

Challenges of Marine Tourism in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Marine tourism is different from the conventional tourism concept which is based on ocean, sea, or coastal regions of a country. Demand for marine tourism is increasing throughout the world. Bangladesh has great potential to thrive in this sector. Bangladesh has the world's longest unbroken sea beach at Cox's Bazaar and many other natural resources. Every year millions of domestic and foreign tourists visit the coastal and marine areas of Bangladesh including Cox's Bazaar, Kuakata, and beautiful islands such as St. Martin's island, Moheshkhali, Sonadia, etc. Yet the full potential of this sector remains untapped due to various challenges. In this paper, efforts have been made to explore the challenges of the marine tourism sector in Bangladesh. This study analyzed the existing marine tourism industry of Bangladesh. It was mainly an exploratory research. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire survey. Secondary data were sourced from published books, documents, reports, articles, and the internet. The collected data were analyzed with qualitative approaches. The study revealed that there are some potential barriers to gaining success in the good development of marine tourism. Lack of skilled manpower, safety and security issues, lack of infrastructures, and inadequate funding are some remarkable challenges. Based on the findings the paper suggested several recommendations for the developments of marine tourism activities in Bangladesh. This study is expected to help the policymaker, maritime educational institutes, and researchers in this domain.

Keywords: Marine Tourism, Coastal Tourism, Prospects, Challenges.

1. Introduction

Marine tourism has added a new dimension to conventional tourism and this industry is growing very fast. The 'United Nations World Tourism Organization' analyses tourism

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prospects of different countries and predicted that within the next decade aquatic tourism will play an important role in the world's tourism. As per the Economic Impact report by WTTC, the Total contribution of travel and tourism of Bangladesh was USD 9,419.3 million in 2019 which comprised 2.7% of the total GDP. The WTTC forecast that the contribution will rise to BDT 1753.1 billion by 2028. The tourism sector of Bangladesh is expanding every year, both in terms of an increasing number of tourist and travel destinations (Sarker et al., 2018). It has seen steady growth both in the numbers of international and domestic tourists over the last few years. As per UNWTO data, the number of foreign tourist arrival increased to 323,000 in 2019 from mere 126,000 tourists in 2015 (UNWTO, 2021). On average, 81.0 percent of all the international tourists arriving in Bangladesh visit Cox's Bazaar, which is one of the most desired marine tourism destinations of Bangladesh (Bangladesh bank, 2021).

Being a maritime nation, Bangladesh has enormous potential to develop marine tourism because of its long coastline, vast sea area, pristine natural beauty, and rich cultural heritage. She is also home to the world's longest sea beach, Cox's Bazar, and the largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans. She has got numerous inland water bodies and a huge sea area which has been annexed recently to it through triumph in the maritime delimitation case against its two adjacent states India and Myanmar. Now Bangladesh has a maritime boundary of 1, 18,813 sq. km. After the delimitation of maritime boundary, Bangladesh has eyed to explore the benefits of blue economy. Marine tourism is an integral part of the "Blue Economy" concept. The government of Bangladesh has also identified and highlighted the prospect of marine tourism for its potential contribution to the economic development of Bangladesh (Alam, 2019).

However, the prospect of marine tourism along the Bay of Bengal is still in its infancy. Most tourist attractions in Bangladesh's coastal and marine zones have remained mostly untapped due to certain barriers and constraints. The objective of this study is to explore the challenges of Marine Tourism in Bangladesh by analyzing the present condition of this sector. Based on the analysis of this paper, attempts have been made to suggest relevant recommendations to overcome the existing challenges.

2. Literature Review

An extensive literature review has been done to have a better understanding of the research topic. Marine tourism entails sea, ocean, and coastal area-based recreational activities such as surfing, windsurfing, fishing, scuba diving, water skiing, parasailing, snorkeling, yacht cruising, etc. Since humans are land-based creatures, some activities that occurred on land but focused on the marine environment are also included in marine tourism. This may include watching a professional surfing competition, land-

based fishing, reef walking, etc. When people come to a coastal area for taking part in different types of sea or shore-based activities then it is called activity-based marine tourism (Orams 1998).

Marine tourism is an essential driver of economic growth for many coastal and island countries (Sarker et al., 2018). (Hussain et al., 2017) identified the marine tourism sector as one of the major opportunities for the development of the Blue Economy in Bangladesh. (Chandra and Roy, 2015) discussed different aspects of tourism in Bangladesh and its economic importance. (Parveen, 2013) analyzed the contribution of the marine tourism industry to Bangladesh's economy. (Nobi and Majumder, 2019b) analyzed the benefits of coastal and marine tourism in terms of contribution to GDP, employment generation, poverty alleviation, foreign exchange earnings, socio-cultural benefits, environmental benefits, and protection, etc.

As a maritime nation, Bangladesh is rich in immense marine and coastal tourism. (Nobi and Majumder, 2019b) highlighted the coastal and marine tourist destinations along the coastal belt of the country in the southern region. The extraordinary beauty and great diversity of coastal areas in Bangladesh have made them the preferred destination for many tourists from home and abroad and made coastal and maritime tourism an important sector of this industry (Sarkar, 2018). Cruise tourism is an integral part of marine tourism. In Bangladesh, cruise tourism is in its initial stage. (Chawdhury and Islam, 2021) analyzed the current scenario of cruise tourism in Bangladesh. In his paper, he discussed different types of cruises such as Marine Cruise, River Cruise, etc. and summarized the benefits of cruise tourism in the overall marine tourism industry of Bangladesh.

(Islam, 2015) analyzed the factors that are influencing the marine tourism industry and suggested a few ways forwards for the development of sustainable tourism in Bangladesh. One of the 3 pillars of sustainability is the environment. Marine tourism has a great impact on the coastal and marine environment. A case study (Ahammed, 2010) analyzed the impact of tourism in Cox's Bazar area. (Hasan, 2009) conducted another case study focusing on the impact of increased tourism on the biodiversity of Saint Martin's Island. He also briefly discussed the regulatory regimes such as laws and policies adopted by the government of Bangladesh to conserve the biodiversity in the marine area.

(Rahman, 2017) identified the prospects of marine tourism of Bangladesh in terms of economic, environmental, social, and cultural aspects. But most of the potential for marine tourism remains unexplored. Specifically, the tourism prospect of the Bay of Bengal is still in its primary stage. (Hussain et al., 2017) addressed the absence of a strategy for well-planned marine tourism from the concerned ministry and department

of Bangladesh as a setback. (Hassan and Burns, 2014) analyzed the prevalent policy for tourism in Bangladesh. They found the present policies are not clear. They also suggested that concerned authorities should possess a great deal of the most recent socio-political and economic knowledge and global trends.

It seems that the reviewed literature has mainly focused on the potentiality and prospects of the tourism industry of Bangladesh. There is a genuine lack of comprehensive studies made solely on the challenges of marine tourism from Bangladesh's perspective. It would be beneficial to assess the challenges for the development of marine tourism in Bangladesh. Therefore, throughout the paper, it would be tried to evaluate the present condition of marine tourism in Bangladesh and explore the existing challenges of this sector.

3. Methodology

Data on marine tourism in Bangladesh is inadequate, so it will be an initial exploratory study. This study adopted qualitative approaches based on the synthesis of primary and secondary data. To collect the primary data a survey has been conducted where the data has been collected through a self-administered questionnaire (structured). The questionnaire survey aims to explore the challenges of marine tourism in Bangladesh. As there was a limited number of primary data sources purposive sampling technique has been adopted. Moreover, marine tourism is a node of interaction among humans, oceans, seas, and coasts this sampling technique can be effective in exploring the actual scenario from an intuitive approach. Initially, the population size was 30. Later through purposive sampling technique the number was cut down to 15. The target people were professionals such as government officials, policymakers, stakeholders, researchers and tourists who understand the pros and cons of this industry.

Secondary data has been collected from published research articles, journal articles, conference papers, seminar proceedings, dissertations, books, reports, newspaper articles, magazines, brochures, government websites, policy papers, and open access materials. To accumulate and sort the secondary data a software named "Harzing's Publish or Perish" has been used. The manual categorization method has been used to select the literature. Various descriptive statistical methods like numerical, graphical, and tabular techniques were used to organize and present the obtained data. Data generated from administered questionnaires were analyzed by adopting descriptive-analytical tools using google docs responses. Various tools like Microsoft Excel, Google spreadsheet, google docs were used to analyze the collected data. The analyses were used to explore the challenges and finally make relevant recommendations to flourish marine tourism in Bangladesh.

4. Background of the Study

4.1 An overview of Marine tourism in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has the world's longest-unbroken sea beach of 580 km of coastline, 200 nm exclusive economic zone, and 12 nm territorial zones. She has substantial resources including beaches, islands, and forest areas, situated all along the southern coastal belt and in the Bay of Bengal. Within this vast coastal and sea area, Bangladesh has substantial resources which made it a unique country in the world in terms of marine and coastal tourism. So far, relatively limited tourism is developed in a couple of spots including Cox's Bazar, Teknaf, and St. Martin's Island. In addition, in the western part, Sundarbans-based tourism has been flourished for the last few decades. Although little success has been achieved in coastal tourism, marine tourism has remained largely ignored.

4.2 Major marine tourism spots

Bangladesh has a long coastline extending from Teknaf to Patuakhali. The famous Cox's Bazar lies in between these two places. It is home to the world's longest unbroken sea beach (120 kilometers) which slopes down into the blue water of the Bay of Bengal. Cox's Bazar was placed 77th out of 440 natural sites in the "New Seven Natural Wonders of the World" competition in the years 2007. Cox's Bazar is recognized as the tourism capital of Bangladesh for its potential tourism activities. Swimming, driving along sea beach, riding speed boat, parasailing, a large sea aquarium named 'Radiant Fish World' are the prime attractions of Cox's Bazar. There are more than 300 hotels, motels, cottages, and rest and guest houses in Cox's Bazar. About 1.5 million tourists visited this area in 2015 and 95% of them were local tourists and 5% are foreign. Moreover, foreign tourists are also interested to visit various coastal and marine tourist spots of Bangladesh.

Besides the longest beach area, other attractive tourist places in this district are Inani Beach, Himchhari, Sonadia Island, Moheshkhali Island, Teknaf, Kutubdia Island, and Saint Martin's Island (Mamun, Hasan and Mohsinul, 2013). Teknaf lies at the southern tip of Bangladesh territory. It is 85 km away from Cox's Bazar by road. Pristine beaches, sand dunes, and lagoons are important attractions of Teknaf.

St. Martin's Island is a beautiful coral island situated 100 km away from Cox's Bazar sea beach and 9 km from Teknaf. Attractions of the island are coral reefs, coconut groves, sea crabs, turtle shells and pearls, etc. Ministry of Environment and Forest

recently declared this island an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) and restricted massive tourist use.

Sonadia is a crescent-shaped island about 7 km northwest of Cox's Bazar. The area of the island is about 9 sq. km. Sandy western coast, dry fish processing, and colonies of red crab are the main attractions of the island. In the winter season, a great number of migrating birds come here.

The Sundarbans, which is the largest mangrove forest in the world and one of the UNESCO world heritage sites, is situated in the Khulna Division. Khulna has two other important coastal and marine tourist spots; Katka Beach and Dublar Char. The Kuakata sea beach which is locally known as Shagor Konnya (Daughter of Ocean) is located in the Barisal Division.

Two of the major marine tourist attractions of Chittagong are The Parki Sea Beach and Patenga Beach. There are also some potential tourist attractions in Chittagong such as Kattoli, Bashbaria, Guliakhali, Bashkhali Beaches (Nobi and Majumder, 2019a). Islands such as Monpura, Nijhum Dwip, Char Kukri Mukri, Sandwip also are marine tourism destinations (BPC, 2021). Also, 75 outer islands could be potential tourist spots (Alam, 2019). Intending to attract foreign tourists, Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA, 2021) has taken an initiative to build up 03 exclusive tourism zone in the coastal zone of Bangladesh, namely Sabrang Tourism Park, Naf Tourism Park, and Sonadia Eco-Tourism Park, etc.

Table 1: Major marine tourism spots and activities (Mamun, Hasan and Mohsinul, 2013) (Nobi and Majumder 2019a)

Division	Marine tourism spots	Marine tourism activities
Chittagong	Cox's Bazar Beach, Himchori And Inani Beach, Parki Beach, Patenga Beach, St. Martin's Island, Maheshkhali Island, Sonadia Island, Hatiya Island, Sandwip Island, Nijhum Dwip, Teknaf	Sightseeing, surfing, fishing, trekking, hiking, swimming, festivals, local handicrafts, shopping, seafood, SCUBA diving, snorkeling, boat cruising
Khulna	Sundarbans mangrove forests, Katka and Dublar Char	Boat cruising, sightseeing, fishing, swimming, seafood
Barisal	Kuakata Sea Beach, Manpura Island, Char Kukri Mukri	Sightseeing, festivals, local handicrafts, shopping, fishing, swimming, seafood

4.3 Major marine tourism activities

The most common marine tourism activities in Bangladesh are nature sightseeing and beach-based recreation. There is a lack of diversification in marine tourism activities and products. Along with sightseeing tourists can also experience horse riding, beach volleyball, speedboat riding, parasailing, surfing SCUBA diving, snorkeling, boat cruising, etc. as well as local handicrafts/souvenir shopping in the local market and experiencing seafood. Tourists can also enjoy various water sports such as surfing, swimming, yachting, boating, diving, fishing, snorkeling, hiking, trekking, etc.

Cruise tourism is another integral part of marine tourism (Hussain, Failler, and Sarker, 2019). At present only, river cruising is available in the Sundarbans and few coastal passenger ships carry passengers from Teknaf to Saint Martin's Island. However, in 2017, US-based international luxury cruise line "Silversea" made trips to Sundarbans and Maheshkhali island using sea routes along the Bay of Bengal. These trips have unveiled another dimension in the country's marine tourism sector (Mahmud, 2018).

Table 2: Cruise transports in Bangladesh (Helal, 2020)

Name of Cruise Transports	Capacity	River Circuits	No. of Units
Day Cruising Ship	100-500 seating	Cox's Bazar, Dhaka	13
Day Cruising Vessel	40-100 seating	Dhaka	10
Overnight Cruising Vessel	20-70 sleeping	Sundarbans, Dhaka	50
Engine Boat for short destination cruise	10-30 seating	Mongla, Rangamati, Bandarban, Cox's bazar, Kuakata, Sylhet, Jhalokathi.	1200
Speed Boat for destination transfer	6-10 seating	Cox's Bazar, Rangamati, Mongla, Dhaka	300

Proper support and policy guidelines are required from the Government to exploit the full potential of the marine tourism sector in Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh has taken several projects in the coastal regions such as extension of Cox's Bazar Airport, establishment of Dohazari-Cox's Bazar Rail Line, Tunnel in the Karnaphuly river, exclusive tourism zone in Sabrang, Naf and Ecotourism Park in

Sonadia, etc. Once the projects have been completed, these will contribute to expanding and flourishing the marine tourism industry of Bangladesh.

5. Findings and discussions

Despite the massive prospects, there lie several challenges which are causing hindrance to the development of marine tourism in Bangladesh. After analyzing the primary data obtained from the survey and the secondary data from the existing literature the following challenges have been identified;

Existing Challenges of Marine Tourism in Bangladesh:

5.1 Lack of Marine Tourism based activities

The respondents stated that sightseeing, swimming, shopping, and dining on seafood are common marine tourism activities in Bangladesh. All the respondents agreed that marine tourism-based activities in Bangladesh are insufficient. Respondent R4 mentioned Except Cox's Bazar, other prospective destinations offer very few recreational activities and services for the tourists. Post-evening activities are almost non-existent in most places. The majority of the respondents mentioned that because of the overall cultural and religious barriers in Bangladesh, there are hardly any bars or nightclubs for tourist enjoyment, even for foreign tourists. There are very few arrangements like open-air musical concerts, laser shows, indigenous cultural shows, or movie shows on the beaches or open spaces.

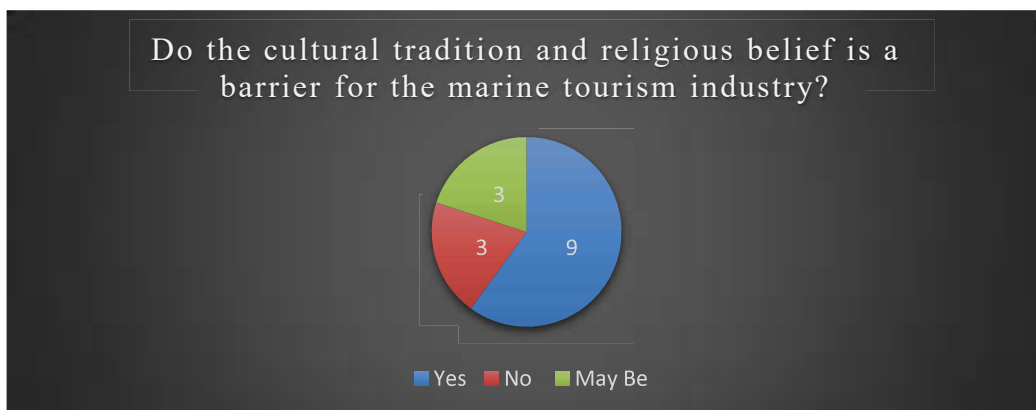


Figure 1: Impact of Cultural tradition and religious barrier.

5.2 Safety and Security issues

According to the primary data, the safety and security arrangement in the beach area is inadequate. Currently, two rescue teams are working to provide safety to the tourist in the beach areas of Cox's Bazar. They are Yasir Life Guard (YLG) and Sea Safe Life Guard Services (SSLGS). Respondents from these 2 institutes answered that from 2015-2016 Yasir Life Guard rescued 76 dead bodies and 1200 persons alive. Whereas Sea Safe Life Guard Services rescued 52 dead bodies and 226 persons alive (Figure 02).

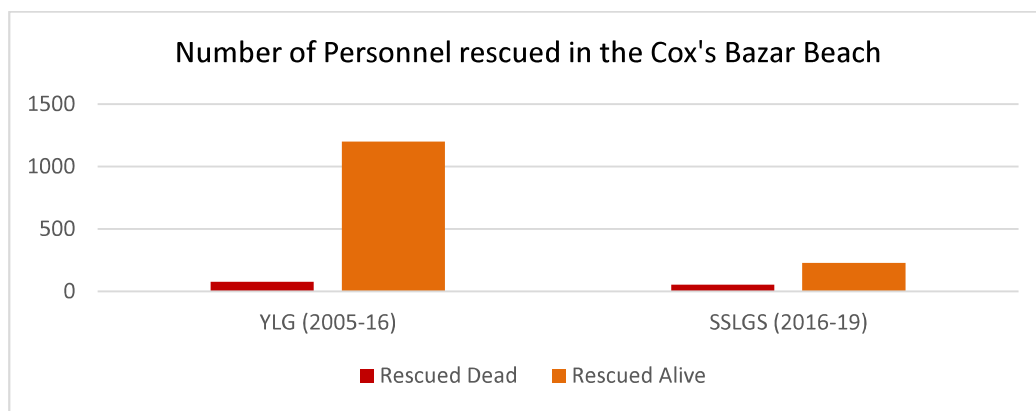


Figure 2: Number of personnel rescued in Cox's Bazar beach by two lifeguards providing services.

Most of the respondents agreed that the shortage of lifeguards in the safety of thousands of tourists in the beach area is a big challenge. Moreover, the rescue personnel is not well trained as well as they are not well equipped with modern safety devices. There is no medical team to respond to any medical emergency. Few respondents stated safety and security issues become a great concern in most of the places after the sunset. Touts, frauds, robbers, thieves, and pickpockets are very common in most tourist spots. One of the respondents stated the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar area are also involved in such criminal activities. This means, through the night the tourists are mostly confined to their rooms which can be monotonous and may lead to loss of interest for future visits.

5.3 Absence of exclusive zone for tourists

Local people are not habituated with different beach activities such as sunbath, beach volleyball, and drinking in open spaces. When any western tourist plans his/her holiday destination, these activities often remain very high on their consideration. Most of the respondents mentioned that there is no 'Exclusive Zone' on the beach where foreign

tourists can enjoy such activities without any disturbance. They also agreed to the establishment of such exclusive tourist zones. But two respondents disagreed with this and stated this may have a bad impact on the native people.

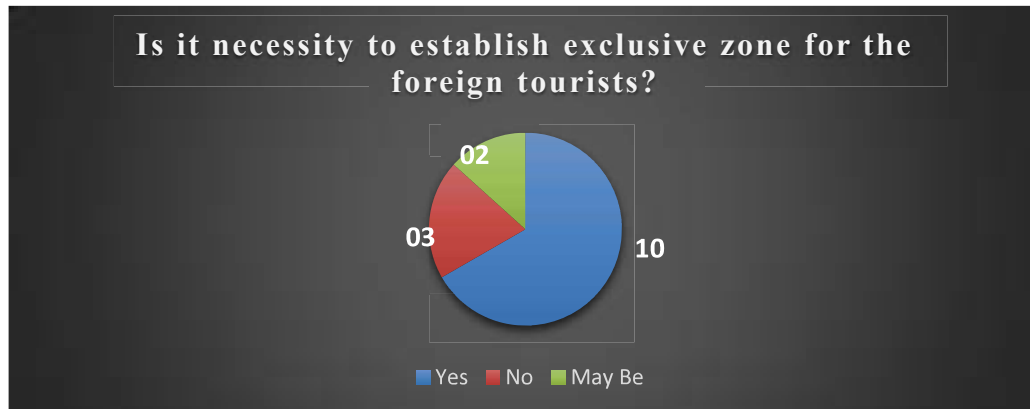


Figure 3: Necessity of exclusive zone for foreign tourists in the beach area.

5.4 Lack of digital promotional activities

Because of the COVID 19 pandemic, the number of tourists has been declined to a large extent. Steps need to be taken to attract more tourists as the restrictions on traveling have been uplifted. But the respondents affiliated with the tourism industry mentioned that there is a lack of government-level initiative to promote and brand the country as a tourist-friendly one in the electronic and print media. There have been no major advertisements or campaigns outside of Bangladesh to highlight the vast potential and opportunities of tourism to foreign tourists. The respondents informed that websites or social media channels of the governmental or private tourism organizations are not well maintained and not regularly updated with attractive features. As a result, Foreigners have little accessibility to the country's tourism information which hampers the prospects of marine tourism.

5.5 Underdeveloped tourism infrastructure and lack of skilled human resources

When the question is asked about the infrastructure and skilled human resources, the interviewees answered that there is a serious lack of tourism infrastructure like world-class hotels, resorts, restaurants, etc. to serve the high-end foreign tourists. Except for Cox's Bazar, there is no 5-star hotel available in other tourist destinations located in the coastal areas. BPC has a few motels but it is not adequate to meet the tourist's demands. Moreover, the participants informed that there is a lack of skilled manpower in the

hospitality sector to serve the foreign tourists efficiently. The lack of efficient and well-trained hotel management, tour operators, operators, and trainers for marine-based sporting activities hinders the progress of the marine tourism sector in Bangladesh.

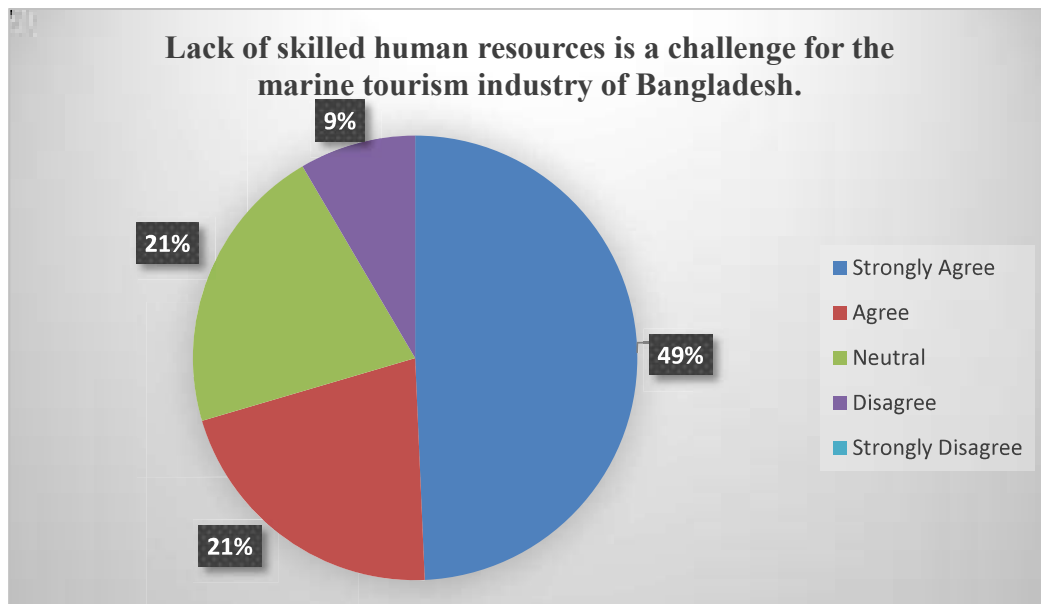


Figure 4: Lack of skilled human resources.

5.6 Lack of Budget

From 2009 to 2014 the budgetary allocation for Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry in the national budget was also very scanty (Figure 03). But the scenario started to improve after the declaration of the year 2016 as the “Tourism Year”(Chandra and Roy, 2015). Later in the budget of the fiscal year 2017-18, BDT 687 crore was proposed for the Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry which is merely 0.17% of the entire budget (Nobi and Majumder, 2019b). The respondents agreed that, with these limited resources and funds, it is very difficult to improve the tourism sector.

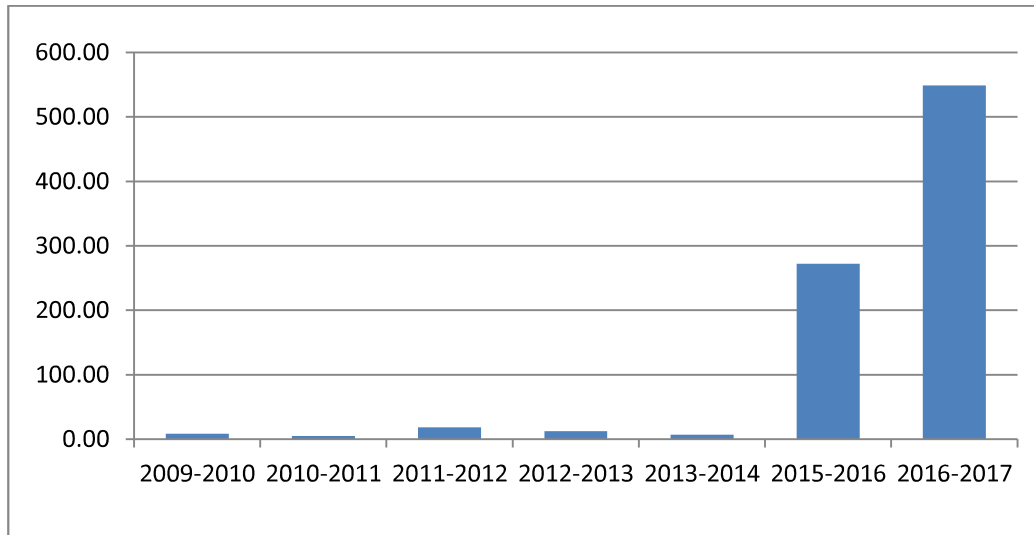


Figure 5: National budget allocation for to urism in different years.

5.7 Lack of environmental awareness

The main challenges for marine tourism are the preservation of the sea and marine resources through conserving the marine ecosystems and reducing marine pollution (Bhuiyan et al., 2020). Because of the unawareness of the local people and the tourists, the biodiversity of the marine ecosystem is under immense danger. A study reveals that around 67 percent of corals of Saint Martin's Island have been bleached to death and the rest are likely to be damaged if pollution and non-regulated navigation continues (Chowdhury, 2016). Most of the respondents addressed unplanned tourism in the coastal and marine areas as a great threat to the coastal ecosystem. The respondents stated that proper garbage or sewage management is absent in most of the coastal towns. As a result, garbage and polythene bags are often found on the roads, beaches, and waters which is a sore sight to the eyes.

Recommendations

After analyzing the existing challenges extracted from the survey several recommendations have been identified which can help the marine tourism sector of Bangladesh to flourish and progress to new heights. They are;

5.8 Introducing more tourism-based activities

Leisure and recreational activities based on marine tourism such as yachting, water-skiing, wake-boarding, boat-based fishing, wildlife watching, sea kayaking, surf-ski paddling, kite-surfing, board-sailing (windsurfing), dragon-boat paddling, stand-up-paddle boarding can be introduced. The introduction of various water sports facilities, availability of seaworthy pleasure boats, and other facilities like camping, floating hotels, and restaurants will encourage the growth of the marine tourism sector of Bangladesh (Amin et al., 2016).

5.9 Arrangement for ‘Exclusive zone’ and amusement activities at night

Entertainment zones with the inclusion of casinos, nightclubs, and bars, modern cinema theaters, spa and massage centers, Bar-B-Q facilities can be established. A cultural night with the participation of local tribal groups with diverse and unique cultural identities can increase the variation in marine tourism activities. Open-air musical shows with local musicals bands, laser, and fireworks shows should be organized at regular intervals (Amin et al., 2016),(Hossain, Failler, and Hussain, 2017). To encourage international tourists, the government may declare some places exclusive to foreign visitors. Arrangements should be such that foreigners can enjoy their vacation without hesitating about the religious and socio-cultural barriers existing in Bangladesh.

5.10 Establishing Bangladesh as an ocean cruise destination

The government of Bangladesh as well as private tour operators need to be more proactive to attract famous cruise liners to add stops in the Bangladeshi ports. It is also necessary to locate suitable cruise ports and destinations and facilitate those with the necessary infrastructure. Bay cruise, River cruise, Offshore island cruise, and Deep sea or Ocean cruise need to be introduced in the potential cruise destinations like St. Martin’s Island, Moheshkhali island, Nijhum dwip, Sundarbans and Swatch of no ground, etc. (Hossain, Failler, and Hussain, 2017).

5.11 One-Stop Service for Tourists

One-stop service should be ensured to avoid administrative complications. Any tourists should be able to avail all required services such as tour information, online hotel booking, visa approval, immigration and customs formalities, and other necessary logistical support hassle-free (Nobi and Majumder, 2019b), (Hossain, Failler, and Hussain, 2017). On-arrival visas can be approved to more countries (Ahammed, 2010). Also, easy access to information on marine tourism-related products and services must be ensured for all interested tourists.

5.12 Branding with digital marketing

The branding of Bangladesh with the slogan 'Beautiful Bangladesh' needs to be promoted through local and international media, popular tourist-related websites, in social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Websites of Bangladesh Parjatan and other concerned organizations need to be updated, well-designed, and user friendly and contain all the necessary information (Ahammed, 2010), (Islam and Akter, 2021). 'Tourism Fair' can be arranged by the Bangladesh embassy across the world where tour operators will display marine tourism opportunities to prospective tourists.

5.13 Attracting private and foreign investment

Increased participation of the private sector is necessary to improve the marine tourism sector, both in terms of infrastructure development and providing tourism services. The government can ask the private sector to invest through the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) plan. The government can also raise funds for the development of marine tourism by issuing mutual funds and bonds in the local financial market (Nobi and Majumder, 2019b). Some of the beaches, islands, waterways, jetties can be privatized, partially or fully, to promote marine tourism.

5.14 Improving Safety and security measures

The highest priority should be given to ensuring a safe and secure environment for the tourists round the clock. The authority and competency of the 'Tourist Police' wing need to be increased. The numbers of tourist police also need to increase across the marine tourism sites. Also, regular patrolling can be increased around the Rohingya refugee camps to improve safety measures in the surrounding area. Moreover, the lifeguards at different beaches need to be trained and equipped with modern equipment. An emergency mobile medical needs to be formed to respond to any emergency within the shortest possible time.

5.15 Developing skilled manpower

The establishment of specialized academic and training centers is needed to create skilled manpower for tourism across the country (Hassan and Burns, 2014). It is recommended to expand the scope of graduation and post-graduation courses at the university level. The country's only specialized university, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University can play an important role by offering different courses at under graduation and post-graduation level. Also, they can organize different seminars, conferences, short courses, and research programs to uphold this sector.

5.16 Raising awareness

The tourists and local people need to be aware of the conservation of the marine environment and pollution prevention. This can be done by engaging them in awareness activities like campaigning, seminar, conference, etc. Laws for the protection of special marine areas should be implemented strictly to preserve the marine environment and support ecosystem services (Bhuiyan et al., 2020). The restriction should be imposed on building hotels in the name of tourism development adjacent to the beach area (Hasan et al., 2019). Proper and detailed garbage and sewage management system must be implemented to prevent environmental pollution. Unplanned littering and garbage discharges need to be penalized severely (Nobi and Majumder, 2019b).

6. Conclusion

Bangladesh is scheduled to officially become a developing country in 2026. In this case, marine tourism can play a significant role to contribute to GDP along with readymade garments (RMG) and the agricultural sector. This industry will bring solvency and economic prosperity to the national economy. The Marine Tourism sector has great potential to reduce the unemployment rate by generating new jobs.

As a maritime nation, Marine Tourism in Bangladesh has tremendous potentials along with many challenges which include fewer marine tourism-based activities, safety and security issues, absence of exclusive zone, lack of promotional activities, underdeveloped infrastructure, and human resources, lack of budget and lack of environmental awareness, etc. The prosperity of the Marine Tourism Industry in Bangladesh depends on how efficiently these challenges can be overcome. In the recommendation sector, the strategies to mitigate the existing challenges have been discussed. These strategies are expected to mitigate the existing challenges of marine tourism sector of Bangladesh and contribute to flourish this industry.

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