

EXPLORING TOURIST SPOTS FOR PROMOTING INVESTMENTS IN TOURISM INDUSTRY OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract

Out of different problems, the researcher has concentrated his focus on the institutional frameworks and different potential tourist spot for profitable tourism sector in Bangladesh. It is due to low literacy rate of general people, they cannot communicate with the domestic and foreign tourists significantly. So, the tourists felt discourage to visit repeatedly to the tourist spots as they always hunt for new place and new test. The researcher feels that institutional backup is necessary for this industry. Governmental and private owner should come up to invest some of their capital for the sake of tourism development. In some International Hotels, Parjatan Corporation and at private level tourist agencies very limited scope on the training job has been developed. Here, the researcher tried to explore the most promising tourist spots that could be commercially profitable for the poor country like Bangladesh.

Keywords: tourist spot, investment, tourism industry, Bangladesh.

JEL classification: D21, L11, L83.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh, the second largest Muslim country of the world, as a holiday land, has many facets. It's endowed with almost all the natural potentials to create a center of tourist attention. These include Cox's bazaar – the longest unbroken, clean sandy beach of the world, the Sundarbans- the home of the majestic Royal Bengal tiger and the spotted deer, Dhaka- the capital known as the city of mosques and muslim, Rangamati- the heart of the panoramic lake district, Sylhet – land of holy shrines of great religious saints and of fascination hills and tea gardens, Chittagong- the largest port city of the country known as the city of holy shrines, Mainamati, Mohasthanarh and Paharpur archaeological treasures in the country over the period from 300 BC to 1200 AD. Above all the reverie beauty, colorful tribal life, and simple village life of the friendly millions are the main motivational factors for the potential visitors.

The experts opine that tourism marketing is the systemic and coordinated efforts to optimize the satisfaction of tourism. The tourism marketing is also supposed to be a device to make a possible reorientation in the business policy and overhaul in the management

concept. Generally speaking, tourism planning has been defined as a process based on research and evaluation, which seeks to optimize the potential contribution of tourism to human welfare and environmental quality (Tosun and Jenkins, 1998).

Moreover, it includes a decision-making process between the tourism industry and other sectors of the economy, between various sub-national areas and between types of tourism. It requires the integration of the tourism industry into other sectors such as agriculture, industry, transportation and social services (Timothy, 1999).

In view of the aforesaid facts, it is right to mention that tourism marketing is an integrated effort to satisfy tourists by making available to them the best possible services. It is a device to transform the potential tourists into actual tourists. It is the safest way to generate demand and expand market. Further, it is an effort to make harmony possible between the social interests and the interests of tourist organizations.

It is an approach to promote business, which feeds the organizations necessary information for farming or revamping the marketing decisions. The tourism marketing is thus promotion or sales based on research, which are to be sold on the market. Dependence on laurels is not possible in the tourism marketing since the taste preferences of users change firstly.

Objectives of the study

In the light of development of tourism industry in Bangladesh particularly, the main objectives of the study are:

1. To examine institutional framework of tourism industry in Bangladesh
2. To check out governmental and non governmental investments in tourism industry
3. To explore the tourist attraction Place in Bangladesh
4. To provide recommendations for the sake of developing tourism industry in Bangladesh

2. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. The National Tourism Organization

The principal channel of Government involvement in the tourism sector is the national tourism organization, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, (BPC or Parjatan), which is a semi autonomous government agency reporting to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism as its administrative Ministry. Importantly, the national airline Biman Bangladesh Airlines, (Biman), forms a separate division within the same Ministry, which allows integration of tourism initiatives. Many of BPC's managerial matters are handled through the national Tourism Facilitation Committee headed by the secretary of the ministry of Aviation and Tourism. A sub-committee of the National committee is responsible for coordination of efforts to promote tourism in the country.

The sub-committee is comprised of the following members: Biman (Convener); Chairman, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation; Joint secretary of the Ministry of Aviation and Tourism; Sonargaon Hotel; Sheraton Hotel; Association of Travel Agent of Bangladesh; Pacific Area Travel Association; Secretary Bangladesh Services Ltd; Flying club of Bangladesh (co-opted). BPC was founded on 27 November 1972 by order of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and commenced business in January 1973. It was established as a Corporation under the laws of the country with an authorized capital of Tk one crore (roughly US\$ 1.3 million then) and initial share capital of Tk five lakhs (roughly US\$ 65,000 then). Under the law, additional loan or equity capital could be raised for carrying out the functions of the Corporation with government approval. It was evidently the intention of the drafters of the Order that BPC should be an autonomous corporation responsible to its shareholders as would be any other corporate entity in the country. Specifically, the Order directed that the assets and liabilities of a preceding company, Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation Limited, would be transferred to BPC. The Government clearly intended to distance itself from the operations of BPC and not be a major investor. The Corporation was given broad power and authority and important some power as follows:

1. To promote tourist undertakings and to control and regulate tourist installations and services;
2. To project the image of Bangladesh abroad for the purpose of attracting tourists by publicizing the history and culture of the country;
3. To organize reception and information facilities in or outside Bangladesh;
4. To encourage and develop domestic tourism;

5. To enter tourism agreement with foreign countries with the previous approval of the Government;

6. To conduct and carry out research on various aspects of tourism;

7. To publish literature on tourism;

8. To establish institutes or make other arrangements for instruction and training of persons engaged, or likely to be engaged, in any activity connected with, or ancillary to, tourism;

9. To acquire, hold or dispose of any property whether movable or immovable;

10. To invest its moneys and funds and to vary the investments as and when it may seem necessary or proper;

11. To do all other things connected with or ancillary to any of the matters referred to in the foregoing sub-clauses;

12. To carry out any other functions as may be prescribed.

[Source: President's Order No 143 of 1972 as published in the Bangladesh Gazette Extraordinary, November 27, 1972.]

Since 1973 BPC has engaged in a number of the activities specifically mentioned in the Government Order including the construction of hotels, a training school, establishment of a car rental system, organization of sight seeing tours and the establishment of duty free shops at the international airport and on other premises.

3. GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS IN TOURISM

Despite the low priority given by the Government to tourism at a national level there have been some important investments in both Parjatan and Biman.

3.1 Government investment in BPC

The audited, consolidated balance sheet of the Corporation as at 30 June 1984 (the latest available at the time of preparation of the master plan report) shows total government investment of over Tk 20 crore. That amount, equivalent to us\$ 6.7 million was composed of fully paid capital of Tk 345 lakhs (us\$ 1.15 million), grants Tk 281 lakhs (us\$ 0.93 million), and loans Tk 14.4 crore (us\$ 4.82 million). Of the total investment at the balance sheet date, net assets account for Tk 13.9 crore (us\$ 4.62 million) and operating losses (including depreciation) for Tk 9.2 crore (us\$ 3.07 million). The operating losses occurred in the years from 1972 to 1983 and have been partially off set by profits since then.

3.2 Government investment in Biman Bangladesh airlines

The government as sole stockholder in Biman was not primarily making an investment in tourism but in an airline with potential to become an important contributor to tourist flows. Substantial levels of investment have taken place both in Biman and in the rehabilitation and development of domestic airports. In TFYP, for example an allocation is made to Biman of Tk 140 crore (us\$ 47 million), and to domestic airport development to Tk 70 crore (us\$ 23 million), for improvements at Sylhet and Chittagong and for further capital works at Zia international Airport in Dhaka. Such investments are supportive to tourism development aspirations particularly those investments in the national carrier although clearly the investments have wider implications than for tourism alone. The importance of Government investment in hotels and airlines is in providing seed money to start an activity initially beyond the capability of the private sector in an impoverished country and in providing a model and encouragement to private investors.

3.3 Private Investment in Tourism

A range of concessionary investment incentives are being offered to the private sector in tourism activities, in line with other special capital depreciation regulations, etc. In addition, the tourism sector receives significant loan finance from the commercial banks. The availability of foreign exchange is restricted in Bangladesh. The starting date for the period of income tax exemption for companies in the tourism sector has been extended to June 1990. The period of exemption varies with the district in which the activity has arrived on and portions of the profits must be reinvested in the activity or in government bonds. Recent private sector investment initiatives appear limited to Dhaka, however. The primary reasons for this would appear to be demand deficiency rather than any institutional constraints. One of the examples of private investment in tourism is Fantasy Kingdom.

3.3.1 Fantasy Kingdom:

Thirty kilometers off the Dhaka city on the way to Savar and about five kilometers off the Zia International Airport, the theme park Fantasy Kingdom owned by Concord group were formally opened on Feb.19.2002. By this time, it has gained popularity both from the kids and from adults. Fantasy kingdom now offers 1500 feet long roller coaster, a big flume ride, Santaramaria Viking ship, Arabian flying carpet, racehorses, crazy bumps, a big video game arcade etc.

4. EXPLORE THE PLACE OF TOURIST ATTRACTION

There exist so many places that are enriching for tourism. The researcher mentioned some of as follows:

Chittagong: Chittagong, the second largest city of Bangladesh and a busy international seaport, is an ideal vacation spot. 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. Chittagong remains true to both the descriptions even today. It combines the busy hum of an active seaport with the shooting quiet of a charming hill town. Besides, the longest sea-beach, Cox's Bazar and its adjoin areas have a lot of things to see and places deserve visiting by the tourists are Tomb of Sultan Bayazid Bostami, World War II Cemetery, Shrine of Shah Amanat, Court Building Museum, Foy's Lake (Pahartali Lake), Mercantile Marine Academy at Juldia, Patenga and Fouzdarhat Sea Beaches, Port Area, Ethnological Museum, Zia Museum, Sitakunda, Kaptai lake. Other places of interest in the Hill Tract districts include Chandraghona, Khagrachari, and Bandarban etc.

Cox's Bazar: Cox's Bazar beach Miles of golden sands, towering cliffs, surfing waves, rare conch shells, colorful pagodas, Buddhist temples and tribes, delightful sea-food--this is Cox's Bazar, the tourist capital of Bangladesh. Having the world's longest (120 kilometers.) beach sloping gently down to the blue waters of the Bay of Bengal, Cox's Bazar is one of the most attractive tourist sport in the country. Located at a distance of 152 km. south of Chittagong, the leading seaport of Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar is connected both by air and by road from Dhaka and Chittagong. Besides, the longest sea-beach, Cox's Bazar and its adjoin areas have a lot of things to see and places deserve visiting by the tourists like The Aggameda Khyang, Cox's Bazar, Himchari, Inani, Maheshkhali, Ramu, Sonadia Island, Teknaf etc.

Dhaka: The capital of Bangladesh is Dhaka with its exciting history and rich culture, known to the world over as the city of mosques and muslin. It has attracted travelers from far and near through ages. It has history dating since the 18th century, Dhakeshwari Temple (11 th Century), Ramkrishna Mission, Armenian Church (1781 A.D.) St.Mary's Cathedral at Ramna, Lalbagh Fort that was built in 1678 A.D. by Prince Mohammad Azam, son of Mughal emperor of Aurangazeb, National Memorial, Bahadur Shah Park, Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, Mukti back to earliest time. Seven domed Mosque (17th century), Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, Star Mosque Juddha Museum, National Museum, Science Museum,

Ahsan Manzil Museum, Banga Bhaban, Bara Katra, Chota Katra, National Art Gallery, Suhrawardy Uddyana (Garden), Balda Garden, Ramna Garden, National Park, Zoological Park, Curzon Hall, Botanical Park, High Court Building, Dhaka Zoo, Central Shahid Minar, National Poet's Graveyard, Buddhist monastery, Sonargaon etc.

Dinajpur: The most northern district of the country, offers a number of attractions to the visitors. The Ramsagar Lake with rest houses is a good picnic spot having facilities for fishing and rowing in a serene and quiet green countryside atmosphere.

Khulna: Gateway to the Sundarbans Abode of the Royal Bengal Tigers Khulna is an industrial town and Divisional Headquarter. The Mongla Seaport is close by. Some of the biggest Jute mills in the country are located here. Khulna is connected with Dhaka by road and boat and by air via Jessore. Accommodation and eating facilities are available

Kuakata: Kuakata, locally known as Sagar Kannya (Daughter of the Sea) is a rare scenic beauty spot on the most southern tip of Bangladesh. Kuakata in Latachaplī union under Kalapara Police Station of Patuakhali district is about 30 km in length and 6 km in breadth. It is 70 km from Patuakhali district headquarters and 320 km from Dhaka. At Kuakata excellent combination of the picturesque natural beauty, sandy beach, blue sky, huge expanse of water of the Bay and evergreen, forest is eye-catching.

Rangamati: From Chittagong a 77 km road amidst green fields and winding hills will take you to Rangamati, the headquarter of Rangamati Hill District which is a wonderful repository of scenic splendors with flora and fauna of varied descriptions. The town is located on the western bank of the Kaptai Lake. Rangamati is a favorite holiday resort because of its beautiful landscape, scenic beauty, lake, colorful tribes (Chakma, Marma etc.), its flora and fauna, tribal museum, hanging bridge, homespun textile products, ivory jewelers and the tribal men and women who fashion them. For tourists the attractions of Rangamati are numerous, tribal life, fishing, speedboat cruising, water skiing, hiking, bathing or merely enjoying nature as it is. Some of the Offers: Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation provides suitable hotel and cottage accommodation, catering, speedboat, paddleboat and other facilities at Rangamati.

Rajshahi: Rajshahi has seen the most glorious period of Bengal's Paul dynasty. It is famous for pure silk, mango, and litchi. Attractive silk products are cheaper. A visit to Veranda Research Museum at the heart of the city of rich archaeological finds would be most rewarding. There are also a number of ancient mosques, shrines, and temples in and around Rajshahi.

Connected with Dhaka by road, rail, river, and air, Rajshahi is located on the bank of the Padma River.

Sundarban: In the southwestern part of Bangladesh, in the district of greater Khulna, lies the Sundarbans, the beautiful forest. It is a virgin forest which until recently owed nothing to human endeavor and yet nature has laid it out with as much care as a planned pleasure ground. For miles and miles, the lofty treetops form an unbroken canopy, while nearer the ground, works of high and ebb tide marked on the soil and tree trunks and the many varieties of the natural mangrove forest have much to offer to an inquisitive visitor. Here land and water meet in many novel fashions. Wildlife presents many a spectacle. No wonder, you may come across a Royal Bengal Tiger swimming across the streams or the crocodiles basking on the riverbanks. With the approach of the evening herds of deer make for the darkling glades where boisterous monkeys shower Keora leaves from above for sumptuous meal for the former. For the botanist, the lover of nature, the poet and the painter this land provides a variety of wonder for which they all crave.

Sylhet: Nestled in the picturesque Surma valley amidst scenic tea plantations and lush green tropical forests, it is a prime attraction for all tourists. Its terraced tea gardens, eye soothing orange groves and pineapple plantations and hills covered with tropical forests form a beautiful landscape. The Sylhet valley has a good number of haors, which are big natural wetlands. During wintertime, these haors are vast stretches of green land but in the rainy season, they turn into turbulent seas. These haors provide sanctuary to the millions of migratory birds that fly from Siberia across the Himalayas to avoid the severe cold. Srimongal in Sylhet, known as the tea capital of Bangladesh, is the main tea center in this region. Visit in the vast tea garden spread like green carpet over the plain land or slope of the hill is a memorable experience. A stay in one of the rest house of the tea garden is a fascinating one.

Bogra: Bogra, this small town district serves as the nerve-centre of northern Bangladesh and is coming up fast as an industrial zone. It provides several road links with other district towns and historical sites in the region besides being itself well connected with Dhaka. Some of the largest coal and lime deposits have been discovered in this district and ambitious plans have been made for their utilization. The district already has a number of sugar, textile, and chemical industries. The handloom products of the area are popular throughout the country. Bogra is also popular for its rice, sweets, and yogurt. Besides that, there are several places, which might be, treating as a tourist spot like Natore, Mainamati, Paharpur etc.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are so many problems, the researcher found regarding investment matter in tourism industry in Bangladesh. These are as follows:

- Government never highlighted this industry though this industry has tremendous potentials to earn domestic and international clients in Bangladesh;

- There are no international standard tourism education to develop marketing or sales people to sell the product properly to the right place in local and global perspectives as well;

- In order to strengthen the investment matter, concern people should be appointed to look after policy matters and new exclusively brand while the responsibility of that division should be in the hand of the marketing Director;

- Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation should create pressure on Govt. to implement her policy more strictly regarding the exploring tourists place and investment. As a result, private investor will be able to invest in the proper place;

- To deliver the investment information to the foreign and to local investor in the potential tourist spots;

- BPC should formulate her investment strategy in such a way, according to which she can serve the investors and users more effectively.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Bangladesh is one of the third world countries having scarcity of his finance but they can increase their GDP through, by giving stress to the tourism industry. From overall point of view, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation is an only one-government provider of tourism service in Bangladesh, which practices modern marketing concept. However, in some sector they are lagging behind. There have a lot of opportunities to earn foreign and local revenue from this sector but this sector is totally ignored. The researcher has put forward some recommendation. If

BPC follows these recommendations, in the long run, BPC will become revenue-generating organization. Bangladesh has a lot of potential tourist spots but it should do find out the exposure. Otherwise, she cannot cash from this potential sector. In addition, private sector should encourage by the government to work together for the sake of the development of tourism industry in Bangladesh.

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