

Prospects and Constraints of Tourism Sector in Bangladesh : An Analysis

Wasib Bin Latif¹ Selim Ahmed²
Shabuz Mahmud³ Mohammed Abdul Jalil⁴ Syada Ummul Aowara Suchana⁵

Abstract

This study mainly focuses on the prospects and constraints of tourism sector in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has enriched cultural heritage. Bangladesh is very much attractive and potential tourism sector that can earn foreign currency around the world. This study has based on secondary information that has gathered from different articles published in journals, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, and different websites. This paper discovers the prospects and potentiality of tourism development in the country. Moreover, the paper recognizes various constraints to the development of tourism and prescribes some necessary recommendations for policy formulation and managerial implication of the development of the tourism sector in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Tourism, Tourist, Prospects, Constraints, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Bangladesh has a country of natural beauty and attractive places for traveler. People like to travel for their different i.e. recreational, business, religious, cultural, sports and as well as to attend at conference and seminar. Traveler is the person who goes from one place to another for satisfying his own needs and wants (Zulfikar, 1998). Traveling supports to breakdown of

-
1. Assistant Professor, World School of Business, World University of Bangladesh
Email: wasib.latif@business.wub.edu.bd
 2. Assistant Professor, World School of Business, World University of Bangladesh
 3. Assistant Professor, World School of Business, World University of Bangladesh
 4. Research Fellow, Early Concern, Bangladesh.
 5. Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Prime University

the dull and monotonous feeling which is to be for a long time work and gives refreshment to join the work with encouragement.

Tourism sector can be flourished a dramatic opportunity in Bangladesh. There are some beautiful beaches, religious places, archeological sites, hills and islands, forests and jungles as well as many historical places in this country. At present, it is very important to preserve the places and develop necessary infrastructures for attraction of travelers from different regions within the country and also from foreign countries (Latif, 2016).

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to identify the prospects and constraints of tourism industry of Bangladesh. The objectives of the study are as follows: To investigate the opportunities and potentiality of tourism development in the country. To identify the major constraints to the development of tourism, and to prescribe necessary recommendations for reformation and improvement of the tourism sector in Bangladesh.

3. Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the prospects and constraints of the tourism development of Bangladesh. Pannell Kerr Froster Associate (1998) has mentioned its comprehensive report on the Strategic Master Plan for Tourism in Bangladesh that for the development of infrastructure, national airlines, and overall tourism in the country, the government of Bangladesh has taken efforts to make substantial investments which require to be properly supported by effective management and marketing activities in order to meet the policy objectives.

It has also identified the shortcomings as difficulty in obtaining the operating supplies of sufficiently high quality, poor communication system, lack of infrastructure, bad image and more importantly even, a lack of true professional management. It has further blamed the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) for not playing completely its role as a national tourism organization and facilitator of tourism development (Latif et al., 2015).

The report finally highlighted on the balanced marketing activities along with the improvement of the infrastructure, quality of services, facilities, and efficient management in order to cater to the needs of the existing and potential tourists (Latif, 2015 & 2016). Ahmed (1986) has criticized in his study that despite all the efforts and measures of the government, the BPC and other private firms, the tourism industry in Bangladesh had not yet taken off, got a solid footing, and been able to give a true sense direction towards its development. He has pointed out the main reasons including the lack of co-ordination, imagination, effective policy planning and resources responsible for such backwardness and underdevelopment of this sector. He has also advocated the need for the expansion and development of infrastructure with a view to developing the tourism industry of the country.

Tourism sector in Bangladesh has potential market and marketing strategies (Hasan, 1992). He has blamed that Bangladesh, in comparison to other South Asian countries, has failed to develop its tourism as yet and attract a sizeable number of tourists to visit the country, though it is endowed with different tourism attractions. Hasan has suggested to create a separate

organization for performing the marketing activities of the BPC owned tourist plants and installations. Hasan has further recommended for planning the necessary strategies aiming at the potential markets and avoiding aimless policies to develop mass tourism at the initial stage of this new industry in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has a very potential state at hotel and restaurant services and progressive development critically analyzed by Hasan and Chowdhury (1995). They have shown that the occupancy rates of the graded hotels at Dhaka, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar are much lower due to high room-rates. The local non-graded hotels throughout the country are engaged in catering to the needs of the domestic night stoppers and most of these do lack in food and drinking facilities. The country also suffers from an acute shortage of standard restaurants to meet the needs of the tourists (Latif et al., 2015). They have suggested for erecting good quality accommodations blending with good restaurants and commercially important cities to serve both the domestic and the intra-regional tourists. They have also suggested the deluxe and graded hotels to offer customized services blending with reception, living, foods, and recreation for the high spending tourist segments (Zahir, 2011).

Hossain (1999) has identified the major problems of this sector that are the absence of enough and exclusive tourist products, the poor access to the destinations as well as the lack of enough and effective marketing promotion. In another study, Hossain (2001) has emphasized on the adopting marketing strategies of the BPC in order to meet the needs of the tourists, fulfill objectives of the BPC, and contribute to the national economy of Bangladesh. He has recommended that in formulating and adopting marketing strategies, BPC should examine carefully those factors which affect prospective tourists' choices in connection with selecting destination and adopting tourism products (attractions, facilities and accessibility). Therefore, the existing evidences and literatures reviewed above for the purpose of this study clearly indicate that the tourism sector in Bangladesh has not flourished yet. However the government, the BPC and other private sector firms have already taken several steps for development of this sector (Latif, 2014, 2015 & 2016).

4. Methodology of the Study

The study is based on secondary data. The data and information have been collected and analyzed mainly from different published articles and reports, research monograph, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, and different websites.

5. Tourism and Tourist

Tourism is a leisure activity. It involves a discretionary use of time, money and recreation. There are also main purposes to participate in tourism. In short, tourism means the business of providing information, transportation, accommodation and other services to travelers (Ghosh, 2001 & Latif, 2016). In tourism, tourist acts as the key player in this system. The term tourist is defined as who goes on holiday to visit places away from his home.

There are two kinds of tourist i.e. foreign tourist and domestic tourist. Foreign tourist is a person who visits a place and stays at least 24 hours on a foreign passport for the purpose of leisure, business and meeting etc. On the other hand, people who travel within the country to

a place other than his place of residence and stays at hotel or rented place and uses the sightseeing facilities for a duration of not less than 24 hours or one night and not more than 6 months (Zulfikar, 1998 & Latif, 2016).

6. Short preview of Bangladesh as Tourist Country

Bangladesh is a large delta laden with bounties of nature. The borderland along the north-east, east and the south-east is evergreen forested hills with wondrous wildlife. All her six seasons vibrate with fairs and festivals, mirth and merriment. Bangladesh is a small country. It has the longest sandy sea-beach at Bay of Bengal, Sundarbans which is the largest mangrove forest, sentinel of the south and the home of the Royal Bengal Tiger. Bangladesh is heir to a rich cultural heritage (Zahir, 2011 and Ferdouse, 2014).

7. Tourism Products in Bangladesh

There are three World Heritage sites in Bangladesh, such as Mahasthangarh, Mosque city of Bagerhat and the Sundarban. These attract huge number of tourists in Bangladesh. At Cox's Bazar, world's longest sandy beach is situated in Bangladesh. Besides, Patenga, Parki, Teknaf, St. Martin Island and Kuakata Sea beach are definitely quenching the thirst of local and foreign tourists. In Bangladesh, the largest mangrove forest is situated. Its beauty may amaze anyone while traveling in steam boats and enjoying the diversity and ecosystem of the forest. The private and government authorities of Bangladesh are now trying to construct the world class hotels, resorts, motels for the tourists. As a result, local and foreign tourists come to the historical places in Bangladesh to enjoy themselves.

Tourists both local and foreign may come to see the lake district of Rangamati, the lake town of Kaptai, the hilltop town of Khagrachhari and the roof of Bangladesh Bandarban. They can come to close the nature of beauty in these places of Bangladesh. The tourists can develop their archeological knowledge about South Asia and Bangladesh from visiting the archeological sites of Buddhists monasteries, Hindu temples and Muslim mosques and places, etc. In addition to these, there are various nice places and institutions of Bangladesh which might draw the attractions of the tourists (Latif, 2014, 2015 & 2016).

8. Prospects of Tourism Sector in Bangladesh

Tourism sector can help to flourish the economy of Bangladesh. By ensuring proper development of this sector, it is possible to earn a lot of foreign currency which will contribute to the growth of the national economy of the country. The sector also provides ample employment opportunity for the people who are directly or indirectly involved in this sector, since it is a service providing sector. The unemployment problem of the country can be reduced partly to develop necessary infrastructures of this sector. It will help to increase household income and as well as the revenue collection of the government will increase proportionally (Latif, 2016).

As a result, it will also help to reduce the economic gap between the rich and the poor people of the country. Tourism can also be strengthened by the political unity of the country. Domestic tourists as well as foreign tourists like to visit historical places, archeological sites,

national monuments and ancient battlefields that help to strengthen the political unity of the country in the long run (Latif, 2015).

Moreover, extensive domestic tourism will help to build regional cooperation among the people by giving the opportunities to contact, share and exchange their views and sub-cultures with each other. It will also help to enhance more cohesiveness and empathy that will reduce regional disparity in terms of psychological and economic point of view within different divisions and districts and increase the unity among them and encourage them more to work for the national interest (Latif, 2014).

The people who come from developed countries, their life style, income level, background etc. are totally different from developing countries like Bangladesh (Zahir, 2011 and Ferdouse, 2014). The people of the country can easily compare their life style with the people of developed countries. Thus, they can exchange these idea and views with each other. It is also possible to introduce Bangladesh to other parts of the world by tourism sector. It may also helpful to create better image to foreign country through proper management of tourism activities. If the sector can be managed properly and attracted tourists from different region within and outside the country, it will create goodwill for the country.

Tourism can also play a vital role to social and cultural development through cultural exchange and contact between people of different race and nationalities. This sector has also educational significance. The people of the country can learn many things by sharing knowledge with tourists who come from different regions within the country and foreign countries (Latif, 2014, 2015 & 2016). Figure 1 illustrates the structure of tourism services in Bangladesh.

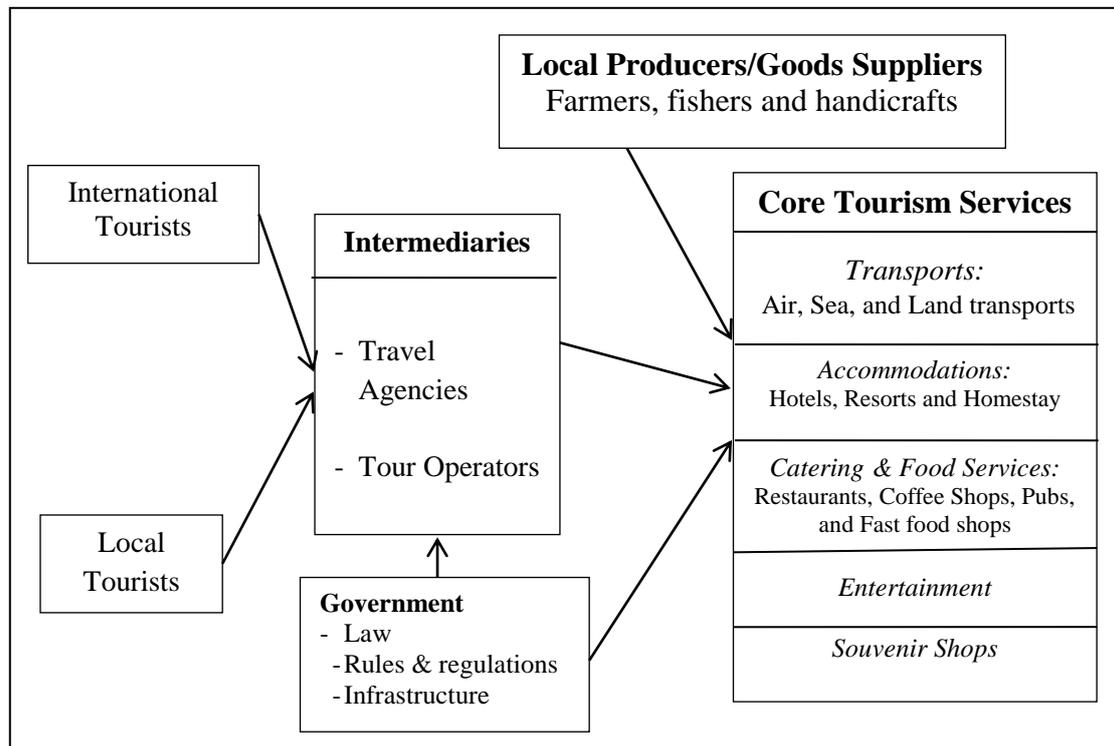


Figure 1: Structure of tourism services in Bangladesh

9. Constraints of Tourism sector in Bangladesh

Tourism sector of Bangladesh is facing many obstacles in its sustainable development. Infrastructure facilities are not adequate for this sector of the country. Accommodation facilities are not at satisfactory level at different tourist spots in Bangladesh (Latif, 2016). Some are highly expensive which are not affordable to both domestic and international tourist and some are in poor condition. Transportation linkage i.e. road, rail air and water is not good. The success of tourism sector mostly depends on marketing promotion tools like advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations (Latif, 2015).

But the government of Bangladesh has not enough skilled and knowledgeable human resources and technical expertise to formulate policy guidelines for such promotion tools and overall marketing (Latif, 2014). Some innovative ideas are necessary to highlight the tourist spots to people within and outside the country. Website of the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation is not well developed with adequate information such as photographs of renowned places, accommodation facilities, modes of transportation, distance from the capital city etc. Political will is the prerequisite for any kinds of development.

For development of tourism sector, there is lack of political will and commitment. Lack of efficiency in coordination among various organizations is directly or indirectly involved in

tourism sector. To flourish this sector successfully Government policy is inadequate. Unplanned commercial development beside the tourist spots affects the physical environment of the spots. It destroys the natural scenic beauty of the sites (Latif, 2014, 2015 & 2016). As for example, at Cox's Bazar sea beach and Saint Martin Islands, there are developed many unplanned commercial establishments such as hotel, motel and shopping center which disturb the tourist as well as the environment. Corruption is also another problem among officials of various organizations involved to operate tourism sector behind proper tourism development in Bangladesh (Zahir, 2011 and Ferdouse, 2014).

10. Recommendations for Improvement of Tourism Sector of Bangladesh

According to Zahir, 2011 and Ferdouse, 2014; some recommendations for sustainable development of tourism sector based on the investigation of its problems and opportunities are given below:

The government should play a key role to prepare a policy guideline for planning and development, advertising, regulation and marketing of tourism sector because it provides ample employment opportunities to the citizen and earns foreign currency for the country. The government should monitor the activities of travel agencies which are involved in operation.

BPC as the National Tourism Organization (NTO) should be strengthened with providing adequate fund, skilled human resources and technical expertise to function the organization smoothly. Strategic Master Plan for tourism was prepared by UNDP/WTO after that updated by WTO should be implemented for sustainable tourism improvement.

Necessary imitates should be taken to increase cooperation between public and private sectors to provide services for the tourists. ? Bangladeshi tourism faces many problems including areas of marketing, management, infrastructure, policy, safety, regulation and image etc. the problems are not unique and are the reality of worldwide tourism destinations.

Necessary solutions should be taken to consider every aspect carefully and valuable suggestions should be taken based on experience, opinion of experts and relevant knowledge of others.

11. Conclusion

Due to various constraints, tourism is a profitable sector in Bangladesh. Thus it is possible to improve sustainable tourism in the country all over the world for a long time. New historical and archeological sites should be identified and preserved properly for attracting tourist sites both for domestic and foreign tourists. The tourist places should be kept free from all destruction pollution. Eco-friendly tourism plays an important role for sustainable growth of this sector and for the betterment of overall economy of the country. Finally, the success of this sector mostly depends on assistance of various performers involved in this sector as well as on their unique vision.

References

- Ahmed, S.S. (1986). "Tourism in Bangladesh," Bangladesh Quarterly, Vol. 6, No. 6, p. 11-13.
- Ghosh, B. (2001). Tourism and Travel Management, Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
- Hasan, S. R. (1992). *Problems and Prospects of Bangladesh Tourism Industry*, Bureau of Business Research, University of Dhaka, pp. 107-109.
- Hasan, S.R. and Chowdhury, M.A.I. (1995). "Hotel and Restaurant Services and the Development of Tourism in Bangladesh", Dhaka University. *Journal of Business Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 175-183.
- Hossain, M.A. (2001). "Marketing Strategies of the Tourism Industry in Bangladesh: Implications for Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation", Dhaka University. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. No. 4, June, pp. 79-100.
- Hossain, M.A. (1999). "Marketing of Tourism Industry in Bangladesh: An Empirical Study of Performance and Strategies," Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Pune, India.
- Latif, W. B., Islam, A., & Noor, I. M. (2014). Building brand resonance in a competitive environment: a conceptual model. *Advances in Environmental Biology*, 593-601.
- Latif, W. B., Islam, A., Farzana, N., Hasan, M., Hossain, E., Islam, N., ... & Hossain, M. (2014). Antecedents, moderators and outcomes of brand image: A conceptual framework. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(23), 221.
- Latif, W. B., Islam, A., Noor, I. M., Mohamad, M., & Kongsompong, K. (2016). Imagination of brand image for tourism industry. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, Volume 14, Issue 2, pp.138-142.
- Latif, W. B., Islam, M. A., & Mohamad, M. B. (2015). Antecedents of Brand Image: A Conceptual Model. *Australian Journal of Business and Economic Studies*, 1(1), 95-100.
- Latif, W. B., Islam, M. A., & Noor, I. B. M. (2014). A conceptual framework to build brand loyalty in the modern marketing environment. *Journal of Asian Scientific Research*, 4(10), 547.
- Latif, W. B., Islam, M. A., & Noor, I. M. (2014). Building Brand Awareness in the Modern Marketing Environment: A Conceptual Model. *International Journal of Business and Technopreneurship*, 4(1), pp. 69-82.
- Latif, W. B., Islam, M. A., Mohamad, M., Sikder, M. A. H., & Ahmed, I. (2015). A conceptual framework of brand image on customer-based brand equity in the hospitality industry at Bangladesh: tourism management and advertisement as moderators. *Journal of Scientific Research and Development*, 2(11), pp. 1-16.
- Latif, W. B., Islam, M. A., Noor, I. B. M., Saaban, S. B., & Halim, A. A. (2014). Antecedents of brand image: A case of a developing country. *Asian Social Science*, 10(19), 1.

- Latif, W. B., Islam, M. A., Noor, I. B. M., Saaban, S. B., & Kabir, A. J. (2014). Outcomes of brand image: A case of a developing country. *The Social Sciences*, 9(4), 284-288.
- Latif, W. B., Islam, M. A., Noor, I. B. M., Saha, A. C., Roy, S. S., & Halim, A. A. (2015). Moderating effects of tourism management and entertainment to antecedents of brand image towards brand image: A case of a developing country. *Research Journal of Applied Sciences*, 10(5), 181-187.
- Latif, W. B., Islam, M. A., Rahman, A., Mohamad, M., & Kongsompong, K. (2016). Conceptual framework of brand image for tourism industry: tourism management and advertisement as moderators. *Journal of Tourism Management Research*, 3(1), 1-9.
- Pannell Kerr Forster Associates (1988). "Strategic Master Plan For Tourism, Bangladesh, Project Findings and Recommendations," Prepared for the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Jointly sponsored by the WTO and UNDP, Chapter-3, p. 1 and Chapter-11, p. 6.
- Tuli, F. A. (2014). The Problems of Managing Tourism Business in Bangladesh: Causes and Remedial Measures. *Global disclosure of Economics and Business*, 3(2), 167-174.
- Zahir, Nazrul & Shafiqul (2011). "opportunities of tourism sector in Bangladesh". *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL of RESEARCH in COMMERCE, IT & MANAGEMENT*, Volume no.1, Issue no.6, pp. 10-17.
- Zulfikar, M. (1998). *Tourism and Hotel Industry*, Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.