

Chapter 20

Investment and Development for Tourism and Hospitality Revenue Collection in Bangladesh



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Abstract This review paper consists of details about Bangladesh's total revenue from tourism with the actual figure, investment amount, employment status, and roles of government and private organizations in the tourism and hospitality industry. The chapter also shows data from different sources like Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB), Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), United States Agency International Development (USAID), National Board of Revenue (NBR) and different ministries of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB). The chapter finds new steps that are taken to make the tourism industry more attractive. New infrastructure, projects, and marketing activities that are currently done by government and private organizations are also mentioned. Effects of COVID-19 on Bangladesh's tourism was also focused with detailed statistics about total job loss, and industry-wise revenue loss. Other barriers and shortcomings that stop international tourists from coming to the country and resulting in low revenue collection were also identified. Recommendations were made based on former research results and observations from news portals, journals, and other sources.

Keywords Tourism · Hospitality · Revenue · Investment · Bangladesh

Introduction

Currently, Bangladesh is becoming a destination for tourists from across the globe. It is believed that the tourism industry will become a big revenue generator in a short time. This chapter sees the hospitality and tourism industry's investments to generate revenue. An analysis is made that shows the different sections of this

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industry where those investments are made. According to a report published by the Bangladesh Ministry of Civil Aviation & Tourism (MoCAT), some of the current famous tourist attractions in Bangladesh are the world's largest undivided sea beach in Cox's bazar, Kuakata sea beach, the world's single largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, hills, tea gardens, etc. (Ministry of Civil Aviation & Tourism, 2010). Tourism refers to the activities commenced by visitors. It is also called the "visitor economy". The industry of tourism includes different activities that occurs within the "visitor economy" (Stainton, 2019). Tourism revenues are a measure of the economic impact of tourism. In easy words, it is the earning from the tourism industry after deducting costs. It includes all sorts of tourism-related expenditure within a region by non-resident visitors and locals traveling within the province/district. It includes accommodation, transportation, food and drinks, cultural sites, recreation and entertainment, travel agency, and other reservation services (Tourism Nova Scotia, 2020). This chapter deals with the investment and development for tourism and hospitality revenue collection in Bangladesh.

Present Scenario

Status of Revenue from Tourism

Bangladesh has been earning revenue from the tourism and hospitality industry. This part of this chapter shows related statistical data regarding earning of revenue. Following the United States Agency International Development (USAID) (2019:23), the tourism industry, which reported USD 5.3 bn annual revenue last year, and is currently growing around 7 million domestic travelers per year. Despite the fact that it has enormous potential in terms of GDP contribution, Bangladesh has yet to establish itself as a popular tourism destination. In 2017, the Bangladesh tourist business was estimated to be worth USD 5.3 billion, contributing roughly 2.2 percent to the country's GDP. Local tourists contribute 98% of the revenue, and 2% comes from foreign tourists, for both business and traveling purposes.

Visitor exports generated USD 228 million in 2017, and are predicted to expand at a 6.20 percent annual pace from 2018 to 2028, resulting in USD 445 million in visitor exports. In 2017, the tourist industry contributed around 1.17 million jobs to the economy. Between 2017 and 2018, 100,000 foreign visitors (90 percent business travelers, 5 percent vacationers) visited Bangladesh, a 22 percent increase (USAID, 2019:1).

As per the World Travel & Tourism Council's (2020), annual research report of 2019, tourism contributes 3% of the entire economy, which totaled to T&T GDP = BDTk 772.7BN (USD 9,113.2MN) and has created 185,89 jobs (2.9% of total employment). The International visitor impact is BDTk 28.3bn as visitor spends (0.7% of total exports). Another report on "Global Economic Impact & Trends 2019" from the World Travel & Tourism Council's (2020), shows that Bangladesh

is among the TOP 20 countries for travel & tourism GDP growth in 2018 by holding the 11th position with 11.6%. the World Travel & Tourism Council's (2019) also shows that Bangladesh is estimated to be in the 9th position by contributing to 6.1% growth to its GDP by 2029.

Financial Investment Details

Government of Bangladesh (GOB) has allocated BDTk 34 billion in FY2019-20 for the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism. This was more than double of the last fiscal year's allocation, which shows that the government is giving importance to the tourism industry (Ministry of Finance (2019)).

Governmental Initiatives to Promote Tourism in Bangladesh

To become a revenue-generating industry, requires good publicity and advertising. So, the GoB has done a lot for Bangladesh's tourism publicity via different mediums and programs in different times.

Promotion and Marketing

Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) promoted the positive image of Bangladesh to the world via advertisements in July 2010. A promotional video was seen during the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 named "School of Life: Beautiful Bangladesh". This television commercial had obtained 3rd position at the prestigious Zagreb Film Festival for TVC.

Digital Marketing Campaign

BTB has created its website www.tourismboard.gov.bd for a digital marketing campaign (Bangladesh Tourism Board, 2020). The parent organization Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation also featured a lot of details. Unfortunately, this website is not working at the moment. Another website is www.visitbanglades.gov.bd. This was launched during the World Cup Cricket 2011, and was re-vamped for the purpose of digital marketing campaign.

Participation in Foreign Tourism Exhibitions

In order to attract more tourists to Bangladesh and to promote its tourism, BTB launched the “Visit Bangladesh” Campaign. GoB had allocated a total of BDTk 66 crore to facilitate the project. BTB took several steps for this massive project.

Bangladesh Premier League 2011

Bangladesh Cricket Board and BTB co-sponsored and collaborated in arranging the opening ceremony of the Bangladesh Premier League. The Bangladesh Premier League is an International Standard T20 Cricket Tournament that has lots of well-known foreign and local players as participants. This event is now taking place every year.

Asian Tourism Fair 2011

An event named as “Asian Tourism Fair 2011” was arranged in Dhaka from September-October. It was a three-day regional tourism fair, and organized to make common tourism-promotion strategies for the Asian countries. This fair highlighted their uniqueness in tourism in particular regions, and focused on attracting international tourists for those particular regions (Tourism BD, 2018).

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Projects

According to the “Public-Private Partnership (PPP)” Authority under the Prime Minister’s Office, several tourism enhancement projects are being initiated under the PPP.

The PPP is another way to enrich the tourism industry jointly. Many private companies are willing to invest in tourism but cannot get much access due to not having government support, infrastructure, and finance. So, the term of PPP was introduced where government and private industry can work in partnership to develop faster and in a competitive manner (Nipa et al., 2015). A project under the PPP was initiated titled “Development of Integrated Tourism and Entertainment Village at Parjatan Holiday Complex, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, Cox’s Bazar Under PPP” with private partner Orion Group. To date, its status is “contract to be signed”. The total estimated cost was fixed at USD80–200mn (PPPA, 2020a).

Another project under the PPP named the “Development of Five Star Hotel and Zakir Hossen Road in Chittagong” was planned by Bangladesh Railway and due to

insufficient fund it was done on PPP, with a budget at USD80–200 mn and the current status is “no bids received” (PPPA, 2020b).

Joint Cruise Service

Dhaka Dinner Cruise with Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation jointly took the initiative to create awareness to conserve the country’s perpetual rivers (Dhaka Dinner Cruise, 2020).

Project with China

China and Bangladesh agreed to expand cultural exchange, education, tourism, etc., during the last visit of Chinese President Xi in 2016. They also agreed to promote interactions among media, think tanks, youth activities, and women entrepreneurship for non-government groups and local authorities. Both Bangladesh and China view the tourism industry’s potentials via the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical & Economic Co-operation (BIMSTEC). The member countries in BIMSTEC agree to the concrete steps to promote intra- BIMSTEC tourism (The Independent, 2020).

Institute for Training on Tourism Management

The Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation has National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute (NHTTI) for professional tourism management training. NHTTI was established in 1974 under Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation. Also a good number of private universities are offering courses on hotel tourism management now a day (Roy and Roy, 2015).

New Tourist Destinations for Prospective Revenue Collection

Investments are made by individual institutions and the GoB jointly to bring more professionalism, competitiveness, and meet up to date client demands. The world’s longest marine drive of 80-kilometer road from Cox’s Bazar to Teknaf along the Bay of Bengal is famous and attractive for tourists. The Bangladesh Prime Minister inaugurated the coastal road at the 28th kilometer point of the road near Inani beach. It was constructed by the Bangladesh Army Engineering core under the supervision

of the Roads and Highways Department. The total cost was around BDTk1050 crores (1.2billion approximately) (Dhaka Tribune, 2020a, b).

After assessing a famous travel website [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com), it was found that more than 15 resorts and big hotels are built to create tourism and entertainment in different parts of Bangladesh in the last 15 years. Many of them focus on eco-tourism, tea resorts, natural views, and water parks, cottage and rural tourism beside rivers, mountain, and hill tracks, island tours, etc. (Booking.com, 2020).

Mithamain and Nikli haor, Austogram (inland water reservoir) are famous tourist spots in Kishoreganj. These attractions are creating interests among many new tourists. Several new roads are constructed to connect the three villages; the recent one is 29.73 km with BDTk 874.08 crore cost. It has created an extraordinary scenario and tourist spot where people come for a one-day tour in between the busy life. It has become a tourist spot and has made the lives of people living in the Haor (water sources) area easy to commute and earn revenue from tourists (The Daily Star, 2020a).

BiriShiri is another beautiful place in Netrokona, Durgapur having a canal with blue water, and small restaurants and motels (Journey for Better Life, 2020). People usually go for a day-long trip.

The first cruiser in Bangladesh has set its journey in the Bay of Bengal. The cruise ship arrived at Chittagong port on Sunday (the 20th September). It is currently located there. It is expected to be connected by sea from Cox's Bazar to St. Martin's island. The ship's previous name was "Salvia Maru". The ship was bought from Japan to provide an international quality travel experience to the tourists. After being brought to Bangladesh, it was re-named "One Bay" (Somoy News, 2020).

Sajek Valley is a mountain area in the hill tracts Chittagong and an emerging tourist spot. Several tourism agencies are operating tours in this area where tourists can feel the cloud in their arms. Even in the Corona pandemic, it was opened in September, and the cottages are finding a large number of travel lovers (Dhaka Tribune, 2020a, b).

Drawbacks of Tourism in Bangladesh

Lack of Tourists from the Western Countries

Bangladesh gets half of its international tourists from India and has failed to draw tourists' attention from the western countries. According to the World Tourism Organization (2020), the Americans spent USD334 billion, and the Europeans spent USD570 billion for tourism while the global expenditure was tourism is USD1.7 trillion. For Bangladesh, only 5% of the tourists come from the US, including the Bangladeshi origin Americans, and 7% from the rest of the world, which is pretty low compared to neighboring countries. It shows that Bangladesh is not attracting enough high spending tourists.

Lack of Security and Public Safety

Security can be a huge issue for foreign tourists making them unwilling to travel to Bangladesh. The US Department of State had issued a warning against traveling to Dhaka and the Southeast of Bangladesh, citing crime, terrorism, kidnapping as the main reasons and Bangladesh being at level 2 (exercise increased caution). The Safety and Security Index of 2019 by the World Economic Forum shows that Bangladesh has improved its rankings to 105th from 123rd in the list of unsafe countries to travel (U.S. Department of State-Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2020).

Insufficient Local Transports

The number of local transports going to popular tourist destinations is not enough. Also, facilities and quality of these transports fail to attract foreign tourists, and to the locals, these seem to be a bit expensive.

Lack of Proper Policy

In 1992, the National Tourism Policy (NTP) was formulated, as a Strategic Master Plan for tourism development. It was prepared by UNDP/WTO in 1990 and updated by WTO. Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation also took many initiatives but still, efforts are not enough (Afroz & Hasanuzzaman, 2012).

Lack of Adequate Infrastructures

Bangladesh is unable to build enough infrastructure that can help the tourism industry grow. Recently, the private sector is doing a lot but still GoB support is inadequate regarding hotels, motels, and transportation (Moniruzzaman & Abedin, 2015).

Political Unrest and Decisions

Political unrest that is known as “Hartal” (blockade) was a big reason for tourism to go downwards from the year 2008-2014. Also, there was not enough budget allocated to develop public hotels in those years (Chowdhury & Chowdhury, 2015).

Inactive Worker Unions

Several private agencies are there to negotiate with the government regarding tourism development (National Board of Revenue, 2020). But it seems that these worker unions are mostly quite inactive.

The Rohingya Crisis

The Rohingya crisis is a big issue now, fleeing from Myanmar as refugees (UN News, 2020). As per UN mandates, Bangladesh is letting them in. Most of them are staying at Cox's Bazar, the largest undivided sea beach in the world, which is also the biggest tourist destination in Bangladesh. Their presence makes tourism difficult in the region.

COVID-19's Effects on the Industry of Tourism in Bangladesh

According to a report of the Pacific Asia Travel Associations (PATA Bangladesh Chapter) (2020), in the aviation sector, more than 2000 lost their jobs and had a financial loss of 6 billion. More than 100,000 employees from across Bangladesh in different hotels/motels/inns and resorts lost their jobs, a financial loss of 1500 crore BDTk (15 billion). Also in Bangladesh, these losses accounted to 150,00 jobs and 300,00 crore BDTk (30 billion) among travel agents; over 100,00 jobs and 100 crores BDTk (1 billion) among inbound tourism, and for both inbound and outbound 150,00 people lost their jobs and faced a loss of 3000 crores of BDTk (25 billion). For Umrah (Hajj), 5000 people became jobless. Fast food, restaurant, bar, coffee shops, and other small food preparation points have lost 150,000 jobs and a loss of 4.5 billion BDTk. Among vehicle operators in tourism, the losses were 1000 jobs and a financial loss of 4 billion BDTk., and in tourists' vessels, the loss was 15 billion BDTk. The total losses until June 2020, were 9705 crore BDTk. (97.5 billion) approximately, and a total of 309,500 jobs.

Recommendations to Collect More Revenues from the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Benchmarking with Other Countries

Neighboring countries as India and Sri Lanka are well ahead of Bangladesh in tourism. Despite having great potential and resources, Bangladesh lacks behind. So the idea to benchmark neighbors who are competitors can help to know their people,

nature, food, and culture to follow their success steps. Eco-tourism, water life tourism, and wildlife tourism can be good sources to develop tourism revenue and interests about Bangladesh. Some neighboring countries are practicing them and getting great attention (Bandara & Tisdell, 2004). Sri Lanka has good places for wildlife tourism, and these are practiced at the local and regional levels. Bangladesh has the largest mangrove forest that is globally known as the Sundarbans with full of wild animals, especially the Royal Bengal Tiger, deer, and expensive woods can be great sources to earn foreign currency. If tourism companies are given permission, and proper roads, quality resorts and hotels are built, Ecotourism can be done in locations like Sylhet that is famous for growing tea and exports. The golden fiber of Bangladesh “Jute” and eco-friendly products made from it can also be a source of ecotourism. Water life tourism can be arranged on the largest coral island of Bangladesh, St. Martin’s Island. For a long time, international football, tennis, athletics etc. tournaments are not arranged. Hosting international sports tournaments can also be a great way to attract foreign guests for revenue earning (Arulmozhi & Gomathinayagam, 2019).

Other Recommendations

Exploring new tourist spots or building them can be a way to attract more tourist to generate revenue. Already the GoB has taken initiatives through different ministries to enrich the tourism industry, but it is believed that it has to be more. While collecting the data, it was found that several government tourism websites do not open or have not been updated for a long time. Upgrading the government tourism website, providing proper feedback, online advertisements can make good impacts. Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation Sponsorships can be introduced for domestic tourism for educational institutes and private tourism agencies so that study tours can be arranged regularly that will help to enhance concern and awareness about tourism among the youth (Hossain & Wadood, 2020). Tourism and hospitality infra-structural development is needed Bangladesh. These need to be the most modern and technologically sophisticated. Also, their updating and proper maintenance are essential. Sponsoring festival-based tourism can be another effective way to promote Bangladeshi culture and tourist destinations. The “Pahela Baishakh” (Bengali new-year), Bengali autumn festival, folk music festivals can be some of the primary tourism products. VAT-free concept of tourism for a foreigner can be marketed more. The NBR website mentions that tourist who stays less than 180 days and buys from specific outlets marked as “VAT Refund for Tourists”. Showing the refund certificate issued by those outlets, the VAT money can be refunded and made cash from the Tourist Return Desk at Airport Customs Office (National Board of Revenue, 2020). It is essential to make the most prominent tourist destination (Cox’s Bazar) of Bangladesh safe. Considering the risk of natural disasters, security concerns and taking cognizance of tourism interests in the area, the GoB has taken the initiative to transfer the Rohingya camps from Cox’s Bazar to Bhashan Char (an island),

Noakhali. Bangladesh Navy has implemented the project costing USD280 million to construct shelters for Rohingyas on the island (Center for Policy Dialog, Bangladesh, 2020). Khan et al. (2020) states in their study that many hotels are under performing compared to the private hotels due to lesser investment and no modern revenue management system. However, Ivanov and Zhechev (2011) suggested hospitality industry will have to cope with online distribution and more intelligent approaches through technology in order to sustain.

Future Possibilities

Bangladesh's tourism is well flourished compared to its economic development in the past decade, as a good number of the population is overcoming poverty. According to The Daily Star (2020b), in the past decade, her economic growth was 6.5% on an average; but in the last three years, it had more than 7% growth. As a result, peoples' buying capacity and ability to afford tours to different destinations raised rapidly. Also, resorts and tourist spots opened up for business and created thousands of jobs for residents. At the end of 2017 (the last fiscal year), the per capita income raised to USD1,751 from USD703. Bangladesh does not get many foreign tourists, but it has huge number of local tourists who go out for vacations very often. According to different tour operators, the number of domestic tourists rose to 7 million in 2017 from 6 million from the previous year.

Conclusion

This chapter aims to outline the investment and development aspects of tourism and hospitality revenue collection in Bangladesh. The study finds that the number of both domestic and international tourists and revenue collection from the tourism industry in Bangladesh are increasing. Proper initiatives of the GoB and private sector investments can support the generation of more revenues. Also, this industry needs more professionals and client supportive services. Thus, future studies can cover post-COVID-19 context of the tourism industry.

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