

## “MARKETING” A TOOL TO DEVELOP BANGLADESH’S TOURISM SECTOR

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### ABSTRACT

*In Bangladesh’s tourism, prospective areas are present, minimum infra structural arrangement is developing, role of government is now positive, private and public organizations have come forward side by side to attract the local and foreign tourists, researchers, dignitaries, and foreign delegates. Out of different problems, the researchers have concentrated their focus to the marketing aspects of tourism sector in Bangladesh. Presently, specialized formal education like bachelor’s degree and diploma are available in universities of Bangladesh on tourism. They are trying to develop skilled people by providing them good education and training so that they can use marketing as a tool to develop Bangladesh’s tourism. The objective of this study is to find out the potentiality of Marketing to develop Bangladesh’s tourism sector. The study covered various government and non-government institutions that are playing vital role in developing tourism industry situated mainly in capital of Bangladesh. Necessary information and data were collected from secondary sources. While in this process different books, journals, magazines and periodicals have been reviewed. In addition to these, a lot of tourism related websites has been reviewed for updated information. On the other hand, several foreign and local research works has been reviewed in this field.*

*Keywords: Tourism, Development, Marketing.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The role of tourism in earning revenues for the country has long been recognized in many developing countries. The public sector may have been reluctant in the past to contribute towards tourism development, but the situation has changed and, over the years, government’s perspectives on tourism have not only evolved to include wider participation, but have also widened from the narrow focus on financial and economic benefits to encompass environmental and societal concerns. Everything seems to suggest that developing countries look upon tourism consumption as manna from heaven that can provide a solution to all their foreign exchange difficulties (Erbes, 1973: p-1). This description of tourism as ‘manna from heaven’ has gained some support, in part because tourism is a highly visible activity. Although tourism development results in the provision of facilities and services, there are, however, instances when these facilities are not accessible to local residents, particularly if tourism development involves the creation of tourism enclaves. In the last two decades in particular, tourism has developed, especially in developing countries by their integrated tourism planning.

### DEVELOPMENT AND ROLE OF TOURISM MARKETING ORGANIZATION IN BANGLADESH

During the rule of West Pakistan, there was a tourism department (later called Tourism Cell) with an office in West Pakistan. This department was assigned promotion, development and regulation of the tourism sector in Pakistan. A private sector corporation came into operation at the end of 1970. After independence, the socio-economic and political climate prevailing in the country was not encouraging for the private sector to participate in economic activities of wider magnitude. Therefore, it became imperative for the government to come forward to promote tourism in Bangladesh (Talukder, 1984). Soon after the independence of Bangladesh, the government of the newborn state realized the importance of tourism in its economic and social life. Therefore, the government decided to reorganize the tourism sector (Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, 2004) by combining both the tourism department and the private corporation into one organization, bringing it under government responsibility for better coordination, promotion, development and marketing (Hossain, 2006). Consequently, the government established the National Tourism Organization (NTO) in the name of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation under Presidential Order No. 143, declared in November 27, 1972. BPC began in January 1973 with limited assets of the former “Pakistan Tourism Corporation” and TK.10 million (\$US147, 059) sanctioned by the government. The Corporation was entrusted with the dual responsibility of developing tourism infrastructure and promoting Bangladesh as a tourist destination. Other responsibilities of the Corporation included regulation and operation of tourism activities in the country. Thus, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation came into being as the NTO in Bangladesh (Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, 2004). As such, the structure of the tourism sector in Bangladesh is predominantly managed by the public sector. The public sector has played a pioneer role in the development and promotion of tourism in the country. Government involvement in the tourism sector is channeled through BPC (Hossain, 2006), which is under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism. As a semi autonomous organization it enjoys wide power and authority, including the right to acquire and dispose of property; construct and run hotels, restaurants and other tourists facilities; operate duty free shops (DFSs), transportation and car rental; establish training institutes; and invest its funds as it deems proper (Rahman, 2004). Due to neglect by successive governments, BPC totally failed to achieve the objectives for which it was created. Had there been no private sector tour operators in the country things would have been even more precarious (Hossain, 2006; The Independent, 2003). They have kept the hope of tourism alive, almost without government support. Private sector involvement in tourism in Bangladesh is still not adequate however, and the Bangladesh government has

taken remedial measures to encouraging the private sector to play a positive role in the development and diversification of tourist facilities to promote domestic and international tourism in the country (Rahman, 2004). A large proportion of investments have been made in hotel businesses and tour operations as private sector investors are now showing a keen interest to participate in the tourism sector (Rahman, 2005; Hossain, 2006). Tour operators have a significant role to play in tourism business. Over 40 private tour operators have already been engaged in tourism marketing in Bangladesh. Some of them conduct only domestic (inbound) tours while others offer both domestic and outbound tours (Bangladesh Monitor, 2007). Thirty two such private tour operators are members of an association named "Tours Operator Association of Bangladesh (TOAB)", formed to carry out their activities more efficiently, to lobby the BPC and the government for the realization of justified rights (Siddiqi, 2006), and to promote the country's tourism together. Travel agencies in both the destination and the tourist generating countries also play important roles in the promotion and development of tourism in a country (Hossain, 2006). There are 235 travel agencies in Bangladesh; most of them are members of the Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB) (Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, 2006). These travel agencies are licensed by the Registration Authority under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism and controlled by the same authority under the Travel Agencies Registration and control ordinance of 1977, which says that the travel agencies are involve themselves in travel arrangements only (Jobber, 1986; Hossain, 2006).

## **BANGLADESH TOURISM MARKETING PRODUCTS AND TOURIST ATTRACTIONS**

The world thinks Bangladesh as a poor, flood-ravaged, and more of a disaster zone than a travel destination. In some respects, the world is right but hiding behind these images is a country with a rich history, a extraordinary beauty, and some unexplored destinations but it is not, however, a destination for everyone. Bangladesh is a country with rich traditions, natural beauty, beaches, forests, lakes, hills, wild lives, archaeological attractions, monuments, handicrafts, sanctuaries, religious festivals, cultural heritage, tribal culture and architecture, incredible greenery, mighty rivers and attractive river cruises, sunny beaches, colorful tribal life and attractive cultural functions that offer great tourist attractions. Tourism involves travelling for pleasure, enjoy and education. It is also a business of attracting tourists and providing for their accommodation and entertainment. In many countries, tourism is an industry for earning revenue and foreign exchange. There are many businesses that grow along with the development of tourism include airlines, shipping, hotels and restaurants, finance companies, tour operators, travel agents, car rental firms, caterers and retail establishments and together, they contribute significantly to the overall development of a country's economy and to its cultural diversification and adaptation. The Moorish traveler Ibn Batuta who visited Bengal in the fourteenth century described Bengal as the wealthiest and cheapest land of the world and stated that it was known as 'a hell full of bounties'. Bangladesh has the world's longest 120 km unbroken sea beach sloping here down to the blue water of the Bay of Bengal in Cox's Bazar, Parki beach, and Kuakata. Such a long sea beach covering miles of golden sands, soaring cliffs, surfing waves, all of these make Cox's Bazar the tourist capital of Bangladesh. The tourists can enjoy the charming beauty of the sunset behind the waves of the sea. Its appeal makes Cox's Bazar one of the most attractive tourist spots in the world. In addition to that, there are other beaches like Inani beach in Ukhia, Cox's Bazar, St. Martin Island, and Patengha beach which are also attractive to foreign as well as local tourists. In Bangladesh, there are some attractive hilly regions, which also are considered beautiful tourism spots and attract a large number of tourists. These hilly regions show significant differences from the rest of the country because the indigenous inhabitants belong to different ethnic minorities who have a distinctive lifestyle from the majority of the population.

## **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Bangladesh is trying to develop her tourism status to compete in regional and global market. Tourism is one of the effective ways of developing the country's economy and as well as skilled professional human resource. Governmental and non-governmental institutes can keep such a vital role by giving emphasis on tourism marketing. Bangladesh needs to develop its human resources for improving tourism marketing in local tourists as well as foreign tourist. In Bangladesh, tourism has lot of potentiality to earn more revenue than presently what they are earning. If Government and non-government organization come forward and take the responsibility for developing tourism industry, it will earn much more revenue and create lots of employment as well. This research will add some value and fill up the gap that motivated other authors to undertake such a study.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The overall objective of this study is to find out the potentiality of Marketing to develop Bangladesh's tourism sector. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To identify development trends in Bangladesh tourism
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of tourism marketing Bangladesh; and
3. To identify potential strategies that can contribute to increase the competitiveness of Bangladesh's tourism.

## **SCOPE AND METHODOLOGIES OF THE STUDY**

The study covered various government and non-government institutions that are playing vital role in developing tourism industry situated mainly in the capital of Bangladesh. Different sorts of information were collected from more than 10 governmental and non-governmental institutes those who are working with the tourism in Bangladesh. Necessary information and data were collected from secondary sources. While in this process different books, journals, magazines and periodicals have been reviewed. In addition to these, a lot of tourism related websites has been reviewed for updated information. On the other hand, several foreign and local research works has been reviewed in this field.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study covered very limited number of organizations in respect of its real scope all over the country. Sometimes responded were not interested to express their honest opinion specially people from government organizations. To overcome these limitations, an intensive study of existing literature in this field, foreign journal, relevant publication by government and other private agencies were studied.

## **ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

The conceptual exposition appears essential to study tourism marketing. The marketing experts opine that, tourism marketing is the systemic and coordinated efforts to optimize the satisfaction of tourism. The things that are closely related to the tourism are the main concern to make available to the tourist organizations. 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. Tourism marketing is an integrated effort to satisfy tourists by making the best possible services available to them. 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 possible harmony between the social interests and interests of tourist organizations. It is an approach to promote business, which feeds the organizations the necessary information for farming or revamping the marketing decisions. The tourism marketing is thus promotion or sales based on research on what are to be sold in the market. Dependence on laurels is not possible in the tourism marketing since the taste preferences of users changes rapidly in Bangladesh.

## **BANGLADESH TOURISM MARKETING STRATEGIES**

The most important challenge for destination marketing therefore is to bring all individual partners together to cooperate rather than compete and to pool resources towards developing an integrated marketing mix and delivery system (Buhalis & Cooper, 1998; Buhalis, 2000). Bangladesh, as a vacation destination, has many facets. It is endowed with almost all the natural potentials that attract tourist. These include: Cox's Bazaar, the longest unbroken clean and sandy beach in the world; Sundarbans, the home of the majestic Royal Bengal tigers as mentioned earlier, Dhaka, the capital known as the city of mosques and muslin; Rangamati, the heart of the panoramic lake district; Sylhet, land of fascinating hills and tea gardens; Mainamati, Mahasthangarh and Paharpur, archaeological treasures of Hindu and Buddhist rule in the country from 300 BC to 1200 AD. Above all, riverine beauty, colourful tribal culture and simple village life are the main factors for attracting visitors. These things need to be explored by the tourism marketing promotion and need to formulate tourism marketing strategies either by the Bangladesh government organization (public sector) or the private sectors. Therefore, the objectives of the tourism marketing strategy in Bangladesh could be outlined as below:

- i. To consolidate Bangladesh's position as a tourist destination in the established generating markets at regional and international levels by utilizing different marketing tools such as websites, TVC for satellite and local TV channels and other marketing communication tools.
- ii. To target new and potential markets by identifying and monitoring changing designs and needs for various market types such as China, Japan, East European and South America, and South Asian countries.
- iii. To enhance Bangladesh's competitive position in the intercontinental destination market by mobilizing effective promotional measures supported by attractive proposals and appealing tourism products. The Bangladesh government can promote Sundarban and Cox's Bazar, St. Martin Island (these are the listed as international tourism heritage) and the Fort William, and House of Ahasan Monzil, Sonargaon (which is a key factor in leading to the marketing Bangladesh, regionally and internationally) as preferred tourism destination areas.
- iv. To pay special attention (in terms of promotion and product diversification strategies in particular) to tourist arrivals from Europe, South Asia, USA, Gulf Cooperation Council Countries, East Asia and the Pacific Rim, Australia and New Zealand and others. BTO opened new regional offices in these countries to support and enhance the value of Bangladesh as a tourism destination.
- v. Identifying natural target market for the particular destination could help to conduct research to determine where these tourists are found, which countries contain a large number of citizen who have the means and motivation to enjoy the particular place. In case of less natural tourist segment investment may be needed in infrastructure and visitor events and attractions.
- vi. Destination images are heavily influenced by pictorial creations used in televisions or satellite channels, by music and in some cases by popular entertainer or by celebrities, and
- vii. Developing packages of attractions and amenities is a good way of catching attention of tourists. Destination must provide easy access to attractions by bus, boats, trains and planes along with restaurants, facilities, sports, cultural amenities and entertainment.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The researcher found many problems regarding tourism in Bangladesh. The customers of tourism market are price sensitive and want security in tourist places. To expand the market it is necessary to set competitive price.

1. Develop the management education on tourism marketing and prepare marketing or sales people to promote the product properly to the right place in regional and global perspectives.
2. In order to strengthen the marketing department, a person should be appointed to look after policy matters and new brand exclusively while the responsibility of that division should be in the hand of the marketing director.
3. To deliver information to the foreign tourist through online or website and information technology is necessary to research about new tourist spots.
4. Training and other updated courses should be conducted at regular intervals to update the personnel with efficiency.
5. Bangladesh Porjoton Corporation should formulate its strategy in such a way by which it can serve the users more effectively. BPC can easily utilize all the distribution channels.
6. Private sector in this field should be encouraged by the BPC and as well as government officials.

## CONCLUSIONS

To get hold to the upcoming great opportunities in tourism industries, Bangladesh tourism sector must start its preparation for the moment. At the same time it must not also ignore the increasing prospect of the domestic market of this sector. As mentioned earlier, it is not enough that the country possesses a potential for becoming a covetable tourist destination. To turn that possibility into reality, marketing is a pre-condition. Today, promotional activities through the internet and other electronic media including TV can be utilized with reasonable costs. Bangladesh government should take necessary measures to encourage the private sector to play positive role in the development and diversification of tourist facilities to promote domestic and international tourism in the country. It has declared a National Tourism Policy, recognizing tourism as an industry and a thrust sector in the latest industrial policy and it is taking appropriate measures to offer incentives to both the local and foreign investors.

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