

Sustainable Coastal and Maritime Tourism Development in Kuakata, Bangladesh: From the Perception of Tourists

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Abstract

Coastal and Maritime tourism is considered one of the most appealing types worldwide. Likewise, Bangladesh as a maritime nation has got the attention of marine tourists from home and abroad. Kuakata is familiar with Coastal and Maritime tourism in Bangladesh. From this research, it is found that kuakata is enriched with historical and cultural importance. But still, this place is not fully developed for tourism as expected. Thus, this study identifies several rich maritime tourism resources in Kuakata and on-site basic tourism facilities to meet tourists' demands. The study also suggests some development approaches for Kuakata to make it a prominent Coastal and Maritime tourism spot in Bangladesh. With the help of this research tourism stakeholders in Kuakata will be able to develop a standard and integrated maritime tourism-based infrastructure for sustainable maritime tourism operations.

Keywords: Coastal and Maritime tourism, Maritime tourism resources, Tourism facilities, Development approaches, Kuakata, Bangladesh.

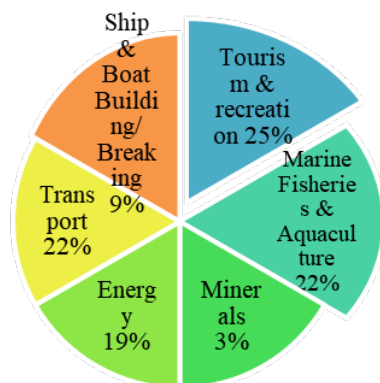
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1. Introduction

Coastal and maritime tourism is considered as one of the largest and fastest growing sectors in the Blue Economy. It is expected that, by the year of 2030, Coastal and maritime tourism will be the largest contributing sector in blue economy (Tonazzini et al., 2019). In terms of revenue generation and job creation, Coastal and maritime tourism contribute most than other sector in global economy (United Nations, 2017). According to ADB (2021) estimation, Coastal and maritime tourism will employ just about 8.5 million people around the world by 2030. Like other maritime nation, Coastal and maritime tourism also is the most important contributing sector of blue economy in Bangladesh.

Figure 1: Major Sectors of Blue economy of Bangladesh



Source: Asian Development Bank, 2021

In Bangladesh, Coastal & Maritime tourism is accounted for the highest revenue generating sector in Blue Economy comprising 25%. Subsequently Marine Fisheries & Aquaculture and Transport 22%, Minerals 3%, Energy 19%, Ship Breaking 9% (Asian Development Bank, 2021). In addition to 200 nautical miles (nm) of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and all types of living and non-living resources beneath the continental shelf up to 354 nm from the coast of Chittagong, Bangladesh possesses sovereign rights over more than 118,813 square kilometers of territorial sea in the Bay of Bengal. The Bay of Bengal's coastline regions are famous for the world's longest beach, a coral reef island, and thick mangrove woods. Bangladesh has various maritime and coastal tourism resources such as the longest attractive seashore, 710 km (approximately) diverse coastline, the unique beauty of sunrise and sunset from the fascinating Kuakata, magnificent mangrove forest, appealing islands, marine wildlife, and Swatch of No Ground in the southern part of the Bay of Bengal. These places attract the majority of the tourists' visiting around the country. Kuakata in Patuakhali District is one of the crucial coastal areas, is located in central zone of Southern region of the country. Kuakata Sea Beach often referred to locally as "Shagor Konnya (Daughter of Ocean)," has drawn attention to the area by providing visitors with an unusual perspective of the dawn and sunset from the same location. Therefore, the endeavor of this study is to discover out the most important maritime tourism resources of Kuakata, which will attracts marine tourists and identify the on-site basic tourists facilities for providing a smooth, enjoyable, and memorable tourism experience.

2. Theoretical and Contextual Background

According to the OECD's Ocean Economy Database (OECD, 2016), the economic production of the oceans in 2010 was valued at 1.5 trillion USD, or roughly 2.5% of the global gross domestic product. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2016) estimated that the oceans produce 81.5 MT of fisheries annually worldwide. The marine fishing industry supports 8% of the global population's livelihoods directly or indirectly and adds 230 billion USD to the global economy (Sumaila et al., 2011). For the transportation of global trade, oceans provide the most convenient routes (Corbett and Winebrake, 2017). Many coastal and island countries depend mostly on maritime tourism for their economic growth. As stated by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2016) almost 161 billion USD in profits come yearly from the global marine and coastal tourism. Maritime tourism represents an important component of the blue economy all over the world. In world GDP, tourism sector stands for 5% and in global employment it contributes 6%–7% (UNWTO, 2019).

Marine Tourism: Marine tourism offers tourists to enjoy sea-based activities. It includes cruising, sailing, water-based activities and sports like scuba diving, wind surfing, water skiing, wildlife watching, and so on.

Costal Tourism: Mainly beach-based and along the shore line tourism activities are considered as Coastal tourism. It includes swimming; surfing, sun bathing, beach games and other coastal recreation activities mostly take place along the shore and in the water immediately adjacent to the shoreline.

Bangladesh has the potentialities to turn the Kuakata sea beach into a hub of economic development and prosperity by utilizing its marine resources and natural beauties for tourism development. Kuakata Sea Beach has the potential to become one of Bangladesh's most sought-after destinations for maritime tourism by introducing both marine and coastal tourism. The protection of Kuakata Sea Beach and its marine resources will be enhanced through the promotion of marine tourism, which aims to preserve coastal biodiversity, natural resources, and the coastal and marine environment in order to ensure their long-term sustainability. Additionally, this will contribute to the responsible and sustainable utilization of marine resources and lessens marine pollution. Marine tourism has the potential to boost local Kuakata communities' capacity development and provide job opportunities. Additionally, it guarantees that Kuakata's host communities would profit from tourism by using marine resources. Furthermore, it promotes Kuakata, Bangladesh's unique cultural history and builds local supply networks for the tourism industry. The local communities of Kuakata can reap economic, social, and environmental advantages from marine tourism.

3. Objectives

The aim of this research is to identify and evaluate potential maritime tourism resources in Kuakata, and recommend policy guidelines for sustainable development. Therefore, this study looks for answers of the following objectives to address the aim of this research.

1. To explore potential maritime tourism resources in Kuakata.
2. To develop a list including on-site basic tourism facilities based on tourists need.

3. To recommend some approaches for the sustainable development of maritime tourism in Kuakata.

4. Methodology

This research is based on qualitative research approach. Researchers of tourism are finding that qualitative research methods are becoming more suitable for exploring personal feelings, valuable insights, and perceptions of people, for investigating the consequences of tourism on them (Walle, 1997:534). Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interview and open-ended group discussion. Also from a wide variety of sources, secondary data and information were collected for this research. In order to gather secondary data, a thorough online search was done to find literature on coastal and marine resources, as well as the challenges and limitations associated with their management in the context of Bangladesh. Also, through personal interactions with the governmental authorities, pertinent policy documents and reports were obtained.

4.1 Breakdown: Mostly tourists from Kuakata (50 people) were taken part in data collection process. Their personal observations, thoughts, and valuable insights about Kuakata as a marine tourism destination, were gathered for further thematic analysis. Most of the discussions were led in Bengali language. Participants were provided extremely thriving data to find out the major maritime resources from tourists viewpoint and their demand for on-site tourist facilities.

Received data analyzed manually through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used to presume the meaning of gathered data. In this process themes were discovered in text. These themes hold meaningful observation into data and quantified for pairing with sentiment analysis when needed. Thematic analysis helps to capture themes in terms of categories or codes from gathered data (Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke, 2006).

4.2 The Procession of Questioning in the Semi-structured Interviews:

During the data collection process for the study semi-structured interviews (see the Table- 01) had been arranged with tourists from Kuakata with their kind consent. All the participants took part willingly and shared their knowledgeable opinion. The interview session was divided into two parts and average length of the interview was 8-10 minutes.

The 1st part of the interview was about the potential maritime tourism attractions of Kuakata. In this session tourists contributed with their experience after visiting Kuakata. They recommend some potential maritime tourism activities, which can be developed in Kuakata for attracting tourists from home and abroad.

The 2nd part of the interview was about questioning about the tourism related services they need mostly for their smooth and satisfied tourist experience.

Table 1 Sample of the semi-structured interview

Part A	a. What kind of coastal and maritime tourism activities you did in Kuakata?
	b. Suggest some maritime tourism activities you want to experience in Kuakata.
Part B	c. During your visit in Kuakata did you find any basic tourism facilities?
	d. Suggest some important on-site basic tourism facilities for the development of Kuakata based on your personal understanding.

Source: Constructed by the authors

4.3 Exploration the Tourist’s Viewpoint for the Development of Coastal and Maritime Tourism in Kuakata:

Tourists often visited Kuakata for enjoying the sea-beach and exploring other tourist’s spots. During their visiting period they felt the absence of different tourist facilities, which are very necessary for a tourist (see the Table-04). Therefore, tourists share their practical opinion and it helps researchers to sketch the themes for the

further study (Brinkmann, 2014). Also tourists shared their thoughts about what kind of maritime tourism resources (see the table-03) they can enjoy in Kuakata. As per tourist's opinion these maritime tourism resources will increase the number of tourists in Kuakata and add more satisfaction during their tour.

5. An Abridgment of Kuakata: A New Horizon for Maritime Tourism Destination

Kuakata is one of the most renowned beaches in Bangladesh. Kuakata welcome people with its panoramic eye-shooting sandy sea beach, which is located southern part of Bangladesh. Kuakata, sometimes referred to as Sagar Kannya, or "Daughter of the Sea," is a well-known beach in southwest Bangladesh that ranks second in popularity, after Cox's Bazar. Kuakata, which is 30 km long and 3 km wide, is renowned for its exceptional natural beauty since it provides unhindered views of the Bay of Bengal at sunrise and sunset. The region, which is located 320 kilometers from Dhaka and 70 kilometers from Patuakhali, offers a rare blend of beautiful skies, sandy beaches, and evergreen trees. Its century-old Buddhist temple and the Rakhine tribal village both serve as important cultural reminders of its rich past.

The 11-mile long sandy Kuakata beach offers breathtaking views of the sunrise and sunset. Kuakata is a major hub for marine-based tourism. The white sand beach of Kuakata Sea Beach is connected to the Bay of Bengal's water by the baseline. The enormous increase in water in the Bay of Bangle creates the illusion that the sea has touched the sky. Kuakata has a typical tropical climate with heavy rainfall all year round. For most people in this region, January is the coldest month of the year and May is the warmest.

However, the ecosystems of Kuakata are seriously threatened by climate change. Increased salinity, rising sea levels, and warmer temperatures are predicted to cause disruptions in the area. Current habitats could be submerged by a one-meter rise in sea level, and more salt-tolerant plant species like Gewa and Keora would replace the native species. Sidr and Aila are two examples of cyclones that worsen habitat degradation by interfering with normal regeneration and allowing invasive species to outcompete native plants.

Kuakata is full of natural beauty and there are lots of places to visit. These tourist spots are scattered all over the Kuakata and many of them offer unforgettable experiences. But most such places are relatively unknown to the rest of the world. Table-02 presents a list of some popular places that one may take interest in visiting.

Table 2: Some popular tourism destinations of Kuakata

Classification	Name of the Destination
Parks	Kuakata National Park, Kuakata Eco-park
Forests	Forest of Fatra, Forest of Gangamati, Jhau forest, Kuakata naricle bagan
Monasteries	Shima Buddhist Monastery, Mishripara Buddhist Monastery
Rakhine village	Keranipara
Chars	Lebur char, Lal- kakrar Char, sutki polli
Temples	Misri para Buddist Temple, Central Shima Buddist Temple
Others	Gangamati, sutki polli

Source: Constructed by the authors

6. Identifying Potential Maritime Tourism Resources in Kuakata

Some popular maritime tourism activities, that are currently practice in Bangladesh are surfing, scenic boat cruising, scuba diving, snorkeling, swimming etc. Nonetheless, a vast range of possible aquatic activities are conveyed by the presence of several outstanding marine tourist destinations such as boat based fishing, wildlife watching, sea kayaking, stand-up-paddle boarding, surf-ski paddling, kite-surfing, yachting, dragon-boat paddling, water-skiing, wake-boarding, board-sailing (windsurfing), (Nobi et al., 2019). Cruising along the Kuakata (Potuakhali) beach route can provide visitors with an amazing opportunity to explore the coastline and

marine landscape. In addition, Cox's Bazar, St. Martin, Teknaf, and Kuakata are among of the most well-known surfing locations in Bangladesh. The authorities of Cox's Bazar sought to establish a surfing zone in this purpose. Moreover, Bangladesh boasts two coral islands encircled by azure, transparent waters, providing great opportunity for tourists to observe aquatic biology firsthand. These two islands are St. Martin Island and Cheradwip, present numerous opportunities for the development of undersea facilities. Additionally, Kuakata Sea Beach has potential in these areas (Nobi et al., 2019).

Sports enthusiasts, organizers, and participants will be persuaded to favor leisure travel to marine tourist destinations by the expansion of marine tourism activities through marine-based sports. (Herstein & Jaffe, 2008). For Bangladesh's coastal people, recreational fishing can guarantee a higher standard of living (Mojibul et al. 2018; Hussain et al., 2019; Bhuiyan et al., 2020).

An extensive variety of maritime tourism activities need to be formed in Kuakata in order to provide enjoyable leisure activities and create re-visits intention to tourists. Additionally, Kuakata's environmental features make it possible for a wide range of recreational activities, some of which are listed below:

Table 3: Potential maritime tourism resources in Kuakata

Swimming	In Kuakata and throughout Bangladesh's marine tourism industry, swimming is one of the most popular leisure activities. But swimming in certain Bangladeshi maritime sites cannot be done soulfully because of crowds. It is therefore necessary to use carrying capacity to enhance swimming in Kuakata.
Para-sailing	Parasailing ranks as the second most popular recreational activity but it is still being experimented with and not yet added as a tourist attraction. It can allows tourists to soar over the water and capture a bird's eye perspective,
Recreational fishing	Fishing is one of the major livelihoods in Kuakata. Tourists are quite interested in buying dried fish from Kuakata. By establishing areas for recreational fishing in Kuakata may attract more visitors.
Jet-skiing	Locally it is known as “water bike” and usually tourist police use it to rescue local people or tourist, who is facing danger in Kuakata sea beach area. It is one of the most popular maritime tourism activities in all over the world. Therefore, a lot of adventure lover tourists rented it for recreational purpose.
Kite boarding	Kuakata doesn't offer such maritime tourism activity but it can be an attraction for tourists if it can be organized. These kinds of water sports require training and certificate for providers.
Sea kayaking	It is very popular in Kuakata and tourists demand for this ride is increasing rapidly.Sea kayaking offers to travel by sea kayak. The sea kayaks are made for either one or two people and are smaller and sleeker. This sport provides a steady and comfortable visit in peaceful, long-range sea water.
Cruise ship	The huge extension of the territorial water in Bay of Bengal compels an enormous opportunity to travel across water with cruise ship from Chittagong to Kuakata.
Speed boats	Sometime referred as powerboats. Tourists can make short trip by speed boats in different spots of Kuakata. For instance it can be Kuakat Beach to Crab Island. The best time in the year for speedboat riding is from the month October to March.
Sailing	Sailing is very popular as marine recreational activity. Adventure lover people love to run sailboats through the power of wind in sails and this wind power forced the boat for shift forward.
Yachting	It is considered as one of the most expensive marine recreational activity. However Kuakata isn't offering yachting to maritime tourists. Hopefully it can be worked as an attractor for local tourists as well as foreign tourists. Now a day Bangladesh is producing solar power yatch, which can make yachting more affordable to tourists and provide eco-friendly experience.
Maritime	There is a scope of developing a maritime heritage museum in Kuakata. Rakhine settlers in

heritage museum	Kuakata make it more rich culture. Constructing a maritime heritage museum can protect this history of this ethnic minority (Rakhine) group over 200 years ago.
Underwater Aquarium	it is one of the most important tourist attractions all over the world, which exhibit various aquatic creatures of under the sea. This can be built in Kuakata which will attract domestic as well as foreign tourists also.
Tidal pool	Tidal pool offers an isolated seawater area which contains much warmer water than the full sea water. This is not available in Kuakata. But this can add as attraction for tourists.
Dolphin show	This kind of show attracts many tourists in different ages. If it can be started, then it also can be ensured proper maintenance of dolphin sanctuary and raised awareness for diminishing the death toll of aquatic creatures in a eco-friendly way.
Water bungalow	These kinds of bungalows are very popular in Maldives. The water bungalows are building close to the sea shore. These are individual bungalow and connect with the mainland through a long plank walkway. Erosion can be an obstacle for making this kind of bungalow in Kuakata but it is also not impossible to build.
Marine park	Government of Bangladesh declared Kuakata National Park as a protected area for vultures, flora, and fauna. Therefore marine park can be an alternative to raise awareness regarding marine protected area among marine based stakeholders in Kuakata

Source: Developed by the authors

7. Developing On-site Basic Tourism Facilities for Tourists:

The remarkable escalation in number of tourists in Kuakata, has made it necessary to develop on-site basic tourism facilities. Like other marine destination, Kuakata is also ecologically sensitive area which can be getting in risk for tourism practices without proper tourism infrastructure. Therefore, it is necessary to develop on-site basic tourism facilities for enduring tourism based operations without hampering the environment and server tourists as per their needs.

Table-04 on-site basic tourism facilities

a.	Creating exclusive tourist service zone in Kuakata. It will include wash rooms, resting facilities including space for prayer, breast feeding corner, locker facility, magazines and newspaper stand, restaurants, shopping stalls, information booth, and small play ground for kids.
b.	Creating a designated space for setting up tents and temporary shelters for backpacker tourists.
c.	Establishing one or more central shopping centers in Kuakata for selling local handicrafts, souvenir items and local crafts. The local people of Kuakata should be trained up to produce diversified quality and standard artifacts. Setting up ethnic shopping centers at every tourist destination to provide handicrafts to both local and international tourists.
d.	Establishing tourist information center in Kuakata for providing quality information about the best things to do in the spot, best places to stay and eat, events nearby in the area, safety information, free map, guide book and weather forecast and helping in itinerary plan.
e.	Establishing public toilet and vending machine for sanitary napkin facilities in different places of Kuakata.
f.	Establishing CCTV in tourist spots of Kuakata for safety and security of tourists.
g.	Establishing location map and sign board in Kuakata for direction in tourist spots.
h.	Developing a specific tourist guide book (including tourist site map, information, history regarding the spots etc.) for every tourist spots in Kuakata.
i.	Establishing locker facilities in Kuakata sea beach area for tourists. So they can keep their valuable things in locker while enjoying the sea.

8. Recommendations for the Development of Kuakata as Maritime Tourism Destination

For the modernization of Kuakata as a tourism destination, several approaches should be taken in action. Briefly described in below section-

1. Conservation of bio-diversity: for preserving marine biodiversity, tour operators, tour guides, and tourist's organizations should avoid intrusion into protected areas to aquatic animals or other marine things. They should maintain a safe distance from the breeding place of marine mammals and Low noise propellers should be used in the wildlife watching boats and engine should be shut off while watching the marine mammals as louder sound of engine can create stress and scare the whales.
2. Development of infrastructure: Port facilities should be developed for jetties, fenders, anchoring and maintenance for the cruise ships. Proper waste management plans should be developed for safely collecting; separating and processing of onboard waste and offload them to the approved waste disposal area. Provide minimal level of toilets, rubbish bins and car parking facilities near sea beach to avoid environmental pollution.
3. Behavioral insight for sustainable tourism: Green practices (e.g. Implementing onboard recycling and composting practices, encouraging the use of refillable water bottles and drink containers, and promoting the use of reusable shopping bags.) must be developed for cruise tourism.
4. One stop service for smart tourism: This kind of service center should be established for removing tourists hassle. This will guide tourists for visiting the area and take decisions about where to go, how to go, where to stay, and so on.
5. Establish a suitable fare rate for transport: Usually tourists face difficulties to set a fare rate during their travel for visiting different tourist spots. It will be very convenient if a fixed rate can be set for per mile in case of renting any transport. Both the owner of the transport and tourists will get benefit from it. Moreover tourists can enjoy a hassle free travel.

9. Conclusion

Kuakata as one of the familiar marine tourism spots of Bangladesh, are receiving huge demand from domestic tourists. Recently Padma Bridge and Payra Bridge add easy accessibility to Kuakata which makes this place more popular to tourists. Now, the most important facts are to ensure the sustainable development for comfortable tourists visit and achieving long term benefits from this marine tourism spot. In contrast, it is need to be ensured that the marine ecosystem should be maintained properly for achieving the long term success of maritime tourism (Roy and Roy, 2015).

This study has exposed the major maritime tourism resources in Kuakata as well as the facilities are demanded by the tourists when they are visiting the site. The necessity of on-site basic tourist's facilities should be given importance for the maritime tourism development in Kuakata. Because this ensure the best tourism experience to tourists and make re-visit intention as well. This study also suggests some modernization approaches for Kuakata, which can be adopted by the relevant authorities. The local communities of Kuakata also understand the significance of the maritime tourism resources they have. Since the involvement of local community ensures the sustainability of tourism development (Regina M. Thetsane, 2019). Local communities also get employment opportunities in on-site tourism facilities establishment and management Kuakata.

Kuakata has lots of potentials to act an significant role to boost up the economy of Bangladesh. There are a plenty of maritime tourism resources, which can be offered to tourists from home and abroad for leveling up the image of Kuakata. Consequently, Bangladesh government, tourism organizations (public and private), local administration, and relevant stakeholders should work in mutual co-operations for building Kuakata as a prominent maritime tourism site in Bangladesh.

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