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Sustainable Tourism in Saint Martin Island: An Observation on Young Tourist Perception and Awareness Level

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ABSTRACT: Saint Martin Island is located in the northeast of the Bay of Bengal, about 9 km south of the Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. During the tourist season an average of 3500 people visit this island daily, which is beyond the carrying capacity of this small marine island. For the last few years Saint Martin's Island, which is the only coral-bearing island in Bangladesh, has been facing an ecological disaster due to excessive tourism activities. This island is under threat from unlimited and environmentally irresponsible tourism activities. The fragile eco-system of Saint Martin's Island is only suitable for the sustainable tourism. The aim of this study is to know the perception and awareness level of young tourists about sustainable tourism. This study examines the social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism. To achieve the objectives of the study, data were collected from 150 tourists through questionnaire.

Keywords- Environment, Saint Martin Island, Sustainable Tourism, Young Tourist

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I. INTRODUCTION

Saint Martin is one of the most popular destinations for leisure tourists in Bangladesh. With its attractive natural views, sea water and its colonies of corals this island became a trending tourist spot. Due to its unique environmental and ecological conditions, it is the only destination in Bangladesh where coral colonies are found (Islam and Thompson, 2010). The island is on the west of northwest coast of Myanmar and on the south side of the Cox's Bazar. It is believed that the island is officially named after, Mr. Martin, a British government official who first took this island under Settlement record. Around 3500 people visit this island daily during November to April every year, which is considered to be a pick season for domestic tourism. Unfortunately, this little marine island doesn't have this much carrying capacity. Moreover, there are regular large ferry and engine boat service that is used for carrying tourist to the island. In addition, large amounts of unprocessed wastes which include sewage from the local people and tourists are also discharged into the water (Feeroz, 2009). For that reason, the quality of coastal water is degrading gradually which badly impact on the total ecological balance of this island.

Tourism activities on extreme level have brought ecological disaster on this one and only coral-bearing island in Bangladesh. Due to the eco-unfriendly mass tourism and unmonitored tourism activities huge amount of sewage and waste are being disposed in the island resulting a heavy burden on the island. The fragile eco-system of Saint Martin's Island is only suitable for the sustainable tourism. Moreover, the tourist hotel and resort built at the west beach of the island has directly linked its sewage line to the seawater which contaminates the ground water and badly affects the bio-diversity of the island. Besides that, hotels are also liable for making lighting hazard in the nearby sandy beach, which was previously used as a nesting ground by the turtles (Abdullah, Chowdhury and Hossain, 2010). The collection of corals and shells as souvenirs by the tourists is posing a threat to the island's ecosystems.

In recent years tourism has increased in the developing countries like Bangladesh. Bangladesh has seen a huge growth in domestic tourism in the last decade and young tourists poses a large share of this growth. Besides the huge growth of tourism, it is imperative for us to think about the destination sustainability. We know that Saint Martin Island is one of the most attractive and vulnerable tourist destinations in Bangladesh. For that reason, this paper will address the various issues of sustainable tourism and also try to understand the young tourist precipitation about sustainable tourism.

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II. LITERATURE RIVIEW

2.1 Sustainable Tourism

The magnitude of the tourism and hospitality industry in the world economy is growing from the early 1950's and now this industry is generating total revenues of almost US \$1,000 billion and direct employment of over 70 million people (WTTC, 2012). At the same time tourism development represents many problems and challenges created by the tourist activities. Many regions, like Saint Martin Island, were facing real problems caused by mass tourism. Researchers have identified three types of impacts: economic, social and environmental. These impacts can be positive, negative or both at the same time (Fennel, 2007; Mason, 2003; Saarinen, 2007). On one side, the positive impacts may consist of: income for the local community, employment in the service industry, the increased infrastructure (economic), learning and sharing between cultures, increased quality of life, upholding the flag of new and enhanced global community (socio-cultural) and conservation of areas/countryside (environmental). On the other side, the negative impact may consist of: traditional clashes, standardization of culture as product, the import of bad practice brought by the tourists (socio-cultural); seasonal jobs, financial leakages and inflation (economic); contamination and extension of the constructed environment in the natural place (environmental) (Bac, 2003).

However, previous studies indicate that tourism generates both negative and positive results. For that reason the idea of "Sustainable Tourism" has been emerged as an alternative to the traditional mass tourism. Some authors state that sustainable tourism is a part of sustainable development. Saarinen (2006) states that the term sustainability is conveyed to tourism studies from the concept of sustainable development with the Brundtland Commission's report - "Our Common Future" in 1987. Hunter (2002) notes that although the idea of sustainable tourism is evolved from the sustainable development but it is considered an independent and distinct component of the tourism development. Some authors (Hunter, 2002; Swarbroke, 1999) believe that the expansion of tourism must provide economic remuneration to all stakeholders and manage and preserve all the available resources for the future generations. So, fundamental requirement of sustainable tourism is that it should incorporate all the sectors of tourism and also address the principles of sustainable tourism. The UNWTO and UNEP (2005) defined sustainable tourism as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities".

According to Coccossis (1996) there are at least four ways in which to interpret tourism with the principles of sustainable development: economic sustainability, ecological sustainability, long-term viability of tourism and accepting tourism as a part of an overall strategy of sustainable development. Moreover, Bramwell (1996) identifies seven different dimensions of sustainability and these are: environmental, political, cultural, economic, managerial, social and governmental. So, sustainable tourism will help to minimize the negative impacts of tourism activities and will help to preserve and conserve the natural built environment. The Saint Martin's island is the only coral bearing island of Bangladesh. But, mess tourism has become detrimental for the wellbeing of this unique ecosystem. We are on the verge of destroying our one and only coral bearing island. Unless the visitors of Saint Martin's Island rapidly adopt ecologically responsible behavior, its unique biodiversity will continue to be degraded (Islam and Thompson, 2010).

Every destination has its own capacity. People visit the place to feel the natural environment but nature must not be irritated. Carrying Capacity Assessment (CCA) is important because it focuses on the relationship between the numbers of tourists and their impact on nature (Hasan, Hassan and Islam, 2014). The concept of carrying capacity in tourism develops from a perception that tourism can grow in a place without causing irreparable damage to the local system. For this reason, this concept is important in the tourism planning which aims to develop sustainable tourism. Hasan, Hassan and Islam (2014) conducted a study on carrying capacity on Saint Martin Island. They found that the Real Carrying Capacity (RCC) of the Saint Martin's Island is 2913 tourists/day. They also evaluated the Effective Carrying Capacity (ECC) of the Saint Martin's Island and determined that it is about 1835 tourists per day.

2.2 Sustainable Tourism and Young Tourists

In recent years, many studies focus on the importance of tourist behavior in sustainable tourism development. For that reason, a wide range of analytical models have been used to identify different tourist profiles and their particular choice, motivations and behaviors (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1997; McIntosh and Goeldner 1990; Moscardo, et. al., 1996; Plog, 1974). Only a few studies focus on the young tourist market and their perception and attitude on tourism development. Most of the time, youth travel is considered as a less productive sector because expenditure of youngsters is comparatively low (Firth and Hing, 1999). But, the

Australian Tourist Commission found that youth tourists stayed in a destination far longer than the average tourists stay. So, the overall contribution of the youth tourists is higher than it is commonly believed.

Moreover, several studies have increasingly turned attention to a particular segment of tourist demand that is young tourists. Pendergast (2010) stated that the young tourists are the new visitor segment of tourism market. According to Vukic, Kuzmanovic and Stankovic (2015) young market is not only becoming larger but also that it represents the future market. In fact, WTO (2008) published that about 20 percent of international arrivals are young tourists. Both tourists flow and spending power is making it the fastest growing sector of the hospitality industry. Richards (2007) forecasted that by 2020, total market values of youth tourism will be at least US\$12 billion. That's why researchers at last devoted the much needed attention in this arena. Ahmed, Jusoh and Azazi (2012) identified the following characteristics of youth travelers:

- Young travelers consist of youth between the ages of 15 to 25 years. They often have similar hedonistic tastes in terms of attraction, destination and the freedom to travel.
- Travel expenditures of young travelers provide more benefits for the local people because they tend to purchase more local goods.
- They play a major role in the development of a destination by being the first to visit new places and attractions.

Previous studies revealed that the youth and student travelers age 15 to 29 are estimated to represent 23 percent of international tourist arrivals. Generally youth tourists loved to travelling unknown and remote places to experience a variety of culture. They choose their vacation in their own way and prefer travelling by bus or train that allows them to interact with the local community. Young tourists also avoid the activities that are destructive to the environmental. So these factors are directly or indirectly related with the sustainable tourism. On the other hand, UNTWO and WYSE Travel Confederation (2011) describing youth and student travelers as paving the way for sustainable tourism. Therefore this study will investigate the young tourists' behavior while travelling and their sensitivity to sustainability. Thus this study will contribute, on the one hand, to increasing our knowledge of this segment and, on the other, to suggesting destinations how to improve.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The investigation provides the researcher insights about the problems or situation of the research. In order to collect information from the tourists who have visited Saint Martin Island a structured questionnaire is designed. For gathering descriptive information, the most suitable approach is survey, which can be structured or unstructured. A structured survey is conducted using questionnaire forms and is called structured because all the respondents are asked in the same way. The questionnaire is divided into two parts; part one consists of questions on socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and part two consists of questions on tourist perception and awareness level about sustainable tourism in Saint Martin Island.

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

This study involved both primary and secondary data where the primary data collected from the young tourists who have already visited Saint Martin Island. A group of 150 tourists has been surveyed through a questionnaire for that purpose. The sample of 150 tourists have selected based on Simple Random Sampling method. In order to collect appropriate information, a questionnaire is delivered to the tourists. The secondary data mainly consists of data and information collected from records, websites and published materials. Secondary data was also collected from journals, magazines and books.

3.3 Questionnaire Design and Scaling technique

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. There are eight questions in part one mainly focus on the socio-demographic characteristics of the tourists. Thirty two questions are included in part two to measure the tourist perception and awareness level of sustainable tourism and these 32 statements of the questionnaire are divided into 12 aims of the sustainable tourism which is developed by the UNWTO. Questions in part two mainly focus on social, environmental and economic aspects of tourism. Basically sustainable tourism addresses these three components of a destination.

A five step 'Likert' scale was used to measure the level of perception measurement of the tourists. The responses of respondents were categorized into five groups and given them weight from minimum 1 to maximum 5; then assigned point 1 for the response 'strongly disagree'; 2 for 'disagree'; 3 for 'neutrals', 4 for 'agree' and 5 for 'strongly agree'. If one is strongly agreed with particular statement that indicates he is highly satisfied with that particular criterion. On the other hand, if one is strongly disagreed with particular statement that indicates he has negative attitude or dissatisfaction with that particular criterion.

3.4 Data analysis

The survey data are analysis in a descriptive manner. For collaborating the data and information collected through primary and secondary sources, both qualitative and quantitative method have been used. SPSS 20.0 software has been used to analyze the primary data. In this study, data obtained from part one analyzed and presented by the percentage. After that this study used mean and standard deviation to analyzed data obtained from part two.

IV. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

In this section, the background information of the respondents of the survey is presented. Particularly, it provides the socio-demographic information about respondents' gender, age and education level. It also provides information about the respondents' travel pattern in Saint Martin like the frequency of the visit, length of stay and daily expenditure during the stay.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variables	Categories	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	90	60.00
Genuei	Female	60	40.00
	15-18	42	28.00
Age Group	19-22 years	88	58.67
	23-26	20	13.33
Education Level	Undergraduate	94	62.67
	Graduate	56	37.33
	1 time	75	50.00
Frequency of Visit	2 times	58	38.67
	3 times	12	08.00
	4 times	5	03.33
	1 night 2 days	25	16.67
Length of Stay	2 nights 3 days	65	43.33
	3 nights 4 days	48	32.00
	4 nights 5 days	12	08.00
	below 1000	36	24.00
Daily Expenditure	1000-2000	72	48.00
During Visit	2100-3000	30	20.00
	3100-4000	9	06.00
	over 4000	3	02.00

The profile of the sample respondents is shown in table 1 and revealed that 60 percent of the sample populations were male and 40 percent were female, 58.67 percent of them were between 19 to 22 years old and 62.67 percent had graduate degree as educational qualifications. About 50 percent tourists visited saint Martin Island for the first time and a portion visit twice. Majority of the respondents stayed 3 to 4 days at saint Martin Island and their average expenditure during stay were one thousand to two thousand taka per day.

4.2 Young Tourists Perception and Awareness Level on Sustainable Tourism in Saint Martin Island

To examine the young tourists' perception and awareness level on sustainable tourism, 32 Likert scale statements based on a five-point scale were used. This condition is reversed for the negative statements. The mean scores and standard deviations for the 32 statements on tourists' perception and awareness level are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations for the 32 Statements

No.	Descriptive Statistics	Mean	Std.			
			Deviation			
	Economic Viability					
1	Local people earn enough by doing business related to tourism	3.9875	.92084			
2	Tourism in Saint Martin brings economic benefits to the community people.	4.0375	.78666			
	Local Prosperity					
3	Tourism creates jobs more for externals than local residents	3.4375	1.16753			

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A	m 1 (6 1 1 1 (7 C))	4.007.5	67060				
4	Tourism creates new markets for our local products (dry fish) Employment Quality	4.0875	.67868				
5		3.9500	02641				
6	Local people get jobs because of tourism development		.92641				
7	Entrepreneurial attitude grown among the local residents A large portion of tourism jobs is part-time due to the seasonal	3.6250	.80150				
'	character in Saint Martin	4.0875	.98333				
	Social Equity						
8	Tourism has brought positive change in local people's life style.	3.6750	.95168				
9	Tourism creates employment opportunity for women	3.1500	1.00757				
Visitor Fulfillment							
10	Security system (e.g. beach, tourist ship) is enough for tourist	2.5250	.81850				
11	I saw guideline & instruction for tourist at Saint Martin	2.8625	.61086				
12	Accommodation facilities are good in Saint Martin.	3.9375	.82591				
13	Taste of local food is good	3.7375	.98010				
Local Control							
14	It is necessary to bring all the stakeholders (local govt., local people,	4.3250	.93829				
15	tourism business operator) in the tourism planning process	2.0975	50471				
13	Most of the managerial level job is occupied by the local people Community Wellbeing	2.0875	.58471				
16	Tourism has increased the living standard of the local people	3.1750	1.24041				
10	Cultural Richness	3.1730	1.24041				
17	The cultural exchange between residents and tourists is valuable for						
1	the residents	3.8205	1.05367				
18	Tourists are aware about the local culture	3.0513	1.07989				
	Physical Integrity						
19	Environmental protection is a significant issue for Saint Martin Island	4.3333	.81504				
20	The collection of corals and shells as souvenirs by the tourists is posing a threat to the island	4.3333	.89249				
21	Tourist are concerned about ecological balance	2.9744	.93766				
22	It is important to limit the tourism development at Saint Martin Island (set carrying capacity, tourist activities, heavy construction)		.94865				
23	I like to buy some souvenirs made from corals and shells	3.9410	1.32630				
	Biological Diversity	l	l				
24	The construction materials of hotels and other tourist facilities has destroyed the natural environment	4.1277	.82003				
25	Tourism development at Saint Martin Island take into account environmental protection	3.3590	1.23766				
26	It is necessary to protect flora and fauna of Saint Martin	4.2308	1.09216				
27	Souvenirs made from corals are available in Saint Martin		.75651				
28	I know that corals are protected under the Wildlife Act	2.5513	.58319				
29	Current initiatives are enough to protect Saint Martin	2.7564	.94317				
30	I know that that Saint Martin's Island has been declared an ECA and is protected under the law	3.2821	1.13844				
	Resource Efficiency	ı					
31	Tourism Businesses at Saint Martin are engaged in environmental practices (Sewage and Waste Management, Use of Renewable Energy)	2.0641	.77248				
Environmental Purity							
32	Tourist activities cause environmental pollution (litter, noise, waste)	3.9231	1.15959				

In this study 32 statements of the questionnaire are divided into 12 aims of the sustainable tourism which is developed by the UNWTO. Each of these aims supports the social, environmental and economic

elements of sustainable tourism. On the other hand, there are some questions that will help to understand the tourists' awareness level about sustainable tourism. In this section survey result will be discussed in more details.

- Economic Viability: Table-2 presents the responses to 4 statements on economic viability of tourism in Saint Martin Island. Economic viability mainly depends on the local people's earning capability and community involvement in tourism related activities. This study found that respondents have positive perception towards economic viability of tourism in Saint Martin Island. It is found that more than 81 percent tourists believe local people earn enough by doing tourism related business and 83 percent respondents state that Tourism in Saint Martin brings economic benefits to the community people. Mean score for number one and two statements is 3.9875 (SD- .92084) and 4.0375 (SD- .78666) respectively
- Local Prosperity: Local prosperity means to maximize the contribution of tourism to the prosperity of the host destination; including the proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally. Table-2 includes two statements about local prosperity. These two statements focus on the local job creation and opportunity to create new market for local product through tourism activities. More than 50 percent of the tourist state that tourism creates jobs more for externals than local residents. Over 80 percent tourists think that tourism creates new markets for our local products mainly for dry fish with 4.0875 mean score (SD-.67868).
- Employment Quality: Employment quality mainly focuses on the number and quality of jobs created and supported by tourism in local area. This study found that respondents generally have a positive attitude towards employment opportunity and quality of tourism in Saint Martin Island. More than 67 percent respondents state that local people get jobs because of tourism development in their community and 63.8 percent tourists state that because of tourism entrepreneurial attitude grown among the local residents. Local residents in Saint Martin Island engage in small business in the tourist season. But in the last statement 75.5 percent respondents state that a large portion of tourism jobs is part-time due to the seasonal character in Saint Martin.
- Social Equity: Social equity means to seek a widespread distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income and services available to the poor. This section mainly focuses on the local people's lifestyle and inclusion of disadvantage groups in tourism activities. Approximately 62.6 percent respondents' state that tourism has brought positive change in local people's life style with 3.675 mean scores (SD- .95168). But at the same time it is found that respondents' perception on second statement is very much disjunctive. About 37.6 percent sate that tourism creates employment opportunity for women but 27.6 percent are disagree and 35 percent are neutral position on this statement.
- Visitor Fulfillment: To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, and disability. Four statements in the questionnaire mainly focus on the visitor experience. First two statements show negative perception of visitor satisfaction. 57.5 percent tourists are dissatisfied with the security systems in the sea beach and tourist ship. More than 50.1 percent tourists state that they do not see any kind of guideline or instruction for tourists in Saint Martin Island. 37.5 percent state that accommodation system is moderate and 52.6 percent have a positive perception on accommodation facilities. This study found that respondents' are satisfies with the local food.
- Local Control: To engage and empower local communities in planning and decision making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders. In this study 86 percent tourists state that it is necessary to bring all the stakeholders (local govt., local people and tourism business operator) in the tourism planning process. But 2nd statement of this section shows that 57 percent think that most of the managerial job is occupied by the non residents' people.
- **Community Wellbeing:** Community wellbeing focuses on the quality of life in local communities. Survey result shows that 49 percent respondent's state tourism has increased the living standard of the local people.
- Cultural Richness: Cultural richness state to respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of host communities. More than 62 percent tourists state that cultural exchange between residents and tourists is valuable for the local community. But 42.5 percent respondents believe that tourists are not aware about the local culture and 30.1 percent state neutral position.
- Physical Integrity: Physical integrity means to maintain and improve the landscapes quality, both rural and urban area and minimize the physical deterioration of the environment. More than 81 percent tourists believe that environmental protection is a significant issue for Saint Martin Island. 83.8 percent tourists state that the collection of corals and shells as souvenirs by the tourists is posing a threat to the island. But majority of the tourists state that Tourists are concerned about ecological balance. Approximately 90 percent tourists believe it is important to limit the tourism development at Saint Martin Island.
- **Biological Diversity:** Tourism supports the conservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife, and minimizes damage to them. 71percent tourists state that the construction materials of hotels and other tourist facilities have destroyed the natural environment. Majority of the tourists state that it is important to

protect the flora and fauna of Saint Martin. 58% respondents state that souvenirs made from corals are available in Saint Martin which is harmful for the Island. But majority of the tourists are not aware about 5th and 7th statement. 55% tourists state current initiatives are enough to protect Saint Martin

- **Resource Efficiency:** Resource efficiency means to minimize the use of scarce and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services. More than 57 percent respondents' state Tourism Businesses at Saint Martin are engaged in environmental practices.
- **Environmental Purity:** Environmental purity focuses on the minimization of the pollution of air, water and land and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors. 73 percent respondents' state Tourist activities cause environmental pollution.

V. FINDINGS

From the analysis, the major findings of this study are given below:

- This study reveals the characteristics of young tourists and their perception about saint Martin Island. Most of the respondents belong to the 19 to 22 age group. Some of them love to repeat their visit at the same destination which is helpful for the destination. They usually stay longer than the average stay at Saint Martin Island. On the other hand their expenditure is comparatively low than other tourists.
- Young tourists are aware about economic impact of tourism in Saint Martin Island. They think tourism activities financially benefited local people in terms of earning, living standard and employment opportunity. But at the same time they are neutral about the entrepreneurial attitude of local people and they express that external people get more job than local people because they do not get any kind of training facilities. Most of the respondents express that tourism in Saint Martin Island creates seasonal job for the residents.
- Most of the respondents express their neutral position about the social equity in Saint Martin Island. They think tourists are not aware about the local culture that causes social problems. Most of the respondents strongly agreed that local people should be included in the tourism planning process.
- This study reveals that tourists and local people are not concerned about the environment and ecological balance of this Island. But environment is the most vital factor for the study area because of the unique physical setting. Even most of the respondents do not know the Saint Martin's Island has been declared an Ecologically Critical Area and is protected under the law. They also think that tourism businesses at Saint Martin should be engaged in environmental practices and tourist activities should be limited at some area.
- Most of the respondents state that security system is not enough in beach and tourist ship. They also express that they do not see enough guideline and instruction for tourist at Saint Martin Island.

VI. CONCLUSION

From last decade, Saint Martin Island has become a great tourist attraction spot in Bangladesh. Lately, it has turned as a fast economic growing spot due to tourism business. Consequently, the natural environment and ecosystem is continuously deteriorating at an alarming rate. Therefore, government and local authority have already adopted some policy and plans but imperfect implementation hereto. Moreover, lack of awareness among local people and tourist is a great barrier to implement all the planned policies and laws. The broader message of this study is that while tourism could provide economic benefits to the local residents, careful planning and implementation policies are required in order to limit its negative environmental impacts. It is important to maintain the carrying capacity and restrict the tourism activities in Saint Martin Island. This study found that tourists are not aware about the ecological aspects of this island. So, it is necessary to take some initiatives that will create awareness among tourists. In addition, proper coordination among the stakeholders is necessary for the development of sustainable tourism on this island.

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