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## Exploring the Potentials and Challenges of Agritourism in Bangladesh

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### **Abstract**

*The combination of tourism with agriculture, or agritourism, has become well-known around the world as a viable strategy for rural development, income diversification, and cultural preservation. This study sought to investigate the potential of agritourism in Bangladesh, assess its present state, and identify the primary difficulties obstructing its development. The research utilized a cross-sectional survey methodology to gather essential data. The stratified random sampling method was employed to select 100 respondents from various regions of Bangladesh, mostly comprising tourism-related enterprises, tourists, and prospective residents. A survey questionnaire was constructed with three sections: Awareness, Interest and Perception of Agritourism; Agritourism Potentials; and Key Challenges. The analysis was conducted utilizing SPSS version 26.0. The research indicated that internet outreach is the most efficacious method for engaging potential stakeholders in the agritourism sector. The research revealed a disparity between the expansive definition of agritourism and the perceptions of the study's respondents. A substantial segment perceives it mostly from a commercial or hospitality perspective rather than an experience one. The data indicates that although Bangladesh possesses culture, hospitality, and a general need conducive to agritourism, it is deficient in training, funding methods, and the desire to invest in tourism to implement it effectively. The study advocates for the establishment of a National Agritourism Policy, enhancement of rural infrastructure, implementation of capacity-building initiatives for farmers and local entrepreneurs, promotion of public-private partnerships, and formulation of effective marketing and branding strategies to harness agritourism's potential. Prioritizing sustainability, community engagement, and environmentally conscious behaviors is crucial for enduring success.*

**Keywords:** Agritourism, Current scenario, potential, challenges, Bangladesh.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, tourism has emerged as the foremost business in the global economy (Smith & Eadington, 1992). The expansion of innovative new destinations that represent the historical, cultural, and natural domains has made tourism more alluring and majestic in both developed and developing countries (UNWTO, 2019). Since achieving independence in 1971, Bangladesh has not provided this burgeoning sector with the essential infrastructure and skills required for its growth (Rahman, 2015). The country is undeniably endowed with remarkable natural resources and possesses significant historical and cultural landmarks. Consequently, tourism may serve as a significant contributor to the national economy and substantially aid in the sustainable development of the country (Hassan & Shahnewaz, 2014). Agritourism, a relatively recent worldwide tourism idea, has the potential to become an emergent business in this country (Islam & Afrin, 2019). Agritourism has arisen as a strategic instrument for enhancing a sustainable rural economy through the diversification of agricultural income, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the promotion of environmental care (Phillip, Hunter, & Blackstock, 2010). Agritourism is a broad term that includes a variety of activities that link farming with tourism. It is a multifaceted way to revitalize rural areas (Flanigan, Blackstock, & Hunter, 2015). It includes going to working farms, doing farm labor, staying in rural areas, and buying things made in the area. Agritourism is a big part of economic growth and community resilience since it diversifies agricultural revenues, creates jobs, and brings people to rural regions (Tew & Barbieri, 2012). It is also very important for keeping traditional agricultural methods alive, supporting local food systems, and spreading the word about sustainable agriculture (Barbieri, 2013). Countries including China, Italy, Thailand, and the United States have used agritourism to help rural economies, raise awareness of environmental issues, and get people more involved in their communities (Yang, 2012; Mastronardi et al., 2015; Srisomyong & Meyer, 2015; Chase, 2015). Bangladesh has a lot of promise for agritourism since it has fertile land, a wide range of crops, and strong rural traditions (Ullah, 2018). However, a systematic study has not yet looked into the field very much (Ahmed & Begum, 2020). Hence, this study bears immense significance, as it investigates this unexplored sector of tourism in Bangladesh.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism has become one of the most important forms of international trade. In terms of export revenue, international tourists rank alongside chemicals, fuels, and automobiles (UNWTO, 2019). It serves as a significant source of income and a crucial category of goods for many developing nations (Smith & Eadington, 1992). Tourism creates employment opportunities and encourages growth (Rahman, 2015). Numerous countries rely on tourism for revenue generated through providing products and services to visitors (Hassan & Shahnewaz, 2014). Agritourism has become a vital part of rural development, contributing to economic, social, and environmental progress in many areas (Phillip, Hunter, & Blackstock, 2010). Studies show that agritourism benefits rural communities' economies (Tew & Barbieri, 2012). It boosts local economies by creating jobs and revenue, as shown in various reports (Flanigan, Blackstock, & Hunter, 2015). Some argue that agritourism supports small businesses and promotes diverse economic activities, aiding local development (Barbieri, 2013). An article about Italy states that agritourism provides additional income for farmers (Mastronardi et al., 2015), while another about Ukraine suggests it can shift from being a minor part of farm family income and regional economic stability to a major contributor (Petrenko & Shevchenko, 2018). Other researchers highlight how agritourism benefits the environment by fostering community engagement and resilience (Chase, 2015). Additionally, the connection between sustainable agriculture and agritourism serves as a model for revitalizing rural areas in China (Yang, 2012). A plan for sustainable agritourism in Zimbabwe stresses the importance of community involvement and

environmental conservation (Moyo & Ndlovu, 2019). Some studies explore how agritourism can preserve cultural values while promoting economic growth (Ahmed & Begum, 2020). They suggest that agritourism can leverage cultural traditions and local resources to create unique experiences for visitors, benefiting host communities (Islam & Afrin, 2019). Bangladesh has the potential to develop into a long-term tourism destination within a region rich in natural beauty (Ullah, 2018). As a developing nation with a high population density, many people here are capable of working in tourism. They can grow crops on their land and contribute to tourism by participating in it (Rahman, 2015). When properly managed, agriculture-based tourism can help address issues related to overpopulation (Hassan & Shahnewaz, 2014). Research indicates that areas like Sylhet, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Mymensingh, and Jessore have significant opportunities for agritourism, including tours of tea plantations, fruit orchards, flower farms, and rural homestays (Ullah, 2018; Islam & Afrin, 2019). Agritourism can help farmers earn extra income, create jobs—especially for women and young people—and educate others about rural culture and the environment (Ahmed & Begum, 2020). Despite the extensive literature on agritourism and rural development, comprehensive and rigorous research on the topic remains limited (Ahmed & Begum, 2020). Most existing studies focus only on specific regions, subtopics, or theories and lack a complete, data-driven overview of global research trends (Flanigan et al., 2015). This study aims to fill that gap by conducting a systematic review of research related to agritourism and rural development.

### III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This research examines the agritourism industry in Bangladesh. The study specifically sought to examine stakeholders' opinions of agritourism and the opportunities and challenges associated with this burgeoning industry.

### IV. RESEARCH METHOD

This study, titled "Exploring the Potentials and Challenges of Agritourism in Bangladesh," employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey approach to objectively assess the current state of agritourism, along with its potentials and challenges in Bangladesh. This approach facilitates the acquisition of a "snapshot" of stakeholder perspectives by gathering quantitative data from a substantial sample at a particular moment in time. The study used stratified random sampling to provide an appropriate representation of the population from diverse stakeholder groups and geographical regions, including divisional or ecological zones. The sample typically comprises three distinct strata: agritourism company operators (33), tourists (33), and local community members (34). Data collection is accomplished using structured questionnaires sent online. The instruments employed Likert scales, such as 5-point scales from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," to assess attitudes regarding the current state, potential, and specific issues, including bureaucratic obstacles, insufficient training, seasonal variability, and access to funding. Descriptive statistics are utilized on the data using software like SPSS for analysis. This research classifies the present situation of agritourism by analyzing frequency distributions and percentages, such as "percent of operators identified a lack of knowledge as a primary constraint." The analysis also concentrated on measures of central tendency, including the mean and standard deviation, to rank the perceived "potentials" (such as the preservation of cultural traditions and market growth) and the severity of "challenges" (such as policy deficiencies and infrastructure inadequacies) based on stakeholder perceptions. This descriptive approach yields empirical data to delineate operational realities, quantify the disparity between potential and actual performance, and provide evidence-based policy recommendations for sustainable rural development. It provides measurable insights into the present state of agritourism in Bangladesh, which might inspire policy recommendations.

## V. FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

A survey questionnaire was constructed with three sections: Awareness, Interest, and Perception of Agritourism; Agritourism Potentials; and Key Challenges for collecting data for the present study. The analysis of the collected data was conducted utilizing SPSS version 26.0. The results of the analysis have been described below:

### Awareness, Interest, and Perception of Agritourism

Questions	Options	Column N %
Are you interested in starting or participating in agritourism activities?	Very interested	35.0%
	Somewhat interested	39.0%
	Neutral	12.0%
	Not very interested	8.0%
How did you learn about agritourism?	Not interested at all	6.0%
	From other farmers/neighbors	15.0%
	From agricultural extension officers	18.0%
	From television/radio/newspapers	21.0%
	From social media (Facebook, YouTube, etc.)	35.0%
In your opinion, what is agritourism?	From tourism operators/agencies	11.0%
	Inviting visitors to experience farm life and activities	37.0%
	Selling agricultural products directly to tourists	29.0%
	Setting up a restaurant on the farm	15.0%
	Creating a resort in a rural area	11.0%
	I am not sure	8.0%
What types of agritourism activities would you be most interested in offering?	Farm tours and nature walks	20.0%
	Selling fresh produce/farm products to visitors	21.0%
	Letting visitors participate in farming activities (planting, harvesting, fishing, milking)	25.0%
	Providing farm-stay accommodation	17.0%
	Serving traditional/local food to visitors (catering)	6.0%
	Demonstrating traditional crafts or cooking methods	5.0%
What is your main motivation for considering agritourism?	Organizing cultural performances or festivals	6.0%
	To earn additional/supplementary income	30.0%
	To create a business for family members	24.0%
	To share agricultural knowledge with others	6.0%
	To find a market for my farm products	24.0%
	To utilize unused space or resources on my farm	16.0%

The data analysis shows that agritourism in Bangladesh is a complex issue. While there is strong interest among potential participants, there are significant gaps in their understanding of what agritourism is and how it functions in practice. The data also indicates substantial market potential because the target audience is highly interested. A total of 74% of respondents said they

are either "Very interested" (35%) or "Somewhat interested" (39%) in starting or participating in agritourism activities. This majority suggests a strong latent supply or willingness to engage in the sector. Only a small portion of respondents are not interested, with 14% saying "Not very interested" (8%) or "Not interested at all" (6%). The way people learn about agritourism reflects a shift in knowledge transfer from traditional to digital media. 35% of respondents cited social media (such as Facebook and YouTube) as the best sources of information. Television, radio, and newspapers (21%) and agricultural extension officers (18%) remain important, but less so than social media. Reliance on "other farmers/neighbors" (15%) is moderate, and only 11% of respondents learned about agritourism from tourism operators or agencies. The data also reveals that the most common ideas about agritourism are "Inviting visitors to experience farm life and activities" (37%) and "Selling agricultural products directly to tourists" (29%). Meanwhile, 26% of people believe agritourism equates to hospitality services like "Setting up a restaurant" (15%) or "Creating a resort" (11%). The top three activities considered most connected to actual farm work are "Visitors participating in farming activities" (25%), "Selling fresh produce" (21%), and "Farm tours" (20%). Interest in activities such as "Serving traditional/local food" (6%), "Demonstrating traditional crafts" (5%), and "Cultural performances" (6%) is low. The main reason for participation is "To earn additional/supplementary income" (30%). Regarding motivation, a significant 78% of respondents are driven by direct financial benefits or starting a business, along with "To create a business for family members" (24%) and "To find a market for my farm products" (24%). Only 6.60% mentioned "to share agricultural knowledge," and 16% cited "to use unused space".

### Agritourism Potentials

#### Descriptive Statistics

Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bangladesh is a land of unique crops and livestock that would interest visitors.	100	1	5	3.28	1.341
The country's diverse natural beauty might be beneficial for agritourism.	100	1	5	3.64	1.168
The country's cultural/heritage attractions may be useful for promoting agritourism.	100	1	5	3.12	1.217
Bangladeshis' innate hospitality could facilitate agritourism activities.	100	1	5	3.83	1.272
Many institutions provide basic training for operating a small tourism business.	100	1	4	2.76	.911
The local community in this country would support the development of agritourism.	100	1	5	3.20	1.271
Young people in this country are very interested in tourism-related work.	100	1	5	3.48	1.210
I believe there is demand from city dwellers in this country to visit rural farms.	100	1	5	3.68	1.197
Tourists in this country would be willing to pay to participate in agricultural activities.	100	1	4	2.68	1.162
People could sell farm products directly to visitors at a better price.	100	2	5	3.76	.955
Valid N (listwise)	100				

The table displays the participants' perceptions concerning the potential of agrotourism in Bangladesh. The dataset's highest mean scores are for valuable cultural assets, which means that the people who answered the survey think that Bangladesh's social structure is very good for agritourism. The term "Bangladeshis' natural hospitality could make agritourism activities easier" got the highest mean score (Mean = 3.83, SD = 1.272). Additionally, the belief that "young people are very interested in tourism-related work" (Mean = 3.48, SD = 1.210) shows that people are hopeful about finding work. In addition, the participants' agreement with "The country's diverse natural beauty might be beneficial" (Mean = 3.64, SD = 1.168) shows that people know that Bangladesh's beautiful and varied landscapes are a key factor in attracting tourists. The table also shows that the people who took part strongly believe that there is a market for agritourism in Bangladesh. Also, the people who responded to the survey strongly believe that "city dwellers want to visit rural farms" (Mean = 3.68, SD = 1.197). The statement about selling "farm products directly to visitors at a better price" has a mean of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 0.955, which is the lowest of the three. Even though people are very hopeful about culture and demand, the data show that there is a lot of doubt about the institutional and financial frameworks needed to support agritourism. The statement "Many institutions provide basic training for operating a small tourism business" had a low mean score of 2.76 (SD = 0.911). The statement "Tourists in this country would be willing to pay to participate in agricultural activities" had the lowest mean of all the data (Mean = 2.68, SD = 1.162). The data also shows that people are somewhat hopeful about social cohesion but not sure about institutional frameworks. The average for "The local community would support the development of agritourism" is 3.20 (SD = 1.271). The statement about "cultural/heritage attractions" being useful for promotion got a lower mean score (Mean = 3.12, SD = 1.217) than the statement about natural beauty.

### Challenges Related to Agritourism

#### Descriptive Statistics

Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I lack sufficient knowledge about how to start agritourism	100	1	5	3.80	1.206
I don't know how to market or promote a tourism business	100	1	5	3.64	1.235
Access to bank loans or credit is difficult	100	1	5	3.72	1.173
Poor road conditions make it difficult for tourists to reach my farm	100	1	5	2.68	1.370
Unreliable electricity supply limits what I can offer visitors	100	1	5	2.88	1.266
Internet/mobile network connectivity is poor in my area	100	1	5	3.38	1.362
There is a lack of training programs on agritourism	100	2	5	3.94	1.052
Government support for agritourism is insufficient	100	1	5	3.46	1.290
I worry about potential conflicts with neighbors or the community	100	1	5	2.90	1.367
Security concerns are a major threat to agritourism in this country	100	1	5	3.50	1.275
Valid N (listwise)	100				

The table presents the analysis of the data about the Challenges of Agritourism in Bangladesh, in

the form of descriptive statistics. The highest mean scores in the dataset are challenges related to the serious lack of human capital and institutional support. This shows that the main problems in the agritourism sector are cognitive and educational, not physical. The statement "There is a lack of training programs on agritourism" had the highest mean of all the data (Mean = 3.94, SD = 1.052). Most people who answered the survey agreed with the statement "I don't know enough about how to start agritourism" (Mean = 3.80, SD = 1.206). Besides, the phrase "I don't know how to market or promote a tourism business" (Mean = 3.64, SD = 1.235) shows that people are not getting enough training. Moreover, according to the data presented in the table, getting financing was a big structural problem. "Getting a bank loan or credit is hard" had a high mean (Mean = 3.72, SD = 1.173). Furthermore, people who answered the survey think that "Government support for agritourism is insufficient" (Mean = 3.46, SD = 1.290). In addition, "Security concerns are a major threat to agritourism" (Mean = 3.50, SD = 1.275) shows that people are moderately to very worried about safety. "Internet/mobile network connectivity is poor in my area" (Mean = 3.38, SD = 1.362) is a moderate concern among the participants. This is especially important because earlier data showed that social media (35%) is the main way people learn about agritourism. "Poor road conditions make it hard for tourists to get to my farm" had a mean score of 2.68 and a standard deviation of 1.370, which is not very high. In this case, the high standard deviation (1.370) shows that experiences vary a lot; some people have serious accessibility problems, while others do not. "Unreliable electricity supply limits what I can offer visitors" (Mean = 2.88, SD = 1.266) is another concern that is lower on the list. The second-lowest mean (Mean = 2.90, SD = 1.367) was "I worry about possible conflicts with neighbors or the community." This is in line with earlier data that showed people thought the community was supportive (Mean = 3.20) and that people were naturally hospitable (Mean = 3.83). This suggests that social cohesion is probably a good thing rather than a bad thing.

## VI. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The results show that many people in Bangladesh are interested in agritourism, but there are significant gaps in their understanding of what it is and how to implement it. Most Bangladeshis are eager to participate because they need the income. The findings reveal that most participants are connected to technology, mainly through social media, for learning about this emerging tourism sector. Since social media is not a place for formal and censored information, many people have misconceptions about agritourism. Therefore, for agritourism to succeed, we must bridge the gap between how people currently perceive it, primarily focused on sales and hospitality infrastructure, and how it should be viewed, which also includes cultural assets and low-cost activities (Dhaka Courier, 2019). The fact that tourism operators lack opportunities to educate Bangladeshis about this sector (Ahmed & Jahan, 2013) further complicates the situation. The findings also show that interested entrepreneurs need better connections with institutions and more training to convert their interest into profitable tourism products. An analysis of related statements indicates a gap between perceived assets and perceived viability (Ahmed & Jahan, 2013). Participants believe agritourism has the most potential in socio-cultural assets like hospitality and youth interest, and in market demand, such as urban markets and direct sales potential. These aspects form a strong foundation for growth. However, the main barriers are the lack of training provided by institutions and the reluctance of people to pay for such training (Ishtiaque, 2014). Therefore, unlocking agritourism's full potential in Bangladesh requires efforts beyond promotion. Strategic priorities should include establishing formal training programs and developing business models that clearly demonstrate the value of authentic agricultural experiences, which will help change the misconception that people won't pay for them. If these structural gaps remain unaddressed, the country's rich cultural and market potential for agritourism may never be realized (Daily Sun, 2017).

The data also indicate that the biggest obstacles to agritourism growth are not infrastructure or social conflicts but a lack of knowledge, funding, and institutional support. Respondents see significant gaps in human resources and government backing, though they consider rural infrastructure issues like roads and electricity easier to tackle (Ahmed & Jahan, 2013). This near consensus suggests many believe that institutional capacity for building skills is almost nonexistent. Potential entrepreneurs lack the essential knowledge to operate effectively in this combined agriculture-tourism sector without formal training. This highlights a shortage of training and indicates that individuals recognize their own skill gaps (Ishtiaque, 2014). Even among those interested, there's a clear sense that they don't know how to turn their interest into action. Investors often need to spend money on infrastructure like signs, bathrooms, seating areas, and activity materials (Rasul & Manandhar, 2009), so they require financial support (Daily Sun, 2017). However, many participants believe that accessing formal financial services is difficult, which means interested entrepreneurs may need microfinance or government-subsidized programs to secure funding. This suggests that the public sector has yet to make agritourism a priority through policies, subsidies, or promotional efforts (Dhaka Courier, 2019). Since agritourism falls under both the agriculture and tourism ministries, this perceived gap may reflect institutional fragmentation.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The participants overwhelmingly feel that they haven't had enough training on agritourism, which calls for immediate action. Training in agriculture and tourism needs to be broadened to encompass agritourism business development. Training ought to involve things like business planning, customer service, pricing strategies, and marketing.
2. Because agritourism enterprises are a diverse assortment of businesses, financial institutions and microfinance organizations ought to provide specialized loans to new businesses in the agritourism industry.
3. Training programs should take advantage of YouTube, Facebook, and other digital platforms to disseminate knowledge rather than depending on conventional institutional training. This is because past evidence indicates that a significant number of individuals are interested in social media as a source of information.
4. Even though real security may be different, the idea of security as a threat needs to be addressed through community policing programs, the presence of tourist police in agritourism areas, and campaigns to raise public awareness.
5. Agritourism development does not need to wait for significant upgrades to rural infrastructure since people are not very concerned about roads and power. This implies that the growth of agritourism may begin immediately. One of the first things that may be done is to concentrate on making it simpler to obtain money and exchanging information, both of which are considered to be more urgent issues.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Agritourism encompasses any agricultural activity that attracts guests to a farm or ranch. A genuine farm is characterized by visitor engagement with farmers, participation in agricultural activities, and the opportunity to taste food directly from the farm. Individuals frequently conflate the terms "rural tourism" with "agritourism." The study investigated the agritourism sector in Bangladesh. The research aimed to investigate stakeholders' perspectives on agritourism, as well as the potential and challenges inherent in this emerging sector of tourism. The findings reveal that a considerable proportion of persons in Bangladesh remain uninformed about agritourism. The findings of this study indicate that agritourism have significant potential in this nation due to the high level of public interest in this emerging sector. The research

indicate that the industry has specific challenges due to insufficient training and financial support. The researcher has proposed strategies for the prospective expansion of this segment of the tourism business in this nation.

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