

Monsoon Tourism: A New Aspiration for Bangladesh Tourism Industry

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Abstract

From the very past Bangalees are highly attached with the monsoon season and much influenced by the beauty of the rainy season. So we find a touch of the season in our every occasion and festivals. Most of the countries of the world are deprived from the blessings and beauty of the monsoon climate. So, every year lots of tourists from different countries (like Norway, Germany, Switzerland, Russia) come to visit different countries which are blessed by monsoon climate. They also come to visit Bangladesh. Like other seasons the rainy season of Bangladesh is also very suitable for the interested visitors. So, in this article we have tried to conduct a descriptive research to represent the current scenario with the emphasis on future impact of Monsoon tourism for the development of Bangladeshi tourism sector. Our research is based on both qualitative and quantitative data which we have collected from various sources like websites, articles, journals, etc. Throughout our study we mainly try to focus on the future of Bangladesh tourism sector by introducing new phenomena monsoon tourism.

Keywords: monsoon, tourism, tourist, Bangladesh, Bay of Bengal, Cox's Bazar, rainy season.

1. Introduction

As a tourism destination, Bangladesh is truly hard to beat. Bangladesh definitely offers a lot to watch and enjoy and do. In Bangladesh, where Bangla is spoken, is one of the most beautiful countries in South Asia, Bangladesh has tremendous economic potential. Its tropical beach resorts on the Bay of Bengal are counted as a paradise for the sun vacationers.

The splendor of its six seasons, the world's longest natural beach at Cox's Bazar, the cloud forests of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the country's rich flora and fauna fascinate tourists. The Saint Martin's offers excellent scuba diving opportunities. Tea and mango plantations of the country can attract tourists. The historic city of Dhaka and the port city of Chittagong have tourist value.

Promoting tourism products successfully requires a context that allows the audience to appreciate what a country has to offer to visitors. That context is the overall image of a country. To establish Bangladesh as potential tourist destination like India, Nepal, Srilanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and some other popular tourist destinations, we may also create some distinct and different set of tourism activities here in Bangladesh. We are naturally blessed and have some colorful seasons to pay focus on. Despite of some natural obligations, Rainy season may become one of the best time for the tourist all over the world to come and enjoy the nature and beauty of monsoon in Bangladesh. So, to establish ourselves as a most attractive tourist destination we can introduce a new way of tourism called monsoon tourism in Bangladesh to attract monsoon lovers and to ensure the social and economic development for the nation.

2. Research-objectives

The objectives of conducting the study are based on some earlier identified implications. There are various researches on this topic for example, Monsoon Tourism in Goa, monsoon tourism: a ray of new Hope for Indian tourism (Alam, 2008) and Monsoon Tourism in Bangladesh (Howlader, 2013). The main objective of this study is to discover the scope of monsoon tourism in Bangladesh. The secondary objectives are to find out the similarities between Indian monsoon tourism with the Bangladeshi one, and how we can achieve success with this concept.

In this paper we try to focus on the beauty and geographical aspects of Bangladesh which may allure a lot of tourists. As a booming sector, we feel that a new dimension like monsoon tourism should be introduced to develop the tourism industry in Bangladesh.

3. Literature Review

We can define Tourism as a social, cultural and economic experience related to the movement of people to places

outside their usual place of habitation. It is observed that, Tourism has an impact on the economy, on the natural and built environments, on the local population of the places visited, as well as on the visitors themselves.

Climate and weather are important factors in tourists' decision making and also influence the successful operation of tourism businesses. More specifically, climate is defined as the existing condition observed as a long term average in a location. In contrast, weather is the expression of climate at a specific point in time and place. So, while tourists might expect certain climatic conditions when they travel to a place, while they will experience the actual weather, which might deviate quite substantially from the average conditions. (Becken, 2010).

Even though most tourism demand studies focus on economic variables (Crouch, 1994; Lim et al., 2008), climate has been identified as a key driver for tourism and an important destination attribute (Hu & Ritchie, 1992). Climate is either the main tourism resource, for example in the case of beach destinations (Kozak et al., 2008), or it acts as a facilitator that makes tourism activities possible and enjoyable (Gómez M, 2005). The importance of climatic attributes for tourist destinations is reflected in advertising materials (Gómez M, 2005) as well as destination image construction (Pike, 2002).

These related variables have enormous affect on the tourism of Bangladesh. BANGLADESH is one of the smallest countries in the world and it is also a South-Asian isolated country. BANGLADESH has some natural assets and those are:

- It has an open access to open ocean named 'The Bay Of Bengal'.
- The tropical climate.
- The abundance of good soil.
- Adequate of rainfall.
- River flow.

It is said that BANGLADESH is a poor country financially but it has a vast natural resources which enriched it. Her geographic location is from 20°34" North Latitude to 26°38" North Latitude; From 88°01" East Longitude to 92°41" East Longitude (Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, 2009). Due to her geographic location Bangladesh is blessed with tropical monsoon climate characterized by heavy seasonal rainfall, high temperatures, and high humidity. This blessing of monsoon can play a vital role on our tourism sector development by attracting large numbers of nature lover tourist from all over the world.

According to Mr. Howlader (2013); "In Bangladesh the tropical monsoon climate can bring much hardship but it also blesses the landscape with heavy rainfall each year". For this reason Bangladesh should focus on the monsoon tourism as it may play a pivotal role in the future economical condition

4. Methodology

This article is based on secondary data and basically it's a descriptive research. The qualitative and quantitative data has been collected from various sources like newspapers, journals, online publications. We have also given emphasis on expert opinion to ensure the reliability of the study. The major concepts related with the study are, Bangladesh tourism sector, The Monsoon tourism at Goa, The scope of monsoon tourism in Bangladesh. Further studies need to conduct to find out the impact of the monsoon tourism on the Bangladeshi tourism sector.

5. Current scenario in Bangladesh tourism

Bangladesh is a developing country in South Asia, located between 20°34c to 26°38c north latitude and 88°01c to 92°42c east longitude, with an area of 147,570 square km and a population of 140 million. It is bordered on the west, north, and east by India, on the southeast by Myanmar, and the Bay of Bengal to the south (Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, 2009).

Bangladesh's natural beauty, hill tracts, Cox's Bazar sea beach, Sundarbans and historical and religious monuments have always attracted the tourists. Bangladesh was listed by Lonely Planet in 2011 as the "best value destination". Various Bangladeshi Division offers both individually and combining a variety of natural and cultural destinations suitable for tourist attractions. The duty of proper authority is to make it handy for the interest group both from home and abroad.

To get better understanding about present status of tourism in Bangladesh and its prospect as a contributor in GDP we can go through the report of World Travel & Tourism Council (2011). According to them, the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP is expected to be BDT184.4bn (2.3% of total GDP) in 2011, rising by 6.3% p.a. to BDT339.2bn (2.3%) in 2021 (inconstant 2011 prices).

In this country, the scope of nature based tourism, research based tourism, culture based tourism, and eco-tourism is quite evident (Shamsuddoha, 2004). Many developing countries have prepared plans particularly at the central level to guide tourism development, as they have recognized the tourism sector as an important source of foreign currency earning and employment (Tosun and Timothy 2001). It requires the integration of the tourism industry into other sectors such as agriculture, industry, transportation and social services (Timothy 1999).

Bangladesh is a country of good prospects for tourism. Bangladesh Economic Review (2010) states that Bangladesh has basically three sectors of generating revenue: Industry, Agriculture and Service. Tourism is a part of service sector which is contributing a major part of total GDP of Bangladesh. Though the contribution of tourism in GDP is only 7% (Table 1) in 2004-05, it has increased to 9.44% (Table 1) by the year 2009-10. This simple data could be helpful to understand how promising the sector is for Bangladesh.

Table 1: Growth and Contribution of Tourism and Other Sector in GDP of Bangladesh

Year	Growth of GDP including Tourism	Growth of GDP excluding Tourism	GDP including Tourism	GDP excluding Tourism	Growth of Tourism (%)	Contribution of Service in GDP (%)	Contribution of Tourism in GDP (%)
2004-2005	-	-	266978	248278	-	47.41	7.00
2005-2006	6.63%	6.14%	284673	263513	13.16	47.31	7.43
2006-2007	6.43%	5.88%	302971	279001	13.28	47.51	7.91
2007-2008	6.19%	5.54%	321726	294466	13.73	47.66	8.47
2008-2009	5.74%	5.31%	340197	310107	10.38	47.92	8.84
2009-2010	6.00%	5.31%	360609	326579	13.09	48.19	9.44

Source: Bangladesh Economic Review 2010, Ministry of Finance and 2011 Bangladesh Economic Impact Report, World Trade and Tourism Council

Tourism is a promising sector in Bangladesh having a steady growth rate of around 13% (Table 2) except in 2008-09 which has a growth rate of only 10.38% (Table 2). From figure 1 which is drawn from table 2, earning from tourism has a slow rising growth trend till 2007-08. Though there is sudden fall in tourism growth in 2008-09, total GDP growth is almost unaffected. It implies that GDP is not very much depending on tourism apparently. On an average, around BDT4598.32 million (Table 3) is earned from tourism which has been experienced an average growth rate of 8.41% (Table 3).

Table 2: Growth of Tourism, Total GDP and GDP Excluding Tourism

Growth in different sectors	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Growth of Tourism contribution	13.16%	13.28%	13.73%	10.38%	13.09%
Growth rate of GDP excluding Tourism	6.14%	5.88%	5.54%	5.31%	5.31%
Growth rate of GDP	6.63%	6.43%	6.19%	5.74%	6.00%

Source: Bangladesh Economic Review 2010 (Ministry of Finance) and 2011 Bangladesh Economic Impact Report, World Trade and Tourism Council

Table 3: Foreign Earnings from Tourism (In Million BDT)

Years	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	Ave.	STDEV
Total Foreign Exchange	2653.80	3312.60	3310.00	3967.56	4493.89	5530.65	5265.19	6124.52	5762.24	5562.70	4598.32	1221.60
% Change	1.02	24.82	-0.08	19.87	13.27	23.07	-4.80	16.32	-5.92	-3.46	8.41	12.24

Source: Tourism Statistics 2010, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation

Major number of tourists visiting Bangladesh is for scenic beauty. Around 46% of total number of foreign tourists visiting Bangladesh in 2009 comes to enjoy nature. Second highest reason for tourists' attraction is religious interest. Bangladesh is a giant country in the Muslim world. Thousands of people visit Bangladesh for religious purpose. She arranges the three-day Bishwa Ijtima each year attracting people from around the world. According to GTA Muslims News & Resources (2010), Bangladesh — Tens of Thousands (according to some report 4 million) Muslims attended Tabligi Jamaat Ijtima in 2010 near the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka. In 2009, around 41% of total tourists come for religious purpose. Moreover, 3.36% for business tourism, 2.42% for study tourism and 1.46% for office of total number tourists visit Bangladesh in 2009.

Despite of having huge potential – tourism industry of Bangladesh – has been badly affected by the current image of the country as well as many other major factors working behind the sluggish growth of tourism in Bangladesh like political instability, pollution, illiteracy, natural calamity etc. but the situations can be changed with a new and attractive modern ways of tourism management.

With ongoing monsoon season, Bangladesh tourism industry trying to introduce a new way for attracting tourists (specially for the people whom love rainy season as well as travel by boat or river cruise). This will come in light as a new hope for our tourism industry. For last few years Bangladesh trying to introduce 'monsoon tourism' as a new theme of tourism to draws the attention of large number of tourists from across the globe. Monsoon has

already knocked the door in Bangladesh and other parts of the country as well, which is good signal from the tourism point of view.

6. Monsoon tourism- A new hope

This new idea come along with a good news for Bangladesh tourism industry as monsoon season is calling the tourist from across the globe every year. In fact, people in many regions of the country have experienced the rainfall well in advance and got some relief from scorching heat of summer. Though the monsoon brings excessive rains and badly hit the normal life, but it has special significance for Bangladesh tourism Industry. Each year tourists from various parts of the world come to visit Bangladesh and many of them specially come to enjoy the monsoon climate. Bangladesh is one such place, which would beckons tourists in the monsoon season for a wonderful vacation. We should follow the examples of Goa tourism in this sector. In monsoon tourism Goa registers an insignificant 6.5% increase in 2012 for the four months from June to September (Department of Tourism, Govt. of Goa, n.d).

Like Goa, in Bangladesh We have thousands of rivers, sea-beach, hill tracts, wildlife, natural water falls, and many more which are some of the popular attractions. Here tourists can refresh themselves in the invigorating and intoxicating monsoon reason. Besides, the houseboat trip and river cruise across the rivers add more to the experience of the tourists.

Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) tries to promote Goa as an all year holiday destination. GTDC introduces various packages to lure tourists. Ralph de Sousa, spokesman for the travel and tourism association of Goa, said, "The department's effort in promoting monsoon tourism is showing results. We need to create a hype and come up with a calendar of events showcasing the festivals and activities we have in the monsoons, to convince people to visit Goa". In Bangladesh, To attract interested tourist during monsoon season we may also offer the especially customized tour like 'Monsoon Holiday Packages' that cover all important destinations of the country. We can offer these packages during June to September every year, when the season has got its blooming beauty. We have to keep in mind that most of these monsoon packages would be customized for both the domestic and foreign tourists. If anyone wants to experience the real charm of monsoon season then after visiting Bangladesh- surely he/she will find a rare chance of experiencing nature closely and return home with some lifelong memories.

6.1. The crucial attributes for monsoon tourism

To promote monsoon tourism we need to promote different types of entertainment forms that are available in Bangladesh. Such as:



6.1.1. Boat or Cruise Trip in the monsoon season

There isn't a better or more exhilarating way to see the scenic majesty of the countryside. Anyone board on a comfortable wooden boat to absorb the sights, while experiencing the surprisingly peaceful sensations of being on the river. This is the only exciting way to discover Bangladesh. Tourists may stop on many villages, bazaars, see the real life style, and enjoy the different folk cultural programs in different villages in the evening. A cruise

on Ganges, Brahmaputra, Meghna and others rivers will introduce tourists to riverside Bangladesh and her history, culture and life style.

Bangladesh Now offering different types of cruise, motor boat or even journey by boat trip to enjoy and explore the scenic beauty of the beautiful monsoon climate is an attractive way for holding the attention of both the domestic and the foreigners. The views of blue sky without cloud, white flowers near the bank of the rivers, scenery of the magnificent villages of Bangladesh, aromas of seasonal foods & fruits and the lifestyle of our general people in this season is the major demand of the tourists. So the monsoon season open a new door for holding the attention of the tourists around the globe though this season may have some negative affect like cyclone, floods, high tide etc. And we have work out on the opportunities by deducting its negative effects.

6.1.2. Foods in monsoon season

This season offers a wide variety of foods for the nation as well as for the tourists whom come from different corner of the world to enjoy the beauty of the monsoon climate.

- **Fruits:** For the blessing of the climate we find many delicious fruits in this season like Jack Fruit (our national fruit), black berry, mangoes, pine apple, palm, coconut and many others to be mentioned here. The taste and aroma of this mouth watering fruits attract many tourists around the globe.
- **Fish:** This is the season of fishes. Especially hilsha fish (National fish of Bangladesh). The mouth watering taste & smell of different preparations of the hilsha fish like fried fish or curry is another spatiality of Bangladesh. We may offer our tourist this specialty and introduce then with a world of new taste.

6.1.3. Flower exhibition

We already mention earlier, in monsoon climate many flowers are bloom and enhance the beauty of our country. Majestic beauty and fragrance of Kadam, Hizal, and Juthika create magic everywhere. Beauty of white kashful beside the bank of rivers is the most common as well as attractive scene of this season in Bangladesh. Thousands of flowers bloomed in this season here in the tropical monsoon climate area, like- Kadam, Ketoki, Juthika, Hizal and many more.

6.1.4. Musical events

Our National poet Kazi Nazrul Islam and sobriquet Gurudev, the world famous poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote many songs and poems on rainy season inspired by the beauty of the season in Bangladesh. So, Nazrul wrote- "Jachhe ghono ghono borishone kon Ketoki," "Rim jhim rim jhim oi namilo deya, Shuni shihore Kadam, bidore deya" or "Bashi bajay ke Kadam tolay ogo Lolita," "Dola lage Ketoki Kadam dale, Ano kundo malati jui vori thalik malbika". We can attract tourists by sponsoring these musical events on some exotic locations.

7. Some suggestions that can be followed to promote Monsoon Tourism in Bangladesh

- We need to design a proper plan to prepare a "to do list" which will help to redesign our tourist attractions and to decide the monsoon tourism activities for both in-bound tourists and out-bound tourists from all over the world.
- Through country branding, tourism will find a position it deserves. Its eternal reputation as a land of rivers, birds, flowers, fruits and greeneries along with its timeless beauty of rainy season can represent Bangladesh as an attractive tourism destination for the monsoon tourists.
- Proper development of tourist facilities at government and non-government levels will help to promote tourism in rainy season. Monsoon tourism can be considered as a major instrument for social integration and economic development and this will automatically enhance the country image.
- To inform tourists –both national and international we may create some promotional activities enrich with supportive information and attractive visual illustrations of the rainy season in Bangladesh.
- South Asian countries are all blessed with monsoon and beauty of rainy season. So, we may come together and try to combine our tourist destinations under one monsoon tourism package to provide a unique tour facility for the monsoon lovers.
- ASIAN, SAARC and other welfare organizations can take some initiatives to promote "Monsoon Tourism" like they are doing different seminars, training and others financial and supportive activities to promote and establish "Eco-tourism" and "Sustainable Tourism Development" here in Asia and South Asia.
- To ensure tourism development here in Bangladesh we may try to focus on tourism education to establish a strong workforce to understand and act properly and promptly to maintain the tourism growth along with increasing contribution on our economy.
- Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation along with other Govt. and private organizations may take some initiatives to promote and establish "Monsoon Tourism" in Bangladesh. Development of this type of tourism activities not only ensures employment facilities but also ensures proper economic growth for the country.
- We may arrange different customized packages including boat or cruise trips, flower exhibitions, food festivals, mangrove forest, longest sea beach, tea garden visits and water fall tours to attract tourists.
- To show the beauty of our lakes, canals, small and big rivers in the rainy season we can arrange boat trips to attract and hold the attention of the nature lover.

- Bangladesh and India may also arrange some cross-country river-cruises to attract more visitors in the rainy season. This will ensure lots of profit for both countries.
- A new form of attraction called “Health Tourism” may also be introduced to attract more tourists in this season. Like Spa, Mineral Spa, Meditation etc. will be arranged for the visitors. These types of facilities may also create many employment opportunities for the local people. It will be an experience of undoubtedly find a place which will provide the unforgettable trip of a lifetime.
- Through our traditional medication system Ayurveda and other herbal treatment we may introduce a new way of attraction for the tourists who come to explore the beauty of rainy season in Bangladesh.
- The main mission of our “Monsoon Tourism” will be creating place of hilling for the foreign visitors who come to visit and explore the beauty of the nature and our country as well.

8. Conclusion

The romance of the monsoon with its abundant rains and lush green landscape of Bangladesh can be promoted as a "unique" tourist attraction. “Monsoon Tourism” has a great chance to hold and keep both in-bound and out-bound tourists by providing them different and adventurous travelling experiences to enjoy the charm of the rainy season. We have lots to offer. By ensuring the potential uses of our natural and historical resources we can create a new hope for our tourism industry. With unique and eye-catching promotional activities, we can increase the chance of success rate for this new wing of tourism.

These programs will generate new employment opportunities and will also help government to earn precious foreign exchange from the expenditure of International tourists during their stay in Bangladesh. Along with Govt. and Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation private organizations may come forward and contribute to enhance the tourism industry of Bangladesh by working on this new idea “Monsoon Tourism”. Besides being a blessing for the budget conscious travelers, monsoon tourism can appear as a blessing for the Bangladesh tourism industry. And will show the pathway to improve its current tourism scenario which normally at present facing a sharp drop in the number of travelers at the end of the summer season, once the clouds appear in the sky overhead. Monsoon tourism has huge potentiality to create a remarkable change of the economical growth of Bangladesh.

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