

'BD' Tourism: FC Earner & Image Builder

Tourism industry can earn foreign currency and also can create country image.

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Tourism is considered as the world's largest and rapidly growing industry of modern business world. It has a vital influence on economic development of a country. Bangladesh is a new tourist destination on the map of the world. Bangladesh has enormous potential to develop tourism because of its attractive natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. Tourism can add value in the Bangladesh economy if proper marketing plan and strategy can be built and implemented for this purpose. However, this industry fails to reach its goals due to inadequate marketing practices. This paper aims to show the present scenario of tourism industry in Bangladesh, identifies the possibilities and suggests helpful measures accordingly. We also suggest that the government should formulate a 'Tourism Policy' immediately for the development of this industry. Both public and private level investment is required in the tourism sector and regional cooperation can bring benefits for Bangladesh.

SWOT Analysis of Tourism Development in Bangladesh.

Strengths

- Bangladesh is unique for its natural resources.
- We have the largest sea beach in the world.
- Bangladesh is renowned for its archaeological and historical places.
- We have unique natural beauty and greenery.
- A nation famous for hospitality.
- Rich cultural heritage and religious harmony.
- Bangladesh can be reached by air from any part of the world. Biman, the Bangladesh Airlines connects Dhaka with about 30 major cities of the world.
- We have the accommodation facilities available throughout the country. Ruposhi Bangla, Radisson, Westin and Panpacific hotel chains are in operation in the capital city.

Weaknesses

- Tourism sites are not properly explored, promoted and managed.
- Lack of investment.
- Low quality services.
- Lack of safety, security and hygiene.
- Lack of infrastructural development.
- Visa requirement and complex visa procedures.
- Absence of sales plan and public relation activities.
- Lack of private initiatives in tourism development.
- Bangladesh cannot offer tourist products and destination packages exclusively to local and foreign tourists.
- As a result, tourists have to go back to their home with low level of satisfaction.
- The number of supply chain member in the tourism industry is not sufficient to build up a strong base.
- Small number of tour operators, inefficient national airlines, and insignificant role of travel agencies.
- Shortage of professional guides.
- Cost of some tourism components like the star and standard hotels, food items, package tours and river cruise programs are much higher than those of neighboring countries like India and Nepal.
- Lacking of promotional and marketing activities of tourism by both public and private sector.

Opportunities

- Due to globalization, scope for distribution of information and communication media.
- Scope of making the tourist spots more attractive.
- Research and development to attract more tourist and making favorable tourism policy.
- Development of tourism culture.
- Arrangement of international events like World Cup Cricket.

Threats

- Political instability of the country.
- Harassment by the police and brokers in the airport.
- Language barrier of the people of the country: differences in dialects.
- Conservative social and religious systems.

- Strong competition within the region, barriers to overcome the image crisis of the country.
- Lack of awareness among the mass people regarding the benefits of tourism both locally and internationally.
- Illegal hunting and fishing in Sundarbans create loss of valuable wildlife.
- Absence of sufficiently trained lifeguards in the beaches to save the tourists in case of emergency.
- Shortage of sufficient accommodation, food and beverage services and other amusement services.
- Tourists presently hold misconceptions about Bangladesh as a tourist's destinations. Foreigners now know Bangladesh as a country of poverty, beggars, flood, political unrest and corruption.
- Absence of proper tourism policy.

Considering the above analyses the following suggestions are made for the improvement of the tourism industry in Bangladesh:

- Positive image of our tourism industry must be expressed by our diplomats, ambassadors, consulars representing Bangladesh in different countries of the world. Bangladeshi representatives abroad can act as overseas office for the wholesale tour operators who conduct inbound tours.
- Billboard, leaflets, brochure, magazines and other promotional materials can be displayed in different places in home and abroad. There should be a permanent photo gallery in all our Embassies. All Embassies website should be developed with tourism information including service providers contact information.
- Local people have to be informed about the attractions rich in history, culture, and heritage.
- Different beaches, rivers etc. have to be facilitated with various activities like river cruise, boating, beach volleyball, fishing, etc. along with boatel based food and accommodation especially in the Sundarbans area which is the largest mangrove forest in the world.
- Adequate safety and security of the tourists should be ensured to remove negative image.

- Full-fledged tourism training institutes have to be established in a number in different regions so that they could produce skilled professionals to meet the needs and demand of the tourists.
- Adventure tourism like trekking, hiking, mountaineering, hunting in different hilly areas must be established by building up different clubs and organizations.
- To build more eco-park, safari park and wildlife sanctuary especially in Sundarbans, Hill tracts and different potential areas like DulaHazra and Madhabkunda.
- Tourism facilities and services like accommodation, food and beverage, entertainments, travel agents, tour operations, shopping malls, supermarkets, transporters have to be established in large numbers of international standard in different tourist areas by public and private sectors.
- Unexplored area like Parkirchar, Cheradip, Sandeed, and Hatia must be taken into consideration to explore properly and establish all tourist facilities there for development of tourism.
- The existing formalities should be made easy to get Bangladesh visa so that the foreigners get interests to visit Bangladesh. Visa on arrival may be considered.
- Tourism fair can be arranged in an adequate number at home and abroad to inform the latest updates of our tourism products, services and overall tourism industry to attract the tourist.
- Government can formulate long term and short term master plan with support from private sector, for the overall tourism development by generating interest for the investors and commercial organizations.
- Tourism in educational curriculum is to be initiated; subjects should be introduced in the High School level.
- Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, Bangladesh Biman and Civil Aviation Authority should be working in partnership for the overall development of tourism in Bangladesh and also for promoting tourism abroad as per their areas of operation.
- Tourism Call Centers may be introduced by the Government to keep potential tourists informed about the tourism products, facilities and services available all over Bangladesh.
- Infrastructure should be developed specially for tourist areas. All tourist areas should be fully secured.

- A large number of visitors come in Bangladesh for business purposes other than tourism purpose. To attract such visitors to visit Bangladesh tourist destinations through marketing of our tourists attractions, effective promotion, recreation and entertainment.

At present world tourism industry appeared as a competitive and promising sector. It is not only that tourism sector earns foreign currency but also tourism creates image of the country and cultural diversification. The country, having tourism potential, must be conscious in developing market offering and marketing mix. Bangladesh has lacking in this regard which need to be overcome through proper marketing planning. Natural, ecological, historical, cultural and other form of tourism based tourism industry of Bangladesh has huge potentials to develop. The country has its potential to differentiate its product for its uniqueness. As tourism is mostly service oriented, business professionals are essential for successful operations. Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, though, offers short term and vocational courses but highly educated and well known persons are very essential as faculty member. Recently, University of Dhaka and some other private universities opened Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management. This will definitely encourage creating skilled manpower in the tourism sector and as a result new generation may use innovative ideas for capacity building and opportunities to attract tourists in the country. Government should extend these types of opportunities. Government of Bangladesh, different concerned ministries and the industry itself should take necessary measures. They should concentrate their efforts on the development of peripheral products, relocation of necessary facilities, improvement of domestic transport networks, development of professionally skilled human resources, arrangement of necessary security measures, creation of good image of the country. If all these measures, marketing strategies along with policy measures are coordinated, tourism sector in Bangladesh would make a positive result.