



# **Floating Market-Based Slow Tourism: Harnessing Climate-Based Entrepreneurship towards Community Development in the South-Western Region of Bangladesh**

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** Slow tourism is a new, alternative form of tourism competing with mass tourism, as tapping its full potential can be utilised in riverine and flood-prone countries. The key purpose of this study is to find the elements of slow tourism in the southwestern part of Bangladesh, known for its serene floating market, and assess its features that are compatible with the principles of slow tourism.

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**Methodology:** This research adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods such as narrative interviews, key informant interviews and FGDs were used to collect primary data. The southern region of Bangladesh, is famous for floating market and was selected as a study site.

**Findings:** To incorporate the floating market through the broader lens of “Slow Tourism”, synthesising the attributes of slow tourism was significant. As the attributes of the floating market supported the characteristics of slow tourism to a certain degree, the floating markets and adjacent areas were a suitable premise for developing the concept of slow tourism.

**Originality:** Since there hasn't been ample research on slow tourism in Bangladesh, this study can transform the perception of conventional tourism into alternative tourism. It provides tourists with spiritual tranquillity in the desired destinations of floating markets and a leeway to connect with local people, history and cultural products rendering a mutual reciprocity for future research.

*Keywords: Slow tourism; floating market; community development; climate-based entrepreneurship.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The term “slow” was once invoked as a derogatory term signifying one’s inability to “carry on” or “engage” in the competitive realms of work and life [1]. Nonetheless, the connotation of slowness has evolved into a positive metaphor, undermining the supremacy of global capitalism and encouraging energetic consumers to embrace a much-needed work-life balance [2,3]. Global social movements have created an opportunity for a slow worldview; in particular, the Slow Food and Slow Cities (CittaSlow) movements, which originated in Italy in the 1980s and 1990s, inspiring the concept of slow travel. Consequently, both concepts have been institutionalized by academic purview and developed as a subject of scholarly investigation of slow tourism [4,5]; emphasising the local consumption of food based on gastronomic history or organic values, including the sensory engagement of the journey reflecting local distinctiveness [1,6].

The definition of Slow Tourism lacks comprehensiveness and generality, underpinning non-universal subjectivity among scholars [7]; however, it is often characterised as journey-oriented travel with an emphasis on reducing tourist consumption [8]. As a holistic idea, slow tourism aims to minimise carbon emissions by focusing on sustainable means of transportation, adopting extended stays at locations to engage with and respect local cultures, and supporting local businesses by purchasing nearby produced goods. In addition to the practical aspects of slow tourism, the movement aspires to include quality experiences with destination attachment and satisfaction for visitors [8].

Numerous academic researchers have organised and contemplated the central view of slow

tourism around various tourist destinations and places, signifying constructions, conflicts, and complexities in the term “Slow” tourism [1,8,9]. Slow travel advocates emphasise the journey more than the destination, stressing the experience of a place by travelling slowly through the landscape and surroundings [9]. Slow “mobilities” encompass a range of “spatio-temporal” activities, immersive modes of mobility, and ethical connections based on the need to connect in specific ways [1]. Sweetman et al. [10] interpreted the term “slow” within the “qualities of rhythm”, speed, “tempo”, and “velocity” that are shaped by the travellers’ sensory and emotional contact with the environment. Moreover, various academic disciplines, including history, sociology, anthropology, cultural heritage, development studies, and tourism and hospitality management in varied world regions, have significantly contributed to the body of knowledge on slow tourism [1].

Floating markets are predominant in South-East Asia, particularly in Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam, as well as in the regions of India (Dal Lake, Kashmir) and Bangladesh’s south-west coastal districts (for example, the floating guava market in Bhimruli). Society and economy have been inextricably interwoven with rivers and water ways since ancient times in these parts of the world, functioning as significant modes of transportation, water sources used for agriculture and community, and locations for cultural events of many kinds [11].

The floating market in waterways and the concept of slow tourism seem to be rather far-fetched; hence, there has been a minimal attempt in scholarly works to interweave these concepts. As the body of research on the relationship between water and tourism has advanced, it has increasingly focused on

inclusiveness, adopting a more comprehensive approach that is less abstract. This shift in emphasis reflects a growing recognition of the need to consider the impact of water-related tourism on individuals, their social relationships, and livelihoods [12]. Conway and Timms [8] suggest that the narrow space of waterways coupled with underdeveloped space and remote locations facilitates slow tourism. They further find slow movements that are undertaken in a narrowboat on waterways accentuate memorable sensory experiences and integrate people and places. In essence, floating markets in waterways can deconstruct the sense of desolation, and closeness to water and nature, recognising the past as well as the perceived experience of authenticity [13].

A relevant qualitative research by Fallon [14] observed the congruency of waterways and slow tourism as both are tailored into an adaptable pairing since the concepts of slow travel and tourism are manifested in this setting. The slow-paced vacation experience is encouraged by waterways, shaped by their geographic locations constrained by space, thus providing meaningful experiences in tune with quality time, harnessing ecology and diversity [15]. The first significant effort to establish a cohesive body of work to construct river-based tourism was found in Glover and Prideaux's literature [16], covering visitors' utilization of major riverine systems, fluvial hydrology, river management, and literature centered on river travel. Erfurt-Cooper [17] primarily explored the viability of rivers and waterways as a balanced approach to developing and managing natural tourist resources, although no significant work has connected slow tourism with riverine tourism. It implied some aspects of slow tourism, such as "taking time" to explore rivers and waterways, encouraging "culture and heritage," "relaxing setting", and engaging the "local community" [17]. The principles of slow tourism somewhat ambiguously attach to the discourse associated with the floating market.

Since ancient times, the regions of Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia have been endowed with the complex intricacy of rivers and waterways, integrating the social and economic fabric of the inhabitants living in these regions [11]. Rivers and waterways epitomise the enduring river culture in the daily lives of the people who live in these areas, providing food, transportation channels, water for agriculture and places for celebrating cultural events [11,18]. Floating

markets have traditionally been a vital feature of riverine cultures, facilitating the trading and exchange of local agricultural goods [19]. Floating markets such as "Klong Lat Mayom" and "Amphawa" provide souvenirs and local products, traditional river-based culture, a technology-free atmosphere, and the roots of Thai culture, making them ideal for slow tourism [20].

Specific features of a floating market are embedded in the ideas of slow tourism, typically located in rural settings, far from the commercial centres of major cities, and their intertwined geography of rivers and waterways. The philosophy of slow tourism attempts to familiarise a common mode of transportation such as boats, thereby rendering the experience authentic and aesthetically pleasant. Caffyn [9] proposed secondary places as opposed to a single or central destination to encourage slowness. Hence, the adjacent regions of Bhimruli in Bangladesh can qualify as prospective sites for fostering slow tourism due to their particular geographical features. Historically, floating markets have served as a principal means of trade and exchange of local agricultural products, mostly in rural Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and some parts of India [21]. The Bhimruli region in the southern part of Bangladesh hosts the largest floating market, renowned for its guava production, along with the traditional craftsmanship of boat builders in the Atghar and Kuriana regions, diversifying this growing tourist destination; moreover, the completion of the Padma bridge has significantly improved accessibility [22].

The identification of a water-based community refers to the special characteristics of a community residing along a major river or canal, exploring the uniqueness of its residents' close relationship with water. The connotation of community differs across varied domains; geographically, it identifies the neighbourhood where the community resides [23], but socially, it is self-defining and fosters a sense of shared purpose and common goals, reflecting shared history and cultural values [24]. Similarly, communities are characterized as "heterogeneous, stratified, and sites of power relations" [25]; hence, the demands of the communities are diversified and heterogeneous [26]. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that community development has been practiced for as long as there have been communities and that it is a tool for empowering community members

to build connected communities. The guiding concepts and philosophy of slow tourism are founded on the idea of simplicity; nonetheless, the outcome of this strategy can render significant effects on social stability and enhance the resilience of local communities, while pursuing a comprehensive approach towards community development [27, 28]. Conway and Timms [8] suggest that the “Holistic Umbrella” of the slow tourism concept should be integrated with community-based tourism while concurrently absorbing the connotations of alternative-based tourism to facilitate ecotourism, pro-poor tourism, agricultural tourism, and heritage tourism.

Bangladesh is vulnerable due to climate change, combined with global and regional variables, as well as along with geographical location [29]. Climate-based entrepreneurship is a relatively new concept, particularly in Bangladesh; thus, it is important to prioritise its importance in addressing climate challenges with various entrepreneur groups. In general, climate-based entrepreneurship should be oriented towards growth potential, underlining the concept of “small and growing businesses” by harnessing the essence of “opportunity,” and “transformation” in the social context of community development [30]. Particularly, the growth of entrepreneurship must be justified based on “institutional fragmentation” [31], focusing on the multifaceted process of recognizing the reconstruction and reorientation of the whole economic and social system. Similarly, the floating markets in Bangladesh leverage adverse climatic conditions to enable the local community to efficiently use the concept of entrepreneurship underlying this region's socioeconomic background. Since the settings and authenticity of these floating markets have been manifestations of a natural process for centuries, a gradual adaptation of the local community recognises this spontaneity of climate change.

This study adopts the concept of slow tourism with regard to analysing the adaptability of floating markets located in the south-western regions of Bangladesh. Specifically, this paper aims to assess the merits of the floating market sites of Bhimruli, Atghar and Kuriana located in south-western Bangladesh to provide justification as an alternative segment for the slow tourism to explore river-based markets, culture, nature, and economy. It also explores locals' perceptions of community involvement, discovering local livelihood opportunities, tailoring the adverse

climatic conditions as a means of entrepreneurship development.

In Bangladesh, limited research has been conducted to interpret the underlying dynamism associated with the floating market; hence its articulation with slow tourism has been unexplored in academia. This study intends to focus on slow tourism in floating markets that may foster relationships with the environment and host community, maintain biodiversity, mitigate the climate crisis, and develop climate-based entrepreneurship. Furthermore, each attribute has been addressed with the characteristics of floating markets to determine whether it is a potential site for “Slow Tourism”.

## 2. RESEARCH APPROACH

The study aims to assess the floating market locations of Bhimruli, Atghar and Kuriana in South-Western Bangladesh to justify an alternative sector for slow tourism in the light of river-based marketplaces, culture, ecology, and economics. The underlying philosophy of slow tourism is centred on gathering information about the natural and archaeological history, consuming local cuisine and traditions, and immersing in authenticity by strolling around the local market, engaging in a local ambiance, observing and purchasing from a local craftsperson, indulging over a meal at a nearby restaurant, as well as walking or cycling into the adjacent countryside [9]. Lumsdon and McGrath [32] questioned the feasibility of slow tourism by disregarding its precise definition and instead envisioning a praxis that entails establishing genuine and meaningful relationships with people, places, culture and the environment. A large and growing body of literature on slow tourism is descriptive or qualitative in nature; however, empirical data is still insufficient to provide a comprehensive understanding of its scope and dynamics [33]. Following prominent academic research trends, slow tourism falls under the purview of qualitative study because its characteristics defy articulation in magnitudes or, alternatively, lack quantification. Such research benefits from a qualitative study as it conveys the society, culture, lives, livelihoods, experiences, and reality of the studied population in a natural and intensive manner. Thus, this study has followed a qualitative approach to address the research questions. In this instance, data from both primary and secondary sources has been used.

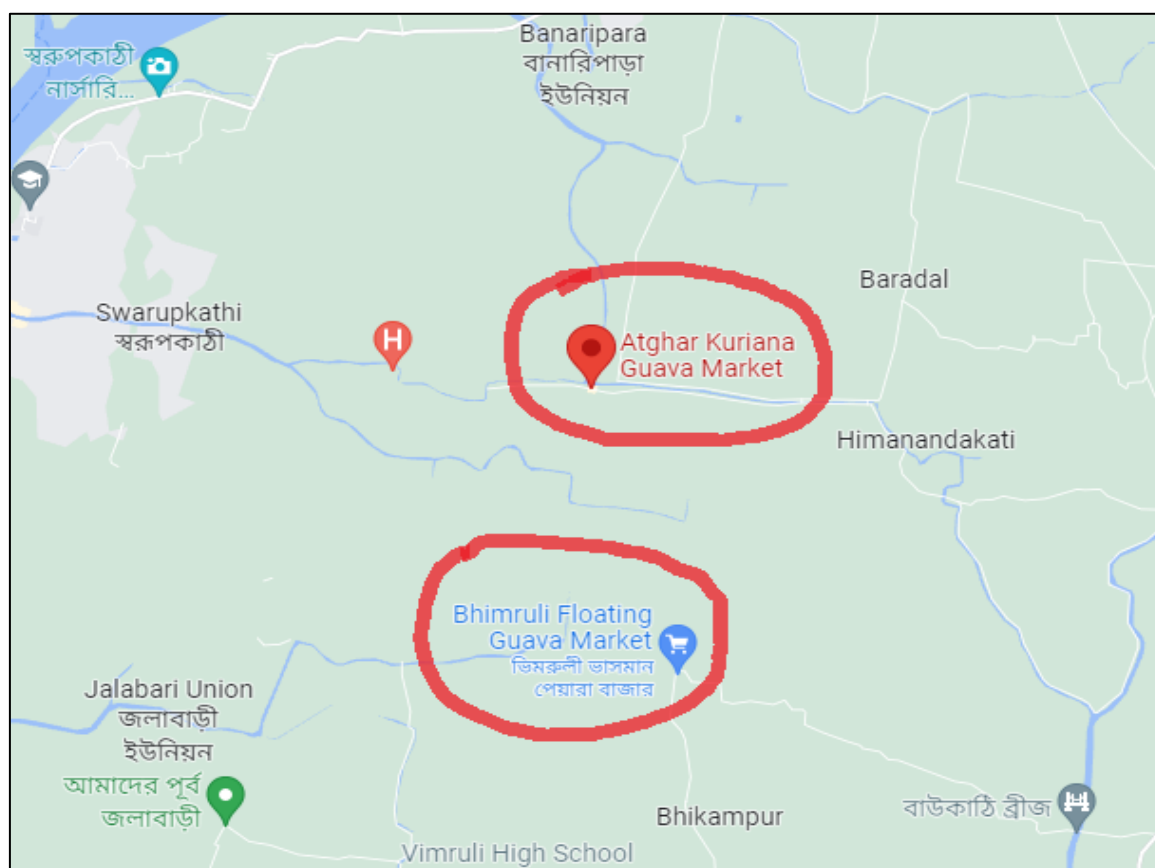


Fig. 1. Map of the research area

## 2.1 Geographical Locations of the Study Area

In order to collect primary data, fieldwork has been conducted in the Bhimruli, Atghar, and Kuriana areas located along the Pirojpur and Jhalokathi districts in south-western Bangladesh. These areas are well known to tourists for guava production, known as "Bengal's apples" [34]. For more than two centuries, Bhimruli has been operating as the biggest guava market in Asia. It is located at the confluence of three waterways flowing in opposite directions, and the splendour of guava plantations enhances its magnificence. Farmers cultivate guava along the small waterways and collect ripe guava from the orchard using "Ding" (a small country boat). Producers in the region grow *amra* (hog plum), golden apples, lemons, and other indigenous fruits and vegetables in the form of floating beds. The floating market begins its daytime operations early in the morning and ends at night, operating seven days a week during the guava season (July–August). Tourists are usually fascinated by the natural beauty of the market, a diverse

bazaar for boats and trawlers coupled with seasonal fruits and vegetables. It is worth mentioning that this market has been operating to cultivate and flourish a unique and picturesque beauty in its naturalistic landscape.

## 3. METHODS, TOOLS AND SAMPLING

This study has adhered to the prevailing research paradigm in the field of slow tourism, specifically using a qualitative methodology. Narrative interviews (NI), key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD) have been used as means of gathering primary data from the participants. Furthermore, secondary data sources, including books, scholarly publications, and reports pertaining to slow tourism, were also used.

a) **Narrative interviews:** Narrative interviews are a valuable method for eliciting comprehensive insights into an individual's perspective, lived experiences, and attitudes pertaining to a certain topic. In recent years, there has been an increasing scholarly focus on the use of narrative

inquiry as a methodological approach for investigating various aspects related to tourism. According to Franzosi [35], “narrative texts are packed with sociological information, and a great deal of our empirical evidence is in narrative form” (p. 517). Furthermore, it provides a narrative depiction of an event, incident, or perspective from the individuals being interviewed [36]. During such interviews, it is important to prioritise the establishment of rapport, mutual respect, and the demonstration of respect for the local community. The interviewees were able to talk about their experiences with the areas. Using an interview guideline, this study explored the experiences of 18 purposively selected participants, including both locals and tourists, regarding the concept of slow tourism through narrative storytelling.

**b) Key Informant Interviews:** Key informant interviews serve as a valuable method for obtaining comprehensive information, thoughts, and insights pertaining to a certain topic, owing to the expertise and experience of the persons involved [37]. This study involved conducting nine KIIs with individuals who possess expertise and extensive knowledge in the study areas. The participants included local government representatives, community leaders, teachers, politicians, and historians who have demonstrated a high level of understanding and reflection pertaining to the subject matter. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight into the sites' potential for slow tourism.

**c) Focus Group Discussion (FGD):** An FGD is a research method used to gather participants' attitudes, views, knowledge, experiences, and practices via interactive sessions with diverse individuals [38]. In this study, three FGDs have been conducted with local people. Each group discussion consisted of a cohort of 8 to 10 individuals and had a duration ranging from 1 to

2 hours. For this particular instance, we utilized a pre-existing guideline that covered various factors related to examining slow tourism elements within the study areas. These factors encompassed, among others, the geographical positioning, cultural dimensions, public perceptions regarding floating markets, indigenous cuisine and products, accessible natural resources and biodiversity, the impact of climate change on the local populace's existence and means of subsistence, as well as community-driven entrepreneurial endeavours. Given the lack of familiarity among both visitors and community residents about the concept of slow tourism and its alignment with sustainable tourism, the interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) guidelines were developed with the aim of identifying and understanding the different components of slow tourism.

### 3.1 Data Management, Analysis and Presentation

In order to maintain the accuracy and authenticity of the data, all interviews and discussions were documented by audio recording. To confirm the veracity of the interview transcript, the English translation of the transcript also underwent a process of peer review. Subsequently, each interview underwent a meticulous review process. Various codes were allocated based on the themes that emerged in the interview scripts. The data was managed in the form of an alphanumeric code. In this instance, a composite code, namely NI/BR-1, is used, denoting a Narrative Interview conducted in Bhimruli with participant no. 1. Furthermore, the research ethics has been ensured by addressing several aspects related to participant consent: anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary involvement. In this study, a thematic analysis approach was used in the examination of the data to derive meaning from it. Specifically, the

**Table 1. Sample distribution in different study areas**

Study Areas	Region Code	Data Collection Tools			Total Respondents
		Narrative Interviews (NI)	Key Informant Interview (KII)	Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	
Bhimruli	BR	6	3	01 (08 participants)	17
Atghar	AG	6	3	01 (10 participants)	19
Kuriana	KA	6	3	01 (9 participants)	18
Total		18	9	27	54

thematic analysis approach was applied to identify and explore themes that highlight the substance and connections between different narratives in relation to slow tourism. In this particular instance, the process of doing thematic analysis included the use of six distinct steps: acquainting oneself with the data, generating preliminary codes, identifying themes, reviewing and refining themes, assigning labels to the identified themes, and publishing a formal report. The data were obtained from many sources using various tools that not only addressed the research questions but also ensured triangulation to enhance the reliability and validity of the collected data. Following a thorough examination of the findings obtained from the FGDs, a comprehensive analysis was conducted by integrating the information derived from the narrative and key informant interviews. Additionally, relevant scholarly literature pertaining to the concept of slow tourism was included in the study. To enhance readers' understanding of the data's reliability and to provide an up-to-date depiction of the study site, the data analysis includes verbatim quotations.

#### 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

In an attempt to incorporate the floating markets of Bhimruli, Atghar and Kuriana areas through the broader lens of "Slow Tourism", a six-step thematic analysis has been applied. In this process, seven themes have emerged that support the attributes of slow tourism as suggested by Valls et al. [39].

##### 1. Change in the concept of travel and the use of time during the trip

Slow Tourism concept should prioritise using non-impact, environment-friendly, low-speed and relaxed modes of transportation, allowing the control of time, thus minimising anxiety and stress triggered by a fast-paced world [40]. The floating markets of Bhimruli, Atghar and Kuriana are joined by canals, tributaries, and river distributaries, resulting in a diverse-sized narrow landscape; hence, a variety of "slow" modes of transportation are used for mobility and sightseeing. This justification is consistent with the "slow" mode where visitors explore the floating market sight, which exemplifies the visitor experience with water [41]. While simultaneously being exposed to the unhurried canal and the narrowboats of floating markets, tourists' sensory and emotional dispositions

advance in the picturesque and lush green environment [42].

The locations of the floating markets can be considered focal points for tourists as the majority of them are naturally drawn to this area due to the famous guava market. The surrounding areas of Guthia Mosque, Kirtipasha *Zamindar Bari* (landlord's abode), Shapla *Gram* (village), Swarupkati Wood Market, the famous Dhanshiri River and the birth place of famous Bengali politician known as the 'Tiger of Bengal' Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Haque in Chakhar can contribute collectively to the legitimacy of tourists' implying all the attributes of prospective sites for fostering slow tourism. In this regard, a local community member (NI/BR-6) commented:

This is a lovely location. As a result, people from all over the country flock to visit this site. This is a wonderful spot for those who wish to enjoy and spend time blending with nature. There are several sights to see, such as the guava gardens, palaces, mosques, and other historical sites. Though we lack adequate tourists' amenities, things are gradually improving. The number of visitors is also increasing day by day.

The above accounts indicate that these places not only bear the local cultural diversity, history and antiquity but also that their distant locations from the focal areas enable tourists to immerse themselves in a slower mindset. Caffyn [9] argues that encapsulating walking, cycling, riding paths, boating, guided tour walks, and experiencing local arts and crafts sessions foster an engaging "slower" environment for tourists. Recently, the establishment of new roads and transport services has facilitated the arrival of a growing number of tourists in the study region, utilizing different modes of transportation, thus creating an engaging environment with the host community. A tea staller remarks (NI/AG-5):

Improved road connections are causing the area to become increasingly crowded. People are coming from different parts of the country. Previously, I used to sell tea and biscuits only to a few customers in the floating market. However, recently, my sales have increased due to the fact that I am selling tea in diverse locations, such as on the boat, on the roadside, and at the market. Even sometimes, I go to distant places in order to sell more where I find customers.

In view of this statement, Caffyn [9] argues that encapsulating walking, cycling, riding paths, boating, guided tour walks, and experiencing local arts and crafts sessions fosters an engaging “slower” environment for tourists. Recently, the establishment of new roads and transport services has facilitated the arrival of a growing number of tourists in the study region, utilizing different modes of transportation, thus creating an engaging environment with the host community.

## 2.The alternative to mass tourism

Although the floating market has a 200-year rich history, the absence of media coverage, its remote location, and the complexity of transit routes made it difficult to classify it as a mainstream tourist destination. In recent times, media reports, for example, the Daily Star [43], travel blogs, and social networking platforms have played a significant role in bringing this relatively obscure tourist destination site to the general public's attention. Although the guava garden areas of Bhimruli and the adjacent regions are yet to be transitioned into mass tourism sites, the recent construction of the Padma Bridge may connect the gap between space and time. A tourist from Dhaka (NI/AG-1) narrated:

I can see the guavas, the floating market, and the gorgeous landscape, including acres of guava trees, all of which captivate me. I will stay here for a few days to enjoy the outdoors, greenery, and water and a life free from daily urban boredom.

Another tourist (NI /KA-2) also experienced:

I only heard about the floating market areas. But after coming here, I got to know about varied historical sites, local artefacts, and handmade crafts. Though I came to this place by bus from Dhaka in a short time, exploring the adjacent area requires a locally crafted boat which is the only mode of transportation to move from one place to another. I am fascinated by the serene environment which made my mind mentally poised and relaxing. I am also being able to experience different landscapes, smell and taste that are aesthetic in nature and meaningful for my mindfulness.

The above statements support the view of Oh et al. [7] who suggest that slowness is not

necessarily antithetical to the mass tourism concept since slow and fast modes of travel exist side by side and continually interact inside a single unit of travel across different destinations. The duality of slow and fast travel modes correlates with accessibility and suitability, indicating various forms of focal travel tailored to a personal preference for a particular means of transportation that best serves tourist needs and travel goals [44]. Nevertheless, traditional laissez-faire mass tourism has a primary contradiction in self-consumption, jeopardising the tourism area's life cycle [45]. In line with both contradictory views, safeguarding the present economic system's continuation and stability has potentially led to the consideration of slowness or slow philosophy to tackle the frantic rhythm of modern life.

## 3. Focus on local and cultural aspects

The praxis of slow tourism revolves around indigenous culture and blending with local inhabitants, reinforcing their roots, languages, norms, and existence [9]. This is supported by the consistent presence of ethnic diversity in Bhimruli, where the Hindu community has inhabited the area for generations. Hindu and Muslim communities coexist in Atghar, showcasing religious harmony. A local teacher (KII/BR-1) commented:

Our area is an excellent example of social, cultural and religious harmony. Since my childhood, I have observed religious tolerance and mutual respect among individuals irrespective of their social, religious and gender status.

As more tourists come to this area, they are exposed to the local cultural system, indigenous gastronomical practices, antiquity and rich heritage, a sense of shared value and ethical homogeneity. Besides, diverse and endemic categories of guava, the uniqueness of the local boats of Kuriana, local handicrafts such as “*Sitalpati*” (cool mats), and local people's unique way of living followed by their traditional homes can necessitate the modification of local territory and heritage, thus enriching the mindfulness of slow tourism. A local female respondent (NI/KA-3) added:

Guavas, hog plums, and lemons are the primary sources of support for our lives and livelihood. Occasionally, I lend my husband a hand in producing bamboo products, which



are sold at the floating market. Sometimes, for extra income, my daughter makes 'Sitalpati'[cool mats] which are popular among tourists. My son also works in the boat market and earns a good amount of money for family. I believe that the buying and selling the products develops a sense of mutual respect and understanding between tourists and locals.

Paul [46] suggests that a sense of place is critical to fostering cultural exchange between locals and tourists, translating into harnessing shared values, beliefs, and attitudes. Ruhanen et al. [47] support this view by arguing that tourists may try to integrate into the local community instead of staying as outsiders, implying that interactions between tourists and locals may go beyond simple business transactions. Particularly, local customs and traditions are at the heart of the slow philosophy [48], a socio-cultural phenomenon transpiring to a significant degree, translating satisfaction travel experiences for tourists [49].

#### **4. Sustainability and overcoming natural environmental concerns**

Slow tourism suggests indigenous resource management in the face of a paradigm shift, as well as re-conceptualizing sustainability, seeking a concept based on a circular system of slow consumption and production, focusing on reducing the use of resources [50,51]. The floating market areas are geographically submerged in water; hence, the local communities in this situation have adapted to overcome the harsh environment by growing plants and vegetables without using soil, creating unusual floating garden agricultural methods (locally referred to as "*Dhap*"). Farmers cultivate ladies' finger, cucumber, and snake gourds, a traditional or indigenous agricultural system employing floating beds on the surface, during the monsoon (often from June to August). After the monsoon, farmers use the floating beds to grow a variety of crops, including spinach, aarum, spices, and many more. Farmers use tiny boats to manage the floating agricultural land during the monsoon. Moreover, to improve soil fertility, farmers relocate the floating bed to higher ground throughout the winter, breaking and mixing it with the soil. The practice's primary goal is the sustainable management of local natural resources (in submerged regions) using methods of floating agriculture. The infrastructural and financial requirements for

floating agriculture are quite low. Since raw materials for constructing floating beds are easily accessible, costs can be kept low. The primary components of manufacturing costs are labor and seed hence, involving women's participation in agricultural activities also ensures gender balance and the system's sustainability.

Hall [52] further contends that this concept does not necessarily conflict with growth but rather facilitates a steady state of tourism, mobilising economic and monetary growth while eliminating environmental and social costs to restore the system's balance. From these perspectives, the tourism development of the floating market and adjoining areas is regulated and exercised to ensure slower and more rhythmic consumption of resources. The local people collect garbage from the canal and decompose it in the soil. A local chairman (KII/AG-3) remarked:

Since we have taken the initiative to use floating bed systems in agriculture, this has had a positive impact on the local community. As time progresses, our practical skills blending with traditional knowledge are increasing. Thereby, a growing trend towards sustainability has emerged among the local people.

#### **5. Change in the quality of experience**

Quality is a differentiator and a strategic aspect of establishing a competitive advantage in the tourism industry [53]. Quality has recently been perceived as a dynamic, complex concept incorporating various meanings, scopes, and interpretations [54]. A tourist (NI/AG-4) visited a floating market area and narrated his experience:

These lovely green vistas brimming with fresh fruits and veggies captivate me. The captivating boat rides through the winding canals provide a genuine experience we lack in bustling city life. These regions can be potential sites for slow tourism, and I urge the tourism stakeholders to invest in a sustainable way that does not hamper the tranquil authenticity of floating markets.

The above narrative indicates that the tourist had a quality experience with nature in the surrounding areas of the floating market. In support of this statement, Slusarczyk et al. [55] argue that quality is an abundance of priceless resources with the luxury of leisure, autonomy, serenity, tranquillity, security, and a viable

environment. Nonetheless, both physical and intangible characteristics determine quality in the slow tourism model, such as a slower rhythm of "time", shaping into a quality experience of attending to the small details of the trip and allowing for the flexibility to enjoy tourism's social and cultural components [56].

## 6. Exploring authenticity of slow tourism

Kolar and Zabkar [57] have defined authenticity as measuring tourists' satisfaction and perceptions and incorporating their interactions with a cultural attraction that manifests a positive influence on the tourist experience. The local boatmen of Kuriana showcase their craftsmanship by uniquely making boats that adapt to the local environment and natural calamities. Furthermore, the locals are involved in alternative agricultural practices, known as 'floating beds', which are unique in the coastal region and tackle environmental challenges. In the floating market areas, guava exhibits a distinctive colour, aroma, and taste, coupled with different kinds that are only found in this region. Hence, the implying meaning of authenticity is validated by the statement of Varga [58] who outlines it as "uncontested origin or authorship" or "true to an original" or "reliable, accurate depiction." A local guava businessman (II/BR-2) said:

Our guavas are rare in other parts of Bangladesh. Varieties with transverse dots, such as *swarnnapakathi* guava, are spherical and medium in size. These fruits are not only tasty, but also have an aroma. This kind of guava is in high demand in our area. When tourists visit this area, they purchase it in bulk at the best price for their families.

Given this fact, the perceived uniqueness available in the floating market areas manifests as a potential destination to promote slow tourism considering its diverse resources tailored towards naturally sustained authenticity [59]. Therefore, those who exhibit a slower pace of tourism are essentially characterised by an underlying inclination towards the pursuit of authenticity and a deliberate desire to engage in genuine experiences, manifesting slow tourist decision-making processes [60].

## 7. Feasibility and new business development

Valls et al. [39] underline the "capacity to create new business" supporting Slow Tourism and

preserving local culture and heritage. The economic surplus value of the floating agricultural bed produces varieties of vegetables adoptable throughout the year, the seasonal floating guava market business, prevalence of local fish species in the rainy season and the influx of tourists in the areas contribute to the transformation of the local economic rhythm in terms of the growing number of local boats, trawlers and restaurants. In this context, the views of Campón-Cerro et al. [61] reaffirm that economic feasibility is a significant part of slow tourism. A businessman (KII/KA-2) (40) added:

I have been doing business here for almost 15 years. We have a great reputation for producing hog plums and guavas all over the country. It used to be difficult to get here because the road was terrible. People have better accessibility now, therefore generating new employment and opportunities.

This narration is properly reflected according to the statement by Valls et al. [39] where he underscored the novelty of slow tourism as it encourages the growth of new businesses by bringing people to less well-known locations, and it helps the local culture by offering new services like lodging, dining, and catering as well as guiding, interpretation, and transportation.

## 4. DISCUSSION

A critical feature of slow tourism has been assessed through the authenticity of cultural exchanges; where "place attachment" is also closely tied to authenticity [62]. Authenticity has long been perceived to be a critical factor in encouraging tourists to visit a particular location [63,64], since it has been contended that authenticity is only appreciated when its exclusion is identified [65]. This floating market bears a rich history stemming from the prosperous Mughal period, commemorating the partition of the British period to the liberation war of Bangladesh, where in both cases, many people took refuge in this garden. Significantly, this essence of reclusiveness and remoteness was a determining factor for conceptualising authenticity.

Floating markets significantly contribute to river-based culture, being viewed as a part of ecotourism and river culture rather than merely a tourist destination [66]. Initially, people came to see guava, golden apple, and other Agro-based products sold in floating boats in Atghar and

Kuriana, oblivious to the rich background and cultural history. The floating market in Vietnam staged the "Food Festival" and "Vietnam Cultural Heritage" both during the peak and off-season to ensure a regular influx of tourists [67]. However, this study found the floating market to be a seasonal business, when tourist inflow is optimal, they generate maximum income during peak season (2-3 months). Hence, in the off-peak season, they cultivated agro-based products and did not organise cultural events to draw tourists. This gap indicates that the local history and heritage must be presented in the off-peak season to attract regular tourists to the floating market zone. In Indonesia, flood water stays in the market area for 6 to 7 months during the rainy season. Therefore, the community started living in the boat and established a floating market to meet their daily needs, eventually, becoming a very attractive tourist spot for visitors.

When slow tourism is examined more extensively, it becomes evident why slow travellers are more likely than other travellers to take advantage of a destination's historical landmarks, regional food, traditions, and other distinctive features [9, 68]. However, the floating markets of Bhimruli, Atghar, and Kuriana are still considered fast-moving markets as travellers visited there to watch the floating boat and take some pictures with local people, and shared those on social media, as the slowness concept has yet to be developed among tourists in Bangladesh. In this context, slow travellers must adhere to two rules: first, they must take their time; and second, they must have a connection to the area [69]. For example, in 2010, the government of Latvia launched the tourism campaign "Latvia Best Enjoyed Slowly," which encourages visitors to have a chance to alter the rhythm of their lives and enjoy tranquil leisure, therefore experiencing unique ideas, aspiring for peace and exposing real values [70].

In Bangladesh, from the tourist point of view, this 'slow' concept is hard to conceptualize in the floating market zone as they lead busy lives. The local people depicted that tourist would stay longer if night-time cultural events were initiated in the floating market area. It is also suggested that local homestays, cottages, and environment-friendly boats can be alternative sources of accommodation rather than establishing commercial hotels. Local sellers also reported that they are compelled to sell their agro-based products to whole sellers at a lower cost because

of product perishability. However, the guava sellers once fed the additional guava to the domestic animal. Now, they sell their surplus guava to tourists which facilitates their ability to generate more income. Eventually, they gain optimum profits from the tourists rather than selling to the wholesalers. The community people are encouraged to create jobs via the floating market. For example, many younger residents have decided to return to their home countries (Amphawa Floating Market) due to the success of turning a local public space into a tourist destination [71]. Most importantly, young locals (between the ages of 20 and 40) who had previously worked or studied in Bangkok had chosen to return to the community to launch the floating business [72]. Therefore, the expert members stated that these floating markets seem unscathed and exist in the exploration stage of the tourism area life cycle.

Thus, the floating markets in Bangladesh have huge prospects for creating job opportunities for the local community. For example, they run their tourism-related businesses in these peak seasons (2-3 months), and in the other season, they cultivate and produce agro-based products. Moreover, the day labourers row boats and sell guava during this season. In the off-peak season, they again get engaged in day labour activities. As it is a seasonal business, the furniture maker in Bhimruli prepares new boats to sell to other stakeholders in the peak season of the tourism business, while in the additional period, they produce furniture only. Even, women support their families by selling cooked food, bamboo-related products, and *Shital Pati* in the floating markets. A few locals run restaurants near the channel and get earnings from tourists. Even though, the floating restaurant offers local foods. However, three eco-parks located in Kuriana do not serve any traditional food, rather confining to fast food and drinks. Furthermore, the boat engines disrupt the fish breeding in nearby rivers and canals.

The Talingchan floating market in Thailand is tranquil in nature; therefore, the boat is relatively larger and can accommodate more agro-based products because these boats rarely encounter natural catastrophes [72]. However, the amazing feature of boats in the study area, which are small or medium-sized, can easily tolerate the wave of water because of the craftsmanship or any catastrophic situation, as these villages are located in the coastal part of Pirojpur district. Even Vietnam's Can Tho floating market

connects other locations in adjacent provinces and countries including Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos [73] where the floating markets have inter-regional linkage within their territory. However, such linkage has not been developed yet with the floating market at Bhimruli, Atghar, and Kuriana in the Pirojpur district of Bangladesh.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to conceptualise slow tourism and examine its feasibility and merit in floating markets situated in Bangladesh's south-western regions. In doing so, this research paper seeks to intertwine different clusters and discourses of climate-based entrepreneurship and community development with an overarching concept of slow tourism. While slow tourism's antecedents, processes and socio-cultural connotations remain largely scant, reaching a consensus remains challenging, considering the practical approaches and modalities.

The primary limitation in slow tourism lies in the perceptions of slowness, as there is little agreement on what "slow" truly entails and how it is implemented or perceived in connection to various tourist settings, cultures, and mobilities yet to be fully envisaged [1]. Moreover, it doesn't shed light on the decision-making process from the individual traveller's viewpoint, nor does it explain why people engage in slow modes of travel (e.g., motivations) or what they're pursuing (e.g., aspirations). Specifically, in Bangladesh, people are more exposed to mass tourism because of their time limitations, job pressure, and regional and psychological concerns. Thus, tourists in Bangladesh are more consistent with goal-driven consumer behaviour patterns, undermining slow speed's mental and subjective disposition and understating the journey's unique reasons and goals.

Upon reflection, future researchers can harness the technicality of the slow-based floating markets to ensure overall sustainability through climate-based entrepreneurship. While the legitimacy of slowness is a novel concept, a comprehensive discussion of their dynamic and nuanced interactions needs to be tailored. Moreover, this study includes two key limitations that provide potential for future research. First, this research focuses on three geographical areas and a limited sample size. Whereas, greater geographical dimensions with a considerable sample size can enhance the generalisability of the study findings and may

provide a valuable outcome. This research incorporates only a qualitative measure for collecting and analysing data, future research may consider utilising a quantitative approach or a mixed-method approach for the viability of the research outcome.

## CONSENT

As per international standards or university standards, Participants' oral consent has been collected by the author(s).

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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