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WRITING A RESEARCH FRAMEWORK FOR AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN CAMBODIA: A CASE OF ANGKOR WORLD HERITAGE AREA

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at writing a research framework for exploring sustainable cultural heritage tourism policy implementation at Angkor (World Heritage Area). There are six policy initiatives within Angkor's Tourism Management Plan (2012-2020) to guide sustainability of tourism development. The year 2020 was the end of implementing these policy initiatives, but there were not any documents reporting the effectiveness and success of their implementations; therefore, this study will show the framework for investigating the implementation of policy initiatives within this timeframe. There are three main objectives in this framework. First, it is necessary to identify the outcomes of policy implementation judged by stakeholders. Second, it is important to outline and understand the barriers that hinder the successful implementation of the policy. Third, there is a need to create a framework for how to successfully implement sustainable tourism policies in the development of more sustainable tourism in the future.

Research Background

Clearly, tourism has gotten to be a really vital economic activity at Angkor (World Heritage Area), but these developments have also brought some pressures on the sustainable management of tourism. The first impact is the number of many visitors per year over three million domestic and international tourists which causes environmental and socio-cultural problems. The second impact is economic factor. It is reported that almost half of the people working at Angkor tourism accommodation sector are outsiders, it means that local residents do not benefit much from Angkor tourism. Relevant parties recognize that unless the management is substantially changed to meet the contemporary needs of Angkor and its population, the site will be irreparably damaged. It also recognizes that tourism is an economic necessity and the greatest threat to the longevity of Angkor. It is decided that a comprehensive tourism strategy must be developed in order to reduce the threat and improve Angkor's long-term viability is both tourism site and a place for people to live in (Mao, 2015; UNESCO, 2019). These negative effects of heritage tourism can be alleviated by good governance, wise regulatory policies, and the participation of other stakeholders. Therefore, the sustainability of tourism requires the government and other actors to plan and develop tourism more proactively.

Research Puzzle

In the context of Cambodian tourism, very few tourism destinations have established policies aimed at preventing overuse or overdevelopment, and those that have done so, have generally found that policy implementation has proven more difficult than policy creation. For Angkor World Heritage Area, policy initiatives within Tourism Management Plan (TMP) (2012-2020) have been prepared by the Angkor Heritage Management Framework (HMF) project team, at the request of the International Coordinating Committee, for the Safeguarding and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor (the ICC) and the APSARA National Authority (APSARA), with support from the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Governments of Cambodia and Australia. Because the year 2020 was the end of Tourism Management Plan (2012-2020), and there were not any governmental or academic documents explaining about the implementation outcomes of policy initiatives within this TMP; therefore, the effectiveness and appropriateness of the policy implementation were in doubt. Obviously, the author has interviewed 20 key informants in August 2020 at Angkor. Most of them claimed that the policy implementation was less than 50% success, but a few government officials said that it was about 70% effective.

Research Aim

Seeing the above-mentioned perspectives are different, the author will write a framework for conducting a research to explore the implementation of these sustainable tourism policy initiatives at Angkor.

Research Questions

Main question: How have Angkor's sustainable tourism policy initiatives (2012-2020) been practiced? Did the policy initiatives produce the intended outcomes and of what values are the outcomes?

Sub-questions:

* How do stakeholders evaluate the implementation outcomes of Angkor's policy initiatives?
* What are the barriers to policy implementation at Angkor?
* What is an effective framework for successfully implementing sustainable tourism policy?

Research Objectives

* To identify stakeholders' evaluation of the outcomes of policy implementation;
* To outline the barriers to the successful implementation of the policies; and
* To create a framework for successfully implementing sustainable tourism policies

Case Selection

Why does the author choose Angkor as a case study? Angkor is the most famous tourism site in Cambodia and half of tourists every year flock to visit this cultural world heritage area. The study of Angkor will be a representative case for other Cambodian cultural heritage areas because Angkor is the source of Cambodian culture and history, even the flag of Cambodia has Angkor picture in it. Moreover, it is first recognized by UNESCO as a world cultural heritage area among other places in Cambodia, and the implementation of sustainable tourism policy at Angkor will be a model for other cultural heritage destinations in this kingdom.

Angkor's Sustainable Tourism Policy Initiatives (2012-2020)

In Cambodia, the Tourism Management Plan (TMP) creates the basis for management and coordination of the rapid development of Angkor World Heritage Area through six policy measures: positive visitor experiences, reduced site impacts, partnership with the tourism industry, benefits for local people, governance, and stakeholder engagement.

Here are the six policy initiatives to develop sustainable tourism at Angkor:

1) **Positive visitor experiences**

Visitors will have good experiences of Angkor's special natural and cultural heritage via effective delivery of information about the place, its sacred nature and its life traditions, gaining diverse opportunities and service levels that surpass their expectations.

2) Reduced site impacts
The total effects of tourism development will be actively managed through encouragement and supervision to eliminate or minimize the adverse side effect on the value of Angkor World Heritage.

3) Partnership with tourism industry
The tourism industry and the government will work together as partners for Angkor sustainable management within clear and steady communication, and transparent and timely decision-making.

4) Benefits for local people
The social and cultural values of local communities or residents at Angkor will be recognized, protected and upgraded, and these communities will be fairly shared from the economic and other benefits brought by Angkor tourism.

5) Governance
According to the eighth principle for sustainable tourism for World Heritage Properties, the Cambodian government agencies will confirm that as tourism income grows, the institutional structures and available resources will reflect the necessities for successful governance of Angkor tourism, including the implementation of TMP.

6) Stakeholder Engagement
Effective communication, consultation and collaboration between the government, industry, non-governmental organizations and Angkor local communities will reach a consensus on the management of Angkor tourism.

Research Framework
This research focuses on three objectives: the stakeholders' evaluation of the outcomes of policy implementation; the response of stakeholders about barriers to current policy implementation; and creating a framework for successful policy implementation. The conceptual and theoretical framework of each of these three objectives are outlined as followings:

First, in terms of the stakeholders' evaluation of the outcomes of policy implementation, the concept tends to be interpreted in terms of economic, environmental and socio-cultural sustainability. These interpretations can be classified within the 'Traditions of sustainability in tourism studies' of Saarinen (2006), which include three primary traditions of sustainability in tourism studies on a local scale: resource-based, activity-based, and community-based traditions of sustainability.

Second, as for the response of stakeholders to current policy implementation, literature on barriers to implementing policies in sustainable tourism on a local scale by Dodds & Butler (2010) is used as a framework. They have identified a number of responses of stakeholders to the policies, such as poor administration, mistrust of government policy, and unclear lines of communication.

Third, for exploring framework for successful policy implementation, the author will use a multi-stakeholder involvement management (MSIM) by Waligo et al. (2012) as a framework. It consists of three strategic levels: attraction, integration and management of stakeholder involvement. Six stages are embedded within the three levels: scene-setting, recognition of stakeholder involvement capacity, stakeholder relationship management, pursuit of achievable objectives, influencing implementation capacity and monitoring
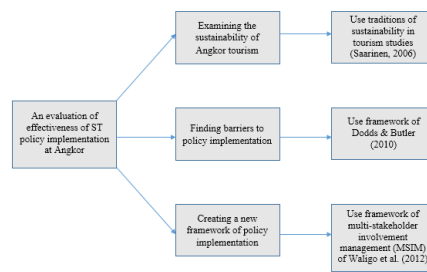
stakeholder involvement.

Figure: Research Framework by Tithsatya DEM

Conclusions
Finally, although this article is short in length, but it plays an important role for future researchers who prefer to conduct a research relating to evaluation of policy implementation in tourism sites, especially the world heritage areas. This is a research framework developed by the author after doing a hard work on research review. Therefore, interested researchers in this topic can test it in the future study.

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