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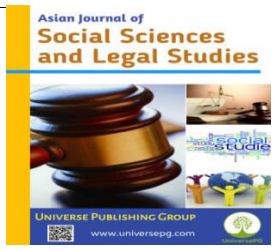

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The Evolution of Maritime Tourism in Bangladesh: A Theoretical Framework for Sustainable Growth

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Abstract

Bangladesh, strategically located along the Bay of Bengal, holds immense potential for maritime tourism, a key component of the Blue Economy. With over 710 kilometers of coastline, the country is home to renowned attractions such as Cox's Bazar, the longest natural sea beach in the world, and the Sundarbans, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Despite this, the maritime tourism sector in Bangladesh remains underdeveloped, and its economic potential has not been fully realized. This study constructs a theoretical framework for the sustainable evolution of maritime tourism in Bangladesh, a sector poised to be a cornerstone of the nation's Blue Economy. While the country's extensive coastline and unique assets like the Sundarbans and Cox's Bazar present significant potential, our analysis reveals that this potential is critically undermined by a confluence of systemic failures. These include pervasive environmental degradation, profound infrastructure deficits, and a regulatory landscape characterized by fragmentation and inertia. The paper argues that the absence of a dedicated, integrative policy framework is the primary barrier, exacerbating vulnerabilities to climate change and stifling inclusive growth. We propose a sustainability-centered framework that prioritizes institutional coherence, community-centric development, and climate-resilient infrastructure, contending that such an integrated approach is not merely beneficial but essential for transforming maritime tourism into a viable engine of long-term socio-economic and environmental resilience. Climate change adaptation strategies are also an essential component of this framework, given Bangladesh's vulnerability to rising sea levels and extreme weather events that threaten its coastal regions. The findings underline the importance of a coordinated approach, which includes stronger policy frameworks, enhanced infrastructure, and increased community participation to ensure the sector's long-term sustainability. The paper concludes with actionable recommendations for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and local communities to develop and implement practices that will enable Bangladesh to unlock the full potential of its maritime tourism sector while preserving its unique marine ecosystems.

Keywords: Maritime tourism, Bangladesh, Blue Economy, Sustainable tourism, Eco-tourism, Coastal tourism.

1. Introduction

Maritime tourism in Bangladesh presents a significant opportunity for economic development, social well-being, and environmental sustainability. Stretching over 710 kilometers along the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh's coastline offers a diverse range of marine

environments, including pristine beaches, coastal wetlands, and coral reefs. These natural assets make the country an attractive destination for maritime tourism, which encompasses activities such as beach tourism, eco-tourism, marine wildlife tourism, recreational boating, and cruise tourism. The country's vast marine resources, including the Sundarbans-the largest mangrove forest in the world-and Cox's Bazar-the longest natural sea beach-are prime examples of tourism destinations that draw both local and international visitors (Gugnani *et al*., 2022).

Despite these advantages, maritime tourism in Bangladesh remains an underdeveloped sector within the broader tourism industry. Historically, the tourism industry in Bangladesh has been dominated by terrestrial tourism destinations, such as cultural heritage sites, historical landmarks, and ecotourism destinations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Sylhet. However, in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the Blue Economy as a key area of opportunity for sustainable development. The Blue Economy, which promotes the sustainable use of oceanic resources for economic growth, provides an integrated framework for tourism development, particularly maritime tourism that balances economic development with environmental conservation.

The Blue Economy concept was formally introduced at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012, where it was emphasized as a path toward economic prosperity, job creation, and environmental protection. For Bangladesh, the Blue Economy offers a comprehensive approach to harnessing the potential of maritime tourism while preserving its unique marine ecosystems. Maritime tourism, as an essential component of the Blue Economy, has the potential to contribute to job creation, poverty alleviation, and economic growth in coastal communities, especially in Cox's Bazar, Saint Martin's Island, and other coastal regions. However, despite the growing interest in maritime tourism, several challenges hinder its development. These challenges include insufficient infrastructure, environmental degradation, and lack of effective regulation. For instance, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh's most popular coastal destination, suffers from the overexploitation of its natural resources, pollution, and overcrowding, particularly during peak tourist seasons. Similarly, the Sundarbans, which is home to unique biodiversity, faces threats from both tourism and climate change. Additionally, the tourism infrastructure remains inadequate in many coastal areas, with limited transportation options, lack of waste management facilities, and insufficient accommodations.

In light of these intersecting challenges, this study moves beyond a mere situational analysis to critically interrogate the governance and structural impediments constraining Bangladesh's maritime tourism sector. It posits that the sector's underdevelopment is not inevitability but a consequence of policy and implementation gaps. Therefore, this paper aims to:

- Critically assess the current state and evolutionary trajectory of maritime tourism, diagnosing the root causes of its under-performance.
- Analyze the synergy between maritime tourism and the Blue Economy, with a specific focus on the institutional mechanisms required to translate principle into practice.
- Formulate a coherent theoretical framework that explicitly integrates environmental safeguarding, equitable community engagement, and robust policy regulation.
- Propose actionable, evidence-based recommendations targeted at fostering a resilient and inclusive maritime tourism ecosystem.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on maritime tourism in Bangladesh by offering a theoretical approach that emphasizes sustainability and community-driven development. By adopting this framework, Bangladesh can create a sustainable maritime tourism sector that not only drives economic growth but also preserves its unique marine environment for future generations.

2. Review of Literature

The global literature on maritime tourism emphasizes the sector's potential to stimulate economic growth, particularly in coastal nations with significant marine biodiversity. The World Bank (2021) highlights that maritime tourism contributes significantly to national economies, particularly in regions with rich natural marine resources such as coral reefs, mangrove forests,

and beaches. For coastal nations, the potential for job creation, economic development, and environmental preservation through tourism is immense. Internationally, nations endowed with significant marine resources, such as the Maldives, Seychelles, and Thailand; provide instructive models for harmonizing economic advancement with ecological stewardship. Their maritime tourism sectors are underpinned by a deep integration of eco-tourism principles, ensuring that economic returns do not necessitate environmental degradation.

The Maldivian approach, for instance, is characterized by a regulatory and operational framework that mandates sustainable hotel practices, advanced wastewater management, and a robust system of eco-certifications for tourism operators. This demonstrates a viable pathway where environmental integrity forms the core of tourism profitability. Similarly, the Seychelles and Thailand have developed regulations that control the number of visitors in fragile marine areas, preventing over-tourism and reducing environmental degradation. Bangladesh, with its significant marine resources and biodiversity, could learn from these countries and adopt similar practices to enhance the sustainability of its maritime tourism industry.

The Blue Economy paradigm, championed by global institutions like the UNDP (2018), presents a holistic framework for oceanic development. It posits that long-term economic growth, job creation, and the health of marine ecosystems are mutually achievable through the sustainable and innovative utilization of ocean resources. In the context of Bangladesh, the Blue Economy offers an ideal framework for developing maritime tourism. With the country's rich biodiversity and marine resources, maritime tourism can play a pivotal role in contributing to the Blue Economy if managed sustainably. Despite the growing recognition of the Blue Economy in Bangladesh, the maritime tourism sector is hindered by several challenges. According to Islam and Sarker (2021), Cox's Bazar and Saint Martin's Island, two of the most popular maritime destinations in the country, suffer from overcrowding, environmental degradation, and insufficient infrastructure. The Sundarbans, home to the Royal Bengal Tiger and a vital mangrove ecosystem, faces similar threats. These natural resources, which form the backbone of the country's maritime tourism industry, are at risk of being lost if sustainable tourism practices are not implemented.

The integration of eco-tourism principles into maritime tourism is essential to minimizing the environmental impact of tourism. Islam *et al*. (2024) emphasize that eco-certification systems can play a crucial role in ensuring that tourism operators adopt environmentally responsible practices. Moreover, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) can serve as a mechanism for managing marine tourism in a way that balances conservation and economic development. The establishment of MPAs allows for controlled tourism in vulnerable areas, where visitors can experience marine biodiversity without causing harm to the ecosystem. Additionally, community-based tourism (CBT) has been recognized as an effective approach for ensuring that local communities benefit from tourism while promoting environmental conservation. Islam et al. (2024) highlight that CBT fosters economic benefits for local populations, providing income through activities such as guided tours, cultural experiences, and local crafts. This approach ensures that local communities have a direct stake in the preservation of their environment, which in turn helps to promote sustainable tourism practices.

Further, Mannan *et al*. (2020) discuss the role of climate change in threatening Bangladesh's coastal regions. The vulnerability of coastal areas to climate change is a major concern for the future of maritime tourism. Rising sea levels, increased frequency of storms, and coastal erosion threaten not only the natural habitats but also the tourism infrastructure. In this regard, climate change adaptation strategies such as the construction of flood-resistant infrastructure, coastal protection measures, and sustainable tourism development must be prioritized.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to provide a theoretical exploration of the evolution of maritime tourism in Bangladesh and propose a framework for its sustainable growth. The study aims to:

- Analyze the historical development of maritime tourism in Bangladesh.

- Identify key challenges and opportunities for sustainable tourism development.
- Propose a theoretical framework that integrates sustainable practices into maritime tourism.

Specific Objectives

The study aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Assess the current state of maritime tourism in Bangladesh: Understanding the trends, growth, and challenges in the sector.
2. Identify key opportunities for promoting sustainable maritime tourism: Focusing on environmental, economic, and social dimensions.
3. Evaluate the institutional framework and policies supporting maritime tourism: Assessing their effectiveness and suggesting improvements.
4. Develop a theoretical framework for sustainable maritime tourism: Providing a comprehensive guide for future policy and research.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, relying heavily on secondary data. Secondary data is crucial in understanding the historical evolution of maritime tourism, identifying challenges, and exploring sustainable solutions. The research is theoretical and aims to synthesize existing literature and secondary data sources to construct a comprehensive framework.

Study Population

The study population comprises existing literature, government reports, and publications from international organizations, academic journals, and local research institutions. The focus is on secondary sources relevant to maritime tourism in Bangladesh.

Example and Method of Sampling

The data used in this research was collected through a systematic literature review. Research articles, policy documents, and industry reports from the last two decades were reviewed. Sampling was based on the relevance of the data to the study's objectives, focusing on key publications that directly discuss maritime tourism, Blue Economy, and sustainable tourism practices in Bangladesh.

Data Sources

Secondary data sources include:

- Academic journals and books on maritime tourism and Blue Economy.
- Government publications and reports from Bangladesh's Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Environment.
- Reports from international organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank.
- Industry publications and news articles on maritime tourism in Bangladesh.

Method of Data Collection

Data was collected through an extensive literature search using online databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and academic journal websites. The search focused on articles published from 2000 to 2023, with an emphasis on recent studies that reflect the current state and potential of maritime tourism in Bangladesh.

Data Analysis and Tools

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, where key themes related to the evolution of maritime tourism, challenges, opportunities, and sustainable practices were identified and analyzed. The findings from secondary data were synthesized to develop the theoretical framework.

Ethical Issues

Since the research relies on secondary data, ethical concerns primarily revolve around ensuring proper citation and attribution of all data sources. Additionally, the integrity of the research was maintained by adhering to established guidelines for systematic reviews and literature synthesis.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on several critical issues facing the development of maritime tourism in Bangladesh. The country's coastal regions are rich in biodiversity, cultural heritage, and natural beauty, offering immense potential for tourism growth. However, challenges related to environmental degradation, inadequate infrastructure, policy gaps, and the impacts of climate change pose significant barriers to the sector's sustainable development. This section presents the findings of the study and discusses them in the

context of existing literature, highlighting the implications for Bangladesh's maritime tourism sector and offering recommendations for addressing the identified challenges.

Environmental Challenges

Environmental degradation is one of the most significant challenges facing maritime tourism in Bangladesh. The country's coastal areas, including Cox's Bazar, the Sundarbans, and Saint Martin's Island, are all prone to environmental degradation due to unsustainable tourism practices, pollution, and the effects of climate change. Cox's Bazar, a beach of global significance, contends with severe pollution from plastic waste and land-based chemical contaminants. The pervasive accumulation of plastic debris not only degrades the scenic value essential for tourism but also poses a direct threat to marine fauna and disrupts critical coastal ecological processes.

Similarly, the Sundarbans, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the most vital mangrove ecosystems in the world, faces the risk of illegal fishing, overfishing, deforestation, and unregulated tourism. These activities have contributed to the destruction of mangrove forests that act as natural barriers against coastal erosion and storm surges, crucial to Bangladesh's coastal resilience. The Sundarbans are home to the Royal Bengal Tiger, as well as various other species of flora and fauna, and any degradation of this habitat threatens not only the local biodiversity but also the future of eco-tourism in the region.

In Saint Martin's Island, the primary environmental challenge is the damage caused to its fragile coral reefs by tourists engaging in unregulated boating, coral collecting, and pollution. Overcrowding and unsustainable tourism practices are putting immense pressure on the island's natural resources, which are key attractions for eco-tourism. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2018) emphasizes the urgent need for sustainable management in these sensitive ecosystems. To address these concerns, the Bangladesh government must adopt eco-tourism principles that prioritize low-impact activities. Wildlife watching, sustainable fishing, and nature trails are examples of tourism activities that can allow tourists to enjoy the natural beauty of these regions without causing harm to the environment. Moreover, promoting eco-certifications for tourism operators will incentivize them to implement environmentally responsible practices, reducing the sector's overall environmental impact.

Establishing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in high-traffic regions like Cox's Bazar and Saint Martin's Island would also be an effective strategy. MPAs help regulate tourism in environmentally sensitive areas, ensuring that the natural resources are preserved for future generations. With proper management and enforcement, these areas could become sanctuaries for marine life and allow for sustainable tourism practices that provide economic benefits without compromising the environment.

Infrastructure Deficiencies

One of the most critical findings of this study is the infrastructure deficiencies in Bangladesh's maritime tourism sector. Despite the growing number of tourists visiting regions like Cox's Bazar, Saint Martin's Island, and the Sundarbans, the infrastructure required to support this growth is insufficient. Cox's Bazar, while well-connected to major cities like Dhaka, lacks the adequate facilities to handle the increasing volume of visitors. This includes a lack of public transportation, modern accommodation, and waste management systems.

During the peak tourist seasons, Cox's Bazar experiences significant overcrowding, putting strain on the local infrastructure. Road congestion, limited parking, and insufficient sanitation facilities lead to a decline in the quality of the visitor experience. The lack of proper waste management results in pollution on the beach, affecting both the tourism experience and the local environment. Overcrowding exacerbates these issues, as the infrastructure cannot accommodate the influx of visitors, leading to the destruction of sand dunes, increased pollution, and coastal erosion. Similarly, Saint Martin's Island, while being a popular tourist destination, lacks the infrastructure to sustain the growing number of visitors. The island is isolated, with poor transport connectivity to the mainland. The accommodation facilities on the island are limited, and waste disposal systems are outdated, leading to

pollution and a decline in the quality of the environment. Overcrowding, poor sanitation, and the absence of basic facilities are contributing factors to the degradation of the island's natural environment.

Improving infrastructure is crucial for the sustainable growth of maritime tourism in Bangladesh. The government must prioritize investments in eco-friendly infrastructure such as solar-powered hotels, rainwater harvesting, and green transportation options like electric boats and buses. Furthermore, waste management systems should be implemented to manage the increased waste generated by tourism. The development of sustainable infrastructure will not only enhance the tourist experience but also mitigate the environmental impact of tourism activities.

Policy Gaps

Another significant issue identified in the study is the policy gaps in Bangladesh's maritime tourism sector. A critical governance gap identified in this study is the absence of a policy instrument dedicated specifically to maritime tourism. While overarching frameworks like the Bangladesh Tourism Policy (2010) and the Marine Fisheries Act (2020) exist, they lack the specificity and integrated vision required to navigate the distinct socio-ecological complexities of the maritime tourism sector. These policies do not integrate principles of eco-tourism, climate resilience, or environmental protection.

As highlighted by Islam and Sarker (2021), the absence of a comprehensive and coordinated maritime tourism policy hampers effective governance in the sector. Bangladesh needs a dedicated policy that incorporates sustainable tourism development, regulates tourism activities in vulnerable coastal areas, and provides clear guidelines for eco-tourism and climate adaptation strategies. The fragmentation of governance is another critical issue. Several government agencies are responsible for different aspects of tourism regulation, environmental management, and coastal protection. However, their efforts are often disjointed, leading to inefficient policy implementation. A centralized regulatory body focused on maritime tourism could streamline efforts and ensure that policies are coordinated and effectively enforced. This body should work in collaboration with other stakeholders, including the private sector, local communities, and NGOs, to ensure that sustainable practices are incorporated into every aspect of tourism development.

Climate Change Vulnerability

Bangladesh's coastal regions are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Rising sea levels, storm surges, flooding, and coastal erosion pose significant risks to both the natural environment and tourism infrastructure. Saint Martin's Island, for instance, is already experiencing significant erosion, which threatens its beaches, coral reefs, and the livelihoods of local residents. The island is at risk of losing its most attractive tourism assets if climate change adaptation measures are not implemented.

Cox's Bazar, the country's largest tourist destination, is similarly at risk from storm surges and flooding, especially during the rainy season. These climate-related events can damage infrastructure, displace local populations, and disrupt tourism activities, reducing the region's attractiveness as a travel destination. Additionally, the Sundarbans, a critical ecosystem that supports both biodiversity and tourism, is vulnerable to rising sea levels and coastal erosion. To mitigate these risks, climate change adaptation strategies are essential for ensuring the resilience of Bangladesh's maritime tourism sector. Mannan et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, such as flood-resistant buildings, coastal protection measures like sea walls, and mangrove restoration programs. The restoration of mangroves in the Sundarbans, for example, would not only protect the region from the impacts of climate change but also enhance the biodiversity that attracts tourists.

Additionally, climate-smart tourism strategies, such as reducing carbon emissions, promoting eco-friendly tourism options, and encouraging sustainable practices, are vital for building the long-term resilience of the tourism sector. These strategies will help ensure that the sector can continue to thrive while minimizing its impact on the environment. The findings of this study reveal that maritime tourism in Bangladesh holds vast potential to contribute to the Blue Economy, providing opportunities for economic growth, job creation, and environmental conservation. The country's coastal regions are rich in natural beauty, biodiversity, and

cultural heritage, making them ideal candidates for eco-tourism development. However, the sector faces significant challenges, including environmental degradation, inadequate infrastructure, policy gaps, and the impacts of climate change.

To unlock the full potential of maritime tourism, Bangladesh must address these challenges by adopting a comprehensive approach that integrates sustainable tourism practices, climate resilience, and community-based tourism. By improving infrastructure, developing a dedicated maritime tourism policy, and ensuring policy coherence, Bangladesh can foster a sustainable maritime tourism sector that benefits both the economy and the environment. Through coordinated action and strategic investments, Bangladesh can create a vibrant and resilient maritime tourism sector that not only provides economic benefits but also preserves the country's rich marine ecosystems for future generations.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, maritime tourism in Bangladesh holds immense potential to be a significant driver of economic growth, job creation, and environmental conservation. The country's extensive coastal regions, including the world-famous Cox's Bazar, the Sundarbans, and the Saint Martin's Island, are home to rich marine biodiversity, pristine beaches, and unique cultural heritage that make them prime candidates for tourism development. These natural attractions, when developed responsibly, can serve as powerful engines for sustainable economic growth and contribute to the Blue Economy, which emphasizes the sustainable use of oceanic resources for both economic and environmental benefits. Additionally, the lack of a clear, dedicated maritime tourism policy and inadequate coordination among key stakeholders have been identified as significant barriers to sustainable development. The study proposes a theoretical framework for promoting the sustainable growth of maritime tourism. This framework emphasizes the need for eco-tourism and community-based tourism models, wherein local communities are actively involved in tourism development and directly benefit from the sector's economic growth. However, despite its tremendous potential, the maritime tourism sector in Bangladesh is currently underdeveloped and faces several barriers to growth. These challenges include environmental degradation, insufficient infrastructure, policy gaps, and the impacts of climate change. Bangladesh's coastal regions are particularly vulnerable to pollution, coastal erosion, and over-tourism, which have negative consequences for both the environment and the local communities who rely on tourism for their livelihoods. Furthermore, the lack of a coherent policy framework to guide sustainable tourism development exacerbates the situation. To unlock the full potential of maritime tourism and ensure its long-term sustainability, it is crucial for Bangladesh to implement a holistic approach that addresses the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of tourism development. By integrating eco-tourism principles, promoting community involvement, and building climate resilience, Bangladesh can ensure that maritime tourism contributes to sustainable development while preserving its valuable marine ecosystems. The following recommendations are essential for fostering sustainable maritime tourism in Bangladesh:

Develop a Dedicated Maritime Tourism Policy

The first and most crucial recommendation is the development of a dedicated maritime tourism policy. Currently, Bangladesh's tourism policies, including the Bangladesh Tourism Policy 2010 and the Marine Fisheries Act 2020, are too general and do not adequately address the unique challenges faced by the maritime tourism sector. A clear and comprehensive maritime tourism policy is needed to ensure coherent governance, sustainable tourism practices, and environmental protection. This policy should focus on integrating eco-tourism, climate resilience, and community-based tourism principles into the development of coastal and marine tourism. Specific provisions should be made to regulate tourism activities in environmentally sensitive areas like the Sundarbans and Saint Martin's Island to prevent over-exploitation and degradation of natural resources. Additionally, policies should incorporate the promotion of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), where sustainable tourism activities can take place without harming the environment. The government should collaborate with international organizations such as the

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to ensure the policy aligns with global best practices for sustainable tourism and marine conservation.

Invest in Sustainable Infrastructure

To support the growth of maritime tourism, Bangladesh must prioritize sustainable infrastructure development. The existing infrastructure in Cox's Bazar, Saint Martin's Island, and other coastal regions is insufficient to handle the increasing number of tourists, and it is often not environmentally sustainable. Investing in green infrastructure will not only improve the visitor experience but also minimize the environmental footprint of tourism. Specifically, Bangladesh should focus on developing eco-friendly accommodations, green transportation networks, and waste management systems that adhere to sustainable practices. Solar-powered hotels, rainwater harvesting systems, and biodegradable waste solutions should be prioritized in key tourist areas. Moreover, transporttation options, such as electric boats and buses, should be promoted to reduce carbon emissions. Cox's Bazar, being the most popular coastal destination, should serve as a model for eco-tourism infrastructure in Bangladesh. Upgrading tourist facilities, improving road access, and building storm-resistant structures will make the area more resilient to the impacts of climate change and improve the quality of the tourist experience. The infrastructure improvements should be designed in a way that minimizes environmental impacts and supports climate adaptation strategies.

Promote Community-Based Tourism (CBT)

Embedding Community-Based Tourism (CBT) principles is fundamental for equitable and sustainable coastal development. CBT mechanisms, which integrate local communities into the planning, management, and operational tiers of tourism, are instrumental in ensuring the equitable distribution of economic benefits and fostering a sense of local ownership. CBT also fosters environmental stewardship, as local communities are more likely to protect their natural resources when they benefit directly from their conservation. For example, in Saint Martin's Island, local communities could be trained as tour guides and involved in eco-tourism activities such as wildlife watching, cultural tours, and sustainable fishing. Additionally, local artisans could sell handcrafted souvenirs to tourists, further boosting their incomes. Bangladesh should also focus on cultural tourism where local communities can showcase their heritage and traditions while promoting eco-friendly tourism practices. Empowering local communities through CBT will create a sense of ownership and responsibility toward the environment and tourism infrastructure, ensuring that the tourism industry grows in a way that is inclusive, equitable, and environmentally sustainable.

Adopt Climate Change Adaptation Strategies

Bangladesh's coastal regions are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, storm surges, and coastal erosion. These effects threaten both the environmental sustainability and tourism infrastructure of key destinations like Cox's Bazar and Saint Martin's Island. To protect the long-term viability of maritime tourism, Bangladesh must integrate climate change adaptation strategies into tourism development plans. This includes investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, such as flood-resistant hotels and coastal protection measures like sea walls and mangrove restoration. Moreover, Bangladesh should prioritize green infrastructure, such as solar-powered buildings and eco-friendly sewage systems, to minimize the carbon footprint of the tourism industry. The Sundarbans, which are crucial for both tourism and environmental protection, should also be at the center of climate adaptation efforts. The restoration of mangrove forests and the establishment of coastal buffer zones will not only protect the tourism infrastructure but also enhance the region's natural defenses against rising sea levels and storms.

Strengthen Institutional Coordination

Effective governance is crucial for ensuring that sustainable tourism practices are implemented and enforced. Currently, there is a lack of coordination among government agencies responsible for tourism, environmental protection, and coastal management. To address this, Bangladesh should establish a centralized maritime tourism agency that focuses solely on the development and regulation of the maritime tourism sector. This agency would be responsible for creating and implementing policies, monitoring the environ-

mental impacts of tourism, ensuring regulatory compliance, and fostering collaboration between government, private sector, and local communities. This coordination will ensure that all efforts are aligned with the country's sustainable development goals.

Foster International Partnerships and Knowledge Sharing

To expedite the development of maritime tourism, Bangladesh should engage in international partnerships and knowledge sharing with countries that have successfully developed sustainable maritime tourism. For example, learning from the Maldives, Seychelles, and Thailand could provide Bangladesh with valuable insights on how to effectively manage marine ecosystems, integrate eco-tourism into the tourism industry, and mitigate the effects of climate change on tourism infrastructure. Bangladesh should also collaborate with international organizations like the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to develop funding and technical assistance programs that support the sustainable development of its maritime tourism sector. By implementing these recommendations, Bangladesh can unlock the full potential of its maritime tourism sector. The Blue Economy offers a sustainable path for economic growth, job creation, and environmental conservation through the development of its coastal and marine resources. By adopting eco-tourism principles, improving infrastructure, and integrating climate resilience into tourism planning, Bangladesh can ensure that maritime tourism contributes to long-term economic prosperity and environmental preservation. The successful implementation of these strategies will help Bangladesh establish a sustainable maritime tourism industry that benefits local communities, preserves the country's rich natural resources, and aligns with the global principles of the Blue Economy.

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7. Conflicts of Interest

I hereby declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this publication.

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