Considerations for archaeological tourism development to boost socio-economic upliftment: Analysis on Mahasthangarh, Bangladesh

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Abstract
   Archaeological tourism is a prospective tourism form to exalt the country branding. The objective of this study is to underline the 4A development to advance Mahasthangarh as an exceptional tourism destination in Bangladesh. The authors have used focus group discussion and observation method among the stakeholders to find out the eventual results. A longitudinal study among the local community people has been conducted to find out how community archaeology can develop local economy. Disability access, funding mechanisms, signage and language, new technology and social media, marketing and merchandise, coordinated tourism strategies, environmental impact assessment, logistics for visitors, scope for vernacular arts and crafts possibly in the form of merchandise sold to the tourists, strategies to mitigate the harmful effects by increased footfall of tourists are included in a brief. Sustainable 4A development can lead the destination to reach a new height as well as can support the concerned authorities to ensure adequate facilities and flexible accessibility to open the door of archaeological tourism at Mahasthangarh which can turn the rural economy of this area into an emblematic example.

1. Introduction
   Tourism is one of the many external forces influencing the direction and options for local development (Gildea, Sligo, & Hanrahan, 2009). The role of tourism is important in the context of local economic development (Pedrana, 2013). The most established archaeological site "Mahasthan" implies an extraordinary place situated at a separation of 18 km. north of Bogra town, Bangladesh. Mahasthangarh is the most seasoned archaeological site of Bangladesh which is settled on the bank of the Karatoa. Mahasthangarh which speaks to a great past of around two thousand and five hundred years of Pundranagar, the capital city of old Pundra Vardhan Bhukti. The fortress, the strengthened heart of the old city, is rectangular in design, estimating about 1.523 kilometers (0.946 mi) long from north to south, and 1.371 kilometers (0.852 mi) from east to west, with high and wide defenses in the entirety of its wings. Region of the bastion is around 185 ha. The Karatoya, once a relentless waterway however now a little stream, streams on its east. Till the 1920s, when unearthing began, within the fortification was higher than the encompassing zones by more than 4 meters and was dabbed with a few straggling raised parcels. The defense resembled a wilderness clad mud bulwark with constrained openings at a few focuses. The defense was 11– 13 meters (36– 43 ft) higher than the encompassing territory. At its south-east corner stood a mazhar (heavenly tomb). A later day mosque (worked in 1718– 19) was likewise there.
   Unfortunately, this incredible tourism resource of archaeological, religious and historical values could not draw the attention of adequate number of tourists to upgrade the tourism industry

and local economy. However, an approach to archaeological resources management consistent with national realities includes involvement of communities, groups, assuring professionals in the field, and finally reinforcing the institution charged with administering cultural resources by updating personnel and orienting them toward education at all levels, and by taking care that site exploitation be truly sustainable.

Hence, a proper understanding is required to unveil the issues that impede the tourism development over there. The extant tourism related studies in this context in most of the cases highlighted the potential of the destination to develop different forms of tourism such as community-based tourism. However, very little has been documented addressing the barriers of tourism development in this context. Considering this phenomenon, the current study aims to develop an in-depth understating of the barriers relevant to the tourism development, Bangladesh. This study follows a qualitative case study approach.

2. Literature Review

Archeological tourism is a type of social tourism, which plans to advance open enthusiasm for prehistoric studies and the preservation of recorded locales (Hasan & Jobaid, 2014). Archaeological tourism can incorporate all items related with open archaeological advancement, including visits to archeological destinations, exhibition halls, elucidation focuses, reenactments of recorded events, and the rediscovery of indigenous items, celebrations, or theaters (Mazzola, 2015).

Archaeological tourism is a kind of cultural tourism and a very complex segment of the 'tourism industry,' its supply is diverse and versatile. The future positions of the discipline will probably be strengthened both directly and indirectly as with the change of the recreational needs the aim to get acquainted with the cultural values is strongly increasing (Csapo, 2012).

Archaeological locales require another administration and improvement structure to address the weights coming about because of an expanding enthusiasm for archeological tourism. The role of archaeological tourism in social and economic development is remarkable (Ullah, 2014). With the development of world tourism, Bangladesh is turning into another goal on the planet vacationer outline. As per UNWTO, the best 15 goals ingested 98 percent of all universal traveler entries in 1950. In 1970 the extent was 75 percent, which fell further to 57 percent in 2007. Moreover, the tourism sector in Bangladesh has been progressively mounting from mid-nineties to till now (Dabour, 2003). It has a great scope to develop tourism sector by applying new policies and strategies (Karim, 2014). Archaeological tourism in Bangladesh, as a section of the bigger tourism industry, can be the significant supporter of aggregate tourism profit. Remote visitors coming to Bangladesh see archeological and verifiable places to start with, while their second decision is beautiful excellence. In spite of the fact that supportability of legacy tourism has turned into a noteworthy worry from the points of view of both scholastics and professionals, the lion's share of research and studies have tended to comprehend the social and instructive issues of legacy tourism as opposed to concentrating on the utilization of manageability in a functional setting (Schmutz & Elliott, 2016). The cultural materials, unique elements and verifiable data demonstrate that Mahasthangarh saw more than 1000 years human exercises as focal place with political, efficient and religious capacities in a long-haul point of view (MD. RIFAT-UR-RAHMAN, 2014).

Despite of having great potentials of Mahasthangarh, there is no research work to make it a distinct tourist destination. The author did not find any research which can propose and clarify a framework for sustainable management through 4Adevelopment of Mahasthangarh to contribute for the local economy. So, the authors have selected this site as a significant resource to safeguard community people by giving opportunities to earn by selling archaeological commodities.

3. Profiling the Study Setting

'Mahasthan' means a place that has sanctity and 'garh' means fort. So, Mahasthangarh was named for its hallowed fort. Mahasthan was first mentioned in a Sanskrit text of the 13th century entitled 'Vallalcharita'. It was stated in another book 'Korotoa Mahatta', circumstantially written in

12th–13th century. The same manuscript also mentions two names of the same place – Pundrakhetra, land of the Pundras, and Pundranagar, city of the Pundras. In 1685, an administrative decree described the place as Mahasthangarh. This earliest and largest city, fortified by mud and red bricks, measures 1,525 metres long to north-south, 1,370 metres to east-west and 5 meters high from the soil. Hashanah is in the Mahathat village in Shibganj upazilla, 13 kilo metres north to Bogra town. In the primeval period, civilisation was established based on a river so that the water way could make communication easier along with road communication. Mahasthan was situated on the western bank of river Korotoa. Another significant feature that was considered as a precondition for such establishment was its security system. To ensure security preparations, building fort was necessary then (Daily Sun, 2017).

With a unique combination of vast landscape, archaeology, architecture and history, Mahasthangarh was declared as the cultural capital of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on November 24, 2016, by a SAARC Cultural Centre team, led by its director Wasantha Kotuwella from Sri Lanka (The Daily Prothom Alo, 2016). From the archaeological indication, it is proven that Mahasthangarh was the capital of the Mauryans, the Guptas, the Buddhist Palas, the Hindu Sen dynasties kings and Muslim leaders in the later period. Primarily it was found as Varendra-bhumi or Barind tract, which encompasses the northern districts of East Bengal.

As a Bhukti or administrative province of the Gupta Empire and later Kingdoms, Pundra Vardhana was a greater territory, containing a large segment of even southern West Bengal. Beyond the citadel, other ancient remains were found within a radius of 7-8 kilo metres in a semi-circle in the north, south and west, which testify the existence of extensive suburbs. It is worth quoted that Xuanzang, the famous Chinese pilgrim visited Pundra Vardhana (pan-na-faan-na) in between 639-645 AD. Eminent British historian and archaeologist Alexander Cunningham rightly identified the present Mahasthangarh as Pundranagar following the description of Xuanzang (Current- Affairs, 2017).

The first archaeological excavation was carried in the area in 1928-29 under the supervision of the then leading archaeologist Kashinath Narayan Dikshit. The excavated mounds were Bairagir Bhita, Munir Ghon and Govinda Bhita. An excavation in 1934-36 by Nani Gopal Majumdar exposed a gigantic shrine or stupa plinth built in the terraced cellular style of construction. After a long gap the excavation was resumed in 1960-61 to continue till 1988. It got a new momentum with the joint venture of Bangladeshi and French archaeologists in 1993.

In the first phase, the operation was concentrated in the middle of the eastern rampart area. Then in the second phase the excavation sustained around the mazar area till 2000. These expeditions have revealed a long cultural sequence raging from 4th century B.C. to 15th century A.D. Mud and brick-built houses, roads, drains, wells, temples, mosques, gate ways, bastions of preMauryan, Mauryan, Gupta, Buddhist Pala, Hindu Sen dynasties and the Muslim period have been successfully unearthed in 18 building levels (Wikipedia).

4. Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature. Focus group discussion and observation method has been adopted to find out the ins and outs. The respondents for focus group discussion were 15 employees of the department of archaeology, People's Republic of Bangladesh, 50 local representatives and 15 experts of archaeological attraction preservation and management. The study has been conducted in last January to March 2018.

Convenience sampling was used to select the tourist participants and the local people, and judgmental sampling was used to select the tour operators and institutional representatives. The researchers decided to stop interviewing when they observed data saturation.

This study has adopted the six-stage thematic analysis process for the qualitative data suggested by Braun and Clark (2006). These stages are getting familiar with the data (transcribing

and repeatedly reading the data), generating initial codes, and collating codes into potential themes, reviewing the themes, refining the themes, and producing the final report. Interviews were transcribed first and then translated to the English. In translating the data, the authors ensured accuracy by cross-checking the translated files three times altogether. Thereafter, the researchers read the interview transcripts a few times to get a thorough understanding of the whole data set. Later, the interview transcripts were coded manually and categorized under the potential themes, which were refined and defined correspondingly to finalize for final reporting.

5. Limitations to the study as well as scope for future research

The study has been conducted by self-funding and within a very short timeframe. The tourist and local participants were selected through convenience sampling. Unless all the stakeholders come together to boost the destination, the study will be limited only in papers. On the contrary, the study paves the way for future research in terms of conservation, marketing, inclusive destination branding and many more.

6. Findings and Discussions

6.1 Attractions

1. Attractions- hotel, watch tower, park, shopping area/local market: For this A the authority can establish an economy hotel which will be eco-friendly building conforming to international standards. "This will be a real green building as each, and every area of the building has been designed such that it will ensure an efficient use of water and energy". Target Market will be mainly Domestic tourists and a few outbound tourists. It will be an economy hotel with some additional facilities for tourist's betterment.

Table 1. Key themes and issues summarizing the study findings

Base theme	Sub-themes	Emergent issues
Tourism development challenges/barriers	Infrastructure	Transport problem Accommodation problem Poor restroom facilities Poor refreshment facilities
	Planning and management	Lack of planning Poor management No idea about carrying capacity Budget constraint No authority to control transport facilities Lack of promotional activities Lack of coordination
	Awareness of local people	Illiteracy Lack of tourism knowledge

1.1 Structural Development: USGBC is a membership based non-profit organization that promotes sustainability in how buildings are designed, built and operated. So far, 49 projects from Bangladesh have been registered with USGBC. The authority can pursue the first LEED (leadership in energy and environmental design) platinum certification for a commercial green building in Bangladesh. They can also register our plan with the US Green Building Council (USGBC).

1.2 Watch Tower: There can be a watch tower for tourists. So that tourists can have a look on the beauties and the sustainability of this heritage site can be maintained. Tourists will not need to climb on the attraction.

1.3 Archaeological Park: An Archaeological Park is a prospective tool for Local Sustainable Development. The authority can establish an archaeological park to enhance and preserve the beauties of this site. Research facilities are to be there to encourage young generation to contribute for the tourism sector. The authority will encourage locals to make replicas to enhance the beauty of

this park which will embellish the park as a green area. Different archaeological attractions and signs will be shown there.

1.4 Local Market/Shopping Area development: The authority can establish or renovate the existing market. The authority can establish two types of market with different products. The first market is the market of crafts. The main product of the market is various handicrafts which will focus mainly on the age-old tradition. The authority can sell traditional jamdani sharees, nokshi katha, bamboo made utensils, various silver made ornaments, and soil made utensils in the market. Tourists may buy these as souvenirs which are mainly to remind them about their journey and visiting experience. Here, the authority can engage the local people with this business to earn and maintain their livelihood by selling those items. On the other hand, the authority will set a market which will mainly sell traditional food of Bangladesh. In Bangladesh there are different cuisines in different places. That tourists can enjoy different local cuisines at the same place. In this case, local community can be engaged as well. In case of merchandising the local made products, local government has a great role to play by arranging fairs and exhibitions at different times.

6.2 Accessibility

Internal and External Transport: There are many ways to go to Bogura such as bus, train everything is available. But problem is in internal transport to visit Mahasthangarh, Hazrat Shah Sultan Majar, Gobinda Vhita, museum and others. The roads are to be constructed as spacious and smooth enough to drive the transports. The front desk of the proposed economy hotel will also deal and provide with internal environment friendly transports like: Auto Rickshaws, Rickshaws, Easy Bikes and so on. Disability access must be ensured to establish this place as an international tourist spot.

6.3 Amenities

Accommodation, Food and Beverage, Entertainment, Tour Guide: The logistics for visitors travelling from Dhaka and other population centres are to be provided to retain tourists for longer level. The proposed economy hotel will be able to serve the tourists of all income levels. Food and Beverages will be served in a hygienic manner. Some of local food, recognized curd will be served specially. All the Bengali food will be cooked. Some foreign menus will also be served there. Entertainment can be provided by arranging cultural events by local performers. Locals can arrange cultural programs, dance or music shows. Thus, they can also be benefitted financially. The local culture will get a chance to revive.

6.4 Ancillary Services

Guides, local Organizations, clubs, welfare associations: The authority can launch Zero archaeological damage program through establishing a club of youth. The authority can have reward program for local organizations who will try at their level best for preservation of this site. The hotel authority will also provide tour guide to help people to learn the history to spread positive word of mouth and bring more tourists by achieving the tourist's lifetime equity.

7. Sustainable development initiatives

Environmental Impact Assessment and carrying capacity analysis are prerequisites to ensure sustainable tourism development. Both funding and operational mechanisms should be decided through PPP (Public Private Partnership). New technology such as database management system could be applied to count the tourist flow and to restrict the number of tourists visiting this destination in a day. There is also scope for vernacular arts and crafts possibly in the form of merchandise sold to the tourists by the local people. Social media and positive word of mouth could be great marketing tools. A site of this significance requires constant upkeep and increased footfall by tourists might cause harm to the site, and thus it is important to adopt coordinated tourism strategies there are to mitigate such activity

8. Conclusion

In recent times, tourists want variety of tangible and intangible services while visiting a tourist spot. Although this notable archaeological site would have some limitations to fulfill the demands of modern tourists in the upcoming days. Whereas, there is a lack of necessary amenities and proper representation of heritage, archeological and other resources is not prevalent. For analyzing future perspectives of archaeological sites that could be confronted in the region, it is imperative to mention some issues like gradual moldering of the real shapes of the relics, threat of alternative tourism products, insufficient tourism services and absence of trained tour guide as well as lower carrying capacity. This research has been conducted to resolve the future and present tourist demand and 4A development according to the needs of tourists of all categories. Local people can play the most vital role to minimize the limitations to meet future challenges. The 4As "Attraction, Accessibility, Amenities, Ancillary Services" deployment are collectively applicable to the Mahasthangarh and overall tourism sector of Bangladesh while there should be a prioritized applicability of accessibility to draw the attention of numerous tourists. The mode of transport which ensures accessibility to Mahasthangarh itself can be a tourism attraction to add extra value in case of visiting this remarkable destination. Moreover, adequate number of activities and traditional or nontraditional recreational facilities can boost tourism to a greater extent. However, through proper planning and implications the authority might go a long way to attract tourists to this archaeological attraction by the development of 4A appropriately.

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