

Tourism Diplomacy: A Feasible Tool of Building Nation's Image through Tourism Resources. A Study on Bangladesh

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Abstract

All stakeholders of the tourism industry are consciously or subconsciously promoting their country to boost its tourism export. That's why tourism is regarded as a hidden export and import industry. The actual base of tourism diplomacy is the application of soft power that covers people, culture, heritage, tradition, history, nationalism, national pride, hospitality, sports, tourism project, nature, prominent person and the participation of international peace mission. This study will reveal the secret pattern of tourism diplomacy and how it can play a crucial role to build up international bonding by breaking down the icy relationship between or among the nations through culture, tradition and heritage. This study figures out how Bangladesh can pertain tourism diplomacy to retain its country interest through representing its tourism resources to stakeholders in the international relationship. Moreover, it includes several ideas and factors of diplomacy through which tourism can play a role of creating peace among different countries of the world.

Keywords: tourism diplomacy, sustainable development, tourism export, green politics.

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1. Introduction

Tourism relates the publics and states through a crucial role that helps to build national identity (L'Etang, 2006). Tourism Diplomacy is the process of promoting tourism resources and solving the crisis or problem of a particular destination by a peaceful negotiation between two or more nations or among nations through the peaceful power of tourism (Baranowski et al., 2019). The whole world is now suffering from various categories of crisis like war, religious conflict, disease and migration. So, there is a crying need to establish a new pattern of international negotiation to demolish or mitigate political unrest or conflict among nations or people. The aim of tourism diplomacy is to promote and invest in the tourism industry, minimize the current crisis and conflict among the nations, generate tourists, increase the standard of living of the host community, preserving the natural resources, practicing green politics and bringing peace among the nations (Bunakov, 2018).

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stated the basic foreign policy of our country by maintaining friendship with all states and no to involve any conflicting situation (Islam, 2019). This tactic can be used in Bangladesh in such a way where the official negotiations with countries can build peace and open countless advantages by reducing the barriers for establishing the tourism industry.

2. Objectives

The principal objective of this research is to stimulate and build the nation's image through its tourism resources by using the theory of tourism diplomacy. Secondary objectives are-

- to identify the strategies of tourism diplomacy for promoting, branding and positioning the tangible and intangible tourism resources of Bangladesh to the international platform.
- to increase tourism export (a process of generating or motivating tourists to visit destinations from another country or location), investment in tourism and generate country GDP.

3. Literature Review

Tourism diplomacy is a bilateral theory that presents a country on political level internationally and gains the

maximum amount of profit in a dogmatic and economic zone by using tourism activities. Tourism diplomacy uses these diplomatic actions with the main purpose of evolving tourism (TASAM, 2020). From the idea of Nepal Foreign Affairs (2015), tourism diplomacy can be seen from global (a global forum that promotes tourism); regional (tourism for regional cooperation); national level (conceptualize tourism diplomacy in foreign policy and international relations). In China, outbound tourism is developing with the state's partisan plan. The Chinese government noticed tourism diplomacy as a soft power because it has the capability, power to attract others and results in the predetermined outcome. They tend to stand tourism and politics in a line (Tse, 2013). The relationship between tourism and diplomacy can suggest static and compartmentalized entities that will deduct the complexities between two (Baranowski et al., 2019). Culture diplomacy is an important part of tourism diplomacy that rises the continuous curiosity about the culture of other countries (TASAM, 2020). It identifies multiple agendas by which culture and identity can be redefined. By tourism diplomacy, tourists can involve in cross-cultural communication and can be formal or informal diplomats. Due to globalization, international communication; political negotiation of countries worldwide are increasing. This negotiation will help to increase the international tourist receipts as the tourists will visit the destination country for a specific purpose will join in tourism-based activities (Parfinenko, 2016). Germann Molz (2010) identifies tourism as a political terrain of cultural exercise because it coordinates culture and public diplomacy. It works as international diplomacy by promoting a national brand; global culture, mobilizing people; place and money.

4. Methodology

4.1 Nature of the Research

This research has identified the depth of the phenomena to promote the nation's culture, heritage, national pride and resources. This study has explained all its findings in a qualitative structure. So, it is all about finding qualitative information to explore the role of tourism diplomacy in developing and highlighting the tourism sector of Bangladesh. So, this study is mainly a qualitative study. The characteristics of the topic are focusing on exploratory factors. The main fact of the study is it has explored the question of 'What are strategies that can be used as tourism diplomacy?' and 'How those strategies can be implemented to promote the nation worldwide and then ensure vigorous growth of the tourism industry in Bangladesh by making a stable international market for it?' So this 'How' and qualitative 'What' question indicates that this is exploratory research (Malhotra, 2010). This study has likewise advised some chain networking ways to connect with developed countries by imposing the bilateral theory of tourism diplomacy. These findings and strategies of the research can be used as the findings, inputs and secondary information for other researches and studies.

4.2 Sources of Data

This exploratory research has explored all its information in a qualitative way. It has collected and analyzed all its information from secondary sources and previous researches. Data has been collected from previous researches, journals, articles, websites, annual reports, case studies, newspapers, magazines, and topic-related books. The facts analyzed from those sources and records have shown a new path to explore the diplomacy theory for the tourism sector by branding and positioning the tangible and intangible resources of Bangladesh in the global market. The proposed strategies have shown clearly in an organized way in this study which can be used as a secondary resource also for further researches of other writers.

5. Findings and Discussion

The idea of tourism diplomacy has been identified from different works, cases and sources. But tourism diplomacy can also be a tool for boosting the tourism industry. The study finds it out and includes over here with intricate discussion.

5.1 Factors of Diplomacy

Some crucial factors have been denoted to negotiate with other countries to promote, minimize and solve problems between or among states. Nye (2004) identified two diplomatic factors, where "soft power" defines the norms, values, culture and nationalism of the state principle and where "hard power" is another wing of the diplomacy that defines the uses of economic, military and political power in international relationship.

5.1.1 Hard power diplomacy: The basic theme of hard power diplomacy is to show political or economic energy in international negotiation that is completely the opposite doctrine of tourism ideology.

5.1.2 Soft power diplomacy: Peace through tourism can be ensured by the application of soft power in the international platform (Bunakov, 2018). Country culture, heritage, tradition, green politics and investment, sports, language, national and international achievement, hospitality, emotion, national pride, and nationalism are part of soft power diplomacy.

5.2 Diplomacy Ideas for Tourism

Soft power diplomacy can become a useful tool to generate the influx of tourists and create a mutual bonding among the countries. It can be ensured through few ideas of diplomacy.

5.2.1 Host community to tourists: In this case, host community people of Bangladesh shows their cultural artifact and the natural heritage to maximize tourist satisfaction and experience. They will act as a story teller and deliberately explain the culture and heritage of an evolutionary angel. They also demonstrate the tourist how they collect honey from the forest, catch fish from the river, ride and run the boat, village shopping etc. They also take tourists to the place that bears the testimony of our national pride and heritage. They held stage performance to explain their culture and tradition including their lifestyle, marriage, language, norms, and social rules as they have inherited from one generation to another. The ultimate objective of the host community to tourist diplomacy is to build up an emotional promise between them.

5.2.2 Hospitality industry to the tourists: The hospitality industry of Bangladesh will frequently contact their prospective guest directly or through travel agency, tour operator, printing media, electric media social media or their official web site. They provide the major information about the destination and special facilities or offers to allure the tourist visit the country. This how hospitality industry interacts with and provides information to the tourists. Tourist searches the types of accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, and other facilities before visiting a destination. They gather the information from the website, friends and families, newspaper, travel agencies or direct contact with the hospitality industry.

Hospitality industry to the host community: Bangladesh has some renowned hotels including Radisson blu Water garden, Westin, Pan Pacific Sonargaon, etc. These hospitality industries directly recruit the community people from every corner of the country to serve the tourist because community people are more knowledgeable about the destination then the industry people. So, they can give suggestions to the tourist about the destination or tourism resources around the country. This strategy will help the industry to generate more tourists and promote the country. In this case, the hospitality industry must train the community people about tourism marketing to create tourist loyalty. In some cases, the community will have direct contact with tourists. So, they have a good idea of tourist likings and disliking. They can pass this information to the hospitality industry that will facilitate them to redesign their product to satisfy their tourist. All the suppliers of the hospitality industry will frequently take promotional strategy to sponsor tourism. Local hotels will organize food festivals by representing their local food where the international hotels will join and demonstrate their food and beverage facilities. Here, Biman Bangladesh Airlines offers 20% - 50% discount for a specific period of time for the tourist. This offer stimulates both affluent and budget tourist to travel through the air.

5.2.3 Country to country diplomacy: A state always strives to increase its export or generate more international currencies (Koc, 2009). It can be degraded because of the bad norms and behavior of people, political patterns, economic turndown, accident rate, rape, diseases, food adulteration, corruption and so on. The country images reflect the hospitality pattern, norm, values that a country practices from one generation to another generation (Blichfeldt, 2005; Kemp et al., 2012).

In figure 1, a model is developed for Bangladesh, based on the theme of two countries diplomacy. Here, country 1 represents Bangladesh and country 2 represents another one where both of the countries must come into a negotiation to use the soft power of diplomacy. In this case, each of the countries will promote or demonstrate cultural values, natural heritage, and national pride and philanthropy activities in the national and global platforms. This negotiation will carry a strong mutual bonding which will open the door for promoting tourism worldwide, increase tourism export and GDP, gain national interest through tourism (win-win game), ensure peace, solve the current crisis (Rohingya crisis, virus, child trafficking, food adulteration, rapid road accident, medicine poisoning, rumor and so on.), fulfill the 17 goals of SDG and ensure 6 win policies.

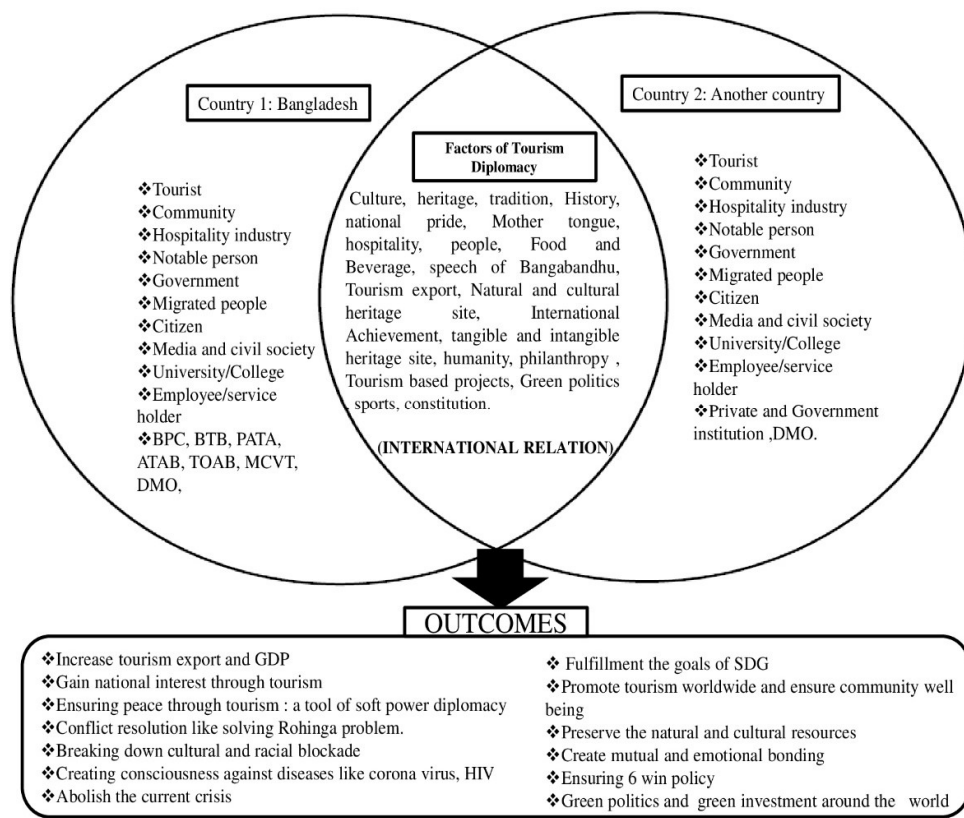


Figure 1: A model of country to country diplomacy (from the perspective of Bangladesh)
 Source: Authors' compilation

6 Win policies through tourism diplomacy

- Win number 1: Local community will develop their standard of living (community satisfaction and society wellbeing).
- Win number 2: Tourist will gather evergreen experiences from the spot (tourist satisfaction).
- Win number 3: Tourism and hospitality industry will generate revenue (Business stakeholders and employee satisfaction).
- Win number 4: Host government will receive tax (increasing GDP and economic wellbeing).
- Win number 5: Sun lust and wonder lust preservation (responsible tourism and environmental wellbeing).
- Win number 6: World peace through tourism diplomacy (global sustainable development)

There are several ideas that must be taken into consideration in the country to country diplomacy:

- *Constitution of Bangladesh- a base of foreign and tourism diplomacy:* In the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Article (25) is about the promotion of international peace, security, and solidarity that stated that country will ascertain the mutual bonding along with all the countries, never interfere any internal politics or issue of other countries, peaceful endings of any conflicting matters with the respect of international rules and regulations. (Laws of Bangladesh, 2020). So, our constitution also supports implementing tourism-based diplomacy in international relations.
- *Cultural and heritage diplomacy to attract tourist:* From the idea of Bowen (2004), it can be said that, cultural and heritage diplomacy involves the exchange of idea, language, art, educational programs, literature, different perspectives of culture, natural and manmade attractions among several nations so that the mutual respect and understanding of different cultures get increased and tourists from other countries get interested more to visit the other countries rather than only the native country. Cultural diplomacy defines the transmission of country culture, heritage, norms, values and images just like an actor to the abroad (Cull, 2008). Gastro diplomacy is

“the amalgamation of culture and culinary that give a unique opportunity to tourist to enjoy foods along with the unforgettable hospitality (Rockower, 2012). Bangladesh is enriched with so many heritage attractions, natural, cultural and unique resources. UNESCO has already been declared the Bangla language as the sweetest language in the world. Sierra Leone approved the Bengali language as their 2nd language. The notable persons of our country also received awards in the sectors of environmental, socio-cultural, economic and technological excellence. These achievements enhance the country’s images worldwide.

- *Tourism ministry diplomacy to gain national interest and peace through tourism:* In the seminar of UNWTO, all the tourism ministers must submit the natural and manmade resources they have and those need a specific announcement from UNESCO for preservation and need aid to protect those resources. UNWTO must come to take appropriate actions to minimize the current crisis and give suggestions to ministry. Farrell (1999) highlights the ‘sustainability trinity’ which purpose is to social, economic and environmental development in a country. The pattern of diplomacy creates emotional bonding between the two states. In this negotiation, both countries must create some emotional attachment that highlights the country’s culture and hospitality. This will ensure peace through tourism between or among nations.
- *Media diplomacy to promote tourism:* Rumors and negative words spread faster than light and people always eagerly waiting to know the current crisis in the world. As it creates an alarming sign to the world people. This news is sold like hot cake and media people always try to cover those events that people grasp easily. In this case, all the national and international media must carry on the news that brings peace in the heart of the people. People now exhausted with the current crisis. Media must focus on the news related to tourism (Månsson, 2011).
- *Sports diplomacy to represent the country:* The audiences get the chance to share their knowledge, culture, tradition with the person next to him and they must use the international language or body language that they can be able to make them understand about their culture and heritage. This international platform can be a massive stage to promote the nation’s appearance through sports tourism (Sports Tourism International Council, 1994). The players of a native country also an influencing factor in international relations. The performance of the team and players can represent a country like Maradona from Argentina, Sakib-Al-Hasan from Bangladesh. Ronaldo (a prominent player from Portugal) has the highest number of followers on facebook and Twitter. So, his post regarding tourism resources will go viral on facebook that will create interest in people to sightsee the destination.
- *National pride and humanitarian diplomacy to build up mutual bonding:* The national days of Bangladesh are carrying its history behind those and representing those towards the world. The 21st February as International Mother Language Day is known to the whole world and it has been observed internationally since 2000. The 16th December of 1971 is another national day of the country as National Victory Day and reason for our national pride which is influencing international tourists to come. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has an international influence worldwide to introduce Bangladesh. His speech of 7th March, 1971 had become one of the most powerful speeches of global history. Bilateral agreements with neighbor countries can work as diplomacy to represent powerful histories worldwide. When it comes to the humanitarian diplomacy term of Bangladesh then the only name comes that is Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina known is the ‘Mother of Humanity’ because of her humanitarian work for sheltering Rohingyas in our country.
- *Diplomacy by tourism pillars to ensure sustainable development:* Environment, economic, political, technological and social factors are the main influencers to establish and improve the tourism sector of a country. Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation has taken many steps to ensure sustainable development through cultural and natural measures. Cater(1993) defines sustainable tourism with three crucial objectives: ensuring the standard of lifestyle of host community people for the long term, satisfying the tourist with memorable experiences, taking suitable measures to conserve natural resources.
- *Tourism branding diplomacy to build up a country’s image:* The national image of a country is the amalgamation perceptions in the mind and heart of international citizens (Fan, 2008) and may cover various aspects of cultural activities, political etiquette, environmental policy and history of the state. Bangladesh is now promoting the tourism sector by the brand name of ‘Beautiful Bangladesh’ which highlights the historical places, natural resources, and cultural heritage in the international stage. The neighboring developed countries can be the invisible hand to promote the brand image internationally (Anholt, 2009).
- *Philanthropy diplomacy to create emotional attachment:* The whole world is now trying to improve itself globally by including each member. Humanity and philanthropic activities are now become mandatory to stand (Lacey et al., 2015). At the time of the natural disaster, the support of financially powerful countries

makes underdeveloped and developing countries more stable. Philanthropic activities are like financial help, food and shelter from developed countries at the time of the natural disaster, mask deliver to protect from Corona virus, decisional support to solve the Rohingya issues. These activities can grab the attention of powerful countries and that diplomatic ideas can make a change in the tourism area.

- *Tourism diplomacy by tourism projects*: There are several tourism projects have been taken that will accelerate tourism diplomacy. Naf Tourism Park, Sonadia Eco-Tourism Park, and Sabrang Tourism Park are the current mega tourism projects of Bangladesh. The objectives of these projects are to welcome FDI in the tourism sector and create employment. These infrastructural and manmade resources will facilitate the tourist to have world class amusements.
- *Migrated diplomacy to brand the country*: The culture, heritage and natural resources can be promoted by migrants thus will facilitate the influx of tourists in Bangladesh. So, whatever the causes of their migration: work permit or educational reason, they are influencing the international reputation of our country. Bangladesh has sent the maximum figure of entire arm forces to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. So, this community has become one of the key contributors to establishing peace globally and can represent the country's resources. Migrants can provide extraordinary support by proving their existence internationally, expand the prestige of the country and represent national pride.
- *Celebrity diplomacy to create public opinion*: All kinds of actors, writers, sportsmen, musicians, politicians, poets, international business owners, and public figures are the celebrities who have an international stage to promote Bangladesh. They are the face of a country and their words have values internationally. Their opinions, blogs, activities, news, information, and statements regarding national and global issues have international acceptance. Their volunteer activities to solve the problems of the country can bring international supports to solve the current issues also. So, these role models can be the main spokespersons to promote the country as a brand and flourish in the tourism sector globally.

6. Conclusion

It is required to organize activities to bring every stakeholder included state persons, community people, representatives, bureaucrats, diplomats, spoke persons, public figures, sportsmen, culture oriented persons, and academicians, etc. all together to promote tourism resources, attract more tourist and foreign direct investors, finding the solution of precise problem or crisis through a peaceful negotiation between or among the countries. This study has developed a model along with the strategies to set the country to country diplomacy and its outcomes in a systematic way. It has also proved the idea of the involvement of all stakeholders to promote the soft power of tourism diplomacy and gain the maximum benefits from it.

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