

# COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM APPROACH AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT – A CASE STUDY OF NEIL ISLAND, SOUTH ANDAMAN, INDIA

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## ABSTRACT:

There are over 1 lakh islands scattered across the globe, containing in excess of 400 million inhabitants. Islands are integral to the earth's biodiversity, with their distinct geo-environmental resource settings and offer a heavenly space for tourists. The Neil Island, a southern part of Ritchie's Archipelago of Andaman and Nicobar group of islands, is a famous tourist spot for its scenic beauty and silver sandy beaches. It is attracted by a large no. of domestic as well as international tourist for live coral polyps. This island has lost its virginity from the beginning of Settlement Rehabilitation Scheme of Indian Govt. and its change and transformation is going on mainly by population expansion, human activities and infrastructure developments such as building, road construction and agricultural activities which lead to ecological damages. This has therefore resulted in increased land consumption, modification and alteration in the status of land use and land cover changes over time. In spite of geographical isolation and typical remote rural characteristics it has huge potentiality to grow as the Island is blessed with different types of environmental resources. In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the status of tourism development as well as rural development scenario of different revenue villages of Neil Island. The purpose of the paper is to focus on the sustainable tourism needs through participatory community development approach which will play a catalytic role for rural boost up. The present paper attempts to review the opportunities and challenges for developing Community Based Tourism (CBT) in the villages of Neil Island. This paper shows how local people perceive both costs and benefits of tourism and argue that the present structure of the tourism industry can be changed to provide greater benefit to the local community.

**KEY WORDS:** community based tourism (CBT), sustainable tourism, rural development, community participation, island tourism

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Tourism is now affecting the lives of rural people and is often seen as a driving force for development (Harrison,2003) and is therefore viewed as a community and rural development tool that serves certain ends (Davis and Morais, 2004). The concept of Community Based Tourism (CBT) has come up after ecotourism in particular has come under increasing criticism (Cater, 2003). CBT is the other popular alternative offered to traditional tourism development style and it can be defined as "Tourism based on negotiation and participation with key stakeholders in the destination (Saarinen 2006). In CBT the hosts play a central role in determining the form and process of tourism development (Timothy, 2002). Community members being the real custodian of any destination must get the central role in decision making process regarding tourism development in order to better handle the impacts. Community involvement in tourism has been receiving increasing attention because of the success and sustainability of the development, depends on the active

support of the local people and higher levels of integration lead to socio-economic benefits for the community (Mitchell and Eagles, 2001). Further through suitable training it can also be enhanced the skills of community members for better interpretation of local natural resource and cultural aspects to the tourists. Rocharungsat, (2008) has summarized the criteria to evaluate the success of CBT in terms of the following factors: i) Benefits gained from CBT should be distributed equally throughout the destination community ii) Good and careful management of tourism is significant iii) CBT should have strong partnership in tourism project and support from within and outside the community iv) Uniqueness of the place should be considered to sustain the destination v) Environmental conservation should not be neglected.

In this paper an attempt has been made to identify the potential for Community Based Tourism (CBT) at Neil Island and to study the perception of the community towards tourism development and its impacts on the developed in a sustainable tourism.

## **II. METHODOLOGY:**

In this study both primary and secondary data have been used. Secondary data has been collected from different published and unpublished sources. Primary data for the study has been collected through a survey in the rural villages of Neil Island using a structured questionnaire, based on five point Likert Scale referring to frequency and evaluation ranging from 'strongly disagree, disagree, undecided or neutral, agree, and strongly agree'. The questionnaire was prepared to understand the perception of the community regarding tourism development and its benefit and cost in the area. Twenty respondents from each village by random sampling method have taken into consideration for sample selection (N = 100). Data has been represented through both analytical and non-analytical manner.

## **III. STUDY AREA AND ITS GEO-ENVIRONS:**

Neil Island is situated between latitude 11°48' 27" N and 11°51' 03" N and longitudes 93°00'43" E and 93°04'29" E (Fig.1) lies on the south side of Fusilier Channel. It is about 1400 km from the Indian main land and 40 km north-east of Port Blair, the capital of UT of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It covers a total area of 18.90 sq. km with a coastal stretch of 18.6 km with maximum elevation of 102 m. As per the 2011 census, it has 3040 population which is distributed among five revenue villages viz. Neil Kendra, Bharatpur, Sitapur, Lakshmanpur and Ramnagar. The Island is named after James George Smith Neill, a British soldier but the villages and beaches have derived their names from holy Ramayana. Settlement at Neil Island was taken up under Rehabilitation Department Colonisation Scheme from the year 1966. The refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan were settled here. A few settlers were allotted land during 1968 in such villages. People from Bangladesh started settling in the study area from 1976 onwards. The Island is known as 'the Vegetable Bowl of Andaman' because of the agricultural standards set by this region with the help of favourable climatic conditions. Besides, it is often called as one of the best Hotspot of Coral Reef of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

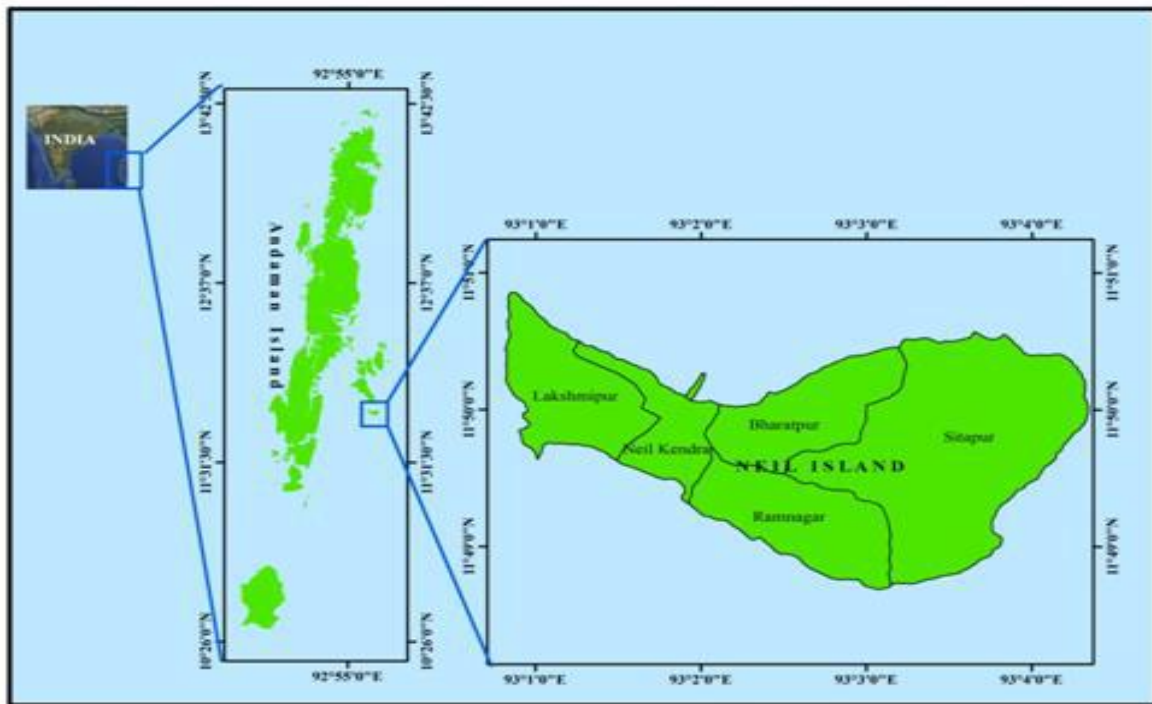


Fig.-1 location map of study area

The Island surrounded by deep blue water as blue as our dream of pristine Bay of Bengal, wrapped in abundant lush green nature and gifted with white soft sandy and rough coral beaches with fresh air. The terrain is plain with low hills. The eastern part of the island occupies dense evergreen forest and semi-evergreen forest. Remaining of the island is mostly covered by the agricultural land, human settlements, degraded forest, proportion of wetland and few mangrove patches occur in tidal swamps close to the seashore. Migrated people have chosen agriculture as the main economic activity though the island has immense potentiality of nature based eco tourism.

#### IV. TOURISM DEVELOPMENTAL SCENARIO:

**TOURIST ATTRACTIONS:** Neil, a tiny and beautiful island is one of the most popular tourist destinations among Andaman, with unexplored coral reefs, enriched bio-diversity, white sandy beaches, tropical forest, creeks, mudflats and mangrove vegetation. The sea encircling the island is shallow and full of colourful corals. Neil Island of Richie's archipelago has been included in the 'Rani Jhansi Marine National Park' and is potential eco-tourism paradise. The beaches are beautiful for their hammocks under shady trees. A natural arch has been sculptured by sea wave and wind action at Lakshmanpur. Colourful corals are in abundance and for that reasons it is known as 'Coral Capital of A & N Islands'. The greenery around the whole island is also very beautiful and mind refreshing. Natural bridge is also very famous and attracts tourist worldwide. Island Tourism festival, Vivekananda and Subhas Mela are very important to tourists in the perspective of cultural entity.

**BEST TOURIST SEASON:** The best time to visit Neil Island is from the months of October to May. It is best to avoid travelling here from the months of June to September, because of the unpredictable weather that is accompanied by storm and heavy rain.

**CONNECTIVITY:** The airport of Andaman is located at Port Blair, which links major cities like Chennai and Kolkata. However, there are other flights connecting different destinations in India. The islands of Andaman have good sea connectivity with several cruises available from major cities like Kolkata and Chennai towards Port Blair. Helicopter service is also available from Port Blair but it is subjected to passenger and fare. There is a jetty at Neill Kendra, which serves as the only entry–exit point of the island.

Neil Island, connected by regular Government operated ferry service from Port Blair, provides ideal holiday destination for eco-friendly tourists in natural and pollution free settings.

**ACCOMODATION:** Different types of hotel and resort are available at Neil Island from luxury to budget, resort to lodge and from 1 star to 5 star. Govt. has built two guest houses to fulfil the tourist demand. No. of hotels or resorts nearer to Bharatpur Beach, Natural Arch, Sitapur Beach, Laxamanpur Beach and Neil Kendra are 16, 15, 11, 10 and 6 respectively.

**TOURIST ARRIVAL & TOURIST CARRYING CAPACITY:** Tourist arrival at Neil Island is limited compared to Havlock Island. On an average only about 300 tourists are visiting this island in a day. Bera (2015) has estimated the effective carrying capacity of different beaches of this island. The effective carrying capacity in terms of visitors per day of Bharatpur, Sitapur, Sunset Point and Natural Arch beaches are 419, 400, 828 and 487 respectively and 2134 visitors per day in case of total Neil Island. So it is rational to say that implementation of tourism infrastructure and management facility will be helpful to meet the actual tourism carrying capacity and it helps further tourism development.

**GOVT. INITIATIVES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN:** The Economic Survey of A & N Islands 2007-08, published by the A & N Administration has set the vision to develop A & N islands as an up market destination for eco tourists through environmentally sustainable development of infrastructure without disturbing the natural eco systems. In this direction, the Tourism Development at Neil Island is to focus on i) Achieving Maximum Economic Benefit with Minimum Ecological Impacts ii) Increasing tourist flow and extend of stay iii) Sustenance of the Tourists interests. Identification of Port Blair - Neil - Havelock - Little Andaman as the Priority Circuit for Development of Tourism, as identified by M/s. IL & FS in its report submitted to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2012) is to be taken further. Tour Operation in such circuit will help to bring more tourists to Havelock & Neil Islands and also save time and energy in transportation of the tourists. Town and Country Planning Unit of A & N Islands Public Work Department has prepared a Master Plan (2014) in which priority has been given for increasing the tourists flow and extending their duration of stay. The thrusting areas of this plan for tourism development of Neil Island are-

- Identification of new tourism spots / locations
- Set up of International Tourists help centre
- Establishment of Tourists Pavilion
- Beautification of Beach / Sea Front
- Construction of Coral Museum, Watch Tower and Eco Resorts,
- Introduction of Rural Home Stay Tourism and Trek Route
- Creation of Eco-Parks
- Provision of Basic Services and Infrastructure

## V. PRESENT RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCENARIO:

**LANDSCAPE AND LAND USE PROFILE:** Mild rolling topography, dense mass of canopy trees abruptly raising in the coast to a height of 30 – 40 meters, humid climate and high intensity of rainfall are the characteristics, generally associated with Neil Island. The characteristics of land utilization within the revenue villages of Neil Island are presented in Table -1.

Table-1 Land utilisation of Neil island

Revenue Villages/ Land use Pattern	Neil Kandra		Bharatpur		Sitapur		Lakshmanpur		Ramnagar		Neil Island	
	Area (ha)	% of Area	Area (ha)	% of Area	Area (ha)	% of Area	Area (ha)	% of Area	Area (ha)	% of Area	Area (ha)	% of Area
Residential	15.55	14.35	8.19	4.36	5.34	0.96	2.67	1.55	16.21	8.44	47.95	3.94
Commercial	8.79	8.12	0.68	0.36	1.3	0.23	7.94	4.6	2.6	1.35	21.31	1.75
Public & Semi Pub	7.64	7.05	0.79	0.42	0	0	1.49	0.86	0.38	0.2	10.3	0.85
Trans. & Comm.	6.63	6.12	1.59	0.85	0.81	0.15	3.8	2.2	4.26	2.22	17.09	1.40
Recreational	1.06	0.97	0.47	0.25	0.33	0.06	0	0	0	0	1.86	0.15
Agricultural	68.62	63.36	167.86	89.33	324.01	58.33	138.4	80.17	163.12	84.93	862.01	70.87
Forest	0	0	5.44	2.89	223.43	40.23	18.04	10.45	5.51	2.87	252.42	20.75
Water Bodies	0.03	0.02	2.9	1.55	0.21	0.04	0.28	0.16	0.01	0	3.43	0.28
Total	108.31	100	187.92	100	555.44	100	172.64	100	192.07	100	1216.38	100

Source: Master Plan, 2014

It shows that land area under the jurisdiction of the villages at Neil Island extent to 1216 hectares. Despite tourism gaining momentum in this island, the land utilization still presents the character of typical agricultural dominant villages of our country. Agriculture plays an important role occupying more than 70 % of lands at Neil Island. Nearly 850 hectares of land at the Island remain under agriculture use. The proportion of agriculture lands in the revenue villages of Neil Island ranges between 58 % and 89 %. At Neil Island, Sitapur record the least proportion of agriculture land (58 %), which is due to the fact that more than 40 % of the area at this village is spread under the vegetation cover. In addition to the spread of reserve forest beyond the territories of revenue villages, forest occupies 21 % of the land forming part of revenue villages at Neil Island. Thus forest becomes the second largest occupant of land. However, more than 85 % of forest in the revenue villages of Neil Island is concentrated only at Sitapur. Residential developments are limited to 4 % only at Neil Island. Neil Kendra at Neil Island is the only one revenue village to exceed 10 % of its land under residential use. The residential use is more prevalent as it is the entry and exist point of the respective villages having the privilege of boat jetty. It may be noted that nearly one third population of Neil Island is concentrated only in the above mentioned settlement area.

### DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE:

The growth of tourism which started at Neil Island during mid-1990s is still continuing but at a slower rate and smaller scale. Neil Island population has been increased by 23 % during the twenty year period 1991-2011. The growth rate which was 16 % during 1991-2001, reduced to 6 % in the subsequent decade 2001-11. Neil Kendra is the revenue village to have more population in the Island, followed by Ramnagar and Bharatpur. 78 % of the Neil Island population is settled in these three villages.

The population density of this area is 222/sq. km but it is misleading because more than 85 % of the lands are covered by either under agriculture or forest. Net densities have been derived by the number of persons living per hectare of residential land. Lakshmanpur at Neil Island is the revenue village which has recorded high levels of net densities 165 pph. Net densities range in all other places at Neil Island range between 50 pph to 73 pph. As per the 2011 Census, the Sex Ratio of the Neil Island is 871, which is the same as the respective index for the South Andaman district. The small villages at Neil Island, like Sitapur & Lakshmanpur where the population is still under 400, show higher sex ratios. At Lakshmanpur, where agriculture is predominant function, the ratio is so high, standing at 1146. The level of literacy is also far below than the corresponding measure for South Andaman district. At South Andaman district 88 % of the population are literates while Neil Island can take the credit only for 76 % of the population.

Table -2 Population and growth rate of Neil island

Name of the Revenue Villages	Population			Growth Rate			Net Density (pph)	% of Literates	Sex Ratio
	1991	2001	2011	1991-01	2001-11	1991-11			
Neil Kendra	866	1064	1000	22.86	-6.02	15.47	73	76.70	812
Bharatpur	467	564	629	20.77	11.52	34.69	53	75.52	797
Sitapur	248	267	274	7.66	2.62	10.48	57	76.64	916
Lakshmanpur	331	372	382	12.39	2.69	15.41	165	74.87	1146
Ram Nagar	551	601	755	9.07	25.62	37.02	50	75.89	878
Neil Island	2463	2868	3040	16.44	6	23.43	63	76.02	871

Source: Census of India, 1991, 2001 & 2011

**ECONOMIC PROFILE:** Extent of participation by the people in economic activities is a broad indicator showing the strength of economy. At Neil Island, population engaged in economic activities as main workers come down to 33 % from 40 % (Table-3) which is mainly due to the fact that notable number of workers did not find regular employment both in agriculture and service sectors, which has brought down the percentage of main workers but significantly has increased the percentage of marginal workers from 4% to 16 % within the last decade.

Table - 3 Worker composition of Neil island

Worker Composition	2001	2011	2001 (%)	2011 (%)
Main Workers in total population	1154	1004	40.24	33.03
Cultivators among Main Workers	561	380	48.61	37.85
Agri. Labourers among Main Workers	73	268	6.33	26.69
Other Workers among Main Workers	1607	352	44.37	35.06
Marginal Workers in total population	348	512	4.39	16.84
Total Population	2868	3040	100	100

Source: Census of India, 2001 & 2011

Table-4 Village wise worker composition of Neil island

Name of the Revenue Villages	Cultivators		Agricultural Labourers		Worker in Household Industry		Other Workers	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
Neil Kendra	17.16	6.86	4.51	38.73	0	0.24	78.33	54.17
Bharatpur	46.24	82.36	26.59	5.88	0	0	27.17	11.76
Sitapur	75.65	65.17	2.56	19.1	0	0	21.79	15.73
Lakshmanpur	70.86	59.68	2.29	8.87	0	0.81	26.85	30.64
Ram Nagar	77.89	46.21	0.35	28.41	2.81	0.76	18.95	24.62
Neil Island	48.61	37.85	6.33	26.69	0.69	0.4	44.37	35.06

Source: Census of India, 2011

Increase in the number of tourists in the recent years at Neil Island has failed to create a significant impact upon generation of employment. Sitapur, Bharatpur and Ramnagar still continue to be largely agricultural dependent wherein 75 % to 89 % of the main workers function as cultivators or agricultural labourers (Table-4). Only at Neil Kendra, where the boat jetty is located has more than 50 % of the main workers are supported by non-agricultural activities.

**OTHER SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE:** Different socio-economic facilities at Neil Island have been presented in the Table-5. From the above discussion it can be easy to say that the degree of rural development in the study area is far below from expectation and it requires suitable rural planning strategy for the all round growth and development of the local community.

Table -5 Existing basic amenities of Neil island

Aminities Available	Neil Kendra	Bharatur	Sitapur	Lakshmanur	Ram Nagar	Neil Island
<b>Educational Facilities</b>						
Available(A)/Not Available (NA)	NA	A	A	A	NA	A
No. of Primry School	0	1	1	2	0	4
No. of Middle School	0	0	0	2	0	2
No. of Secondary School	0	0	0	2	0	2
No. of Senior Secondary School	0	0	0	1	0	1
No. of other educational Institute	0	0	0	0	0	0
College available within range	>15km					
<b>Medical Facilities</b>						
Available(A)/Not Available (NA)	A	NA	NA	NA	A	
Hospital available within range	>15km					
Maternity & Child Care welfare Centre available within range	>15km					
Primary Health available within range	Within 1km	within 5 km				
No. of Primary Health SubCentre	0	0	0	0	1	
No. of Community Health Worker	0	0	0	0	1	1
No. of Doctors	0	0	0	0	1	1
Nurses / Midwives / LHVs	1	2	1	1	3	7
Para Medical Staff	2	3	3	2	8	17
Bed Strength	0	0	0	0	10	10
Drinking Water Facilities (Tap Well, Tank)	A	A	A	A	A	A
<b>Other Facilities</b>						
Sub Post Office	A	A	A	A	A	
ED Branch Post Office	1	0	0	0	1	2
No. of Co-operative Bank	1	0	0	0	0	1
No. of Agricultural Credit Society	1	0	0	0	0	1
Fire Station	1					1
Police Station						1
Distance to Port Blair	Within 40 km					
Power supply facility	A	A	A	A	A	A
News paper facility	A	A	A	A	A	A

Source: Primary Survey, 2015

## VI. PERCEPTION STUDY ABOUT THE BENEFIT AND COST OF TOURISM:

Table-6 highlights that economically, tourism provides employment opportunities more than business opportunities or investment opportunities. They are mainly engaged in either agricultural sector or fishing sector in the region. In addition, tourism assists to some extent local infrastructure development and governance. Cultural exchanges between tourists and local residents are just above average. It is lower than the expected level. But the local people strongly believe that tourism helps to promote their ethno-cultural identity. The table also suggests that inflation is the top concern of the local people, although tourist spending on the local livelihood is perceived to be good. The crime rate is not a concern for the local people and local culture is not very adversely affected by tourism. Though the environmental pollution particularly air pollution is increasing but it is not alarming according to the view of the local people.

Table-6 Perceived Interest and Cost of Tourism

<b>BENEFIT</b>	N	MEAN	SD
Employment opportunities	100	3.98	1.20
Investment opportunities	100	2.47	1.13
Business opportunities	100	2.59	1.12
Tourism income and local governance and development	100	2.72	1.18
Promote local cultural preservation	100	3.94	1.01
Provide parks and entertaining activities	100	2.43	1.48
Improve road and public goods	100	2.98	1.00
Provide better education	100	3.60	1.26
Promote cultural development by the local people	100	3.35	0.98
Cultural exchanges between tourists and local residents	100	2.68	1.14
Positive impact of tourism on ethno-cultural identity	100	3.57	1.12
<b>COST</b>			
Increase in price of the products and services	100	4.89	0.98
Increase in crime	100	2.34	1.18
Increase in noise, solid waste and environmental pollution	100	2.93	1.32
Increase of immigrants from other regions	100	3.20	1.26
Negative impacts of the spending of tourists on local livelihood	100	3.49	1.24
Negative impacts of tourism on the local culture	100	2.22	1.16
Difficulties living places with high tourism	100	2.75	1.17

Source: Primary Survey

## VII. SWAT ANALYSIS FOR CBT DEVELOPMENT AT NEIL ISLAND:

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESS</b>	<b>OPPURTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unparallel island scenic beauty</li> <li>• Silver sandy beaches</li> <li>• Pollution free, less congested rural charm</li> <li>• Colourful live coral</li> <li>• Adventure tourism</li> <li>• Located near Rani Jhansi Marine National Park</li> <li>• Natural Arch formation</li> <li>• Combination of mangrove and tropical forest</li> <li>• Rich Coastal Biodiversity and Agro eco- system</li> <li>• Friendly attitude of local people</li> <li>• Growing interest and awareness of locals towards Tourism Development</li> <li>• Rich culture and tradition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Fragile environment</li> <li>•Lack of transportation facility</li> <li>•Poor infrastructural facilities</li> <li>• Lack of education</li> <li>• Poor marketing strategies</li> <li>• Lack of proper training and entrepreneurial skills for locals involved in tourism related activities</li> <li>Little or no interpretation of the natural environment</li> <li>• Lack of information centre</li> <li>• Absence of an efficient system for measurement of tourism demand and supply</li> <li>•Lack of communication facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Huge potential for ecotourism and adventure tourism with opportunities for bird watching, nature tours and by cycle tour,</li> <li>•Potential to tap the vast emerging markets in ecotourism,</li> <li>•Coastal and forest Trekking</li> <li>• specialist niche markets such as trekking and bird watching</li> <li>• Possibilities for Angling</li> <li>• Cultural museum and nature interpretation centre</li> <li>• Home stays and local cuisine shall be the additions to tourism product</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Poor level of environmental awareness among local population as well as tourist.</li> <li>•Lack of proper implementation of conservation measures</li> <li>• Poor understanding of sustainability</li> <li>•Tourism development can change the whole socio-cultural pattern of the host community, if not planned properly. Could create economic inequality.</li> <li>•Loss of environmental resource and forest cover</li> <li>•Loss of biological diversity</li> <li>• Climate change and global warming</li> <li>•Cyclone, storm surge</li> <li>•Coastal erosion</li> </ul>

## VIII. CONCLUSION:

The local community believes that tourism brings jobs and incomes as well as cultural development. They want equitable distribution of benefits generated from the tourism sector among local people. It is imperative that the government should promote sustainable community based island tourism for rural empowerment and development. Innovation of local products and services is necessary for the participation of local people in this sector. Integrated Systematic Tourism Plan will be a tool not only for the promotion of sustainable tourism in Neil Island but also for the upliftment of the rural poor community.

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