

## Tourism in Bangladesh: A Prospects Analysis

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### Abstract

Tourism has become a great source of foreign exchange earning in Bangladesh. It is playing an important role to create an employment opportunities in a large scale. Bangladesh has become now a new tourist zone on the map of the world. The tourism sector in Bangladesh has been gradually growing from mid-nineties to till now. It has a great potentiality to develop tourism sector by applying new policies and strategies. This research has identified the prospects of tourism industry in Bangladesh, identifies the SWOT analysis, constraints and suggests remedial measures of tourism sector.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, SWOT Analysis

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is a special and complex industry and its promotion has to be directed at a large number of people in various lands of different socio-economic structures having different needs, tests, attitudes, expectations and behavior pattern. Therefore, planning effective marketing promotional strategy must penetrate in the people's tastes and preferences (Shafi, 1985). Jahangir (1998) argued that Bangladesh's share in the total arrivals in the south Asian region is too small. Almost all the countries of South Asia, backed by organized efforts, are far ahead of Bangladesh in respect of development of tourism.

Hossain and Nazmin(2006) depicted that according to the foreign tourists of Bangladesh ,scenic beauty ranked first, cost of services second ,attitude of people third ,and so on down to facilities ranking the tenth.

Tourism is a leisure activity which involves a discretionary use of time and money and recreation is often the main purpose for participation in tourism (Ghosh, 2001). Tourism is emerged from the movement of people to and their stay in various destinations. There are two basic elements in tourism, such as the journey to the destination and the stay. In short, tourism means the business of providing information, transportation, accommodation and other services to travelers (Ghosh, 2001).

Fayissa, Nsiah, Tadasse (2007) found that receipts from the tourism industry significantly contribute both to the current level of gross domestic product and the economic growth of Sub-Saharan African countries as do investments in physical and human capital. Their finding implies that African economies can enhance their short-run economic growth by strategically strengthening their tourism industries.

In the literature review, it has been well described by different authors that tourism marketing is essential for economic development of a country. The study intends to do research work considering secondary sources. Most of the authors do either conceptual framework or secondary sources.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bangladesh possessing attractive bio – diversification empirical and historical heritage has the opportunity to develop the tourism sector to reap benefit out of this ever – expanding industry. It is envisaged as leading to management of all natural resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be satisfied while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes and biodiversity and life support systems. The study has been conducted by-to collect necessary data and information to present the facts in a logical format & has made a modest attempt to provide a small block of knowledge in the field and its practices & development in Bangladesh. A huge number of articles and statements have been gathered to collect information & data also collected from internet for this purpose. The collected data & information have been processed manually. Finally, the paper has been prepared in the present form to make the study informative. It has been found that the present scenario of tourism sector in Bangladesh is reasonably satisfying, although it has some limitations & weaknesses such as accommodation problem, Poor Image of Bangladesh, Transportation problem, Lack of proper publicity, Complicated visa and travel formalities, Lack of initiative to preserve, conserve and maintain the tangible

tourism products, lack of security, unstable political situation, Lack of required fund allocation in national budget, lack of international standard hotel etc. In the light of the identified limitations and weaknesses, some recommendations have been suggested towards its possible improvements in the future. Therefore, this study concludes that directing tourism growth towards local needs, interest and limit can greatly enhance tourism's value to the community and help create a sustainable tourism industry.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The major objectives of the study are to highlight the real picture and description of the different tourist spot in Bangladesh and to identify the present situation, where like reach in future, its socio – economic impact and also aims to identify the major problems and their recommendations of the tourism industry in Bangladesh.

In order to achieve these aims the following specific objectives are as follows:

1. To acquire a conceptual idea of tourism sector.
2. To highlight an overview of different tourist spot in Bangladesh.
3. To identify the SWOT analysis of Bangladesh tourism sector.
4. To find out what is the lacked behind the development of tourism in Bangladesh.
5. To provide some recommendation for the development of tourism sector.

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

To accomplish any study, it is necessary to collect data and information, processed tabulated and analyzed carefully. It has been prepared in present form to make the study more informative and useful. The study was conducted mainly on the basis of secondary data. The secondary data collected from some books, journals, articles, booklets and published materials, Internet, some statistical information, newspapers and other related materials, these were consulted and used as references. Thus, secondary data provides the guideline to create blue print of the research & study.

### **INTRODUCTORY PART**

People travel on foot, by vehicle and air from one part of the earth to another to watch the natural beauties that are surrounded to them. Being curious, they always want to get the flavor of unseen and unknown for pleasure. People get depressed of their monotonous workloads and want to escape from the pressures of work-deadlines, avoid crowd city life, break traditional daily life, and thus enjoy some time in a new place having natural and cultural significance. A new place can relieve the monotony of one's existence and -fill one mind with joy. A tour is very helpful to widen the wisdom of a person. From ancient time, Bengal was very rich in culture, history, social values and religion that's why it is considered as a most wonderful and attractive tourist destination.

### **DISCOVERY OF BANGLADESH**

The people of Bangladesh are essentially a tradition loving nation and simple in nature. The people enjoy six seasons in a year; each of which is distinct from the other in respect of gaiety, color and complexion. (Akteruzzaman & Istiaque, 2001). If we consider the total tourism point of view, the total facilities should rather say that, Bangladesh is one of the most wonderful countries not only in the south East Asia region, but also in the world. Although Bangladesh may not possess the impressive monuments and architectural treasures like the Pyramids and the Taj Mahal, it possesses something substantially different to attract the tourists. It has rich heritage, culture, monuments, ancient & beautiful mosques, temples, magnificent tea gardens, many historical buildings, beautiful landscapes and Pundraardhan, the oldest city of 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.(Mollah & Hossain,2009).Tourism spots can be divided into three categories from broader viewpoints -- archaeological, historical and natural beauty. She is said to have large and attractive tourist's attractions such as Beaches, Archaeological Sites, Hills and Inlands, Historical Places, Religious places, Forests and Wild Life etc.

It has 75 miles long straight sandy sea beach at Cox's Bazar. This type of smooth and straight sea beach is hardly seen in any place of the world. Bangladesh has peculiar tribal people having their unique way of life mostly living in the hilly regions of Cox's Bazar and Chittagong Hill Tracts areas. The Country is also rich in ancient history. Many famous monuments, archaeological and historical places are still standing to indicate the past glorious civilization of Bangladesh. The Sundarbans, a densely beautiful forest, is another attractive tourist spot in Bangladesh. Moreover, Bangladesh is full of rural tourism. Tourists can enjoy the villages and the simple life pattern of the villages. There are some parks in the country for recreation. Ramna Park, Mirpur Botanical Garden in Dhaka, the Foy's lake in Chittagong and other large, medium and Mini Parks are attractive sights to the tourists.( Hasan & Neela,2008) The traditional emphasis of the tourist trade has always been on the material facilities offered by a country rather than on its actual charms. This may be a reason why Bangladesh has seldom been highlighted in the World's tourist maps. [[www.discoverybangladesh.com/25k](http://www.discoverybangladesh.com/25k)]

## **INTRODUCING WITH NATURAL BEAUTIES OF BANGLADESH**

In Bangladesh, tourism spots can be divided into three categories from broader viewpoints -- archaeological, historical and natural beauty. Cultural tourism based on Buddhist and Islamic archaeological and historical monuments, general interest features in the Dhaka region especially Sonargaon, Maynamoti at Comilla region, Mahastangar in Bogra district, Rajshahi, Shat Gombaj Mosque at Bagerhat and Barisal region have also the potential for attracting tourists. Paharpur Buddhist Vihara was included in the world heritage list.

### **DHAKA DIVISION**

Dhaka division is located at center of the country has an area of 31119 sq. km and a population of 38.678 million. Main rivers of this division are padma, jamuna, meghna, old Brahmaputra, dhaleshwari, shitalakshya, brahmaputra, buriganga, arial khan. Madhupur and Bhawal Garhs are located to the northern parts of Dhaka, in Gazipur, southern part of Mymensingh and eastern part of Tangail districts; Garo hills are located in Mymensingh district.

#### **Dhaka City**

Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh. The city is known as the city of mosque, muslin and rickshaws. It has attracted travellers from far and near through ages. Having a happy blending of old and new architectural trends, Dhaka has been developing fast as a modern city and is throbbing with activities in all spheres of life. [<http://www.discoverybd.com/dhaka.html>]

#### **Chittagong Division**

Chittagong is the biggest seaport and second largest town in Bangladesh situated near the Bay of Bengal. It is 264 km away east of Dhaka, famous for hill areas, natural beauty and for the seashore. Chittagong is also known of the town of Aulias (Muslim saints).

Its green hills and forests, its broad sandy beaches and its fine cool climate always attract the holiday-markers. Described by the Chinese traveler poet, Huen Tsang (7th century A.D) as "a sleeping beauty emerging from mists and water" and given the title of "Porto Grande" by the 16th century Portuguese seafarers. The Shahi Jama-e-Masjid and Qadam Mubarak Mosque are two of the most impressive buildings in the city. It is also worth visiting the Ethnological Museum in the Modern City, which has interesting displays on Bangladesh's tribal peoples. There are good views and cooling breezes from the fairy hill in the British city in the northwestern sector of the city.

#### **Khulna Division**

Khulna division is in the southwest part of Bangladesh. It has the world's biggest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans. Major tourist spots in Khulna division

##### **Sundarban**

Sundarban is the world biggest mangrove forest. In Bangladesh tourism, Sundarban plays the most vital role. A large number of foreigners come to Bangladesh every year only to visit this unique mangrove forest. Besides, local tourists also go to visit Sundarban every year. The area of great Sundarban is approximately 6000 sq. km.

**MAIN ATTRACTIONS:** Wildlife photography including photography of the famous Royal Bengal Tiger, wildlife viewing, boating inside the forest will call recordings, nature study, meeting fishermen, wood-cutters and honey-collectors, peace and tranquility in the wilderness, seeing the world's largest mangrove forest and the revering beauty. The Sundarbans are the largest littoral mangrove belt in the world, stretching 80km (50mi) into the Bangladeshi hinterland from the coast. The forests aren't just mangrove swamps though; they include some of the last remaining stands of the mighty jungles, which once covered the Gangetic plain.

Since 1966 the Sundarbans have been a wildlife sanctuary, and it is estimated that there are now 400 Royal Bengal tigers and about 30,000 spotted deer in the area. This is indeed a land for the sportsmen, the anglers and the photographers with its abundance of game, big and small, crocodile, wild boar, deer, pythons, wild-birds and above all the Royal Bengal Tiger, cunning, ruthless and yet majestic and graceful. For the less adventurously inclined, there are ducks and snipes, herons and coots, yellow-lags and sandpipers. It is also the land for the ordinary holiday makers who desire to rest or wander around at will to refresh their mind and feast their eyes with the rich treasure that nature has so fondly bestowed.

#### **Rajshahi Division**

Rajshahi town is situated besides the river Padma. In monsoon the great Padma is in full spate with its tides and waves whereas in winter it dwindles and you will feel the desert by the side of river. Rajshahi Division is famous for archeological and historical places like Mohastnangor, Paharpur Buddhist Monastery, Kantajee's Temple, Ramshagar Dighi, Choto Sona Masjid, and Shopnopuri etc. One can also visit Borendra Research Museum. There will find the ancient elements of Paharpur, Mohasthangar.

#### **Sylhet Division**

Sylhet division occupies the north east part of Bangladesh. It is a natural hilly, forest area with ox bow lakes and famous shrines.

### **Sylhet City**

Nestled in the picturesque Surma Valley amidst scenic tea plantations and lush green tropical forests, greater Sylhet is a prime attraction for all tourists visiting Bangladesh. Laying between the Khasia and the Jaintia hills on the north, and the Tripura hills on the south, Sylhet breaks the monotony of the flatness of this land by a multitude of terraced tea gardens, rolling countryside and the exotic flora and fauna. Here the thick tropical forests abound with many species of wildlife, spread their aroma around the typical hearth and homes of the Mainpuri Tribal.

The Sylhet valley is formed by a beautiful, winding pair of rivers named the Surma and the Kushiara both of which are fed by innumerable hill streams from the north and the south. The valley has good number of haors, which are big natural depressions. Sylhet has also a very interesting and rich history, Before the conquest by the Muslims; it was ruled by local chieftains. In 1303, the great Saint Hazrat Shah Jalal came to Sylhet from Delhi with a band of 360 disciples to preach Islam and defeated the then Raja Gour Gobinda. For miles and miles around, the visitor can see the teagardens spread like a green carpet over the plain land or on the sloping hills. A visit to the tea plantation in Sylhet is a memorable experience. Sylhet, the tea granary of Bangladesh, not only has over 150 tea gardens but also proudly possesses three largest tea gardens in the world in both area and production. The main attraction of Sylhet city is the Shrine of Hajrat Shahjalal(R) and Hajrat Shah Poran (R). Shrine of Hajrat Shahjalal (R) is on the top of a hillock (tilla) in Sylhet city. Thousands of visitors are coming everyday in this Shrine. Shrine of Hajrat Shah Paran (R) is eight km far from Sylhet town on the Sylhet-Jaflong road where also thousands of visitors visits this Shrine every day.

### **Barishal Division**

Barishal is a Division of rivers and canals. It is also famous for gardens of coconut trees. You will find thousands of coconut trees throughout Barishal Division. Kuakata is the main tourist spot in the division. In Barishal town you can visit Durga Sagor - a beautiful Dighi where a lot of guest birds comes every winter season. This is also a beautiful park where one can spend his leisure time by roaming around the park and watching the birds. Main Tourist Spots in Barishal Division

#### **Kuakata**

Kuakata, locally known as Sagar Kannya (Daughter of the Sea) is a rare scenic beauty spot on the southernmost tip of Bangladesh. At Kuakata excellent combination of the picturesque natural beauty, sandy beach, blue sky, huge expanse of water of the Bay and evergreen forest in really eye-catching. From its seashore one can watch both sunrise and sunset. The coconut trees increase the scenic beauty of seashore. Kuakata is truly a virgin beach-a sanctuary for migratory winter birds, a series of coconut trees, sandy beach of blue Bay, a feast for the eye. Forest, boats plying in the Bay of Bengal with colorful sails, fishing, towering cliffs, surfing waves everything here touches every visitor's heart. The unique customs and costumes of the 'Rakhyne' tribal families and Buddhist Temple of about hundred years old indicate the ancient tradition and cultural heritage, which are objects of great pleasure Kuakata is the place of pilgrimage of the Hindus and Buddhist communities. In Horinghata forest sometimes the Royal Bengal Tiger is seen. Horin is a Bengali word for deer. So name itself express why it's called Horinghata.

### **Development of tourism sector in Bangladesh**

Tourism industry has become a growing and most dynamic sector all over the world. Each and every country is trying to increase their share in the world tourism market. So innovative and strategic measures are urgent to improve the health of this industry of the country. It is hoped that the following steps may be effective for the development and promotion of tourism industry and attracting more foreign tourists in the country-

- The BPC, the only national tourist organization should be given adequate autonomy for taking timely decisions on issues relating to strategic joint venture, diversification of business and ensuring the required organizational development.
- Training facilities conducted and given by the BPC for the staff of hotels and restaurants should be enlarged and well equipped.
- Adequate rules and regulations should be framed and existing regulations should be modified.
- Proper arrangement should be made for publications of brochure's, booklet, regarding different tourist spots.
- Development of proper infrastructure may increase the number of tourists both domestic and foreign.
- Creation of sub – regional zones may be helpful to motivate foreign tourists.

### **SCENARIO OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS**

The marketing performance of any tourism organization can be evaluated based on the earnings by the organization. So, it was attempted to focus on the earnings of BPC and the growth rate of the same for the last couple of years to have a clear picture of the sector in terms of financial performance. The following table is showing the earnings and growth rate of the same of BPC, the only government owned tourism organization in Bangladesh:

**Table: Foreign Exchange Earnings from Tourism and Travels in Bangladesh**

Year	Earnings from Tourism	
	Amount (Million Tk*)	Growth Rate (%)
1990-91	267.7	(+) 40.13
1991-92	391.3	(+) 46.17
1992-93	448.3	(+) 14.57
1993-94	1607.1	(+) 35.4
1994-95	823.6	(+) 35.66
1995-96	1125.4	(+) 36.64
1996-97	1799.7	(+) 59.92
1997-98	3086.9	(+) 71.52
1998-99	2370.1	(-) 23.22
1999-00	2582.7	(+) 8.97
2000-01	2638.1	(+) 2.15
2001-02	3087.1	(+) 17.02
2002-03	3207.4	(+) 3.90
2003-04	3782.7	(+) 17.94
2004-05	4203.25	(+) 11.12
2005-06	5076.5	(+) 12.12
2006-07	6234.66	(+) 11.56
2007-08	6580.9	(+) 13.14
2008-09	7650.7	(+) 18.19
2009-10	8095.5	(+) 19.10
<b>Average growth Rate</b>		<b>(+) 22.6</b>

Source: Bangladesh Bank and BPC Web page, available from: <http://www.bangladeshtourism.gov.bd>

**SWOT ANALYSIS OF TOURISM SECTOR IN BANGLADESH**

On the basis secondary data, it has been done the following SWOT analysis

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Bangladesh is renowned for its natural beauty, greenery, archeological and historical places and hospitality of people.</p> <p>It has numerous rivers and longest sea beach of the World.</p> <p>Scope for expansion of world tourism.</p> <p>Low cost of products and services</p> <p>Available accommodation facility throughout the country.</p>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Globalization and dissemination of information</p> <p>Scope for Expansion of Communication media</p> <p>To attract tourists if regular research and development may be done by the policy makers</p> <p>Tourist spots should be more attractive</p> <p>Strong competition within the region</p> <p>To attend in International tourism fair</p> <p>Increase Seminar</p>
<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Problems related to safety security and hygiene,</p> <p>Lack of Entertainment Facilities both physical and recreational</p> <p>Lack of new investment;</p> <p>Lack of safety and Security</p> <p>Non Professional Tour operators</p> <p>Poor Image of Bangladesh, as a tourist destination</p> <p>Lack of proper promotional activities</p> <p>Unavailable forging aids or investment in the tourism sector of Bangladesh</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>Political instability</p> <p>Foreign tourist may not communicate with local people due to lack of language problem.</p> <p>Infrastructure for enhancement of the tourism is not well developed</p> <p>Barriers to overcome Image crisis of Bangladesh</p> <p>Harassment by the police and the broker in the airport.</p> <p>Bangladesh is often projected in foreign electronic and print media as a country of flood, cyclone, strike, political violence etc.</p> <p>Political collision between tribal and Bengali people.</p> <p>Absence of long term tourism policy.</p>

### **PROBLEMS OF TOURISM SECTOR IN BANGLADESH:**

A number of significant factors affect the image of tourism in Bangladesh. Tourism industry of Bangladesh is suffering from numerous problems like;

- ❖ Poor Image of Bangladesh, as a tourist destination
- ❖ Lack of proper publicity
- ❖ Bangladesh is often projected in foreign electronic and print media as a country of flood, cyclone, strike, political violence etc.
- ❖ Unavailable forging aids or investment in the tourism sector of Bangladesh
- ❖ Lack of social and political commitment
- ❖ Lack of well trained, skilled and efficient manpower
- ❖ Terrorism and robbing are common incident
- ❖ Lack of required fund allocation in national budget
- ❖ Development planning of the government does not give importance to proper infrastructure development in the tourism sector.
- ❖ Problems of security, accessibility and accommodation for tourist.
- ❖ Complicated visa and travel formalities in Bangladesh mission.
- ❖ Lack of initiative to preserve, conserve and maintain the tangible tourism products.
- ❖ Lack of proper marketing plans for tourism products for the generation countries of the world.
- ❖ Lack of institutional capacity of the ministry of civil aviation and tourism in general and the BPC in particular.
- ❖ Continuous campaign against Bangladesh by certain quarters as a fundamentalist country is another obstacle.

### **Key Policy Recommendations**

The past several years of tourism marketing for the development of its business was quite insufficient. After long, elaborate and lively discussion on Tourism business made the following recommendations:

- Having realized the importance of tourism's multinational effects
- Need sufficient publicity
- A robust need for tourist guides and training centers
- Taking necessary policies to attract foreign and private sectors investment
- Ensure safety and security for tourists, especially at the tourist sports. Use specially trained-up police in tourism security or "tourist Police".
- Establish coordination among all the concerned ministries, department agencies.
- Simplify the visa and immigration formalities
- Allocate fund in the national budget and initiate immediate loan system for private sector tourism entrepreneurs and tour operators including BPC to create more facilities
- Entrust BPC with the responsibility to issue registration to hotels /motels and tour operators and strictly monitor the performance
- Exempt tourism industry from the purview tax and vat
- Run tourism business both by the government and private sector simultaneously to maintain the standardization of services.
- Community awareness and participation, social tolerance for tourist should be created.
- Government should take initiatives to develop infrastructural facilities so that tourists feel interest to visit the country.

### **Concluding remarks**

At present, the tourism resources of Bangladesh are immense and the simple & friendly people of Bangladesh along with its indigenous communities, which live isolated from modern society and possess their own distinct culture and way of life, make Bangladesh a unique place of attraction for tourists. Bangladeshis are always happy to extend their hospitality to visitors, who should find it an enjoyable place. The significance of tourism is viewed from many angles like economic, social, cultural, political etc.

For many developing countries, in particular the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), tourism is considered to be the one of the fundamental pillars of their economic development. is a country of Asian region holding high potentiality of tourism. Although Bangladesh is a least develop country from nearly 150 million people with limited resources and huge unemployment circumstances, an ongoing effective master plan by the government, Bangladesh Parjaton Corporation (BPC) and collaboration of private sectors of development can contribute for the development of tourism business in Bangladesh.

Tourism can only contribute for the developing countries of economic, socio – cultural and environmental progress apparently. In fact, Bangladesh government needs to keep attention for staggering its strategic planning

for tourism business development as well as the strategic marketing to flourish the existing resources and facilities of the destination.

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