

# Potentiality of Islands Based Tourism in Bangladesh: A Qualitative View from Existing Literature

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## Abstract

The research project is mainly developed to emphasize the development of potential areas in Bangladesh especially in the islands where the tourism sector can be incorporated to act as an income generator alongside the traditional earning opportunities. To place our thoughts of this emerging sector in island areas, we had reviewed some of the works from the earlier researchers of different regions of the world worked on different islands' tourism developments. The result of our findings after examining those works by the researchers will provide us a clear understanding of how tourism can bring balance among environment, local community, and economy of the island areas of Bangladesh which can eventually ensure sustainability. There will be some recommendations as well as policies for enacting this new industry in the island areas in Bangladesh in the last section.

**Keywords:** Island tourism, impacts, Bangladesh tourism, development

## 1. Introduction

The development of a nation can't be at its peak until it ensures the sustainability of that situation. And the possibility of attaining such goals becomes easier for the authority when focusing on tertiary economy meaning service-based economy. Bangladesh a country with a huge potentiality to establish a service-based economy using its friendly and hospitable culture which eventually creates healthier consequences for Bangladesh in the world premises. From the economic point of view, the tourism industry alone responsible for becoming the world's biggest industry creating a wealth of 7.6 trillion U.S. dollars in 2016 through its direct, indirect, and induced involvement with different sectors such as accommodation, transportation, food, entertainment and attractions (Statista Research Department, 2018). The industry has reached to a certain stage of a nation's economy where the policymakers are considering this booming sector as an economy moving force in recent time and it can easily be measured through inspection of the generated value of 8.27 trillion U.S. dollars in 2017 worldwide (Statista Research Department, 2019). The nature of traveling and the facilities for travel have increased the tendency of frequent visits among the mass people all over the world. It has proved that the effect of any critical condition such as war, criminal activity directly affects this industry-first (Statista Research Department, 2019). The recent study of Global Data has shown that the Asian countries are becoming the choice of destination for developed nations' tourists because of the changing nature such as lower connectivity cost; easy visa policies, tourism amiable policymakers, and weak currencies allow tourists from all over the world to visit six cities out of ten in 2018 worldwide (Taylor, 2019). The diversified destinations and the improved promotional efforts by Asian countries are gradually attracting the attention of international tourists to visit different places in Asia. The discussion drives a pave for the tourism industry of Bangladesh to follow since the beautiful country has lots to share with the rest of the people of the world. Although Bangladesh is not doing its best in attracting foreign nationals, the nominal

growth of domestic tourists gives hope to the decision-makers to step forward and display the beauty of our motherland.

The travel pattern has changed among the domestic tourists of Bangladesh in recent times, leaving the traditional environment of crowded destinations through visiting the newly discovered beaches of island areas instead (Shihab, 2019). Bangladesh has its most of the beautiful islands with diversified beach areas along the side of the mighty Bay of Bengal and Padma River creating an amazing environment molded with the love of nature. The island in Bangladesh known as the “Char” or “Dwip” and the amazing islands are such as Saint Martin, Maheshkhali, Chera Dwip, Kutubdia, Nijhum Dwip, Sonadia, Manipura, Sandwip, Shahpuree, etc. (Travelmate, 2019). The global tourism pattern of seeking nature-based experience and true cultural interaction has opened up the door for the pacific island countries to establish tourism as one of the key drivers in changing economic progress through bringing financial security in employment and infrastructural movement (Everett, 2018).

The present decision of the governmental body has been showing the enlightenment in introducing island-based tourism in Bangladesh. Though the country is facing a poor number in attracting foreign tourists for a long time to visit our tourist destinations, the plans including the creation of special tourist zones taken by the authority providing options for the government as well as locals to gain enhancement in their economic bar. There are three projects are going on by the Bangladesh Economic Zone Authorities (BEZA) only in Cox’s Bazar district named as Naf tourism park, Sabrang tourism park, and Sonadia eco-tourism park and it is predicted that the projects once completed will generate 2 billion U.S. dollars with the inclusion of two hundred thousand jobs (Siddiqi, 2019).

There are several islands in Bangladesh having unique characteristics that can easily draw the attention of the tourists as the booming market is always looking for places with a calm environment. Here the island areas have that kind of potentiality to deal with such demand. The factors which are involved in transforming the island into a destination for people to visit, we need to step forward to take the advantage from established research on island tourism and get a holistic understanding in setting the best strategies as well as focusing on the existing consequences from different perspectives of tourism stakeholders.

The study is basically operated to find out the necessity of island tourism development for a country like Bangladesh through focusing on the impacts of it on different stakeholders. The further section will reveal the area of investigation of this project.

## **2. Problem Identification**

### *2.1 Study Area*

The tourism industry has been playing a key role in most of the developing nations to place their economy in the growing parameter which eventually shows them the future doings and set the goals for economic solvency with a sustainable approach. The diversified needs and tastes of growing tourism markets in developed as well as in developing countries have recognized the island areas as a tourism product. The policymakers and the researchers have always been involved in finding out the long term solution for economic prosperity in the developing nations. A prior analysis by UNWTO, suggests that the Small Island Developing Countries can avail the tourism as a driver of development which can ensure employment opportunities for male and female of any skill group, empowerment of the community, bringing economic resilience, raising awareness for environment conservation, and lastly establishment blue economies assuring the enhanced investment in the tourism value chain (UNWTO, 2014). Bangladesh has discovered mainly the two coast based destinations Cox’s Bazar and Saint Martin Island for tourism purposes. The main theme behind this study has remained confined in digging out the possibilities of establishing island-based tourism in Bangladesh and to reach the answer of it, the study has backed by the representation of impacts of the island based tourism.

### *2.2 Knowledge Scope*

To find out the sustainable solution of traditional challenges for Bangladesh such as poverty, less coordination among linked industries and employment generation can be solved through the establishment of the tourism sector as an alternative sector for economic growth (Hasan et.al, 2013). The policymakers need to be aware of the potentiality of different areas where they can incorporate the development goal. The involvement of researchers in providing the information and notifying the development gap can be regarded as an influential factor for a new sector to grow. It is not impossible to achieve the goal of vision 2021 for Bangladesh if it can utilize this undiscovered industry through setting short, mid and long term projects and allocating enough budget for the execution (Parveen, 2013). To conduct the study, the authors have developed some of the questions which will ultimately direct the necessity of island-based tourism in Bangladesh.

The findings we will achieve after analyzing the answers to the first two questions eventually lead us to a conclusion where we can easily get an understanding of the number three question.

- What are the factors that influenced island-based tourism?
- What could be the impacts of island tourism on different stakeholders?
- Why does it essential to establish island-based tourism in Bangladesh?

### 3. Methodology

Though island-based tourism has already experienced in many countries and even today giving them the best benefit out of that industry. But Bangladesh has utilized a minimum level of coastal resources for promoting tourism in these aspects. So, the study basically involved in finding out the positive impacts of established writing through different authors' observations. To conduct the study, very few articles, websites, conference papers, internet columns were identified which meet the criteria of the study purposes. The researchers first gathered information from different sources about tourism prospects in the developing nations, island-based tourism development in developing countries, impacts of island-based tourism, the necessity of island-based tourism in those areas. Then, the information which was collected through journal articles, conference papers, and website writings categorized to find out the specific data regarding the study area. The categories were involved in finding impacts from different aspects such as economic, environmental, socio-cultural, and community. Another category was developed to approach the requirement for introducing the tourism industry in island areas. The following table 1 represents the examined resources used for attaining the understanding of "Assessing the Applicability of Tourism for Islands' People in Bangladesh: A qualitative View Based on Existing Literature".

Table 1. Resources used for this study

No	Author(s)	Year	Source Name	Title
1	Andaria, K.S., Marsoedi, Arfiati, D., Hakim, L. & Soemarno	2013	Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research	Stakeholder Analysis for Coastal Tourism Development in Bangka Island, North Sulawesi Indonesia.
2	Bojanic, D. C., Warnick, R. & Musante, M.	2009	2009 ttra International Conference.	An Evaluation of the Relative Importance of Tourism for Islands.
3	Briguglio, L. & Briguglio, M.	1996	Pinter	Sustainable Tourism in the Maltese Islands.
4	Britton, S.G.	1982	Annals of Tourism Research	The Political Economy of Tourism in the Third World.
5	Craigwell, R.	2007	www.eldis.org	The importance of the tourism industry in small island developing states.
6	Diedrich, A., & Aswani, S.	2016	Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.	Exploring the potential impacts of tourism development on social and ecological change in the Solomon Islands.
7	Everett H., Simpson D. & Wayne, S.	2018	www.adb.org	Tourism in Pacific.
8	Hall, C.M.	2010	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	Island Destinations: A Natural Laboratory for Tourism: Introduction
9	Hassan, M. R., Ullah, M.M. & Chowdhury, M.S.A.	2013	World Journal of Social Sciences	Impact of Tourism in Bangladesh Economy.
10	Kennedy, R.	2018	Usatoday.com	The Effects of Tourism in the Caribbean
11	King, R.	1993	Routledge	The geographical fascination of islands.
12	Lockhart, D., Drakakis, S.D. & Schembri, J.	1993	Routledge	The development Process in Small Island states
13	Mitchell, R.E. & Reid, D.G.	2001	Annals of Tourism Research.	Community integration Island Tourism in Peru.
14	Muhlhausler, P. & Stratford, E.	1999		Speaking of Norfolk Island: from dystopia to utopia
15	Nabiha, A.K.S. & Saad, N.H.M.	2015	Problems and Perspectives in Management	Tourism planning and stakeholders' engagements: the case of Penang Island.
16	Parveen, J. A.	2013	Scientific Research Journal (SCIRJ)	Current Status of Tourism Industry in Bangladesh: An Empirical Evaluation
17	Seetanah, B.	2011	Annals of Tourism Research	ASSESSING THE DYNAMIC ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM FOR ISLAND ECONOMIES

18	Shihab, S.	2019	The financial express.com	Bangladesh's tourism: Prospects and lacunae
19	Siddiqi, R.	2019	Bangladeshmonitor.com	Three islands are set to enrich tourism attraction in BD.
20	Statista Research Department	2018	www.statista.com	Global tourism
21	Statista Research Department	2019	www.statista.com	Total international tourism receipts
22	Stone, L. & Stone T.M.	2011	Journal of Sustainable Tourism.	Community-based tourism enterprises: challenges and prospects for community participation: Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust, Botswana.
23	Stylidis, D. & Terzidou, M.	2007	Middlesex University	ISLAND TOURISM AND ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS
24	Su, M.M., Wall, G. & Wang, S.	2017	Island Studies Journal	Yujiale fishing tourism and island development in Changshan Archipelago, Changdao, China
25	Taylor, M.	2019	www.travelpulse.com	Asian tourism on the rise
26	Thetsane, R.M.	2019	Athens Journal of Tourism.	Local Community Participation in Tourism Development: The Case of Katse Villages in Lesotho.
27	Travelmate	2019	www.travelmate.com.	Top 15 islands in Bangladesh
28	UNWTO	2014	www.e-unwto.org	Tourism in Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

#### 4. Theoretical Outline

##### 4.1 Island Tourism

“Who does not love the islands? To be encircled by the ocean, lapped by the tide and concealed by palm trees and sandy outcrops of rocks and grass. How lovely! And to be safe behind the moat which separates us from our neighbors. Who doesn't feel helped by the security of an island home?” (Muhlhausler & Stratford, 1999).

From the early travelers to the present travel lovers, island areas are recognized for their natural attractions and giving people peace of mind when making a visit to those places. Island-based tourism generally regarded as one of the tourism destinations having less human-made facilities and availing an opportunity to meet nature for the visitors. Different researchers and academicians have provided their understanding of the explanation of the island tourism. From the perspective of a geographer named Marshall, for example, gives the definition of the island as: “and then there are the islands...many are microstates...vulnerable because of isolation that produces poverty and instability”. On the other hand, the academician views it in a different way. An explanation for the island as follows “most enticing form of land. The Symbol of the interminable challenge among land and water... islands propose puzzle and experience; they move and commend” (King, 1993). Another definition has established the characteristics of the island areas said ““Their appeal may relate to the very real feeling of separateness and difference, caused in part by their being physically separate...and given people's desires for the difference while in pursuit of leisure, different climates, physical environments, and culture can all be expected to further the attractiveness of islands as tourism destinations’ (Lockhart, 1993). So, the island area has the potentiality to serve different needs of the growing travel markets in spite of having a shortage of human-made facilities. Sometimes, the area of a certain destination which is shorter in size has an influential impact on the structure of tourism development of that destination (Stylidis and Terzidou, 2007).

Why do we need Island Tourism?

It has noticed that the tourism industry in recent times becomes a multi-billion industry in different countries and especially the developing nations accept this sector for their betterment in terms of economic solvency having insufficiency in the production because of minimum technological expertise (Bojanic et al., 2009). It is quite a common phenomenon for the island based countries also to rely on tourism for their foreign exchange and employment of their labor forces. That is why the tourism industry has evolved as one of the influential sectors in many islands globally and it has been replacing the production industries with services based economy (Craigwell, 2007). The inhabitants of the island areas are faced with some of the challenges for living in those places. The common problems are involved such as isolated areas, less population, smaller economy, insufficient communication, etc. One of the researchers said that “these environments are with their limited resource base, tiny domestic markets, and diseconomies of scale, poor accessibility, limited infrastructure and institutional

mechanisms, and a serious extent of reliance on outer powers (Britton, 1982). These consequences drive these areas to seek a solution and employ them in the development tide with the mainstream. Here, tourism can find a place to play the role of a catalyst to keep up their economic stability as well as ensure the sustainability of that development. Those countries having a developing status as well as enriched with a good number of small islands had experienced an increase in the number of tourist visits from 1998 to 2004 than the rest of the world (Craigwell, 2007). The present phenomena have also provided an opportunity to the undiscovered island areas to show themselves to the potential travelers. Bangladesh and its beautiful islands could be the targeted destinations for the growing market in Asia as well as worldwide if the promotion experience a right on the money situation. The economic growth of Bangladesh has set an option for its own people to experience more leisure time and island areas can be the next destination for the growing domestic tourist. The uniqueness of the destination as well as the services of that place generally represent the competitiveness of that particular place (UNWTO, 2014). The characteristics of the islands of our country place them to a point where they can ensure an advantageous situation in attracting visitors. The island areas which have already experienced the attention by the growing tourist numbers have distinctive characteristics and this situation will call for the specific necessities for the development, marketing, and promotion of those areas (Hall, 2010).

## **5. Impacts of Island Tourism Development**

The small island areas having numerous problems do not allow them to enroll them in the global development progress because of isolation and the lack of enough facilities leaves their economies in the dark. The previous sections of our study have provided evidence about the essentiality of focusing on tourism development in island areas. This section will notify the impacts of such development from a different point of view of the island's society.

### *5.1 Economic Impact*

The island areas most probably faced the fear of vulnerabilities because of the geographic characteristics of those places. Small island based developing countries (SIDC) has experienced a contribution for the development of tourism in ensuring economic resilience and it can be easily understandable through the enhancement of international tourist visit from 28 million in 2000 to 41 million in 2013 in small island developing countries(SIDC) responsible for 53 billion US dollars tourism export in 2013 (UNWTO, 2014). The tourism industry especially in the island areas of Malaysia has revealed that tourism works as an economic contributor in creating job opportunities for all types of people lived in those island areas and lifting their way of living also (Nabiha and Saad, 2015). Many Countries having island-based tourism have been earning a great amount of the economic portions from this industry. A study of panel data from 19 island economies from 1990 to 2007, suggests that the increasing number of tourists in the island areas expand private investment for the tourism infrastructure as well as the foreign direct investment can find these places as investment-friendly zones which ultimately propel the development of tourism industry alongside other social elements (Seetanah, 2011). Taking the example of the Caribbean island destinations, in 2013 the total GDP of that region is contributed by 14 percent from the tourism sector stating as high as 80 cents in every dollar income (Kennedy, 2018).

### *5.2 Socio-Cultural Impact*

The geographical formation of every island is different from one another creating unique characteristics for them. The way of living of the people in the island areas is also influenced by those characteristics. On the other hand, the cultural components of these areas reveals the behavior of that society. The local products produced in those islands areas which was only consumed by the locals once can easily get the new market because of tourism introduction transferring the food habits to the visitors whereas bringing a positive change in producing local products more (Kennedy, 2018). The discovery of tourism activities in the island areas also contributes in influencing people of those areas to refocus on the production of local crafts, and then the improvement in communication system, educational institutions, medical services and other facilities of those places ensure broader outlook of the islanders (Briguglio and Briguglio, 1996). The social point of view for island tourism development has provided evidence on the influence of tourism on the local community's behavior and their social structure (Andaria et al., 2013). The small islands in China have established an evidence for the other island based destinations as they earn money through sharing their fishing cultures as well as the products produced by the locals transfer an idea of impact of tourism development on the physical and social structure of the island communities (Su et al., 2017). It is found that the tourism industry will impact the life of the local people in some way whether the level of exposure of the local culture which actually demand for enacting majority of the people with the direct economic activities (Diedrich and Aswani, 2016).

### 5.3 Community Impact

Community integration plays a pivotal role in introducing a new sector that actually influences the traditional way of living as well as creates an impact on each elements of that society. Island tourism is also responsible for bringing changes within the community's cultures as well as their economic wellbeing. Tourism development ensures both the economic benefits through providing better jobs for all types of people from unskilled to skilled as well as venturing facilities for the local people to generate income for them, whereas the improvements in service facilities for tourists will indirectly facilitate the local people in upgrading their standard of living (Mitchell and Reid, 2001). The involvement of the local community of a destination is a prerequisite for the sustainability of that place. Tourism in the island areas helps the community to build a relationship with mainstream people which can create opportunities for them to avail of new facilities for their betterment whether it is a physical need or a self-esteem one. The employment opportunities for the locals in the island areas are basically confined within the fishing and agriculture. Here, this industry can create an opportunity for the local community to broaden its income-generating option. The benefits derive from tourism can ensure community betterment whereas the involvement of the community can help in minimizing negative impacts that can be originated through tourism activities (Thetsane, 2019). The society in such type of environment can avail the opportunity to provide their women job facilities allowing them to participate in the development journey and this scenario has drawn the attention in the Caribbean where only the hotel and restaurant sector provide around 43% to 63% jobs (UNWTO, 2014). In order to ensure the benefits of the community, they should have to engage themselves in the management, decision making, and tourist management activities (Stone and Stone, 2011).

### 5.4 Environmental Impact

In most countries, the governmental body as the authority of the state is now looking for such growth strategy which can ensure viability as well as sustainability at the same time. To achieve such objective tourism can be evolved as an essential tool for the policymakers. In the island areas which are basically regarded as a vulnerable place where the concentration is given at a certain level so that the development process can contribute to that place for a long time. Island tourism is one kind of responsible tourism in a sense where it considers all the available stakeholders and measures the impact of each component during the development process. The blue economy and the growth of this sector can be obtained through the establishment of island tourism where presenting natural resources and services can be used to generate income while ensuring the protection of the environment with the improved financial status of those regions (UNWTO, 2014). The development of tourism in the ocean area ensures the investment in green economies which can be attained through establishing eco-friendly facilities. And this development planning is far better than any other production process establishment in the island areas. The challenges in climate issues can also be addressed through the promotion of nature-based travel experience rather than places where most of the facilities demanded huge infrastructural requirements. Though most of the studies have shown the impact of tourism on the environment mainly negative. But the use of island areas for tourism expansion as an example, it increases the awareness of conservation of the natural resources to ensure the sustainability of the destinations.

## 6. Recommendations

The early developments of tourism in island areas that have presented in different works of researchers find out the shortages and discrepancies in terms of smooth operation. Another thing which is important for all the stakeholders to ensure benefits through tourism activities in island areas. The followings are basic recommendations that have been given on the basis of the observation of tourism developments in various island areas:

- The authority should have to establish a dedicated department within the government to run the development programs in island areas.
- To educate about the industry and the conservation of the environment in those vulnerable areas, NGOs should have to coordinate with the regional authority.
- The participation of the community should have to be ensured from the planning to the decision making process.
- The public and private coordination should have to be bought to ensure the infrastructural development of island areas.
- There should have to be some programs for living during the offseason for the islanders.
- Governmental supports should have to be ensured for the islanders to commence their own ventures.

Apart from these, there will be certain situations where the decision-making process must have to go through a participatory environment. And this will eventually ensures the benefits of the ultimate objectives of different stakeholders.

## 7. Conclusion

The current study tried to present the ideas of island tourism and it has also revealed the impacts on different stakeholders. Though tourism is not that much booming in our country especially the international tourists. So, this study has opened up an option for the policymakers as well as the researchers to conduct empirical studies to see the exact situation on the field to project tourism development through islands. To investigate the idea of island tourism, we mostly focused on those island destinations which have already experienced a good receipt from their activities. And this study tried to specify the changes that may happen in the future if this industry opens up. The review of all the established literature on this topic remains impossible and many of them could not meet the criteria of the researcher's interest in observation. The development of island tourism in different areas and their returns can be measured in further study to ensure the applicability of such industry for places having the same potentiality.

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