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### **An Analysis on Tourism Marketing in Bangladesh**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Tourism is the fastest growing and single largest industry in the world. The tourism industry of Bangladesh is of no exception from this. It can play an important role to contribute in the national economy of the country. Bangladesh is a developing country in Asia, holding high potentiality for tourism. There are hills, vales, deep and mangrove forests, rivers and the longest beach in the world. In this country, the scope of nature based tourism, research based tourism, culture based tourism and eco-tourism is quite evident. Having all the minimum requirements, the tourism industry could not develop adequately. Even a very few studies are available related to the issue of tourism marketing in Bangladesh. The overall objective of this research is to have an overview in tourism marketing in Bangladesh highlighting the issues and challenges being faced in this sector.

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**Keywords:** Tourism, Development, Marketing, Bangladesh.

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## Introduction

Tourism marketing is gaining importance all over the world. The marketing of tourism in Third World countries is increasingly common and the fastest growing destinations are in these regions and increasingly the focal points for development and marketing of new, adventurous and exotic tourist destinations. As a result, most of the fastest growing tourism regions are in the Third World countries which continue to grow and, correspondingly, the promotion of these regions is increasingly popular and important. Bangladesh as a third world country has the lacking of proper study and attention on tourism promotion. As a result, though the tourism industry of Bangladesh has a bright prospect and could contribute to the economy to a greater extent, but the sector could not flourish up to the mark due to lack of necessary and proper initiative of the concerned firms/institutions. In the face of worldwide stiff competition, intangible nature of tourism services and need of pre-purchase information for potential tourists, promotional measures in tourism industry play key role in the performance and development of this industry. As Bangladesh tourism appears to have suffered mostly due to inadequate and ineffective promotional activities, it is necessary to study the strategic promotional approaches of the tour operators in Bangladesh and find out the remedies to overcome the problems or limitations identified.

### 1. Review of the literature

Though there are sufficient amount of literatures highlighting the marketing aspects of tourism, but a few of them has emphasized on the discussion of the promotional aspects of tourism marketing. At the same time, the literature attempted to deal with marketing aspects of tourism is not available enough especially, on the promotional issues of tourism marketing is much neglected and the literature on the same is very limited. In this study, the literature review includes the following:

Chantarachoti (2005) described that in the eyes of foreigners Bangladesh is seen as a business destination rather than as a tourist destination when in actual fact there are potentials to explore in this country if properly promoted and promotion supported by government to the outside world. He also blamed that though Bangladesh has its abundant potential for growth of tourism industry could not utilized it properly due to lack of government support as well as the right initiatives of the country's NTO to highlight Bangladesh to the eyes of foreigners as a tourist destination instead of a business destination. Though there is lot of similarities between India and Bangladesh and even with Nepal, Bangladesh is far behind from the mentioned two other countries due to the ineffective and insufficient promotional activities.

Hasan (1992) described the present situation of Bangladesh tourism industry and present marketing strategies in his research book "Problems and Prospect of Bangladesh Tourism Industry" has blamed that Bangladesh tourism industry could not achieve the remarkable progress in comparison to other neighboring (South Asian) countries though the country is endowed with different tourism attractions. His criticism was concentrated mainly on the failure of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) to develop and launch any dynamic and effective promotional strategy and then he suggested creating an independent and different organization for performing the marketing activities of BPC owned tourists spots

Hossain and Firozzaman (2003) mentioned that Bangladesh tourism industry failed to grow properly not merely because it lacks in enough attractions but suffering mostly due to inadequate and effective promotional activities. They also claimed that the limited promotional

materials like souvenirs, brochures, travel guides, accommodation guides, hand books, tourist maps, poster, folders, etc distributed by BPC and some other private tour operators don't reach properly to the potential tourists and in addition to that, the quality of these materials is not satisfactory which causes not to create adequate curiosity among the potential tourists. At the same time, there are lacks in government initiative to offset or correcting the country's present image prevailing to the outside of the country as the country presently is suffering a lot from the image problem. The researchers also blamed that BPC or other private tour operators have little connection with the foreign tour operators and travel agencies for promoting Bangladesh tourism abroad though they act as hidden promoters of tourism activities in any tourist destination. According to the authors, lack of coordination among the parties related to tourism sector e.g. Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, BPC, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, tour operators, travel agencies, hotels, other provides, local authorities and host population also causes for not developing the industry in Bangladesh.

Mitra (2005) described that Bangladesh does not have enough effort to promote the country as a tourist destination. He argued that Bangladesh has to make aware to the tourists about what to see, where to stay and what to eat. He emphasized for the development of tourism industry, Bangladesh need to develop the infrastructure like hotels, resorts, promoting more places and there should have a link of the government tourism organization with the private sector to boost up the promotional activities for the same. Siddiqui (2005) the Marketing Communication Manager, Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Bangladesh claimed that though Bangladesh has lots of things for tourism, but the country lacks in the initiatives to expose it to the potential tourists. He added that marketing communication can play an important role to let the people abroad to know what fantastic products Bangladesh can offer to the tourists. He emphasized on the cooperative efforts of the National Tourism Organization (NTO) with the private tour operators rather than emerging as the competitor for the overall development tourism industry. He also concluded that National airlines, hotels and the foreign missions of the country or at least an officer in each mission abroad with the responsibility of encouraging the potential tourists through providing necessary information and cooperation can contribute to a great extent for promoting the tourism industry of any country.

## **2. Bangladesh tourism marketing strategy**

With in marketing promotion mix elements, publicity appears to be the most useful form of promotional measures of the BPC. BPC also participate in international tourism exhibitions like the ITB at Berlin through which attractive package tours are sold to international tour operators and a large number of individual visitors in the fair. During tourism month (16 October – 15 November) different cultural night shows, food festivals, seminars, symposiums, audio-visual presentations etc are arranged mainly locally. BPC also uses a web page for disseminating the information to the potential tourists. But the fact is that the web page does not contain the complete information of Bangladesh tourism and it related facilities. As a result, it is tough for a potential tourist to have the required information from the said page. In the local market, BPC advertise in different newspapers, magazines, television and radio. BPC also sometime advertises in some specialized and special interest magazines. The private tour operators also lack of sufficient fund to operate an extensive promotional activities. As a result, they also conduct some promotional activities in a traditional form by distributing the brochures, leaflets, making advertisements in the local newspapers, participation of different exhibitions arranged locally. But a limited number of private tour operators prints and

distributes their brochures in Bengali (local language), English and Japanese languages and some other operators do the same either in Bengali or in English or in both. There are some operators who participate in the international tourism fairs to attract the attention and encourage the potential tourists and try to sell package tours to the foreign tour operators as well as to the individual tourist. This sort of participation helps to get the media coverage in the international level. But most of the private tour operators try to attract the local nationals and the foreign residents already living in Bangladesh or visiting Bangladesh. The private tour operators also use some sorts of sales promotion like off-season price discounts, free distribution of printed materials; organize live music programs for the visitors in destination's spot, extra service offers, group tour discounts for the packages offered and river cruise programs. Hardly two or three operators are using the web page for the promotion of the tourism in Bangladesh.

Therefore, the objectives of the tourism marketing strategy in Bangladesh are:

- 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;
- 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;
- To enhance Bangladesh's competitive position in the intercontinental destination market by mobilizing effective promotional measures supported by attractive proposals and appealing tourism products;
- 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.

### **3. Data and methodology**

The research has been conducted based on both primary and secondary data. As it was mentioned earlier that the existing literature on the promotional aspects of Bangladesh tourism and even on the overall marketing aspects is not adequate, the study was done on the primary data collected through questionnaire on the use of promotional activities by Bangladesh tourism industry. Secondary data was also used in this study. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire responded by randomly selected 70 domestic and foreign tourists of the country. For the primary sources one questionnaire has been prepared. Variables are as follows: Spots, Security, Accommodation, Entertainment, Political instability, Cost of Services, Tour operator and Tour information and advertisements. To rate the each variable, depending on the need of the tourists the study use: 0= needed and 1=not needed. Dependent variable Tourist has been categorized as 0 = home and 1 = abroad. Secondary data was also used in this study. To collect the secondary data, annual reports of BPC, related journals, periodicals, newspapers, BPC's web page etc. were consulted. In addition to that for literature review and for other theoretical analysis different journals, periodicals, textbooks, newspapers, internet and other related materials were consulted and used as references. After gathering data, we tabulate the data and prepare for regression analysis. Statistical software SPSS was used for the analysis purpose.

The regression model would be as:

$$Y = \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + e$$

Where

Y = Tourist;

X1 = Spots;

X2 = Security;

X3 = Accommodation;

X4 = Entertainment;

X5 = Political stability;

X6 = Cost of Services;

X7 = Tour Operator;

X8 = Tour information and Advertisement

e = error term

#### 4. Estimation results

On the basis of respondents' response, we have done ordinary least square regression equation. The summary of the result is given below:

**Table 1: Regression results**

Variables	Coefficient	t statistic
X <sub>1</sub>	2.0042	6.8796***
X <sub>2</sub>	109.201	0.5942
X <sub>3</sub>	0.01731	0.4781
X <sub>4</sub>	0.02147	0.4437
X <sub>5</sub>	11.8746	0.3362
X <sub>6</sub>	0.57841	6.0014***
X <sub>7</sub>	121.087	0.7401
X <sub>8</sub>	0.74311	0.8157
Adjusted R-squared: 0.8331		F-statistic: 52.874***
***/**/* Significant at 1/5/10% significant level		

We can see that spots, cost of services is positive at 1% level of significance. However, value of tour operator is too large and insignificant at 10% level of significance. The equation provided a good fit at 90% of the observed variation in Tourist. We observed that if the attraction of spots rises by 1%, then the tourists will be raised by 2%. F statistics is significant at 1% level of significance.

## 5. Recommendations

- a) Political stability is also one of the important preconditions to attract tourists. Infrastructure should be developed with a target oriented planning, which must be properly implemented.
- b) Unskilled tour operator should get proper trainings.
- c) Private sectors are needed to be encouraged to invest in the tourism industry.
- d) Government should acquire obligatory enterprises to protect tourism industry from negative impacts of safety and security and for this they should take appropriate decision-making strategies and plans.
- e) Image of Bangladesh should be raised in the eyes of foreign nationals and to attract tourists' innovative ways of marketing strategy accompanied with efficient and effective measures should be taken.

## Conclusion

To get hold of a great opportunity in the tourism industry opening up before in the near future, Bangladesh's tourism sector must start taking all the preparations from this 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. Marketing strategy of the tourism sector must have a clear attitude for implementing the strategy. Tourism sector should simultaneously utilize its assets and abilities in the real life scenario of the country to add value. High quality products at a low price, arrangement for entertainment, development of infrastructure, security, accommodation, aggressive promotional campaign etc. are also required. Growth of the tourism industry largely depends on national and global condition. Pricing strategy of the tourism sector is very important for which all categories of tourists including high-income group and low-income group may get the opportunity to tour. Product differentiation technique should be used to attract tourists and fulfill their demands. Tourism industry should be comprised of accumulating all courses of action for which efficiency and effectiveness in the strategic marketing is being required.

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