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TOURISM IN BANGLADESH – A CASE STUDY ON KHULNA CITY

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Abstract: Tourism is one of the most prominent businesses in the world and its prospect is increasing day by day. Bangladesh has ample scope to develop this industry since it has a long historical background, natural beauty, the largest sea beach in the world etc. By developing this industry, it can create job opportunities, generate foreign currency, circulate money in the economy and thus can contribute to the total economy of Bangladesh. But the development of domestic tourism is the first criteria for the development of this industry. This study aims at investigating the habit and attitude of the people of Bangladesh and also their views and expectation of the present situation regarding tourism. This study has identified that most of the people have tendency to travel. But, due to many problems like security, living place, transportation, food, infrastructure and lack of facilities, information, guide, etc. people feel discouraged to travel. If these problems can be solved and the desired facilities can be provided, people will be encouraged to travel within the country and thus domestic tourism will be developed and that may ultimately attract foreign tourists to visit our country.

Key words: Tourism; Domestic; Khulna; Bangladesh

Introduction

Travelling and tourism are as old as human civilization. From the time immemorial the ancient people used to travel from place to place to see the unseen or to discover lands and places of interests. Today, tourism has become the most dynamic and fastest growing industry in the world. The contribution of international tourism to the balance of payments of many countries has proved to be one of the most dynamic export industries. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), now tourism is the world's largest source of employment, providing opportunities to some 100 million people. Tourism has been seen as a source, offering a new opportunity for the Third World countries to secure foreign exchange and stimulate economic growth. During the time of reduced performance in the export sector, a number of developing countries developed tourism as a source for quick earning foreign exchange by using natural, ethnic and anthropological resources (Hye, 1992).

As tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world, the Asia Pacific region is certainly no exception. Bangladesh is a developing and mass populated country in the southern part of Asia. As a developing country, it has less investment in industrial sector and thus the huge population remains unused, and is dragging down the living standard. In India though tourism industry is much developed, domestic tourism acts as a major

contributor to the economy of the country and they exert a great impact on it. Bangladesh has considerable potentiality to develop her domestic tourism with its historic sites and monuments and with its places of natural beauty and attractions (Hasan, 1992, p. 51). In Bangladesh domestic tourism can also thrive and make a real contribution to the industry through development for which both the private and public organizations e.g., Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) could be responsible. They can either individually or together take necessary appropriate measures to give the tourism industry some reasonable shape, and which might require some reorganization. The long-term effectiveness of such reorganization can be enhanced by installing a new management structure that enables official tourism policy to be reviewed periodically (Sing, 1996). It is important to notice that the neighboring countries like India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan are much developed in tourism and domestic tourists have major contribution to that. But, in case of Bangladesh, although it is claimed to have tourist “Attractions” but in terms of accessibility and amenities, Bangladesh is much behind than many other South and South-East Asian countries (Hasan, 1992, p. 35). New low-cost accommodation at coastal areas and seasonal day excursions in custom built economy, low profile sight seeing boats with fixed zones of operation, might be an effective manner with which to meet the perceived demand (BPC, 92).

Bangladesh does not have enough capability to be developed through industrialization due to lack of capital. The development of tourism industry can be an easy way to create job opportunities, keep the economy moving by circulating money, generate foreign currency by attracting foreign tourists and thus contribute to the economy to a greater extent.

The study aims at investigating two objectives; firstly, to identify the present traveling habit of Bangladeshi peoples secondly, to identify the insight demand for tourism of Bangladeshi people. These sources of information could provide baseline data on the present status of tourism industry and it could provide guidelines in order to overcome the existing problems of tourism industry of Bangladesh.

Methodology

This study is based on a questionnaire survey conducted in Khulna city that includes 200 respondents. The questionnaire comprises demographic and survey parts. Demographic part contains six questions concerning the occupation, gender, marital status, age, family size, and average yearly income of the respondents. The survey part has a total of ten questions regarding the reasons for traveling, attitude towards traveling, problem experience, preference regarding various elements, frequency of traveling and the places visited by the respondents both in and outside the country. The respondents are basically from the middle and upper class. As the poor people travel only for work and they are unable to travel as a part of their habit or recreation, they have been excluded from the present study. Data have been collected randomly from three residential areas namely Sonadanga, Khalishpur and Nirala in Khulna city between January and March, 2001.

Results and Discussion

a. Demographic Features of the Respondents: Of 200 respondents, 77% are male and 23% are female. 69 % of the respondents are married and 31% are single. Thirty nine per cent of the respondents are between 30 to 40 years, 32.8% are between 40 to 50 years, about 22% are below 30 years and only 6.2% are above 50 years of age. It has been found from the study that in respect of age the respondents aged between 30 to 40 years are the most prominent travelers. The majority of the respondents (56.2%) have family members ranging from 3 to 5 persons, 17.1% have family members ranging from 6 to 8 persons, 6.2% have below 3 and 5.7 % have above 8 persons. It is found that those who are from comparatively small families are more interested in travelling. The reason may be that a small family creates fewer obstacles to travel.

b. Occupation and Income pattern of the Respondents: Occupation and income pattern are the two most vital factors for human beings. They stimulate in formulating the habit of the people. They control the consumption pattern, life style and other activities. Most of the respondents (58.9%) are service holders followed by businessmen (31.2%), housewives (4.7%) and other professions (5.2%). In respect of income, it has been found that 27.1% respondents have average yearly income above Tk. 1,50,000, 26% have their yearly income between Tk. 1,00,000 to Tk. 1,50,000, 23.3% have income ranging from Tk. 80,000 to Tk. 100,000, 15% have income between Tk. 60,000 to Tk. 1,00,000 and 8.6% have income below Tk. 60,000. It has been found that most of the people of those who travel frequently are service holders and business people and they travel around the globe as a part of their profession. It is observed that mid and high-level income groups (yearly income above Tk. 1,00,000) have more tendency towards traveling than other income groups and thus they can afford to spend some money for traveling than lower income group people.

c. Reasons for Travelling: The study has identified that 64.3% people like to travel for watching natural beauty, 53% like to visit historical places, 32.4% travel for recreation (mostly to spend vacation) and 23.3% people travel to visit friends and/or relatives. The study identifies some places frequently visited by the respondents. These places are Cox's Bazar, the Sundarbans, Moinamoti, Sylhet, St. Martins island, Sonargaon, *Savar Smriti Soudha*, Paharpur, Bagerhat, Kuthibari of Shilaidaha and Kuakata. A few respondents (about 10%) have visited some places outside the country. Most of them visited various places of India. Some other visited other countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Singapore, etc.

Bangladesh is a country considerably rich in archaeological, cultural and natural wealth. Her tourist attractions include archaeological sites, historic mosques and monuments, resorts, beaches, picnic spots, forests and wildlife. Bangladesh offers opportunities for angling, water-skiing, river cruising, hiking, rowing, surfing, yachting and sea beaching as well as bringing one in close touch with mother nature (BPC, 1997). Therefore there are reasons for the people to travel within the country.

d. Attitudes towards Traveling: About 90% of the respondents think that traveling is a good medium of entertainment and pleasure. For traveling, despite the risks and lack of

proper facilities, few people take initiative at their own cost, devoting time and energy. Though there are the positive feelings for traveling, a great number of people are scared of traveling. It has been found that 41.4 % of the people travel once in a year, 24% travel once in six months, 14.8% travel once in three months and 10% people travel once in a month.

e. Problems Faced by the Travelers: The respondents have identified some factors that they think are important for tourism and have ranked them according to their importance. Table 1 represents these factors and their ranking according to the respondents opinion.

Table 1. Ranking of various items regarding traveling.

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	Attractiveness of the spot	22.4%
2	Transportation facilities	22.4%
3	Security	17.6.3%
4	Availability of proper food	16.7%
5	Place to stay	7.1%
6	Safeness of the journey	5.2%
7	Entertainment facilities	4.8%
8	Comfort	3.8%

Among these factors, attractiveness of the spot and transportation facilities have got the highest importance (22.4%) and the items followed are security, availability of food, suitable place to stay, safety and comfort during the journey. The table reflects the travellers' expectation while travelling.

Eighty percent of the respondents have expressed that they faced various problems while travelling. The main problems pointed out by the respondents are security (80%), lack of proper transportation (77%), infrastructural problems (65%), organized tour facilities (57%), lack of information regarding tourism (51%), lack of residence in the tour spots (41%), and lack of tour guidance (38%). Even in Cox's Bazar where some facilities for the domestic tourists have been available, full range of utilities necessary for tourist is absent (Ahmed, 1998).

Conclusion

Based on the above analysis and interpretation, it is clear that people want to travel as a part of their life. Except a few, majority of the respondents traveled various places within the country. This is due to the fact that tourism provides translucent pleasure, profound tranquility that could not be measured with any monetary value. However, travelling habit depends on occupation & income, age, marital status, number of family members, etc. The frequency of travelling depends upon time and money available to the people. But the people feel discouraged due to various problems associated with travelling. It has been identified that attractiveness of the spot and transportation are the most important factors to the travelers followed by security and availability of food.

Therefore, it can be concluded that respondents from Khulna City have a tendency to travel within the country. However, they have reservation with the existing facilities provided by the tourism operators and/or tourism organizations. Therefore, it is evident that the authority needs to develop basic infrastructural facilities immediately to boost up the domestic tourism in Bangladesh.

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