



## Sustainable Tourism in Kuakata, Bangladesh: Challenges, Practices, and the Role of Hotel and Resort Operators

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### Abstract

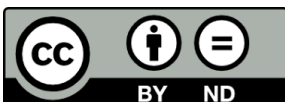
Bangladesh's economy depends heavily on tourism, with coastal regions attracting tourists for their natural beauty and cultural significance. Sustainable tourism in Kuakata faces both opportunities and challenges due to the rapid growth of hotels and resorts. This study shows the impact of hotel and resort operators' decisions and practices on tourism sustainability, and how they utilise principles from behavioural economics. Ethnographic fieldwork, interviews and participant observation with local hotel and resort stakeholders form the foundation of the study. It shows that labour management dynamics, tourist engagement, business strategies and interactions with local and Rakhine communities. This study also shows that Seasonal variations in visitor numbers, infrastructure constraints, and environmental issues are among the difficulties faced by hoteliers. The results show a mixed picture. While many business owners use sophisticated techniques such as digital marketing, cultural adaptation, and incorporating customer feedback and environmentally conscious practices that support local jobs, others operate outside the law, including unlicensed hotels, inappropriate accommodations, and problems with drug use and prostitution. The study emphasises the need for improved governance, clear regulations, and collaboration between local communities, lawmakers, and business owners. This shows that sustaining tourism in Kuakata requires not only innovation and financial commitment but also compliance with legal regulations and respect for the local population's well-being.

**Keywords:** Anthropology of tourism, Ethnography, Coastal communities, Sustainable tourism, Hospitality practices, Bangladesh

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism has become an increasingly significant contributor to Bangladesh's economy, particularly in coastal regions, where natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and religious attractions draw both domestic and international visitors. Among these destinations, Kuakata has emerged as one of the most prominent coastal tourism sites in the country. It is widely recognised for offering the rare opportunity to witness both the sunrise and sunset over the Bay of Bengal, as well as for its rich cultural diversity, including the presence of the indigenous Rakhine community. The continued growth of tourism in the region has contributed substantially to the local economy by generating employment, improving infrastructure, and stimulating small-scale entrepreneurial activity (Sarker, 2024).

Despite these economic benefits, the rapid expansion of tourism infrastructure in Kuakata has raised serious concerns regarding the sustainability of tourism development. In recent years, the proliferation of hotels and resorts, often developed without adequate planning or regulatory oversight, has intensified pressure on the local environment and community resources. Issues such as unplanned construction, seasonal fluctuations in tourist arrivals, environmental degradation, and increasing strain on water, waste management, and other local resources have become significant challenges for sustainable tourism development in the region (Naila, 2025; IOSR Journal, 2024). More broadly, the tourism sector in Bangladesh continues to face systemic sustainability issues, including uneven distribution of economic benefits, weak regulatory enforcement, and limited institutional capacity to manage tourism growth effectively. Addressing these challenges requires stronger policy frameworks, greater community participation, and the adoption of environmentally responsible tourism practices (Farhan & Mohiuddin, 2025).

Furthermore, business decisions within the tourism sector often prioritise short-term profitability, sometimes at the expense of long-term environmental sustainability, local livelihoods, and cultural preservation (Naila, 2025). Such dynamics highlight the need to critically examine how business decision-making processes within the hospitality sector influence the sustainability of tourism destinations. In this regard, understanding the behavioural patterns and motivations of hotel and resort managers becomes particularly important, as their operational choices directly shape tourism practices, resource utilisation, and interactions with local communities.

This study, therefore, adopts a behavioural economics perspective to examine the decision-making processes of hotel and resort managers operating in Kuakata. Behavioural economics suggests that business decisions are not always driven purely by rational calculations of profit and cost; rather, they are influenced by social norms, incentives, habits, uncertainty, institutional constraints, and contextual factors (Sarker, 2024). Within the tourism context of Kuakata, managerial decisions related to labour management, customer engagement, digital marketing strategies, adoption of eco-friendly practices, and relationships with local and indigenous Rakhine communities all reflect these behavioural influences.

Using an ethnographic research design that incorporates in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and fieldwork, this study provides a grounded understanding of the operational realities within the hotel and resort sector in Kuakata. The findings reveal a complex and dual reality: while some entrepreneurs demonstrate responsible business practices that promote local employment and environmental awareness, others engage in unauthorised operations and activities that raise social, legal, and environmental concerns (UNDP, 2024).

This duality highlights the broader governance challenges facing tourism development in Kuakata. Achieving sustainable tourism in the region requires not only investment and entrepreneurial innovation but also stronger regulatory frameworks, effective governance mechanisms, and coordinated collaboration among policymakers, local communities, and tourism-related businesses (Sarker, 2024; UNDP, 2024).

The primary objective of this study is to examine the decision-making processes of hotel and resort managers in Kuakata and to analyse how these decisions influence the sustainability of tourism development in the region. Drawing on the perspective of behavioural economics, the study seeks to understand how managerial judgments, incentives, social norms, and contextual factors shape daily business practices and sustainability outcomes within the hospitality sector. In addition, the research explores labour management practices in hotels and resorts, including employee treatment, interactions with tourists, and business strategies such as digital marketing and customer feedback mechanisms, to assess their contribution to local employment generation and social sustainability. The study also identifies key operational challenges faced by hotel and resort managers, particularly those related to seasonal fluctuations in tourism, infrastructure limitations, and environmental pressures. It examines how these factors affect both short-term operations and long-term sustainability. Furthermore, the research investigates the legal and administrative issues in Kuakata's tourism sector, including the presence of unauthorised hotels and illegal activities. It evaluates the roles of regulatory frameworks, policy enforcement, and stakeholder collaboration in promoting sustainable tourism development.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Hasan et al. (2019) conducted a survey examining travellers' perceptions of Kuakata and highlighted the importance of accommodation facilities in shaping the overall tourism experience. Their findings emphasise that well-equipped hotels and resorts play a critical role in attracting and retaining visitors, particularly in emerging coastal destinations. Kuakata, located in southern Bangladesh, has gained increasing attention for its unique geographical feature, which allows tourists to witness both sunrise and sunset over the Bay of Bengal, as well as its rich cultural heritage. As tourism continues to develop in the region, effective hotel and resort management becomes essential to ensure that economic growth is balanced with environmental and social responsibility.

Further supporting this perspective, Rahman et al. (2020) examined the factors influencing tourists' accommodation preferences in Kuakata. Their study found that proximity to beaches, availability of recreational facilities such as swimming pools, and access to leisure activities significantly influence tourists' hotel or resort selection. Hotels and resorts located along Kuakata's beachfront, offering a range of amenities and services, therefore align well with tourists' expectations and contribute positively to the destination's attractiveness.

Islam and Rahman (2018) explored the challenges and opportunities faced by the hospitality industry in Kuakata. Their study highlights the need for continuous improvement in service quality, infrastructure development, and managerial practices to meet tourists' growing expectations. As tourism demand grows, the hospitality sector must adapt by investing in modern facilities, enhancing service standards, and developing sustainable operational strategies. In addition to service-related issues, several studies have highlighted broader sustainability challenges within Kuakata's tourism sector. Chowdhury et al. (2019) examined the complex dynamics of tourism development in the Kuakata

Sea Beach region in their study titled *Sustainable Tourism Development in Kuakata Sea Beach: Challenges and Opportunities*. Their research identifies major constraints, including limited infrastructure, lack of coordinated planning, and the challenge of balancing economic benefits with environmental protection. The study emphasises the importance of adopting sustainable tourism practices, including efficient energy and water usage, waste reduction and responsible disposal, and environmentally responsible business operations within hotels and resorts.

Furthermore, Chowdhury et al. (2019) highlight the importance of local community involvement in tourism development. Hotels and resorts play a significant role in creating employment opportunities for residents; however, tourism-related activities must also ensure that local communities are not negatively affected. The study recommends that hotel operators educate tourists about local culture and environmental conservation practices to maintain the region's ecological and cultural integrity. Such initiatives can enhance both environmental sustainability and community well-being.

Bashar (2018), in his work *Kuakata's Hotel and Resource Management*, provides a more socio-cultural perspective on the hospitality sector in the region. The study explores the operational realities of the hotel industry in Kuakata, focusing on the relationships among employees, management, and tourists. Bashar highlights how local people's livelihoods are closely linked to the development of the tourism sector and emphasises the social interdependencies between hotel operations and community life.

Environmental sustainability has also been a central concern in studies on coastal tourism in Bangladesh. Islam et al. (2016) argue that the rapid expansion of tourism infrastructure in coastal regions has placed increasing pressure on environmentally sensitive ecosystems. Their findings indicate that the growth of hotels and resorts has contributed to problems such as poor waste management, ecosystem degradation, and excessive exploitation of natural

resources. The authors note that the absence of sustainable management practices among tourism operators further intensifies environmental risks in coastal tourism destinations.

Similarly, Rahman and Rahman (2015) highlight the institutional and policy-related barriers to sustainable tourism development in Bangladesh's coastal regions. Their research indicates that weak policy implementation and poor coordination among regulatory institutions often lead to unplanned infrastructure development and inadequate waste management systems. In many cases, hotel and resort operators prioritise short-term financial gains over long-term environmental sustainability, which further complicates the management of emerging tourism destinations such as Kuakata.

The role of local communities in sustainable tourism development has also been widely emphasised in the literature. Hassan and Mahmud (2018) argue that community participation is a crucial component of sustainable tourism in coastal areas. Excluding residents from tourism planning processes may lead to social conflicts and weaken the equitable distribution of tourism benefits. The authors suggest that meaningful participation by local communities enhances environmental conservation efforts and strengthens social sustainability.

From a governance perspective, Hall (2011) argues that achieving sustainable tourism requires fundamental changes in policy and institutional frameworks rather than incremental policy adjustments. Introducing the concept of third-order policy change, the author emphasises that sustainability initiatives can only be effective when structural reforms are implemented within the tourism governance system. This perspective provides an important framework for analysing tourism management practices in emerging destinations such as Kuakata.

International perspectives also highlight the importance of integrated coastal management and responsible tourism practices. According to the United

Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2018), sustainable coastal tourism requires environmental impact assessments, strong stakeholder collaboration, and the adoption of environmentally responsible business models within the hospitality sector. These global guidelines provide useful benchmarks for evaluating tourism practices in Kuakata.

More recent research has drawn attention to the region's growing environmental challenges. Naila (2025) presents a detailed account of environmental degradation along Kuakata Beach, particularly highlighting the increasing problem of plastic pollution. The study notes that waste such as plastic bottles, packaging materials, fishing nets, and rubber debris has spread across the beach, significantly affecting the area's natural beauty. Interviews with local fishermen reveal that although they are aware of the environmental consequences, the absence of proper waste management systems often forces them to dispose of plastic waste into the sea. The study emphasises the urgent need for integrated waste management systems, recycling facilities, and coordinated tourism and environmental policies to protect the ecological sustainability of Kuakata.

Finally, research conducted in other tourism contexts also provides useful insights for improving hospitality management practices. Nagendrakumar and Rathnayake (2022) examined the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction in the hotel industry in Sri Lanka using the SERVQUAL model. Their study measured service quality across five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Based on data collected from 376 hotel guests, the study found that all five dimensions significantly influence tourist satisfaction, with reliability and empathy playing particularly important roles. These findings highlight that tourist satisfaction is a multidimensional concept influenced by both service quality and interpersonal interactions. The study provides valuable guidance for hotel managers seeking to enhance service quality, strengthen customer

relationships, and improve the competitiveness of hospitality businesses.

Overall, the existing literature highlights that while Kuakata has significant tourism potential, the sustainability of its tourism sector depends on responsible hotel management, effective governance, environmental protection, and active participation of local communities.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in the Kuakata tourism region of the Patuakhali district in Bangladesh. Kuakata is one of the most prominent coastal tourism destinations in the country, known for its scenic coastline and unique cultural characteristics. The region has seen a rapid expansion of tourism infrastructure in recent years, particularly hotels and resorts. Given the significant role of the hospitality sector in supporting tourism and influencing local economic development, Kuakata was selected as an appropriate setting to examine the management practices and decision-making behaviours of hotel and resort operators.

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore the managerial practices, perceptions, and decision-making processes of hotel and resort operators in Kuakata. Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for examining complex social phenomena and capturing personal experiences, perceptions, and contextual insights that are difficult to quantify. As noted by Walle (1997), qualitative methods are increasingly used in tourism research to understand the human dimensions of tourism and its impacts on individuals and communities. Accordingly, the qualitative approach allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of managerial behaviour, operational challenges, and sustainability-related practices within the hospitality sector.

Primary qualitative data were collected using two main techniques: In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). In-depth interviews were conducted with hotel owners and managers to gather detailed information on hotel operations, service delivery, labour management, and

tourism-related business strategies. These interviews enabled participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and decision-making processes in managing hotel operations in the Kuakata tourism region.

In addition, key informant interviews were conducted with individuals with extensive knowledge and experience in the tourism sector in Kuakata. These informants provided broader insights into the development of tourism in the region, industry challenges, and the role of hotels and resorts in shaping tourism dynamics.

Fieldwork was conducted through several qualitative data collection strategies, including observation, field notes, audio recording, and interviews. Direct field observations were conducted to understand the operational environment of hotels and resorts. The researcher visited ten hotels and observed aspects such as service delivery, hotel infrastructure, customer interactions, and overall management practices. During the first phase of fieldwork, observations were conducted in seven hotels. The researcher introduced themselves to the hotel owner or manager, explained the purpose of the research, and obtained permission before conducting observations. Each observation session lasted approximately 50 minutes and followed ethical research practices.

Important observations and information were systematically recorded in field diaries. Keyword-based notes were taken during observations and interviews to capture relevant insights, facilitating later analysis. In cases where respondents did not permit audio recording, field notes served as the primary source of qualitative data. Where participants granted permission, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate capture of participants' responses. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the recording process, and participants were informed of the recording's purpose. Questions that could potentially cause discomfort to participants were avoided in accordance with ethical research standards.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the owners and managers of ten hotels operating in Kuakata. Among the respondents, two were hotel owners, and eight were hotel managers. In situations where the hotel owner was unavailable, the hotel manager was interviewed as the key operational informant. The selected hotels represented different geographical locations within the tourism zone, including those along the main road and those situated further inward, enabling a comparative understanding of operational contexts.

Despite careful planning, several limitations were encountered during the fieldwork. Access to hotel owners was limited because some were unavailable due to management responsibilities; therefore, information was obtained from hotel managers in such cases. Another significant challenge was the reluctance of several respondents to allow audio recording during interviews. As a result, the researcher relied heavily on detailed field notes to capture participants' information. Although extensive notes were taken during the interviews, it was sometimes difficult to record all responses simultaneously, and certain details had to be documented immediately afterwards. These constraints may have affected the completeness of some qualitative data; however, efforts were made to maintain accuracy and reliability through careful note-taking and cross-verification.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Hotel Business Origins and Entrepreneurial Experiences**

Of the 10 interviewed, two hotel owners and 8 managers had different experiences in starting a hotel business. The main reason most hoteliers started their businesses in Kuakata was the lack of alternative livelihood opportunities. Another important reason was transportation convenience. Since the distance from Barisal to Patuakhali is relatively short, it was easier for them to travel and stay connected with their place of origin. Similar findings have been observed

in coastal tourism areas of Bangladesh, where local and migrant workers engage in tourism-related activities due to limited employment options and the accessibility advantages (Islam et al., 2016).

A hotel manager said that he has been associated with the hotel and resort industry in Kuakata for more than 5 years. He used to work in Dhaka. He was a resident of the Barisal district. He joined the hotel business because there was no other field left for him to make a living. Another reason was transportation. Since the distance from Barisal to Patuakhali is short, it will be convenient for the hotel manager (age 28) to travel.

Another hotel manager said, I have been in the Kuakata hotel and resort industry for 5 months. I personally do not like the hotel business. A manager's post was vacant at the hotel. That is why I joined here. I did not have any favourite job of my own (hotel manager, age 18)

### **Significant experience and challenges before or after starting a hotel business.**

Their first challenge in setting up and running Kuakata's business was that it was difficult to work at this hotel on such a low salary in the beginning. In addition to their managerial duties, they had to clean the rooms and listen to the owners. Not only the manager's responsibilities, but also all the other responsibilities in the hotel had to be fulfilled many times. Again, some hotel owners/managers did not face any problems in the early days of their hotel businesses in Kuakata. They did what they were told. Many small hotel managers in emerging tourist destinations often face low wages, role overload, and multiple responsibilities during the early stages of business establishment, which creates significant occupational stress and adjustment challenges (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). A hotel manager said,

*"I faced some challenges in the beginning of running the business." At first, he had some problems. After that, staying in this place, "I learned*

*the tasks, then I had no more problems " (hotel manager, age 18)*

A hotel owner said there was no problem with his hotel staff obeying others' orders. Also, maintaining good relationships with the surrounding people is very beneficial for managing the hotel. Hotel managers said they faced cultural challenges and conflicts in conducting business, including how to deal with tourists, what level of bargaining was acceptable, and how to maintain good relations with locals.

### **Business Strategies and Market Differentiation**

Local hotels and resorts in Kuakata mainly focus on three strategies to attract tourists –

- a. Direct face-to-face promotion
- b. Low-fare display
- c. Providing services based on tourist preferences.

Every day, standing in front of the hotel or along the main road, they discuss with potential tourists the convenience, security, and low cost of their hotel. It is used as their main marketing tool.

Considering the tourists' diverse cultural backgrounds and food preferences, they apply cultural adaptations and personalisation to the services. For example, if not everyone can eat local food, it is possible to prepare food to the tourist's taste, sometimes serve yourself, and even have a separate kitchen if necessary. Through this, an attempt is made to increase tourist satisfaction and make the place more comfortable.

There are different types of tourists staying at my hotel; one interviewed hotel manager said they try their best to keep visitors entertained, and that they occasionally eat their food. They made an effort to feed them what they enjoy (Hotel Manager, age 25).

Although many hotels describe themselves as of general quality, they emphasise that tourists' main need is the opportunity to enjoy the beach at a low cost, safely and with satisfactory service. As a result, they tailor their service and environment to meet these expectations.

Overall, the marketing of Kuakata's hotels is dominated by people-oriented direct advertising, value-based competition, and tourist demand-based service orientation, rather than technology-based strategies (Rahman & Rahman, 2015).

### **Business Strategies and Brand Differentiation**

Most hotel owners/managers say they try to provide good service to tourists by treating them well. For all these reasons, their hotels are different from the rest, and because they are relatively close to the beach, more tourists come to them. A hotel manager said,

*"Our hotel is comparatively cheaper than other hotels in Kuakata. In general, those who want to enjoy Kuakata Beach on a budget most often stay at our hotel. Due to the relative proximity of the hotel to the beach, more tourists come to our hotel" (Hotel Manager, age 36).*

On the other hand, some hotel managers say that the facilities provided by the VIP hotels in Kuakata, such as WiFi, which is why tourists come to their hotels more, are also provided by their hotels. On the other hand, some hotel managers said that their hotels are different from other hotels in Kuakata because of the many facilities they offer—for example, an online hotel booking system, a hotel page on Facebook, and offers or discounts. The hotel owner said that,

*"Tourists who come to spend holidays with their families are more concerned about security. Hotels around the street are safer for them. Because they can help however they want. In some hotels, owners/managers maintain this privacy, noting that it differentiates*

*their hotels from others” (hotel owner, age 44).*

These findings are consistent with studies on coastal tourism in Bangladesh, which show that tourists’ hotel choices are strongly influenced by service quality, affordable pricing, proximity to attractions, perceived security, and the availability of basic digital facilities such as online booking and internet access (Rahman & Rahman, 2015; Islam et al., 2016).

### **Tourist Experiences and Hospitality Practices**

Most hotel owners/managers in Kuakata say they have good relationships with the local community and with the hotel owners. As a reason, a hotel manager (age 44) said,

*“Some tourists cannot stay in a big hotel because the cost of that hotel is too high, so we call the other hotel owner or manager and tell them that the hotel can accommodate these tourists in their hotel at a lower cost. If it were not for this relationship, it would not have been possible”.*

Some managers also said that Kuakata engaged with the local community in various ways. Locals help keep their tourism sector afloat in many ways, such as when tourists ask locals where to stay in Kuakata. Most locals recommend the hotel because they have good relationships with the owners/managers. When foreign tourists come who cannot speak Bangla, many locals speak their language so they can keep in touch.

The locals of Kuakata are cordial and friendly, and tourists have no problem with them. They have not yet faced any cultural challenges or conflicts in running their hotel business in Kuakata. Kuakata has a large Rakhine community. Due to the arrival of tourists, the Rakhine community also faces no problems. It can be said that the Rakhine community in Kuakata is prospering economically due to the arrival of tourists. Gursoy et al. (2019) argue that when residents actively support tourism activities, it leads to improved visitor experiences and shared economic benefits for the community. Community cooperation and positive host–guest interactions are critical for enhancing

tourist satisfaction and sustaining small tourism destinations.

### **Socio-Economic Transformation of Local Communities in Kuakata through Tourism-Based Hotel Industry**

The hotel and resort industry in Kuakata has become an important base for the local community's socio-economic development. The establishment and expansion of hotels has created a multidimensional source of income for the local population and has visibly reduced the unemployment rate (Horaira, 2024). Many families are now sending their children to work in the hotel industry, creating new jobs for lower and middle-educated youth. "Many parents send their children to us for jobs; we provide jobs to children who have passed SSC-HSC," notes a hotel manager (Hotel Manager, age 44).

With the increase in tourist arrivals, the local transport sector (such as vans, motorbikes, and small transport systems) is benefiting greatly. Every day, thousands of tourists use local transport to visit the beach and surrounding sights, significantly increasing the income of transport workers. For example, another manager said,

*"Thousands of tourists come every day, from van drivers to bike riders, everyone is earning a lot" (Hotel Manager, age 18).*

The growth of hotel-based tourism has also stimulated the local market economy. Locals are meeting tourists' needs by setting up food shops, handicraft shops, clothing shops, photography services, pharmacies, and other services. As a result, the financial capacity of small entrepreneurs, shopkeepers and service providers is increasing. Many are also buying land and investing in the construction of new hotels, which is adding value to the local economy.

Besides, with the increase in the number of tourist establishments and hotels, the local administration's revenue collection is also rising. The local government (mayor's office) is being strengthened financially by collecting VAT and other taxes on hotels, accelerating the region's overall development

cycle.

Overall, Kuakata's hotel industry is not only limited to providing tourism services, but it is also driving an overall socio-economic transformation with a profound and positive impact on the local community in the areas of job creation, entrepreneurship development, expansion of the transport sector, growth of the market economy, and increasing the revenue of the local administration (Horaira, 2024; Rahman & Rahman, 2015).

### **The impact of hospitality systems on tourist behaviour and hotel management**

Hotels in Kuakata serve tourists of different social and economic levels. Initially, the hotels are frequented by middle-class tourists, but upper-class and lower-class tourists are also regularly present. Tourists can have a direct impact on hotel management; their behaviour and reactions serve as an important indicator of the hotel's service development. Fatema's (2024) perceptions of service quality strongly influence their satisfaction and repeat visits, prompting hotel managers to adapt services continuously.

Middle-class and lower-class tourists usually come to their hotels, and they are generally well-behaved. If the service is not satisfactory, they try to improve those services later (Hotel Manager, age 36).

*"Tourist feedback is not always positive; sometimes, some services may not be to their liking. However, in response to the right service and tourists' demands, hotel owners or managers improve the quality of their service so that tourists return to the hotel later and also make acquaintances. He also said, "Tourists take our cards when they like our service and choose our hotel when they come back later. Sometimes they give good bakshish" (Hotel Manager, age 18).*

Hotels that actively incorporate tourist feedback and implement service innovations experience higher guest loyalty and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Chongkun, 2023).

### **Case Study: Tourist Safety and Hotel Management**

As Kuakata is a government-recognised tourist destination, tourists of all types can visit. Though the hotels do not monitor who accompanies tourists, voter ID cards are collected at the time of booking, and the police are informed if necessary. According to the experience of one of the managers of the hotel, "A girl and a boy got into the hotel. Voter ID cards are collected. He then called the police to check on the hotel. We informed the police, after which the girl's family came and took her away. Such incidents happen occasionally, and we always report them to the police," he said. This case shows that hotels follow administrative procedures to protect guests' privacy, comply with the law, and manage risks. Proper regulations and precautions ensure the safety of tourists and help maintain the hotel's sustainability and service quality. This case shows that hotels follow administrative procedures to protect guests' privacy, comply with the law, and manage risks. Proper regulations and precautions ensure the safety of tourists and help maintain the hotel's sustainability and service quality (Saleh & Mahmood, 2024).

Overall, there is a direct correlation between tourist behaviour and quality of service. Positive feedback from tourists ensures the hotel's continued operation, and negative experiences prompt hotel management to tighten rules and security measures. In the process, hotels ensure quality hospitality and maintain long-term marketing and brand values by increasing tourist satisfaction (Fatema, 2024; Nagendrakumar & Rathnayake, 2022).

### **Tourism Development and Hotel / Resort Development in Kuakata**

Kuakata's tourism industry has changed significantly and is currently on

a rapid development path. Previously, the number of hotels and resorts in the region was limited, and tourism management was low. According to one of the managers of the hotels,

*"Earlier, the situation in Kuakata was not so good. The number of hotels was very limited. Traditionally, Kuakata has changed, and hopefully, there will be more changes "(Hotel Manager, 25). The growth of tourism infrastructure, such as improved roads, online booking systems, and modern hotels, directly influences tourist inflow and spending patterns, enhancing local economic benefits (Haque & Islam, 2022).*

Currently, Kuakata's infrastructure and tourist facilities have been significantly improved. The number of tourists has increased due to improvements in the communication and transportation systems. For example, another manager of the hotel notes,

Communication was not as active before. Booking online was not possible. Now tourists can easily book rooms online, and thousands visit the beach every day (Hotel Manager, age 36). With the construction of the Padma Bridge and the opening of the railway, the transportation system has improved further, helping increase tourist flow. Furthermore, well-managed tourism facilities and service quality improvements are critical for sustaining tourist satisfaction and repeat visits, thereby encouraging the long-term development of coastal tourism destinations (Rahman et al., 2021).

The number of hotels, resorts, and facilities has also increased compared to the past. Hotels are expanding services and facilities in response to tourist demand. According to the managers, the hotel industry will continue to expand in the future as the number of tourists increases and new tourist centres are established. In the process, Kuakata's tourism industry infrastructure, economic potential and service means ensuring continuous development.

## **Hotel management according to the future development and tourist demand**

Hotels and resorts in Kuakata are planning to improve their services and facilities to meet future tourist demand. Hotel managers said that the height, number of rooms, and quality of service will be increased to provide tourists with a more comfortable and safe experience. For example, according to one manager's experience, "In the future, there is a desire to make the hotel five-story. Provision of AC and non-AC rooms, WiFi, and generators will be ensured for tourists" (Hotel Manager, Age 21).

New resorts will be set up in some hotels, and food facilities will be developed, so that tourists do not have to visit multiple hotels. "A new resort will be built next year," said a hotel manager(age 34). There will be food arrangements according to the preferences of the tourists, so that their comfort and convenience can be ensured "(Hotel Manager, age 44). Kuakta's hotel upgrades in infrastructure, technology, and service amenities directly enhance tourist satisfaction and likelihood of repeat visits, which is crucial for sustainable tourism growth (Fatema, 2024).

There are plans to add new facilities to the hotels to improve the quality of tourist services. This includes the provision of swimming pools, the expansion of rooms, the renting of rooms, and the development of other services. "The building is on the third floor. Rooms will be larger, and Wi-Fi and generators will be improved. The room rent fluctuates and is negotiated with the tourist. Online booking and bKash / Cash / Taka-Pay facility is available "(Hotel Manager, Age 18). Local government institutions play a decisive role in shaping tourism development through infrastructure provision, policy implementation, and coordination with private stakeholders. Anika et al. (2020) found that weak administrative capacity and limited local participation reduce the effectiveness of tourism planning in Kuakata.

In addition, the hotels are guarded by staff 24 hours a day, and generator service is provided to ensure safety and round-the-clock service. Chongkun (2023) hotel services, including food variety, recreational facilities, and online booking options, significantly influence tourists' overall perception and positive reviews.

This planned development and expansion strategy aims to increase the hotel's service quality in line with tourist demand, to provide a comfortable experience, and to ensure business sustainability. Rahman (2018) notes that sustainable tourism in Kuakata largely depends on the conservation of natural scenic resources and the integration of environmental management with tourism planning. It emphasises that unregulated tourism activities and weak resource management threaten the long-term sustainability of Kuakata's natural attractions.

### **Environmental Impact and Entrepreneurial Experience of Kuakata Hotels & Resorts**

Hotels and resorts in Kuakata are contributing to environmental degradation by increasing tourism. According to most managers, the increase in tourist numbers has led to more dust, garbage, and noise. For example, one manager notes that "the dust, dirt, and garbage are increasing every day as tourists arrive, creating noise" (Hotel Manager, 36). Coastal tourism can increase environmental pressure through waste generation and noise, but effective municipal management and eco-friendly practices can significantly mitigate these impacts (Islam et al., 2016). According to another manager,

*"Earlier, the sea water was much cleaner. At present, due to excessive tourists, the amount of garbage has increased, and the climate has changed a bit "(Hotel Manager, Age).*

However, some hotel managers have observed that there is no direct

environmental damage from the establishment of tourist centres, and the situation is being kept under control through regular municipal cleaning. Talukder et al. (2024) sustainable tourism development depends on the balanced integration of environmental protection, community participation, and responsible governance within the tourism sector. Unplanned infrastructure growth and weak regulatory enforcement pose significant risks to long-term sustainability in coastal tourism destinations.

As entrepreneurs, hotel owners and managers also have rich personal experience. They said that the hotel management has gained experience in business skills, communication with tourists, marketing strategies and understanding of the local community. For example, a manager said (Age 43), "In this business, I learned how to talk to tourists, convince them and manage the responsibilities of the hotel. All in all, I have not had a bad experience yet, but I have learned a lot. " Another hotel manager noted that although there have been some negative experiences, he has learned from those experiences and plans to do better in the future. Rahman & Rahman (2015) report that hotel entrepreneurs develop critical business competencies, such as operational management, customer engagement, and strategic planning, which contribute to sustainable tourism and long-term business growth. Temiraliyeva et al. (2021) argue that tourism can grow and develop in a way that endures over the long term if the economy is stable and management is effective.

This shows that hotels and resorts in Kuakata have a mixed environmental impact from tourism, with dust, garbage, and noise increasing, but local authorities' cleaning activities help mitigate these impacts. At the same time, hotel entrepreneurs are gaining rich personal and business experience, which is helpful in their future planning and development of tourist services.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study provides an in-depth understanding of Kuakata's sustainable tourism development by analysing the daily decisions, behaviours, and experiences of hotel and resort owners and managers in an ethnographic manner. The results of the study show that tourism-driven economic development in Kuakata is strengthening employment and the local economy on the one hand. At the same time, sustainability is at risk due to environmental pressures, poor governance and structural constraints. These results are closely correlated with the overall picture of coastal tourism development in Bangladesh (Rahman & Rahman, 2015; Sarker, 2024).

### **Hotel and Resort Management Decisions and Sustainability**

Research shows that hotel and resort managers in Kuakata do not make decisions based solely on the logic of profit and loss. Rather, seasonal tourist arrivals, uncertainty, social relations, local customs and weak institutional control influence their decisions. This is consistent with the concept of behavioural economics, which states that economic decisions are not always fully rational (Temiraliyeva et al., 2021). Strategies such as face-to-face promotion, bargaining, and flexible pricing are mainly used to sustain business during the off-season, reinforcing the informal character of Kuakata's tourism sector (Rahman & Rahman, 2015).

However, some hotel owners and managers have adopted responsible strategies, such as cultural sensitivity, adapting to local cuisine, receiving tourist feedback, and providing personalised service, to increase tourist satisfaction. Previous studies have also shown that quality of service, sincerity and quick response play an important role in ensuring tourist return (Nagendrakumar & Rathnayake, 2022; Fatema, 2024). However, these sustainable initiatives are dependent on individual will, as the sector lacks clear

policies and regulatory frameworks.

### **Labour Management, Employment and Social Sustainability**

Labour management is playing an important role in ensuring social sustainability in Kuakata's tourism sector. According to the study's findings, hotels and resorts have created significant employment opportunities for local SSC and HSC pass youth, which has helped reduce unemployment and diversify livelihoods (Horaira, 2024; Sarker, 2024). This is consistent with previous studies on tourism-driven socio-economic change in coastal areas (Rahman & Rahman, 2015).

At the same time, issues such as low wages, multiple responsibilities, job uncertainty and seasonal attrition have also come to the fore. These problems reflect weaknesses in the overall labour structure of Bangladesh's tourism and hospitality sector, where labour protection and regulation are relatively weak (Sharpley & Telfar, 2015). From a behavioural point of view, workers and managers accept these conditions as normal in the absence of alternative employment, which can harm social wellbeing in the long run.

### **Community relations and cultural ties**

One positive aspect of the study is the relatively good relationship among the hotel owners of Kuakata, the local population, and the indigenous Rakhine community. Support from locals, cooperation between hotels, and foreign tourists are playing an important role in making tourism activities sustainable. These results support the theoretical idea that local participation strengthens tourism development (Gursoy et al., 2019; Hassan & Mahmud, 2018).

However, the absence of formal local participation in tourism planning leaves open the possibility of future social inequality and conflict. Previous

studies have warned that neglecting local participation weakens social sustainability in the long run (Hassan & Mahmud, 2018).

### **Adaptation to tourist behaviour, feedback and service**

Research clearly shows that tourists' behaviour and reactions directly affect hotel management. Based on complaints and tourists' feedback, the quality of service has improved, security has been strengthened, and the management strategy has been revised. Hotels that actively seek tourist feedback are more likely to see a return and positive campaign (Nagendrakumar & Rathnayake, 2022; Chongkun, 2023; Rahman et al., 2021).

At the same time, the presence of security problems and illegal activities in some cases indicates weak control measures. Although some hotels comply with administrative regulations, overall poor oversight remains a major challenge for sustainable tourism (Rahman & Rahman, 2015; UNDP, 2024).

### **Environmental impacts and governance constraints**

The expansion of tourism has led to increased waste and noise pollution, as well as added pressure on the coastal environment. These results are consistent with previous studies that have explicitly addressed environmental degradation in coastal tourism (Islam et al., 2016; Naila, 2025). Although municipal clean-up activities provide temporary relief, the lack of integrated waste management and environmental policies poses long-term risks (Hall, 2011; UNWTO, 2018).

### **The importance of sustainable tourism**

Overall, this discussion shows that the development of sustainable tourism in Kuakata depends on the interaction between individual behavioural decisions and structural regimes. Although the hotel and resort sector plays an

important role in economic growth and job creation, weak policies, informality, and environmental pressures make taxation uncertain. Temiraliyeva et al. (2021) showed that an effective institutional framework, along with stable economic management, is essential for long-term tourism development.

Therefore, to ensure sustainable tourism in Kuakata, it is essential to implement clear policies, enforce strong environmental regulations, protect workers, and promote active participation by the local population. Sustainable initiatives at the individual level will not be effective in the long run without structural reforms and coordinated policy initiatives (Hall, 2011; UNDP, 2024).

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The findings of the study have various implications for the management of tourism in the region. First, the hotel and tourism operators must adopt environmentally friendly practices. For example, the hotel management should introduce better waste management systems. Moreover, the use of plastic should be minimised. Furthermore, the hotel management should raise awareness among tourists to minimise the negative impacts of tourism. These practices would minimise the negative environmental impacts of tourism.

Secondly, the hotel management must strengthen cooperation with the indigenous people. For example, the hotel management should hire locals. Moreover, the hotel management should maintain cordial relations with the region's indigenous people, in this case, the Rakhine people.

Thirdly, government authorities must introduce appropriate regulations to address illegal hotels and other illegal practices in the tourism sector. Better government would improve the quality of tourism services.

Finally, the hotel managers should focus on improving service quality through staff training, online booking systems, and customer feedback

mechanisms, thereby enhancing tourist satisfaction and, in turn, Kuakata's reputation as a sustainable tourism destination.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that the hotel and resort industry in Kuakata plays an important role in promoting sustainable tourism, local livelihoods, and overall socio-economic transformation. The study's findings reveal a dual reality in the tourism sector. On the one hand, many hotel owners and managers have adopted adaptive business strategies, such as offering low-cost services, cultural adaptation, direct marketing, tourist-centred hospitality, and collaboration with local communities. These initiatives contribute positively to generating local employment, expanding the market, and increasing tourist satisfaction. As a result, social and economic sustainability is being ensured, and Kuakata is further strengthening its position as a developing coastal tourism destination. On the other hand, the study has also identified several significant challenges, including seasonal fluctuations in tourist numbers, infrastructural limitations, environmental degradation, and weaknesses in governance. Unauthorised hotel operations, irregular accommodation arrangements, and occasional illegal activities pose long-term threats to sustainable tourism. In particular, increasing waste, noise pollution, and excessive pressure on natural resources make maintaining environmental balance even more complex.

Overall, this study concludes that sustainable tourism in Kuakata cannot rely solely on business innovation and market expansion. It requires effective governance, strict legal regulations, environmental accountability, and active collaboration among hotel owners, local communities (including the Rakhine community), and policymakers. Only through integrating social and environmental considerations with economic incentives can long-term, inclusive, and sustainable tourism development be achieved in Kuakata.

## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Although this study has provided valuable insights into the management practices of hotels and resorts in Kuakata, several areas warrant further research. Future studies could include a larger sample of hotels and tourism stakeholders to better understand the tourism landscape.

Comparative studies on sustainable tourism management practices at other coastal tourism destinations in Bangladesh may also offer important insights. Additionally, researchers could conduct quantitative studies to evaluate how tourism development affects the economy, the environment, and local communities.

Moreover, gathering perspectives from tourists and residents, including the indigenous Rakhine community, could shed light on the impact of tourism development on both the region and the community.

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