Stimulating Rural Growth and Economic Development through Rural Tourism in Bangladesh: A Study on Melandaha Upazilla in Jamalpur District

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Abstract

Rural tourism development can ensure socio-economic development and environmental benefits to the people in any rural area. It contributes to society by creating business and job opportunities. It also guarantees rural residents a standard level of living by earning more. Bangladesh is a land of natural beauty. Melandaha Upazilla in Jamalpur District is a hidden treasure of natural beauties, enriched with colorful rural life, archeological and historical sites and cultural attractions. This destination can be a prominent rural tourism spot in Bangladesh by providing proper nurture. This article aims to recognize how rural tourism can be the best alternative of earning for rural people to minimize the dependency on seasonal work (e.g., agriculture, fishing, boating), create alternative sources of income, and ensure economic development as well as solvency through participation in rural tourism businesses. This study was undertaken to explore a secondary income source for rural people who depend on an agricultural-based economy. To test my assumption, I have conducted a survey questionnaire to identify whether the commencement of rural tourism can stimulate the economic growth of rural residents or not. This article identifies the major attractions and prospects of the rural tourism in this destination. Finally, this article also presents a SWOT analysis and suggests necessary recommendations for commencing

rural tourism in Melandaha Upazilla.

1.   Introduction

Rural tourism has the greatest potential to boost the rural economy by ensuring the rural community's involvement in tourism development. Bangladesh has a huge opportunity to unclutter another sub-sector of tourism as rural tourism, but still, this sector is floating in its newborn phase.

Rural tourism takes place in countryside areas and provides experiences related to nature-based tourism activities, agricultural work, rural culture and unique lifestyle, rural cuisine, sightseeing, and so on. Significant characteristics of rural tourism spots- number of population is relatively low, agriculturally based area and presence of green forestry, exceptional and attractive socio-cultural lifestyle.

Bangladesh is enriched with natural beauties and the simple attractive lifestyle of the rural community. This creates an amazing potential for rural tourism development. Most of the people in rural areas of Bangladesh depend on agriculture-based occupations. Rural tourism has immense potential to offer new segments of working opportunities in rural areas. Countries are enriched with historical places and natural beauty places and can earn foreign currency through tourism (Madden et al. 2017). With proper utilization of this potential, Bangladesh can develop numerous tourism spots in local areas and ensure a distinct contribution to the national economy.

A large number of people are engaged in seasonal agricultural work. So tourism can be another source of income for those people, who are involved in seasonal agricultural work. In rural areas, the way of living, cooking, fishing, and other livelihood works is different from urban life. People living in urban areas are filling greatly attached to the village. Rural tourism also allows city people to live in villages and embrace rural life for some days.

Rural tourism can improve and expand the success of livelihood and create employment opportunities for rural people. It also can indirectly helps rural people to create their marketplace for rural products, ensuring social improvement, upgrading living standards, expanding educational, social and, economic opportunities.

2.   Literature review

Rural tourism is a tactic to ensure sustainable economic development at rural level by preserving culture and traditions, conserving natural

resources, and increasing income. Bangladesh is a developing country with little financial resources, but it may raise its GDP by putting more emphasis on the tourist sector (Muhammad shamssuduha, 2005).

Rural tourism can take part to create an inbound tourism friendly environment by boosting domestic tourism. And this way, domestic tourism will make a footstep to enlarge international tourism (McIntosh et al., 2005). In Bangladesh, tourism is a vital industry that has become the one of the fastest growing service sector. Tourism sector has a countless positive impact on different aspects of development in Bangladesh, such as social, cultural, educational, economic, and political. Also tourism plays a significant role in enhancing Bangladesh's soft power by facilitating cultural interactions between Bangladesh citizens and foreigners from different countries. Rural tourism can help to generate additional incomes to rural community people and diversify the local economy (Tuffin, 2005).

Rural tourism is mainly operating by rural people of any particular area. So they have the scope to make main decision, which helps them to get the profit directly and boost the community with development (Khanal & Babar, 2007). It also gives more importance on improving the outcomes for host communities from side to side tourism development. Rural tourism put emphasize on the role of local communities of any rural area and has an association with rural development than other forms of tourism. Well-running rural tourism can ensure economic development, social development, and environmental development of any rural area.

In rural tourism, community people participate as host and welcome tourists as guest. This helps to reduce the negativity of socio-cultural impact on rural people and handed the responsibility of tourism activities to community people (Ying & Zhou, 2007). Rural tourism can be the best practice for the empowerment of local people, creating awareness about basic needs of life, and moreover improve their expertise in different fields.

3.   Objective of the study

The major objective of this study is to identify that, can rural tourism stimulate rural growth and the economic development of rural communities.

Other secondary objectives are:

- To determine whether rural tourism is indispensable to the long-standing, sustainable economic and environmental development of rural area.
- To identify the importance of rural tourism as means of alternate income source of rural people.

4.   Methodology

Primary and secondary data both have been used in this article. Depth interviews and individual questionnaire surveys are used for collecting primary data. Five tourism experts are interviewed separately regarding the significance of rural tourism in Bangladesh perspective. And they have suggested several positive impacts of developing rural tourism which declare that rural tourism can be a safeguard for the economic development of rural people.

For the questionnaire survey respondents were aligned into four categories- villagers and stakeholders of the study area, visitors who are interested in rural tourism, and consultants from tourism sector. Demographic data of each respondent extract from the upper part of the questionnaire and the lower part of the questionnaire is designed with topic-related questions. To collect necessary data, the questionnaire is prepared by using the most effective and popular Likert scale. Regression analysis is used to analyze the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Correlation analysis is also used to check the correlation among variables and the subsequent hypothesis is tested by quantitatively.

Questions and Hypothesis:
Question:

Is there any relationship that exists between the development of rural tourism and economic development of rural communities?

Hypothesis:

H0: There is no significant relationship exists between the development of rural tourism and economic development of rural communities.

H1: There is a significant relationship exists between the development of rural tourism and economic development of rural communities.

Increasing income of rural people through rural tourism (Y) is selected as dependent variable for data analysis and corresponding independent variable (Xi) are given below:

X1=Job creation
X2=Financial support for the conservation of ecosystems
X3=Improving standard of living
X4=High price of local products
X5=Support other cottage industries
X6=Increasing the rate of primarily educated people
X7=Greater profit sharing and local market creation
X8=Alleviate poverty

The dependent variable 'increasing income of rural people through rural tourism' basically has measured how the rural people are living and the higher living standard they achieve by involving themselves in rural tourism.

5.   Study Area: Melandaha upazilla (Jamalpur District), Bangladesh

Melandaha upazilla is enriched with archeological, historical, and cultural attractions. The area of this upazilla is 239.65sq.km. Melandaha was formed as Thana on 21st May 1925 and turned into upazilla on 15th April 1983. Almost 292347 people live here, and the average literacy rate is 26.6%. All types of religious people live here with the bonding of love and peace. About 70.50% of people are engaged in agriculture and this is the main source of income in this upazilla. Moreover, the people of this upazilla are very much well-mannered, friendly, and hospitable to tourists. Reliable and secure transportation facilities are available to reach this upazilla. This upazilla offers tourists to have a quiet, calm, and comfortable vacation experience while enjoying nature's serenity. There are also several scopes to gain knowledge about the lifestyle of rural people, for example cooking in a mud oven, milking cows, farming, cart riding, artisanal work, craft work, dancing, singing, local sports, and so on. The weather of this upazilla is also pleasant for the traveler and there is less risk of massive natural disaster. Villagers are very hospitable to make visitors comfortable and have an understanding of rural culture's customs and traditions. This place is also famous for various crops such as jute, wheat, paddy, potato, sugarcane, mustard, black gram, tobacco, betel leaf, ground nut, gram, chili, vegetables, and so on. Other crops are Kaun, corn, sesame, and linseed also produced here. Mango, jackfruit, coconut, banana, and papaya are also produced here. During monsoon people catch fish from river, haor, and bill as an alternative of livelihood.

Table 6.1. Famous Tourist Spots and Attractions of Melandaha upazilla

Archaeological heritage sites	Traces of relics of Neelkuthi at Basuria, dighis of Fulkocha and Mohiramkul zamindars, and wreckage of kacharis (revenue offices).
Reminisce spot of the liberation war in 1971	During the liberation war, the freedom fighters conducted guerrilla operations at Dewanganj of the upazilla. On that time an encounter was held at a place near the Paila Bridge of the upazilla between the freedom fighters and the Pak army.
Liberation war mass grave	Liberation war mass grave can be located in 4 places. These are- Adipoita, Kayetpara, Konamalancha, Char Govindapur.
Traditional transport	Palanquin, soari (this kind of transports are nearly extinct, so tourists are interested to enjoy a ride in this traditional transport)
Handicraft products	Blacksmith, nakshi kantha, bamboo work, cane work

Haor Tourism	In rainy season Roumari Bill and Tupkar Char become paradise for Haor tourism
Religious Tourism	There are 519 mosque, Hazrat Shah Kamal (ra:)of Mazar Sharif, Durmut, and 7 temples which can be a great attraction for religious people(who loves to visit religious places for eternal peace)

Source: constructed by author.

Table 6.2. Income source of rural people in Melandaha upazilla

Source of Income	Percentages
Agriculture	70.50%,
non-agricultural labourer	3.02%,
industry	0.44%,
commerce	10.33%,
transport and communication	2.58%,
Service and Construction	5%,
religious service	0.17%,
Remittance and others	7.96%,

Source: Banglapedia

This table represents that maximum rural people are engaged in agricultural work, which is seasonal. Rest of the time they don't have much work to do for surviving. So rural tourism can be the best alternative for these people to make them employed besides their usual work and earn money for their family.

Rural people of Melandaha upazilla can involve themselves in various rural tourism activities, which they can offer to tourists and can make another source of income.

- Natural sight seeing
- Boat riding
- Offering local food
- Building resort with traditional mud house and thatched house for rejoicing rural life
- Selling street food
- Building restaurant for serving tourist as per their demand
- Selling handicraft products specially *Nakshi Kantha* (embroidered quilts), bamboo work, cane work
- Selling locally produced organic agricultural goods

6.   SWOT analysis of selected destination

To understand and identify the competitive advantage of this upazilla for rural tourism, a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) framework assessment is presented below.

Table 7.1. SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Scenic and untouched natural beauties and landscape. • Established access for transport. • Available local food supply by agricultural products. • Availability of land for tourism infrastructure. • Peaceful and hospitable local community.	• Inadequate marketing approaches. • Lack of tourism infrastructure. • Lack of trained tourism workforce. • Lack of information. • Lack of diversification of industries. • Shortage of power availability.
Opportunities	**Threats**
• An adequate supply of low-cost agricultural goods. • Friendly local community. • Satisfactory security system. • Ongoing infrastructural development. • Proximity to old Brahmaputra River. • The current trend in tourism- eco-tourism, recreational tourism, and so on.	• Demographic changes • Climate change and other natural disasters • An unstable political situation arises • Sluggish down the speed of economic development • Disagreement with the local community • Robbery, theft, and other security issues

7.   Data analysis and interpretation:

120 respondents were conducted for data collection. Out of 120 respondents 70 were rural people. 20 were experts and tourism business person, and rests of the 30 were tourists. Most of the respondents were appreciating rural tourism development for economic growth and social wellbeing as well. This study conducted quantitative analysis to find out in which respect rural tourism can work as a growth stimulator for economic development.

Table 8.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ncrease Income	120	3.00	8.00	5.6000	1.43427
ob creation	120	5.00	9.00	6.6000	1.02408
inancial support for the onservation of ecosystems	120	2.00	8.00	5.4000	1.63162
nproving standard of living	120	2.00	8.00	5.5917	1.62696
ligh price of local products	120	2.00	7.00	4.4000	1.69230
upport other cottage industries	120	3.00	8.00	4.7917	1.48322
ncreasing the rate of primary ducated people	120	4.00	8.00	6.4000	1.36215
reater profit sharing and local arket creation	120	4.00	8.00	6.7000	1.27418
lleviate poverty	120	4.00	9.00	6.6000	1.36215
alid N (listwise)	120				

Source: Constructed in SPSS

This table represents the number of respondents, maximum, minimum, mean value and standard deviation of ten attribute along with the dependent variable 'increase income through rural tourism'. In this table, the maximum average value of all attribute is 8. The mean value of the dependent variable is 5.60 which mean the rural tourism can contribute in income generation through opening different opportunities. In this table, it is comprehensible that the independent variables have strong impact on dependent variable. Mean value of the job creation attribute has 6.60 score which represents its importance in increasing the level of income through rural tourism.

Table 8.2. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.621	9

Source: Constructed in SPSS

The internal consistency reliability for the 9 item is analyzed. This table shows the value of Alpha is 62.1% which is above 50%. Most statisticians agreed with the notion that a Cronbach's Alpha value above 50% as acceptable. So it can be assumed that the data are reliable.

Table 8.3. Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.994ᵃ	.988	.987	.16282	.988	1140.404	8	111	.000

Source: Constructed in SPSS

In this table the value of R is .994ᵃ that shows the moderate level of relationship exists between the dependent and independent variables. The value of R2 is .988 and adjusted R2 is .987 which represents that about 80% of total variables can be explained by the estimated model.

Table 8.4. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	241.857	8	30.232	1140.404	.000ᵇ
Residual	2.943	111	.027		
Total	244.800	119			

Source: Constructed in SPSS

This table represents if there any relationship exists between dependent and independent variables by examining the variance of variables. The significance level of the 'F' value shows the acceptability of the model. Here the value of 'sig' is .000 which is less than .050. Consequently, the model is fit at 95% significant level.

Table 8.5. Coefficients regression Y against X1, X2, X3, X4, X5, X6, X7 & X8

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-10.298	.355		-29.003	.000
Job creation	.622	.090	.613	6.905	.000
Financial support for the conservation of ecosystems	1.760	.053	2.002	33.229	.000
Improving standard of living	.456	.015	.517	30.156	.000
High price of local products	.407	.039	.481	10.400	.000
Support other cottage industries	-1.304	.042	-1.348	-31.154	.000
Increasing the rate of primary educated people	.022	.020	.021	1.088	.279
Greater profit sharing and local market creation	1.680	.036	1.493	46.239	.000
Alleviate poverty	-.465	.026	-.442	-18.219	.000

Source: Constructed in SPSS

This table shows all the coefficient of the independent variables and the degree of influence of independent variables on dependent variable. The equation, given below is formulated to simplify the coefficient of independent and dependent variables.

$$Y=-10.298+.004X1+1.760X2+.456X3+.407X4-1.304X5+.022X6+1.680X7-.465X8$$

Here Y= Increasing income of rural people through rural tourism.

Here X1=Job creation, X2=Financial support for the conservation of ecosystems, X3=Improving standard of living, X4=High price of local products, X5=Support other cottage industries, X6=Increasing the rate of primary educated people, X7=Greater profit sharing and local market creation, and X8=Alleviate poverty.

Here job creation, improving standard of living, high price of local products, greater profit sharing and local market creation, each of the variables have positive sign of the coefficient that represent positive influence on dependent variable. So the direct contribution of these independent variables on dependent variables can explain that rural tourism can work as a stimulator rural economy growth.

The outcome of the significance test on regression constants is a = -10.298, with the significant value of 0.000 (see Table 5), considered 'significant' as the value of sig. < 0.05 (0.000 < 0.05). Alternatively it can be stated that, the constants in that model significantly influence the stimulation of increasing income of rural people through rural tourism. The outcome of significance test on regression X1 is b = 0.622, with the sign value of 0.000(see Table 5), considered 'significant' as the value of sig < 0.05 (0.000 < 0.05). Alternatively it can be stated that, the X1 variable or Job creation significantly influences the stimulation of increasing income of rural people through rural tourism (Y). The outcome of the significance test on regression X2 is c = 1.760, with the sign value of 0.000 (see Table 5), considered 'significant' as the value of significant. < 0.05 (0.000<0.05). Alternatively it can be stated that, the X2 variable or financial support for the conservation of ecosystems has a significant influence on the stimulation of increasing income of rural people through rural tourism (Y). The outcome of the significance test on regression X3 is d= 0.456, with the sig value of 0.000 (see Table 5), considered 'significant' as the value of significant. < 0.05 (0.000 < 0.05). Alternatively it can be stated that, the X 3 variable or standard of living has a significant influence on the stimulation of increasing income of rural people through rural tourism (Y). The result of the significance test on regression X4 is e= 0.407, with the significant value of 0.000 (see Table 5), considered 'significant' as the value of significant. <0.05 (0.000 < 0.05). In other words, the X 4 variable or High price of local products has a significant influence on the stimulation of increasing income of rural people through rural tourism (Y). The outcome of the significance test on regression X5 is f= -1.304, with the significant value of 0.000 (see Table 5), considered 'significant' as the value of significant. <0.05 (0.000 <

0.05). Alternatively it can be stated that, the X5 variable or Support other cottage industries has beta value-1.304 indicates that as the independent variable increases, the dependent variable is expected to decrease. On the contrary, X5 becomes a constraint since its regression correlation value is negative. The outcome of the significance test on regression X6 is g= 0.022, with the significant value of 0.279 (see Table 5), considered 'non-significant' as the value of significant. > 0.05 (0.279 > 0.05). The outcome of the significance test on regression X7 is h= 1.680, with the sig value of 0.000 (see Table 5), considered 'significant' as the value of significant. < 0.05 (0.000 < 0.05). Alternatively it can be stated that, the X 7 variable or Greater profit sharing and local market creation has a significant influence on the stimulation of increasing income of rural people through rural tourism (Y). The outcome of the significance test on regression X8 is i= -.465, with the significant value of 0.000 (see Table 5), considered 'significant' as the value of significant. < 0.05 (0.000 < 0.05). Alternatively it can be stated that, the X 8 variable or Alleviate poverty has beta value -.465 indicates that as the independent variable increases, the dependent variable is expected to decrease. On the contrary, X8 becomes a constraint since its regression correlation value is negative.

The result of significance test on the multiple regression analysis is-
Y=-10.298+.004X1+1.760X2+.456X3+.407X4-1.304X5+.022X6+1.680X7-.465X8,

Regarded as 'significant' as the value of significant, 0.00< 0.05 (see Table 5). Such a result also signifies that the model can be used to predict the stimulation of increasing income of rural people through rural tourism using the data of variables X1, X2, X3, X4, X5, X6, X7, and X8 if all of the independent variables have been identified.

Testing Hypothesis

From the findings of the above coefficient table it can be said that income generation and economic growth are up warding through job creation (.919), improving standard of living (.000), support other cottage industries(.000), increasing primary education rate (.279), alleviate poverty and sharing profit among rural stakeholder (.000). These variables have strong (significant at 0.050 level) relationship with the development of rural tourism. So, null hypothesis is rejected. Based on this information it can be assumed that rural tourism can be a stimulator of economic growth and income generation of rural people. Rural tourism has positive impact on new job creation, alleviating poverty, and overall develop living standard of rural people.

8.   Major Findings of the Study:
   a. By doing descriptive analysis it is clear that rural tourism can contribute to income generation through opening different opportunities.
   b. It is found that accommodation facilities of this destination are not well so that it is a barrier for tourism promotion.
   c. Developing infrastructure of rural tourism can create new business and job opportunity for local people that can alleviate the poverty level.
   d. By developing rural tourism it also can be ensured that rural people are getting involved in decision making process, environment conservation, and overall development of this destination.
   e. This study also find out that developing rural tourism can promote the importance and need of primary education for everyone.

9.   Recommendations:

   Rural tourism development can be beneficial to rural people if they can realize their potential and increase the value of their natural and cultural resources. The following suggestions could help to relish the benefits of rural tourism to Melandaha Upazilla.

- Constructing accommodation and theme-based resorts in remote places with traditional styles and locally available materials to align with local design and culture.
- Maintaining hygiene, cleanliness, and standard of food and beverage operation and offering traditional meals.
- Ensuring security and safety of visitors and their belongings in the visitor area.
- A local market should be created for selling locally produced unique handicrafts and other products. It also needs to be ensured that profit earned from rural tourism should be properly distributed in that area and it will help to ensure economic sustainability.
- The local government of Melandaha Upazilla should work with The Ministry of Tourism to promote rural tourism.
- The government should considerably boost budgetary provisions to improve the effective promotion of rural tourism.

Conclusion

   In order to support the sustainable economic growth of rural communities, this article has identified the key characteristics of rural tourism. Rural tourism can help to increase local employment and ensure

revenue earnings. Rural tourism development can ensure sustainable economic condition, and reduce economic leakage. It also helps to continue the harmony with other existing sustainable infrastructure development. Melandaha Upazilla of Jamalpur District is enriched with natural beauties and attractive rural resources. This place has all the physical appearance to be a prominent rural tourism spot in Bangladesh. Rural tourism also can help rural people to be more efficient in their own spaces and aware about their rural resources. Therefore, it can be assumed that rural tourism is one of the effective instruments to ensure stimulating rural growth and economic development in Bangladesh. If rural people can participate in rural tourism business, therefore it can be guaranteed that rural people will be benefited in economically and socially. Tourist also can be served with expanded rural tourism products and services.

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