

Cultural and Economic Constraints on Women Entrepreneurs in Ecotourism in Myanmar

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the cultural and economic Constraints in Ecotourism in Myanmar and analyse various dimensions from ecotourism stakeholders. The case of Irrawaddy Dolphin is applied in this study. The research methodology is the qualitative approach and the semi-structured questionnaires are designed to be the data collection tool. The samplings are 10 tourism entrepreneurs of Irrawaddy Dolphin. According to the findings, commercialisation of small-scale trade in the region is characterised by big money driving out small money in such a way that the independence of women entrepreneurs is constrained and their opportunities reduced. Is it possible that ecotourism offers a different outcome for the women involved. The government policy can encourage the solutions to improve the acceptance and participations of woman entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Cultural and Economic Constraints dolphin tourism, gender relations, Myanmar

1. Introduction

1.1.1 Tourism Impact for host country

Myanmar's tourism industry has increased greatly in size and value since the return to democratic rule in 2011, with many new flights into the international airports of Yangon and Mandalay, with a smaller number to the capital Nay Pyi Taw's airport, and numerous hotel construction projects breaking ground. Although the country has a number of tourist attractions, many of these are not very well known to visitors and the industry as a whole suffers considerably from lack of infrastructure and human resources lacking in education and international experience. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism issued the Myanmar Tourism Master Plan 2013-20, which outlined a comprehensive framework for improving the industry in every aspect (Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013).

Within this plan, emphasis has been placed on the development of community-based tourism (CBT) not only for its own sake but to enhance governance of the country in often remote areas and enhancing resilience in those communities against the external threats of natural disasters and global climate change. Specific locations were identified for CBT enhancement and evaluation and these were: Indawgyi Lake in Kachin State; Thandaunggyi in Kayin State; Pa-O Self-Administered Zone in Shan State; Myaing Township in Magwe Region and the Ayeyarwaddy (Irrawaddy) Dolphin Conservation Centre based in six villages in the

Mandalay Region and Kyaukmyaung in Sagaing Region. These areas were selected on the basis of geographical diversity and with an eye to more equitable development priorities in those regions which had strongly supported the incoming National League for Democracy (NLD). In addition, they were selected so as to meet the priority areas identified in the Master Plan as cultural and creative tourism, nature-based activities, adventure and experiential tourism, cruise tourism and yachting and MICE tourism (ibid.:30).. The value of tourism reached US\$584,000 million in 2016, when international arrivals reached 2.9 million, which was a decrease from the high of 4.7 million the previous year, which indicates the volatility of the sector (CEIC, n.d.). Motivations for tourists include the novelty of visiting a place it was not easily possible to visit before, historical and religious sites and the natural world.

Commercial CBT is quite a new concept for Myanmar and few people are aware of its meaning and appropriate practice. In the case of the Ayeyarwaddy Dolphin Conservation Centre, the proposition put to tourists is to view the dolphins first-hand and up-close and watch their interactions with the male fishermen in the river, in what is an activity that is gender specific. However, reaching the area is quite difficult and organizing the various other activities (e.g. home stay, catering) is complex and expensive – the dolphin excursion is several times more expensive than any other tour locally available.

Research Questions

1. How is the current dignity of woman entrepreneurs in ecotourism in Myanmar?
2. What are those cultural and economic constraints on woman entrepreneurs in ecotourism in Myanmar?

Research Objectives

1. To explore the current status of woman entrepreneurs in ecotourism in Myanmar?
2. To analyze the cultural and economic constraints on woman entrepreneurs in ecotourism in Myanmar.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Dolphin Based Tourism

Dolphins are one of the most loved marine animals, though most people only get to see the species that live in the ocean but six species live in rivers. Dolphins based tourism is one of the most significant areas in tourism industry as nature and eco-tourism. It has two types; marine and fresh water dolphins-based tourism. Most popular is marine dolphins-based tourism then freshwater one because more convenience to see and places all over the world. Fresh water dolphins-based tour is very limited area and small population so that it's a unique tour in ecotourism. Irrawaddy dolphins are freshwater river dolphins and only can found in Asia and Amazon River. It seeing Irrawaddy dolphins can be a trilling and unforgettable experience tour because fishermen and dolphins are corporate fishing together as fishermen can call out to the dolphins, to drive fish into their nets.

The top places to see the River Dolphins detail as follows: the Irrawaddy dolphin thrives in tropical and subtropical waters of the Indo-Pacific region on and near shallow coastal waters. It inhabits Southeast Asia from Borneo and the islands of the Indonesian Archipelago to Papua New Guinea. Three subpopulations live in freshwater rivers: – Ayeyarwady in Burma, Mahakam in Indonesia and Mekong in Laos, They also live in two brackish water systems: Chilika Lake in India and Songkhla Lake in Thailand. (Koehl, Apr 26, 2017)

In Pakistan, the project “Conservation of Indus River Dolphin through Community based Ecotourism” is working to create awareness about the protection of Bulhan among the local fisher communities, concerned stakeholders and general public to minimize the threats through mass awareness campaign and tourism. It efforts have been efforts have been made to build the capacity of selected local community members to establish an ecotourism enterprise and improve their services and skills to deal with nature loving tourists who come for dolphin watching, having unique experience of rural life of South Punjab. The project has very successfully created an effective link between the conservation of an endangered river dolphin species and local community well-being through the use of ecotourism as a tool. <http://www.tourism4development2017.org>

In Myanmar community-based dolphin tour is also under conservation dolphins’ area as well. But the project is under progress and just starts to get the awareness of public and tourism industry. Same like others river dolphins’ tours but different unique sector is Irrawaddy dolphins can do the corporate fishing together with fishermen and can watch both early morning and sunset two times a day in Myanmar.

2.2. Involvement of community

"Policy on Community Involvement in Tourism (CIT)" was published in cooperation with the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (MOHT), MTF and HSF. This policy provides guidelines in planning, implementation and monitoring of CIT projects (cf. MOHT/MTF/HSF 2013, pp.5). The involvement of local communities in a sustainable and responsible tourism development involves a number of challenges. Various challenges could be identified by the experiences with CBT projects in other countries relating to involvement of local community in tourism planning and decision-making processes, access to the tourist market, development of attractive products, establishing business relations with the private sector, obtaining financial resources or training opportunities. (cf. MOHT/MTF/HSS 2013, pp.43).

2.3 Community-based Tourism

CBT is a comparatively recent phenomenon within the overall tourism sector. It fulfils three specific criteria: “... it should have the support and participation of local people; as much of its economic benefit as possible should go to people living at or near to the destination; and the act of tourism must protect local people’s cultural identity and natural environment

(Russell, 2000).” The meaning and practical implementation of many of these terms is contested, not least because of epistemological differences relating to the relationship between people and environment are evident in different parts of the world. Nevertheless, participation is taken here as the mechanism by which people may participate in activities that might lead to improvements in their quality of life as defined by the specific field of action concerned (Zakus & Lysack, 1998).

This form of participation may have additional benefits, such as the more equitable distribution of benefits and costs of tourist development (Arnstein, 1969) and the transformation of the learning process which will lead to community self-development (Connell, 1997). In the viewpoint of Okazaki (2008), these approaches are all moot because the possible value of CBT cannot be properly assessed without making a comprehensive and accurate assessment of the current level of community preparedness before initiatives are introduced. Blackstock (2005) further argues that the common conception of the CBT model is naïve because it tends to ignore the structural forces that inhibit meaningful social change and the tendency to treat all members of the local community as homogenous actors when, in reality, they should be recognised as heterogeneous in nature and potentially in conflict with each other or, at least, with contrasting motivations (*ibid.*). This work builds upon an existing stream of thought (e.g. Wearing & McDonald, 2002), which introduces Foucauldian concepts of power and knowledge into the understanding of how different community members relate to each other.

It would be wrong to imagine that this means that there is a single type of community involvement and attendant forms of organization, since there is considerable diversity in the possible arrangements involving different community, governmental and private sector agencies in the way that local tourist activities are managed (Zapata et al., 2011). CBT can also contribute to poverty alleviation in addition to other forms of community development. Institutional arrangements and successful partnerships as important components of success in this regard (Harrison & Schipani, 2007; Hiwasaki, 2006). It is important for generated income to be retained in the local economy so that linkages may be formed (Lapeyre, 2010), although issues of scale and seasonality mitigate widespread. A research has addressed issues such as the complexity of the term ‘community’ and the difficulties that term entails when communities in real life may be fragmentary or divided (Iorio & Casale, 2014) and the sometimes-contradictory nature of stakeholder responses to it (Tolkach & King, 2015). It has also been found that for success to be achieved, in addition to the rational factors that might be predicted, there is an important role for luck (Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen & Duangsaeng, 2014). The focus increasingly has been on the location-specific factors that might have an impact on the CBT model in actual circumstances. No canonical answers have been found to date for the determination of success.

2.4 Community based tourism production chain

According to CBT, the local communities are the main sector and must participate in the chain, shown in table 1, are transport, accommodation and food. The necessary assistance from public administrations, WCS Wildlife Conservation Society - Myanmar Program and tourism association is required for an adequate planning of activities, together with necessary support from different public and private institutions to develop tourist activities. Therefore, the small businesses to be created in the future in these areas should be diversified, not only offering accommodation and food services, but also working with the sale of local products and tourist guides.

The difference between CBT and general tourism is the main difference as the objective of tourism. CBT is a kind of offers both opportunities and challenges in the quest for holistic community development in conservation area. It can be set up from within and outside the community by the private, public and non-governmental sectors. It aimed that local community development and uses the community's rural traditional lifestyle and the rural environment or wildlife animals as main attractions. In CBT, operator ability and marketing effect is very important. And it's very difficult to control for sustainable tourism because totally rely on the nature and local people. Also management, monitor and control procedures must do continuously and protect conservation area. Example: Irrawaddy dolphins' community-based tourism

Community based tourism is direct impact to local community as social, economy and living standard as increased hygiene and safety awareness. Local community become the familiar with telecommunication, up to date weather report and to protect their farms or to get the knowledge about health and education. They learn and improve on food preparation, cleanliness of toilet and bathing areas, and presentation of sleeping areas also pleased to notice improvements in village hygiene both inside and outside village homes. They can get training about language, cooking class and usage of electric items like computer, smart phone and solar energy. To save the erosions of forest and to maintain the trees to protect the natural dissector as river bank falling down.

Generally, local communities are well integrated to the environment. They noticed to protect their valuable resources and more confidence on their skills and hopes for future. Their communication, decision, trust, good relationship between rural and urban partnership are improved. In CBT, women are the key role of participation for meals and preparing the home stay activities. They more closely work together with their husband and neighbourhoods watch. They learn about teamwork and collaboration between rural and urban ownership. Every stakeholder must share their knowledge, experience, motivation, opportunities and responsibility from time to time.

3. Methodology

In this qualitative research, a geographical approach is study in location of tourist area and environment as a particular region which Irrawaddy dolphin's conservation and human interaction between wild life fresh water dolphins' effect on the ecotourism in that community. The semi-structured questions are suitable for obtaining rich data that answer the proposed research questions. The main research ethnography method is extremely time consuming as spending long periods of time in the tourism field to understand of research topic. It is interviewing individuals on several occasions and participant observation are used for data collection.

A deductive content analysis approach, the categorization matrix also needs to be pretested in a pilot phase. The interviews give an understanding of context, situations, events and actions related to the phenomenon of interest before the data can be analyzed for research topic and then interview conversations should be first transcribed and edited take quite long time for oral data to writing data.

Finally, requested the participants to comment upon the research findings to make sure that to get correct research conclusion support to research topic.

4. Findings

This part of the chapter presents the finding and analyses the data obtained from the individual interviewees on the awareness and acceptance of community-based tourism Irrawaddy Dolphins in Mandalay region, Myanmar. The data were extracted and analyzed according to the objective of the study.

According Categories of Interviewees results and do data analysis stage by stage I find out some point as follows:

1. Very lack of corporate in private sector
2. Myanmar people don't know the real meaning of CTB even in tourism industry.
3. Irrawaddy dolphins are reducing the number
4. WCS is the only one for dolphin's conservation in Myanmar
5. Government sector doesn't have support and not interested.
6. Villagers want to improve their community and ready to participate
7. Tourists are very interested about Irrawaddy dolphins' tour.
8. Most of people do not know about the Irrawaddy dolphins in Ayeyarwaddy River, even from local people who live in Mandalay.
9. Quality of boats and jetty are not safe and then quite expensive for dolphins watching tour.
10. Myanmar Tourism is reducing the quality tourists from west countries and most from China budget tours are increasing. Domestic flight is expensive and not much flights to Mandalay International Airport in daily basic, only from Bangkok, 3 flights per day.

In this finding results support my object of study as community-based tourism is need to organized not only government but also in private sector is most important of sustainable tourism.

And one of my participants who working for Irrawaddy Dolphins conservation project together with CBT in Myanmar, he mentioned that “WWF is starting to do dolphin conservation. There are also some small organizations working on dolphin conservation, including the Harrison Institute, Growth Back for Posterity, CERS, and the Living Irrawaddy Dolphin Project.”

And he told me that “Irrawaddy dolphin counts show that there have been increases over the past 5 years, with 79 dolphins counted this year.”

Its good image and can increase the number of Irrawaddy Dolphins which it’s wildlife resources of CBT to get sustainable.

A good start has been made over the past decade, but more work is needed. Management is essential if the worthy requirement of the dolphins-based tourism. Certainly, the dolphins-based tourism industry provides an economic value to these dolphins that add an incentive to ensure that healthy and abundant populations exist into the future. In addition, the growth of the industry has naturally induced an increase in attention from private recreational “dolphins watching tourists.” This group appears to be growing rapidly in some areas popular for commercial dolphins-based tourism, and management of these activities is a significant challenge for the future.

For river dolphins-based tourism also well known in Amazon River, Mekong and Ayeyarwaddy River in Myanmar. This research provides valuable insights into the potential impacts of tourism on Irrawaddy dolphins.

As a result of the above review of completed studies and a consideration of pertinent issues surrounding the effects of stress, cause and effect determination and impact assessment.

5. Discussion

To achieve a successful and sustainable CBT project, it is necessary to start somewhere and it can hardly be expected that all stakeholders will be able to perform as they are required to do when the concept is being introduced. However, there is a threshold that must be achieved before success can be expected. This threshold has not yet been met in the case of dolphin-based tourism in the River Ayeyarwaddy. The poor state of transport infrastructure in the areas poses a particular problem because it makes it much more difficult to make the improvements needed elsewhere to begin the process of upgrading service providers, who cannot receive training and development, while private and public sector representatives have difficulties in obtaining access to perform their functions. Consequently, implementation of a CBT programme should properly be considered a multi-stage process, depending on the initial

conditions to be found at the site where the programme is to be implemented and the conditions of any intervening regions between the site and any more developed urban regions. Building good roads might short-circuit this problem and make distant tourism sites just as much candidates for development along CBT lines as those in closer proximity to the urban centre. Even so, more development at the provincial level will be required before tourism development can be conducted on a decentralized basis with the benefits that this can provide (Tosun & Jenkins, 1996). In the case of Myanmar, this is likely to remain problematic for the foreseeable future because of the longstanding resistance to central rule by ethnic minority people in so many different parts of the country. The antagonistic relations caused by the activities of the Myanmar army over the decades are unlikely to be improved significantly in the short term and numerous confidence-building measures will be required, even under the conditions of democratic rule that now prevail.

In a similar way to the Myanmar approach to agriculture in rural areas, tourism resources are most commonly viewed by people as being opportunities for income generation. According to this research, somewhat nuanced relationships between the fishing communities and their environment, as manifested by the dolphins. Those men who do the fishing can have formed sophisticated and important relationships with those dolphins who become involved with the cooperative fishing activity.

This rather suggests that the relationship people have with the environment is transactional in nature. If this is the case then it may be that people have become alienated from their environment because the history of Myanmar people, whether majority Burman or the minority ethnic groups, is for a close animist-mediated relationship with an environment that is considered to be living and willing and able to interact with human beings. Those people who are Buddhists might be expected to embrace all living creatures because of the workings of karma and reincarnation. However, these relationships seem to have eroded as commodification of the environment has started to take place. Indeed, the apparent indifference of many members of the fishing communities to the dolphins suggests that the entire venture might quite easily be destroyed or rendered unusable. This might occur through simple neglect, which would see individual dolphins die and the group be reduced to such a small size that it cannot remain together. It is also possible that some malicious acts bring about this result so as to facilitate alternative lifestyle opportunities.

In the Myanmar context, there is an absence of effective local government and oversight of the tourism experience, especially in the relatively remote areas in which dolphin tourism takes place. Consequently, it is inevitable that development of CBT in this respect should be undertaken primarily by the private sector, perhaps with support from civil society as a means of sourcing additional support for local communities and for the dolphins. Although there is a risk that the venture will prove to be unsustainable overall, it is not inevitable that this should be the case.

6. Conclusion

Myanmar it can conclude that the understanding of local community concerning the CBT is essential. The understandings of local community have been divided into four factors which are economic, socio-culture, environmental and residents place the image. While to determine the CBT's benefits and challenges also need to specify in details to assure it can give a positive approach to local community. Through the positive way it can help increasing the tourist's satisfaction level, and at the same time, can contribute to "word-of-mouth" promotion among tourists. Therefore, this study has identified comprising of employment for local community, local development, sourcing of local goods and services, and the tourist numbers as the indicators for CBT's benefits and challenges.

We already knew that how the political influences effect the destination tourism growths. Without peaceful and tourist friendly environment nothing of the tourist destination in the world can expand their tourism sectors. We can take learning from a few Asian tourists' destinations that are hugely affected by their internal political confusion and how it destroyed their tourism prospects and as well how the destination recovered their destination image in the international tourism. The government of Myanmar should take necessary initiative; where collaborations with the opposition political parties are highly required. To make a sustainable master plan to develop tourism sector of Myanmar; where political stability is the main and key tools of its success. Myanmar has holding a huge international attraction as well prospects on its tourism sector like unique wild life Irrawaddy Dolphins to contribute countries economy.

My study's limitation is data collection from six villages which under the dolphin's conversation area. Actually, over 60 villages can find the dolphins and some villages also can do the corporate fishing with dolphins since old generation but very far from Mandalay. In this research, can't provide the detail arrival tourist number of CBT Irrawaddy dolphins, only can mention the increase number from 2016 until 2019.

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