, we sell them in market for tourists. This is how we engage with tourists.

5. Are tourists aware about sustainability and community development, for example, locals equality?

Headman: Tourists have their own insights, they come for few days to stay and they leave. They don't care about local development. They care what service they are getting. Government should be aware about local equality, not tourists.

6. What are the challenges to develop sustainable development (economic, social and environmental)?

Headman: Local rights, land rights, freedom, flexibility are gone. This is not how we used to live. Yes some of us have good lifestyles now, easy transportation, but we are losing our cultural identity. We never saw this amount of cars, hundreds of them are coming and out everyday. So many people, noise, sometimes make our life disturbing.

7. How you communicate with other stakeholders?

Headman: We call them by mobile phone these days. In the past we used to gather in party office.

8. What is your primary roles and responsibility as a community head?

Headman: Peoples safety, their rights, disputing any disagreements and many others.

9. What initiatives have you taken to make sajek a sustainable community based destination?

Headman : we try to contact with government officials to take a good care of us. We want to enjoy our lives also participate in development of sajek.

10. How would you describe the primary goals of Bangladesh Tourism Board in Sajak?

Headman: I have no idea but sajek has been changing drastically. We are thankful and also we are worried. They should also consider our feelings in their goals.

11. How do you perceive the strategies proposed by the Bangladesh Tourism Board?

Headman: Anything that is beneficial for us, we welcome their decisions. We really want them to think about our future generation, our rights so that we can live happily.

12. What are some of the main challenges you encounter when executing new initiatives for your destination?

Headman: Initiatives has to be community friendly, otherwise the hill tracts can be hostile again like past history.

Follow-up question: What if government wants to help you?

Headman: Then we will accept it with our heart.

Interview no. 5

Date: 17 March 2024

Name : kashfi khan

Age: 28

Sex: Male

Hometown: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Ethnicity/ Religion: Bengali/ Muslim

Occupation: Major, Bangladesh Army (Occupied in Banderban)

Confidentiality: Asked to keep Name as confidential

1. DO events, festivals impact the number of tourists? What initiatives do you take in busy seasons?

Officer: Not only events and festivals, weekends, government holidays also impact tourists number in hill tracts also in sajek.

We provide safety issues, for example, we provide patrolling service to the guests when they enter in sajek, in the morning 10am everyday, our team leads all the vehicles. We ask all the vehicles who wants to enter sajek to gather bagharhat camp, from there one team leads in front and one team stays on the tail of the vehicles. Everyday in busy season around 50-80 cars and buses come. Its our daily activity though. At 3pm we let the exit vehicles check out from sajek in same manner.

2. What facilities do the tourists prefer while staying? How do you facilitate them?

Officer: Tourists want spending quality times and we make sure all safety issues are checked. We register each tourists name and profile to our data, we provide our emergency contact number to every tourists, we close down areas which are problematic. Tourists police also involved here and we are also connected with them.

3. What are the challenges to ensure tourists satisfaction?

Officer: Sajek is the safest place in Chittagong hill tracts. I don't see any challenges now. Tourists are very happy here. In the past there were many issues but now sajek is a tourists friendly destination and it's growing day by day.

4. Do tourists buy from locals? How do you engage locals with tourists?

Officer: Yes, tourists buy handicraft items, showpieces, local clothes from local people. However, local people lives far away from tourists spots and they make those items in their house. Engagement between them is difficult. So we sometimes give purchase order to the local people, we arrange small fair in the market, where tourists and locals can interact each other.

5. Are tourists aware about sustainability and community development?

Officer: I had a very little opportunity to interact with tourists, so I can not give accurate answer, but tourists behavior is same as always. I haven't noticed any significant changes.

6. What are the challenges to develop sustainable development (economic, social and environmental)?

Officer: I don't know what to say about it.

Follow-up question: Do you think locals are happy?

Officer: Of course, they are happy. They are farming and selling to the tourists. They are evry happy.

7. How you communicate with other stakeholders?

Officer: Normally as we do, we use mobile phones for private conversations, in DC office we have meetings.

8. What is your primary roles and responsibility as a tourism stakeholder?

Officer: To make sajek a safe, secured, relaxed destination, to welcome more tourists in the future, to spread message to the tourists that we are in service to make Chittagong hill tracts tourism more safe and alternative of abroad tourism.

9. What initiatives have you taken to make sajek a sustainable community based destination?

Officer: Through Locals participation and friendly communication we want to build strong community here.

10. How would you describe the primary goals of your Bangladesh Tourism Board in Sajek?

Officer: Tourism board is trying to make presentable all attractive destinations in Chittagong hill tracts. Board should look for peoples welfare and safety.

11. How do you perceive the strategies proposed by the Bangladesh Tourism Board?

Officer: we are always with tourism board, government and all people.

12. What are some of the main challenges you encounter when executing new initiatives for your destination?

Officer: I don't see any challenges in new initiatives.

Follow-up question: if government wants to employ any new policy regarding community friendly project, how would you see that?

Officer: Government always want peace in hill tracts, we are always concerned about locals' safety and benefits. They are also part of our country. If government want to build a new policy, of course it'll be beneficial for all of us.

Interview no. 6

Date: 18 March 2024

Name : Suporno Deb Barman

Age: 41

Sex: Male

Hometown: Chittagong

Ethnicity/ Religion: Chakma/ Buddhist

Occupation: President of Cottage owners association of sajek (COAS)

Confidentiality: Asked to take interview off record

1. DO events, festivals impact the number of tourists? What initiatives do you take in busy seasons?

Deb: Events play vital role but long holidays also impact tourists attendents. From September to march we have on season time and april to august we have off-season time. In seasonal times, everyday many tourists come here for family program, honeymoon, travellers group picnic.

We have to be so proactive. In season, sometimes, we face over occupied tourists here, we have budget friendly resorts to facilitate solo travellers, at night we also announce through loud speakers if someone doesn't get any accommodation, they can contact us. We give them housing and low rates.

2. What facilities do the tourists prefer while staying? How do you facilitate them?

Deb: Tourists have lots of demands, those are different from one another. As we are connected to nature, many tourists would want private swimming pool, open balcony, spa, yoga. However, we are more ecotourism. We let tourists see green hills, clouds view, fresh foods, local style room decoration.

3. What are the challenges to ensure tourists satisfaction?

Deb: Lots of challenges, to make tourists happy we have to go through so many tasks accurately. Managing everything is challenging itself. Safety and security we monitor all time. At night, we have our own security guards in service. Some tourists don't know when to see the cloud view at morning, we let them guide the timing. So many tourists are upset when they miss iconic cloud view in morning.

In covid time, we went through so many challenges, tourists did not follow health guidelines, but now tourists are more aware about health guidelines. There are challenges but slowly these challenges can be overcome slowly.

4. Do tourists buy from locals? How do you engage locals with tourists?

Deb: Some tourists buy, some doesn't, depend on tourists demand. Budget friendly tourists come here to visit and explore, family tourists are involved mostly in buying from local manufacture. But these numbers are low. Many youtube vloggers make films here, they also buy and make video to show other people and give review of shops. We encourage them to show more good things about sajek so that many people can watch us and visit us.

Look, we want sajek to make a peaceful place as always. Locals are happy but we need to keep this happiness continued. So, we encourage tourists and locals to engage only in markets, not in personal life.

5. Are tourists aware about sustainability and community development?

Deb: Not everyone.

Follow-up question: Do you provide any awareness program to the tourists?

Deb: In general, we launch awareness program about fire management, sexual harassment but they are very often, for example twice in a year. It is for everyone included tourists, locals, employees.

6. What are the challenges to develop sustainable development (economic, social and environmental)?

Deb: Government is the key here. So having a friendly atmosphere is the key. If we ensure a good environment for everyone, we can achieve sustainable development I believe. Challenge is government's fair insight and providing friendly environment for everyone.

Follow-up question: are you happy with biodiversity of your area?

Deb: No, I am not. In the past we had many animals in the mountains, they are getting extinct.

7. How you communicate with other stakeholders?

Deb: Thesedys we are very active in online platforms, but phone calls are obvious.

Follow-up question: How you communicate with locals?

Deb: I am very attached to the locals here. I always keep myself connected with headmen and executive members of the village. I visit them, they visit my office. We discuss many issues in my office, I try to solve their problems as much I can.

8. What is your primary roles and responsibility as a tourism stakeholder?

Deb: there is no limit of my roles, but yes, providing proper accommodation, ensuring safe stay, documentation and paperworks, large events arrangements, answering to the questions in any occurrence and so on.

9. What initiatives have you taken to make sajek a sustainable community based destination?

Deb: We collect wastes from various spots once in a week, we dispose them, we burn them even though it's not good for us, but our waste management system is very poor, we hardly have any choice.

In last rainy season, we faced a huge flood here, thousands of tourists were stuck here, we offered them free accommodation until the road was good to move. We want to maintain a clear image of our services but unfortunately many things are not in our hands.

I want to say, government make a proper plan, they give us a roadmap and we will follow them.

10. How would you describe the primary goals of the Bangladesh Tourism Board in Sajek?

Deb: Their primary goal should be to make sajek a nice place to visit.

11. How do you perceive the strategies proposed by the Bangladesh Tourism Board?

Deb: Yes, this is what we need, a clear picture, proper policy, instructions, involvement we need. Otherwise, I am afraid very soon sajek will lose its attractions. To facilitate tourists demand, we have to do many things even though we don't want, for example, building so many infrastructures on top of the mountain, cutting trees, burning wastes.

12. What are some of the main challenges you encounter when executing new initiatives for your destination?

Deb: I am afraid of conflicts amongst many parties involved in sajek.