

Socio-Economic Culture and Tourism: A Case Study on Saint Martin Island of Bangladesh

Tasmina Chowdhury Tania

Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Bangladesh

tasmina-bus@sust.edu

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ABSTRACTS

Tourism is relevant for sustainable development and environment rehabilitation in areas with cultural value. The present condition of tourism industry and the role of tourism in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh are also very meager. In the study, questionnaire survey and other kinds of methods are used to find out the real impacts and delinquent of tourism sector based on socio-economic culture, particularly in Saint Martin's Island. The locality of the island can protect the biodiversity by increasing the literacy rate and natural awareness. Though tourism facilities are now a bit better than the previous years, the pace of development facilities is not up to mark considering sustainable tourism. Still there is time to save the biodiversity and thereby improve the sector; otherwise it will be too late.

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INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh, Saint Martine is top famous tourist attractions. With its beautiful natural vistas, clear sea water, and coral colonies, this island has become a popular tourist destination. It is the only place in Bangladesh where coral colonies may be discovered due to its unique climatic and biological circumstances (Islam & Thompson, 2010). Echtner and Richie (1993) revealed that destination images are correlated with various tangible and intangible attributes or functional and psychological features. These attributes can further be defined as the tangible features of a place that can be directly observed or measured. A tourism destination is also evaluated by the socio-economic culture of a locality. Tomasscik (1997) described the island was covered with rainforest with an abundance of teak when it was first inhabited in the 1880s. The village was reliant on teak timber extraction, with the first wave of destruction of the natural forest taking place in the 1920s for export to Burma for house and boat construction. Later on, fishing and farming were popular occupations. Due to population pressure, rising numbers of towns and infrastructures, and salt incursions onto agricultural land, the current state of agricultural techniques, arable land, and food production is deteriorating (BOBLME, 2015).

The Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), the country's official tourist agency, was founded in 1973 with the goal of building tourism infrastructure and marketing tourism goods, and it has helped to give our country a positive image. Despite the fact that the number of visitors arriving in Bangladesh is at a reasonable level, Bangladesh has not been able to fully profit from the tourism sector to the extent that it is capable of particular areas (Islam, 2009). The island of Saint Martin is a promising location for Bangladesh's tourist sector to grow.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism provides possibilities for many classes of people to find work, therefore helping to the reduction of poverty in developing nations. Directly through hotels, restaurants, transportation, and souvenir sales, tourism creates jobs, and indirectly through the supply of

products and services required by tourist-related businesses. Furthermore, tourism may encourage local governments to invest in infrastructure and contribute significantly to a country's Balance of Payments (BOP). As a result, tourism is a major engine for economic growth of Bangladesh (Islam, 2009). The tourism industry has always been in crucial like social, economic and biodiversity also some major factors. Regardless of the nature of the tool used to manage tourism, the authentic cultures and potential destination and community must be maintained in order to preserve the regional identity of a tourist destination (Tasci, et al. 2004).

Saarinen (2006) revealed that the attraction of international a tourist depends on a number of factors which is influenced by beautiful landscape, inspiring tourist experience, support from the locality and sustainability. The notion of tourist carrying capacity arises from the belief that tourism may expand in a location without inflicting irreversible damage to the local system. As a result, this notion is critical in tourist planning, which attempts to build sustainable tourism based on unique culture of a locality. (Hasan et.al. 1014). The unique solitary coral-bearing island is Saint Martine's Island in Bangladesh. On the other hand, Mess tourism has proven harmful to the health of this unique environment. We are on the approach of destroying the sole coral-bearing island in the world. Unless visitors to Saint Martine's Island adopt environmentally responsible behavior quickly, the island's unique biodiversity will continue to deteriorate. These ecological responsibilities are also backed by the existing community of the particular locality (Islam & Thompson, 2010).

This socioeconomic research comes at a time when a Marine Protected Area (MPA) is needed as a conservation strategy in this island area. It was acknowledged that massive government and non-governmental initiatives had failed to protect and conserve this biodiversity (BOBLME, 2015).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To understand the socio-economic culture of the island.
- To identify contemporary scenario of tourism prevailing the cultural aspect of the island.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study is the outcome of both primary and secondary data. These data contribute a vibrant idea about the socio-economic culture and tourism in Saint Martin.

Primary Data: Primary data for the study is collected through interviewing with structured questionnaire and other techniques including observation, formal meeting, focused group discussion and informal discussion in the year 2016.

Questionnaire: Sets of questionnaire are prepared keeping in view the objective of the study. The field data of Saint Martine is prepared from total 300 (190 male and 110 female respondents) and correspondents are more than eighteen years of old.

Secondary Data: The other source of information for the study is the secondary data. For collecting secondary data are internet and gone through research articles, published materials etc.

AN OVERVIEW OF SAINT MARTINE ISLAND

Saint Martin is a tiny interior island in the Bay of Bengal, located on Bangladesh's southernmost tip and disjointed from the inland by a 9-kilometer-wide strait. The detachment between the island and Teknaf (the base land's tip) is approximately 34 kilometers. In 1926, the British government's District Collector, Mr. Martin, registered this island as a community, and it was given the name "Saint Martin's Island." Local name of the island is "Narikel Jinjira",

translated from Bangla, meaning “Coconut Island”. "Chhera Dhip" is the name given to the northern part of the island. This section of the island is frequently separated from the rest of the island by high tide. It is also known as southern landmark of the country.

The island of Saint Martin is rich in marine and terrestrial resources that are important to world biodiversity. The only coral island of Bangladesh having sea turtles, seaweeds, rare species red crab can able to attract the world tourists. During the tourist season, which runs from October to March, about four thousand tourists visit such small island per day. Saint Martin acts as significant role through tourism in the economy of our country.

A total of 234 fish species have been identified in the coastal waters of Saint Martin's Island, with 16 of these being freshwater species, 89 of the fish species are coral-related.

Damsel, Parrot, Surgeon Groupers, Snappers, Emperors, and Butterfly fish are most common coral or reef-associated fish. The largest and beautiful molluse is found in this island.

Population

In the Saint Martin's Island area, there are almost 7,000 individuals, with a slightly larger male population than female population. (BBS, 2012). It would appear from the data of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Inside Transportation System

The single metalled road on Saint Martin is located in the centre of the island, and it is just 1.72 kilometers long. There are some Rickshaws, Rickshaw-vans are available. These vehicles provide transport facilities to the tourists. Walking is the primary mode of communication on this island for this reason. In most cases, they love walking in the sea beach. One can visit ‘Chhera Dip’ on foot. The major cause of direct physical harm to sub-tidal behaviors is the development of buildings and infrastructure. For the consequence of jetty, breakwater, and maritime development, current patterns have been changed.

Saint Martin at a glance

- Distance from Taknaf to Saint Martin Island- 34 km with an area of 12 square km
- Area of “Chhera Dip”- 5 square km
- Union parishad- 1, with a population of 5800 persons.
- Number of houses- 6703 people belonging 1169 families (BOBLM,2015).
- Metalled road- 4 km and non metalled road- 4 km
- Number of 3 Primary School, 1 High School, more than 3 Kawmi madrasha and Forkania madrasha.
- Mosque- more than 15 (temporary + permanent)
- Hospital-1
- Bazar/Market-1 Bazar adjacent near Jetty Ghat of the island.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS (BASED ON SURVEY REPORT)

Present Status

Education

Since the inception of habitation of human being they are interested on Madrasha education. However, general education started its official Journey through establishment of primary school in 1948. Other primary educational institutions in the island are NGO cum Primary Schools. Bangladesh Open University launched the SSC and HSC programs in 2014. This island has a relatively low literacy rate.

They are inclined to Madrasha education only but that is also limited up to “Quranic” education. Most of the population is not aware of formal education where some have crossed primary level (class V) only. A few of them have crossed secondary level (class X) and beyond secondary level of education.

Occupation

Most of the inhabitants of Saint Martin’s Island are mainly fishermen. Collecting fishes are their prime job. They usually collect around 10 thousand tons of fish in the dry season. Fishes are also collected using pulling nets, flying nets and fishhooks. But proper value cannot be received due to lack of proper collection, storage, supply and sophisticated processing system. A commercial fisherman's average daily earning is Bangladeshi Taka 500 (BOBLME, 2015).

Female members always prefer to stay in the house as a housewife. They prefer “Parda” system very much. They think that only the male members are responsible for their earnings and they don’t have any role in it. Some female members however help their husbands in the process of drying fishes which is also within their own premises. Major portion of the population is fisherman or business man and rest are boatman, farmers and others.

Agricultural Sector

Agriculture, particularly the removal of stony terrain for agriculture and the filling in of lagoons, is causing continuous habitat degradation. The growth of alien and hybrid species, as well as the usage of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, are additional issues for harmful activities (BOBLME, 2015). A great attraction of the island is the coconut gardens, which can be seen from a great distance from the sea. These gardens protect the houses of the locality from thunderstorm. Some kinds of agricultural items are - paddy field, onion field, screw-pine forest etc.

Religions

The religion of most of the inhabitants of this island is Islam. It is about more than 99%.

Number of family member

Though their families are normally not so big in number, they are not that much aware of “Family Planning” system. But some local NGOs are working about the particular concern.

Earning members

In Saint Martin, most of the families are combined. They have two to three earning members in a family. Very few families have four to five earning members in their family. As only the males are engaged in earning, it is not very sufficient in maintaining their joint family expenses.

Health Care

A hospital is worth overwhelming both the inhabitants of the island and the tourists. The hospital was established by foreign assistance of six corers taka in an area of 54 acres. It is enriched with various facilities like operation theatre, standard staff quarter building and power supply system with powerful large generators. The hospital was established on 9th February 2008. Eight village doctors are serving people round the clock. There are six pharmacies for selling drugs. But the equipment and manpower are not sufficient for the localities of the area. Most of the households are getting treatment from local quacks.

Vaccination

They are more conscious about vaccination for their children than themselves (which is 49% for children) and only 27% of the populations are aware of their own vaccination.

Sanitation

It is praiseworthy that they are very much alert on this point. About 75% of the population use sanitary latrine which plays a vital role in maintaining good health in their community.

Drinking water

This is also an important factor that most of the people (about 98%) use tube well water for drinking purpose which saves them from the attack of water borne diseases.

Visiting Doctor

As the number of qualified doctor is almost nil, so the people are much dependant on unqualified or quack doctors who cover 80% need of this area. Though there is a government hospital with one doctor, who is not available in all cases. Most of the children are born in their own houses.

Social Status

Dowry

In general, there is no binding for dowry on either side but some may prefer to present something to their daughter from their own in the wedding purpose. Most do not prefer dowry at all openly. Only a minor section prefers it but they want to keep it in secret. They named the dowry as gifts from groom's house.

Voting activity

The major portion of population goes for voting from their own preference. But few of them are conscious about the effect of their outlook.

Reading of newspapers

Most of the people can't read the daily newspaper because they are very much busy with their daily activities. Moreover, the educational status is also not up to the mark for reading newspaper.

Watching and listening TV/radio

There is a scope for watching the TV and listening to the radio in the market place only. So some group of people meet together to watch the TV or listen to the radio. The percentage of such people getting the scope of using these media is only 40%.

Situations of income (per person)

Yearly income is increasing day by day but very slowly. This dependent on the occasion of tourists' visit in this area. Though their income is good in winter season but it declines very much in the rainy season. During this season journey to the island becomes very risky as stormy weather prevails in the sea area very frequently.

IMPACTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CULTURE IN TOURISM

Community Benefit and Alleviation of Poverty

The study found that fishing provides the majority of the island's income. Other sources of income/livelihood include selling coconuts and dried fish, running a shop, and providing hotel-motel services. Fishing during the monsoon/rainy season (March-September) and tourism during

the winter (December-February) are, to some extent, seasonal financial supports that are not available all year. Furthermore, unfavorable weather conditions have been observed to have a significant impact on fishing during the monsoon season.

Small-scale tourism-related businesses such as van or Rickshaw pulling, selling coconuts, dry seafood, and so on provide off-season supplemental livelihood assistance.

As a result, tourism has the ability to provide various advantages to local communities, including health care, employment, and respect for traditional lifestyles.

In underdeveloped nations, tourism may be a useful tool for alleviating poverty without disturbing traditional lifestyles (Lincon, 2011).

Revenue of Government

Tourism expenditures and export-related products and services create revenue for the host economy and can help to promote investment in other economic sectors. For greater profits with preserving biodiversity, the government might raise income by placing a tax on popular tourist items (Islam, 2009). Encourage sustainable development, preserve local resources and promote resident's quality of life are also mentioned by Goeldner et al. (2000). To attract both foreign and domestic tourists, the infrastructures require consistent development. The adjacent countries like Sri Lanka, India, Maldives and Nepal bring significant number of tourist each year and generate large portion of money. The cordiality of the local people can improve any country's image to the tourism. The people of the island have some knowledge about tourism and that can increase their planning related to the tourism business. In future, the experience of tourist can be improved if the destination can satisfactorily meet up the tourist's visiting purpose (Baloglu, et al., 2003).

Sustainable Tourism

Approximately 3500 people visit this island every day between November and April, which is considered the peak season for domestic tourism. This little maritime island, however, does not have this much carrying capacity. There is also a frequent big ferry and engine boat service that transports visitors to the island. Furthermore, enormous volumes of unprocessed trash, including sewage from locals and tourists, are dumped into the lake (Feeroz, 2009). Moreover, a tourist hotel and resort built on the island's west shore has directly connected its sewage line to the saltwater, contaminating the ground water and negatively impacting the island's bio-diversity. Hotels are also responsible for creating a lighting hazard on the neighboring sandy beach, which was once utilized as a turtle breeding site. This island is one of Bangladesh's most appealing and vulnerable tourist attractions. In 1999 this island was declared an Environmentally Critical Area (ECA) by the Government (Abdullah, Chowdhury and Hossain, 2010).

Many studies in recent years have focused on the relevance of visitor behavior in long-term tourism growth (Crompton, 1979, Dann, 1997). As a result, the natural environment and ecosystem continue to degrade at an alarming rate. Thus, the government and municipal governments have already implemented several policies and programs. It is essential to preserve carrying capacity, limit tourism activities, and implement measures that will raise visitor awareness on Saint Martin Island.

Implementation of Marine Protected Area (MPA)

Marine Protected Areas (MPA) are increasingly widely used across the world to conserve coastal and marine ecosystems, as well as a fundamental management approach for addressing a variety of challenges that affect marine and coastal ecosystems and resources.

A coastal or offshore marine region that is managed to safeguard natural or cultural values is known as a marine area. Along with conservation aims, MPA works with policy harmonization, increasing knowledge base, institutional deficiencies at both the national and international levels,

natural resource accounting, socioeconomic security, and so on. MPAs provide effective area-based protection, which helps to sustain ecosystem health and production while also ensuring social and economic growth. MPAs can also provide advantages like as nature-based recreation and tourism, cost-benefit sharing among local communities, poverty reduction, and improved quality of life in neighboring areas (Christie et al., 2002).

It should also be highlighted that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Bangladesh Country Office conducted an extensive research for MPAs with technical assistance from Save Our Sea (BOBLME, 2015). Local leaders, hoteliers, tour operators, restaurant owners, sailors, fisherman, and farmers must all be aware of the current situation and take action. Moreover, further study is needed to create awareness based activates both national and international level.

DELINQUENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CULTURE AND TOURISM

- Tourists are transported to the island using large ferries and motor boats on a regular basis. As a result, a large amount of crude oil, plastic, and other non-biodegradable waste items are dumped in the sea around the island.
- Huge volumes of untreated commercial and household trash, including sewage from locals and visitors, are dumped into the nearby coastal sea, causing the quality of the water to steadily deteriorate.
- Tourists often harvest coral, algae, various shell types, starfish, and other marine life, disrupting the natural balance.
- Locals also harvest stone and rock on a regular basis for lime production and building, posing a danger to the island's survival.
- Collecting excess underground water for hotels and restaurants.
- Destroying trees, screw-pine forests, and mangrove forests for using as fuel.
- Cyclones, storm surges, and significant fresh water runoff during the monsoon season, in addition to the aforementioned causes. Furthermore, damaging boat attaching techniques instead of mooring buoys and the use of destructive fishing gear, particularly the use of rock weighted gill nets over inshore boulder reefs, are a major aggravation and one of the leading causes of mortality of endangered rare turtle species.
- After traveling hundreds of kilometers, they arrive to place their eggs on this island, which they believe to be a suitable nesting place. Almost every day, one or two large turtles are discovered dead in the coastal waters of Saint Martin's Island as a result of human activity.
- The last land of Bangladesh is a separate island which refers to 'Chhera dip' which is another beauty of nature. In winter, on an average 1,000-1,500 tourists go to 'Chhera dip'. But the transportation problem makes their journey more difficult.
- The ship service is available only for 4 months here. During the other months of the year tourists visit Saint Martin by boat which is very much risky.
- Lacks of family planning program, education problem, non-awareness of modern life style, decreasing of biodiversity by habitual activity are some major problems.
- Lack of specific government policy particularly for Saint Martin in respect of developing its standard infrastructure, restaurants, maintenance of prices of essential commodities up to reasonable level and biodiversity.
- Lack of awareness about eco-tourism, like lacking of infrastructure facilities for developing eco-tourism spot.

- Condition of drinking water is not satisfactory, because the water of tube well is full of iron and very salty.

RECOMMENDATION

- Mapping of detailed survey of potential sites should be done that could accommodate the three elements for successful ecotourism; benefit for local people, protection of environment and feasible ecotourism business. This mapping should also consider, management plans, zoning scheme and current land use patterns.
- Rules and regulation should be practiced through proper application of concerned act for the interest of preserving bio-diversity and to initiate environment friendly, long lasting agricultural management through preventing diseases.
- Well-planned environment friendly housing system, establishment of schools, colleges, technical institutes in sufficient number for the local inhabitants is needed. Opening of bank branch for the benefit of businessmen, tourists, and others is essential.
- Imparting training with a view to developing the skill of local people in preserving bio-diversity and increasing organizational capability of village conservation group and to stop the illegal collection of coral, snail, oyster and crab etc. is needed.
- Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) should arrange various amusement facilities like speed boat, round trip package in the deep sea, enjoying the underwater world and package trip from the near spot of Saint Martin etc. To ensure the maximum access to tourism information, it should set up tourism information and guidance centers.
- To attract more foreign/local tourists, security measures should be improved further. And necessary modern technology based facilities to minimize the losses from different coastal hazards and sea risks should be procured.
- Creation of new forests through tree plantation and conducting vigilance activities for preserving screw-pine forest and mangrove forest is needed.
- Need to supply power through generator including solar power in the island.
- To create environment friendly tourism service with the participation of local people with some local entertainment facilities for the tourists.
- To ensure proper medical facilities with qualified doctor in the hospital by providing awareness of family planning and health care for everyone.
- Arranging package tour facilities for tourists within a short time by extending cordial services from our foreign embassies worldwide.

CONCLUSION

It was tried sincerely to collect actual data, but in most of the cases it had to face troubles for searching the facts. The exact condition of all tourist spots might not be reflecting, as it had to prepare the report by visiting some of them. Problems were faced in collecting information from the uninterested persons about tourism in the island. Personal limitations might also contribute in making the study a full satisfaction.

The study highlighted the need to move the development of tourism based on socio-economic culture. There is a clear need for improvement of the existing socio-economic conditions in the island, particularly in educational sector and preserving biodiversity. Once the socio-economic culture developed than the sustainable tourism can be adopted.

Tourism development might be an essential tool for a country's economic growth (Saarinen, 2007). Tourism is one of the major development components for Bangladesh's overall sustainable development. Furthermore, the country's natural and cultural treasures have provided a plethora of attractions and adventures to appeal to a wide range of travelers. By preserving biodiversity, Govt. and other private investors should be welcomed in this sector, Saint Martin in particular. However, the socio-economic situation also influenced by sustainable tourism activities in the long run. So, strong and effective measures should be taken to modernize as well as to revise this sector immediately and to develop cultural efforts also.

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