

**PRESENT STATUS AND TOURISM POTENTIALITIES – A CASE STUDY IN
BAKKHALI AND ADJACENT TOURISTS SPOTS, SOUTH 24 PARGANAS, WEST
BENGAL**

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Abstract

Now a day's coastal tourism has been an important branch of entire tourism industry. In west Bengal there are many coastal tourist spots, among them Bakkhali and other surrounding spots like Frazergunj, Henry Island, Jambu dwip are important one and ecologically viable. The present work tries to seek the present status of those above mentioned places as a tourist spot and potentialities in the context of sustainable coastal tourism. As far as tourism is concerned, study on the above regions is sensitive not only in the coastal tourism sector but also in the tourism arena of entire west Bengal. Coastal tourism can offer a rich zone to evaluate the symbiotic activity of human being and ecosystem through an assessment of the nature of consumption involved. With broader concerns of sustainability in mind, this paper concentrates on the path of tourism development that lasts. In that it does not stress the health of coastal ecosystems, in terms of their ability to provide humans with the best services that are required for their continued well in the coming future.

Key words: Coastal tourism, Potentiality, Sustainable coastal tourism.

Introduction

In the South 24 Parganas district, one of the famous tourist spots is Bakkhali sea beach and some other adjacent spots, i.e.-Henry Island, Frazergunj and Jambu dwip. In spite of having other coastal tourist spots in this state like Digha , Sankarpur ,Junput Mandarmani etc ,study reveals that tourists give enough priority to Bakkhali due to its calm and quiet nature. Now a day, no tourist spot is devoid of congestion and maltreatment by reckless tourists, particularly in the third world countries. In this regard Bakkhali is comparatively been less exploited .But as far as coastal tourism is concerned ,this point of tourism and other adjacent places have enough potentiality to be a major centre of sustainable coastal tourism. This paper is an outcome of the study conducted in 2011-12.The total study has been done on the basis of tourist's response and with socio-economic condition of the place keeping in mind. Bakkhali, Henry Island, Frazergunj and Jambu Island act as a circuit or a chain of spots. Among them Bakkhali remains the centre of attraction and acts as a node. The Dampier-hodge line proves that this region (south portion of S.24 Parganas) was once covered with mangrove vegetation which is popularly known as 'Sunderban'. But now Sundarban

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has been shifted towards eastern portion due to deforestation and other irrational activities of mankind. But some residual mangrove characteristics of this region not only make it an ecologically sensitive area, but also hot spot of nature tourism apart from coastal tourism. These very features show that there are enough potentialities of ecotourism and sustainable coastal tourism practices. On the other hand the total region of the South 24 Parganas is not economically strong enough; only planning for tourism in a firm base can reinforce the region in the socio-economic upliftment. The study relates basically to the operative applied aspects of tourism. The nature and importance of the spots and the role of each is extensively explicated from the geographical viewpoint. The case-study has, of course, been brought as a touchstone for the relevance of the sustainable coastal tourism and its application. It also tries to extrapolate the current experiences of coastal tourism in its various dimensions and evolve the futuristic scenario for the sustainable coastal tourism. The authors have, in the various steps, taken meticulous care to raise searching questions, so that it can help others to explore more and more.

Significance of the Study

Coastal tourism is strong branch tourism in all over the world, whereas in India particularly in West Bengal, this branch of tourism is unfortunately neglected. In comparison to the other tourist spots, our study area is noticed to be less concentrated. Resultantly in spite of having much potentiality, the region remains backward in some aspects. So, study and researches in this field can impart awareness among people and can make a drastic change with giving momentum in the tourism industry in these concerned spots.

Database and Methodology

The entire work is based on primary as well as secondary data and information. Primary data have been collected from interactions with local people, tourists, shopkeepers, hotel owners etc. Other necessary information has been collected from a District census handbook, journals, book, research report published and unpublished and web resources have also been consulted as secondary data. The whole work has been done by descriptive as well as analytical methods. After collecting the primary data with the help of questionnaire survey with visitors at every place, the data has been analyzed and represented by the authors .So, being collected and categorized both the desk and field data have been statistically and cartographically represented.

Objectives

- To evaluate the perception, experience and expectations of tourists about the circuit/destination.
- To project the system of maintenance of various facilities created at the circuit/destination and its sustainability.
- Assessment of availability of existing infrastructure at the site.
- To identify the problems and prospects regarding the study area and to find out the role the spots in satisfying tourists need.
- To spread awareness of ecologically sustainable coastal tourism.

Geographical aspects of the Study area

- **Location:** - Bakkhali is one among the popular beaches of India, located on one of the many deltaic islands spread across southern Bengal. Coastal length of about 1.2 Km. Bakkhali (latitude 21° 35' N, longitude 88° 15' E) is situated in the lower reaches of South 24 Parganas. The location of the other adjacent spots in this circuit are – Henry island (21°34'27"N, 88°17'33"E), Frazergunj (21°34'58"N & 88°15'28"E) and Jambu dwip (21°34'42"N & 88°10'54"E).
- **Physiography:-** Southernmost point-Bakkhali, which is an open sea beach, having sand and mud flat. Gentle slope is southward. Here low elevated sand dunes and sand dune migration are seen. Within the inter-tidal zone rill-mark and ripple mark are noticed. Cliffs are not predominant here. Altitude ranges in between 2-2.8mts.
- **Drainage and water bodies:** -There is saptamukhi estuary in eastern side and Hoogly estuary in the western side. In southern portion there is open ocean where dominancy of ocean current is seen. This region has been dissected several times by inter-tidal creek, e.g.-Edward's creek, Hatalia-doania creek, Helen khal etc. There are large number of non-perennial tidal creeks and abandoned channels.
- **Climate:-**The region receives maximum rainfall in south-west monsoon. Average annual rainfall is 1600mm and summer and winter temperature is 23-37°C and 13-23°C respectively.
- **Vegetation:-**The entire length of the beach is lined with casuarinas trees. On the both sides of the creeks, mangrove type of vegetation is commonly seen. In the south-east portion and western portion open mixed and dense mixed jungle are noticeable.
- **Soil:-**In the southern beach area, soil is generally sandy and in the both flats of inner-tidal creeks, silty soil is available.

The tourism products (destination) comprise a core of facilities, amenities, perception and services fashioned to cater the needs of the tourists have generally been represented as six criteria, i.e.-

- Attraction
- Nature of tourist
- Tourist flow
- Amenities
- Access
- Nature of tourist satisfaction

Attractions

Attraction of Bakkhali:-

- The beach of Bakkhali stretches from Bakkhali to Frazergunj.
- The water of the beach appears grey, as the land slopes into the Bay of Bengal, but the land and the water are both clean.
- The beach is strong to bear cycles and cars, but some spots are soft and sinkable.
- The mangrove forest near the beaches has no tigers, but is nonetheless a tourist spot.
- A Crocodile Park, located just beside the bus stop and Bakkhali beach, and Bishhalakshmi Temple, at the end of Bakkhali main beach are other attractions of this place.
- Vendors selling local handicrafts can also be found on the beach.
- There is limited shopping in Bakkhali. One can buy Hyderabad sea shells and pearls that are sold at the small stalls by the road.
- The tourists have to be cautious about visiting there from April- October, as the beach can be rough at that time.

Attractions of Frazerganj:-

- A British named Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (1903–1908) in the early twentieth century, is credited with discovery of this place. He tried to popularise it and in recognition of his efforts a part of the town is named Frasergunj. There is a dilapidated house near the beach, which according to the locals was the one in which Fraser used to stay.
- There are Wind mills generating 1MW and is soon going to be extended to produce 2 MW is located in Fraserganj. The windmills of this farm are lined up on Fraserganj beach and this power is utilized by the Bakkhali.
- Adventurous oceanic boat trip.

Attractions of Henry island:-

- Henry Island is named after a European who surveyed land in the area in the late 19th Century.
- Since the island was once an extension of Sunderbans, wild animals such as crocodile, wild pig, deer and snakes can be seen. Henry's Island is also popular as a bird watching location. The Henry's Island beach can be reached through a mud path cutting through a mangrove forest.
- One can see here Red crab, sand dune, ripple marks, back swamped mangrove.

Attractions of Jambu dwip:-

- Motorised boat takes about 40 minutes to reach Jambu Dwip from Frazerganj Fishing Harbour .This is basically a Reserve Forest covering an area of 1950 hectares, which is home to many water birds and covered by mangrove trees.
- With thrilling adventures visitors can reach Jambu Dwip just 8 km from Bakkhali by a boat ride.
- The tourists have to be cautious ocean can be rough at some time.

Nature of tourists at a glance

Demographic & socio-cultural status

To study the present status of Bakkhali & the surround region, the authors depend upon the primary survey of 100 visitors, 35 locals, 30 hotels and 15 shops. From different angles it has been tried to evaluate the present condition of the study area. It includes demographic and socio-cultural as well as economic background of the tourists.

Here, the total result of the questionnaire survey has been represented both cartographically and statistically for a quick understanding and overall perception of the existing situation. In primary survey, it has been seen that the maximum tourists are in the age group of the 20-40 years (Fig.1).Tourists age group range denotes to the group of people who come in these spots only for enjoyments. Most of them generally come with family and with friends (Fig 2). The places devoid of risk factors are basically gathered by those tourists coming with family. Here it is noteworthy that Bakkhali and surrounding places is substantially risk-free zone as far as risks in the tourist places are concerned. As far as the educational status of the tourists is considered, it has been seen that most of them fell within the range of higher secondary to graduate (Fig 3). Very few are from highly educated background, denoting to the reduction of intellectual brain in the area.

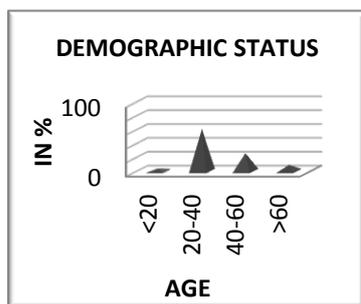


Fig. 1: Demographic status

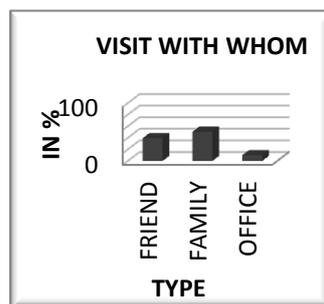


Fig.2: Visit with whom

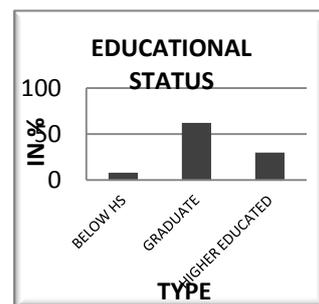


Fig.3: Education status

Tourist’s economic status:-The tourists coming here are from middle class to higher middle class background. The place does not have multiplex or shopping mall etc. which is a reason that does not attract richer people to be here. On the other hand, fooding and lodging expenditure is within the range of middle class people. In our survey, it has been seen that most of the tourists are govt. employees (Fig.5). Rest of them is businessman and self-employees. From the survey, it has also been revealed that per day cost of most of the families is 1000-1500 rupees (Fig.4). It is obviously less in comparison to other coastal tourism spots. But per day cost varies in season and non-season periods.

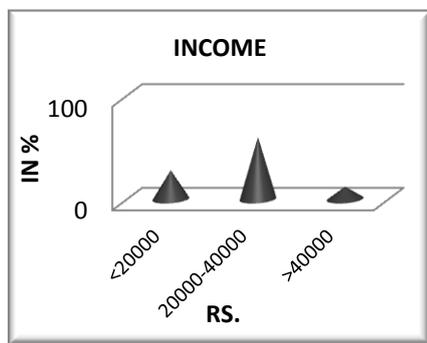


Fig.4: Income level of the tourists



Fig.5: Occupation of tourists

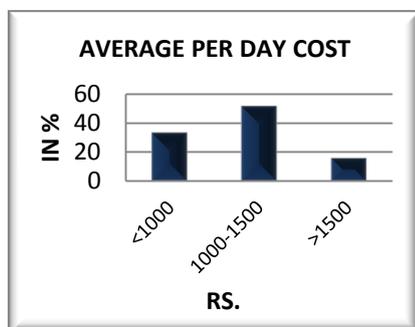


Fig.6: Per day cost of tourists

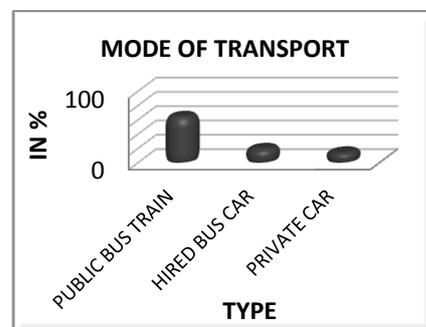


Fig.7: Mode of transport of tourists

The 19 districts of West Bengal are divided into three administrative divisions, i.e. - Jalpaiguri division, Burdwan division and Presidency division. According to field data, for convenience the flow of tourist has been cartographically represented on the basis of the above divisions. From that diagram, it is clear to all that maximum tourists flow is from presidency division. The reason behind the fact is that most of the tourists prefer this place staying just for one or two days. Tourists from distant places prefer other luxuriant coastal destination rather. In most cases the respondents are proved to be excursionist who stays less than a full day (Fig.8).

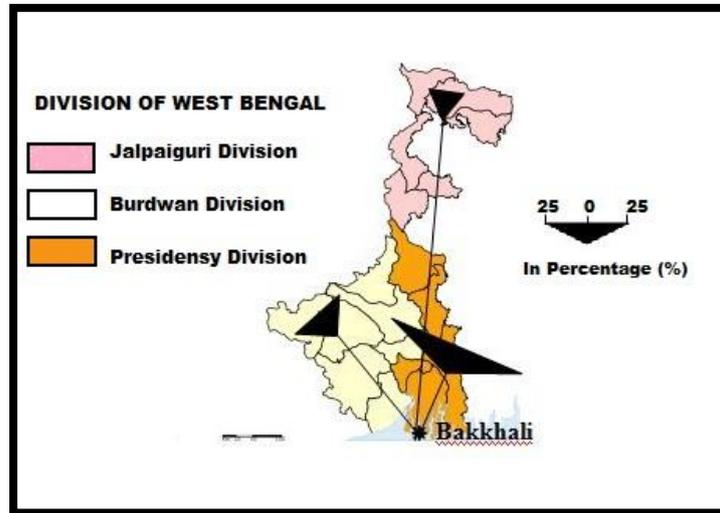


Fig.8 Spatial linkage of floating tourists based on a sample survey

Amenities

Nature of facilities at a glance:- The facility types that emerge, is supported by economic background and is developed in a tourist destination is important, as it contributes to the creation and sustenance of the destination image .The characteristics of a tourism accommodation includes facilities like hotel/restaurants, locomotive, food, guides, bank/ATM recreational centre etc (Fig. 9 & 10). The facility disposal sector, a part of the industry’s supply side, clearly reflects the tourist demand, which is influenced by several factors such as motivation to travel, socio-economic profile and place of origin.

These factors contribute to the evolution of the sector’s typical features, resource consumption pattern and disposal mechanism, which variously impinge the economic, environmental and social domains of the tourist destination. To enable a comparative analysis of the parameters, facilities in the study area are categorized (on the basis of tourist interactions) into various categories. Analyzing likely implication across these categories based on a selected indicators, reveals that hotel and transport availability is good enough in non-season time, but some allied facilities which are also needed in a tourist destination are comparatively lacking. In peak-season, existing facility structure is enough to serve the explosion of tourist arrival. Such a comparison provides tourism planner with an efficient planning strategy, based on an in-depth comprehension of trends specific to each type of facilities.

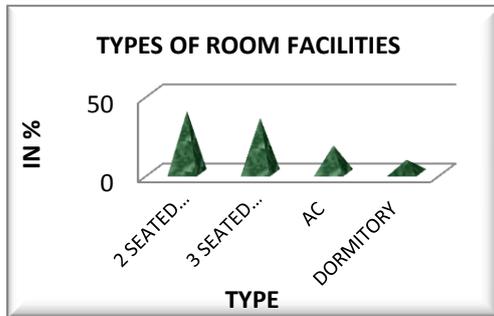


Fig. 9: Other associated facilities

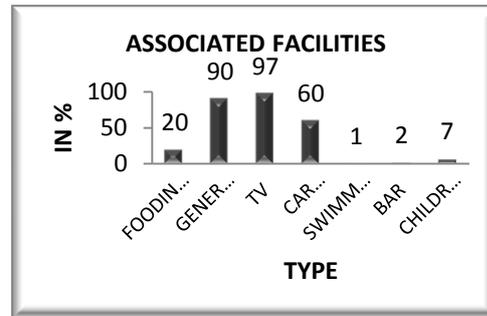


Fig.10: Other associated facilities

Access

Access is a subject of transport infrastructure and transport technology. Whilst transport infrastructure includes airports, harbours, motor ways and rail network, transport technology becomes important in the form of cost of travel and the time consumed in reaching the destination. The three critical factors in transportation-cost, convenience and speed affect the success of every destination on tourism product.

Here, it can be said that Bakkhali is mainly linked with nearby city Kolkata by train upto namkhana (last station in this line) and by bus (from namkhana to bakkhali).In between these there is a ferryghat (called hatalia-doania creek).Apart from that there is bus service from dharmatala (esplanade) directly to bakkhali .Most of tourist come to this place by public bus and train. The proportion of public bus and train is higher than other modes of transport. Some hired bus and train are also seen on this circuit package.

Nature of tourist Satisfaction

Tourist’s feedback about the destination is an important issue in evaluating the nature and quality of concerned place. This study, in this concern, has tried to show the feedback to have a liking for the place from different angles which indirectly shows the acceptability of the place. The criteria given here are based on the interaction with tourists, i.e.-

- Satisfaction of the tourists
- Tourist’s perception of the place
- No. of time visited
- Interested in revisiting
- Index of satisfaction

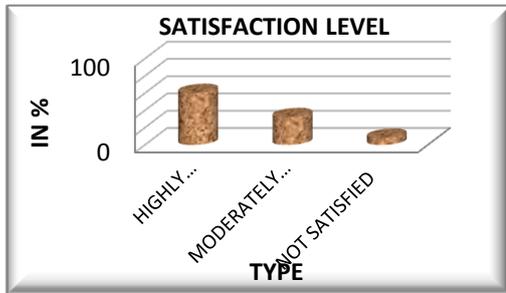


Fig.11: Overall satisfaction of tourists

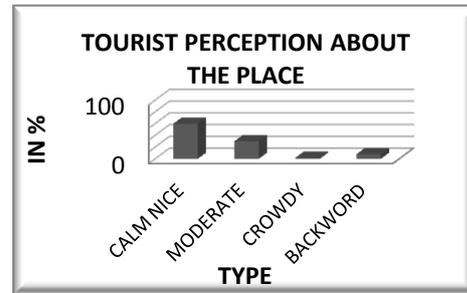


Fig.12: Tourist's perception about the place

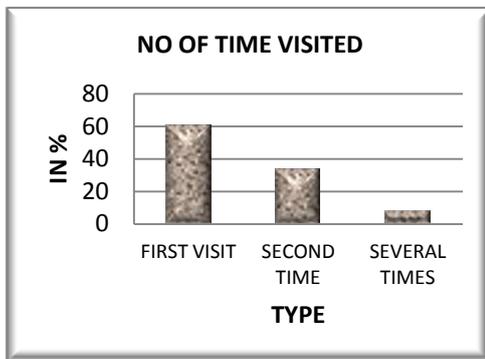


Fig.13: No. of time visited by tourists

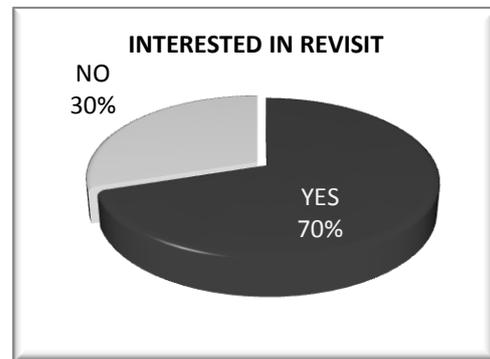


Fig.14: % of tourists interested in revisiting

Index of Satisfaction

To evaluate the satisfaction level of the tourists, the index of satisfaction with some available facilities has been calculated. This shows the strong and weak sides of the place regarding some important and mandatory facilities. The index of satisfaction used here has been developed by Yen, Hall and Tan in 1975. The value of this remains within +1 and -1. Here, greater the value, higher will be the satisfaction and vice versa.

$$I_s = (f_s - f_d) / N$$

Where, I_s = satisfaction index, f_s = no. of satisfied respondents, f_d = no. of dissatisfied respondents and N = total respondents.

According to the satisfaction index, developed by Yen, Hall and Tan (1975), it is seen that, tourists are enough satisfied with some facilities like hotel, transport, food etc. But they are not satisfied with guide facility, market, bank, availability of recreational centres etc. So, it can be said without

any doubt that quantitative and qualitative increase in those backward facilities can give impetus to tourism industry in this destination (Fig. 11, 1213 and 14)

Table 1: Showing degree of satisfaction developed by Yen, Hall and Tan (1975)

| Facilities | Degree of satisfaction | | | Total respondents (N) | Satisfaction index (Is) |
|------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| | Satisfied respondents (fs) | Acceptable respondents | Dissatisfied respondents (fd) | | |
| Hotel | 88 | 2 | 10 | 100 | 0.78 |
| Transport | 40 | 33 | 27 | 100 | 0.13 |
| Food | 80 | 1 | 19 | 100 | 0.61 |
| Guide | 90 | 5 | 5 | 100 | 0.85 |
| Bank/ATM | 1 | 1 | 98 | 100 | -0.97 |
| Market | 13 | 30 | 57 | 100 | -0.44 |
| Security | 70 | 3 | 27 | 100 | 0.43 |
| Recreation | 3 | 80 | 17 | 100 | -0.14 |

Source: Computed by Authors

Concept of Ecotourism and applicability in the study area

There are a number of definitions of newly adopted terminology-Ecotourism. People believe that ecotourism is an approach that creates a variety of quality tourism products and services that are environmentally viable, socially and psychologically acceptable. They further believe that ecotourism must promote sustainable development by establishing a durable productive base that allows local inhabitants and ecotourist’s service providers to enjoy rising standard of living. But many civilians are wondering that ecotourism is and what is expected of them if they do go on a so-called eco-tour. So ecotourism is defined in different ways by different groups of people with different agendas. Many tourists are attracted to the adventure that is associated with many remote natural areas. However, local people also want the opportunity for new jobs and capitalist venture. Additionally one of the main factors of ecotourism in these regions is that tourists will have to take an active role in the maintenance and restoration process. This needs to contribute money by the tourists to develop the region infrastructurally. In turn, it will create jobs and will strengthen the region economy. At this point, it has been noted that it is more feasible to treat ecotourism as a spectrum with a variety of products rather than attempting to define ecotourism from a specific stance or product. More specifically it was claimed that the spectrum includes both-

- Supply factors (nature and resilience of resource, cultural or local community preferences, type of accommodation)
- Demand factor (types of activities and experience, degree of interest in natural or cultural resources , degree of physical effort)



Fig.15: Tourist’s awareness about ecotourism

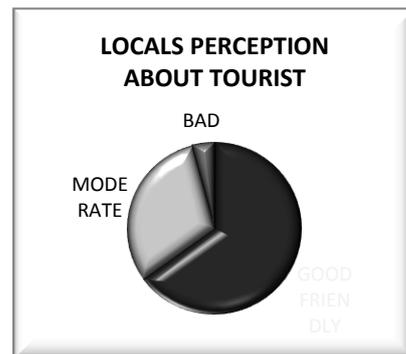


Fig.16: Local’s perception about tourist

In our study area, it has been generally seen that the maximum tourists coming here, do not aware of the code and conducts of the ecotourism ,but about 55% of the tourists have heard of the term merely (Fig.15 and 16). That is why there is huge difference in activity based performance of ecotourism and conceptual development regarding ecotourism as an industry. Resultantly very few of total tourist waste production are recycled and few are concerned about the rich resource of inland vegetation, mangrove vegetation, coastal sand dune vegetation and endangered flora and fauna of this region particularly.

Findings

- Lack of smooth transport in eastward sides where Henry Island is situated. This very fact is a hindrance for Bakkhali circuit tourism.
- Ignorance and lack of aspiration of West Bengal tourism department about Bakkhali, which resist them from proper advertisement of this place as a pleasant coastal tourism destination.
- Many adventure loving tourists have not even heard about Jambu Island which is a nice place for adventure tourism through creeks and open sea trough motorboats.
- Conservation of mangrove flora and fauna can be a pulling force of attraction for future tourists.
- Extension of railway from Namkhana to Bakkhali and bridge over Hatalia-doania can reduce the transport cost for coming in these places.
- There is enough potentiality for sea-shell and fish-centric attraction for tourism which needs a better infrastructure.

- Enough barren non-agricultural plots for setting up recreational centres which can make tourists stay for more than one or two days. This will in turn expand the sphere of influence of this destination.

Suggestion

- Creation of infrastructure like accommodation units, travel agencies, guide services.
- Employment generation.
- Need to formulate marketing strategy.
- Attention to the education training to the youth of local communities.
- Attention to the type of training needed for quality coastal tourism.

Conclusion

The planning and management of coastal tourism can be improved through more careful understanding of social and ecological systems and their linkages with a view to ensure a development that lasts not only for tourism but also for the host destination.

Acknowledgement

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