Tourism potential in Bangladesh

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Introduction

- Majbritt Thomsen
- Education
- In Bangladesh
- Finding relevant work
- Danish Embassy
  - B2B DANIDA, production sector
  - Tourism potential report
- This lecture
  - Share my results
  - Discussion: Bangladeshi tourism industry SWOT
The image of Bangladesh

- Poverty
- Natural disasters
- Corruption
- Micro-Credit
Bangladesh – in brief

Geografi

- South Asia
- 147,570 sq. km
- Few hills
- 80 % under 1,5 m. over sea level – annual floods
- World’s larges
  - river delta
  - mangrove belt
- 10 % forest
- Tree main industrial cities
Bangladesh – in brief
Climate

- Subtropical and tropical climate
- 25-35 °C
- Humidity up to 95%
- Annual rainfall 1000–5000 mm
- Floods and cyclones
- Tree seasons
  - ‘Wet’ May - October
  - ‘Cold’ October – February
  - ‘Hot’ March – May
- Best travel season
Bangladesh – in brief

History

Invaded!
- Buddhism, Hinduism and Muslim cultures
- Large British Colony

- End colonialism divided on religion
- Pakistan: Distance, language and money flow
- 9 month bloody and devastating independence war
- 1971 independent
- Development from chaos
  - 1990’s political stabilisation
  - Corruption
  - 2007 temporary government state of emergency
Bangladesh – in brief

Population

- Densely populated
  - 140 million
  - 60 % under 25 years
- Poorest
  - 40 % below poverty line, limit education
  - Growing middle and high class (English speaking)
- Growing urban population
  - 1950-2025 from 4-40%
- Homogeneous
  - 98 % Bangla speaking
  - 83 % Muslims
Bangladesh – in brief
National economy

• 1990’s stability
  – overseas competitiveness
  – Foreign aid and investment
  – Tourism industry
• Annual BNP growth 5-6 pct.
• Agriculture and labour-intensive manufacturing
Travel advice

- Bangladeshis are generally warm, hospitable and helpful
  - Isolated Muslim Country
  - Rising western presence

- Security issues
  - Terror, abduction, violent demonstrations, poor traffic safety and robbery
  - Violent disputes in Chittagong Hill Tracts

- Advice
  - Well informed - world and local
  - Safe travel behaviour
  - Respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions
Tourist destinations

• Primary
  – Sylhet, Chittagong
    Khulna and Rajshahi
    Division

• Secondary
  – Barisal and Dhaka
    Division
Sylhet Division

- Best climate
- Highest annual rainfall
- Rainforest
- Tribal villages
- Tea, orange and pineapple plantations
- Cycling and bird watching
Chittagong Division

• Diversity
• Sandy sea beaches, coral island and hills
• Ten different tribal populations
• Important Buddhist heritage
Khulna Division

- Marshland, dense jungle and numerous rivers
- Sundarbarns
  - Largest littoral mangrove (UNESCO)
  - Royal Bengal tiger
- Historical Mosque City of Bagerhat (UNESCO)
Rajshahi Division

- Agricultural - no large cities
- Himalayan Mountain view
- Variety of historical monuments
- Buddhist ruin Vihara at Parapur (UNESCO)
Barisal Division
Secondary tourist destination

• Flat region with rivers and sea
• Little industrial development and few historical sites
• Quiet typical rural life
Dhaka Division
Secondary tourist destination

- Densely populated: the hectic capital, villages and closely settled farmland
- Cultural sites
- Lalbagh Fort (UNESCO)
Status for tourist destinations

- Variety
  - natural, cultural, religious and heritage
- Low commercial use
  - standard for preservation, sustainability, development and international appeal
- Huge challenges
  - Global warming
  - Poverty, education, corruption etc.
- UNESCO: National concerned to protect and promote traditional Bengali culture
The upcoming tourist industry
Transportation

• Low costs!

• Air
  – 25 destinations in Asia and Europe
  – 6 national destinations

• River transportation
  – well-developed and comprehensive
  – slow and affected by tide and season
The upcoming tourist industry
Transportation

• Road
  – Often poor quality
  – Heavy, polluted and chaotic traffic
  – Frequent ferry crossing

• Rail
  – Eastern and western network
  – Old and slow
The upcoming tourist industry
Recreational facilities since 1970s

• Pajatan - National tourism organisation
  – Accommodation construction > popular tourist destination
  – Today standard accommodation at 10 destinations
The upcoming tourist industry
Recreational facilities since 1970s

- Private companies
  - Variety of urban business related hotels and restaurants
  - Provisional resorts, hotels and boat operators

- Nightlife is nearly non-existent
The upcoming tourist industry
Tour operators

- Private operators and Pajatan provide tour service
- 1992 TOAB formed
  - 95 members 2008
  - 150 tour operators in total
- Inbound tourism
  - No Bangladeshi offices abroad
  - No foreign operators in Bangladesh
  - Few foreign operators include destination Bangladesh
- Outbound tourism
  - Sell foreign destinations
  - Primary Indian, Nepal and Bhutan
The upcoming tourist industry
How is Bangladesh sold?

• No national strategy
• Local companies are on their own
  – English
  – Internet
  – Photo material
  – Professional
  – Worlds longest, best, larges …
  – Same packages
  – Not western service concept
The upcoming tourist industry
How is Bangladesh sold?

- Foreign tour operators
  - Sustainable tourism
  - Luxurious facilities
  - Often tour guide
  - History, nature and culture
  - People, society, aid projects
  - Participate social work and field studies
The upcoming tourist industry
The future tourist supply

• Investment in tourism sector is half of global and South Asian level

• Main investment
  – Infrastructure (air and road)
  – accommodation
Future Bangladeshi tourist demand

- South Asia most under represented tourist region
  - Instability, negative image, remoteness to major market
  - Exception: India, Bangladesh at the bottom

- Economy in Travel & Tourism 2008 - 2017
  - 4.4% annual growth worldwide
  - South Asia 7.3% growth
  - Bangladesh 5.7% growth
Target groups
Inbound tourists

• Overall growth 1996-2005
• 300,000 a year
  – South Asia 99,459, India 71,966
  – Europe 48,961, UK 31,529
  – East Asia and Pacific 35,976
  – Americas 18,673, USA 14,873
• Pull-factors?
  – Historical links to India, Pakistan and England
  – Linguistic link with English speaking countries
  – Geographical proximity to markets
  – Personal relationships in the Bangladeshi or expatriate community
  – Climate, but tourists all year
  – Unknown adventure
  – Social awareness
Target groups
The local middle and high class

- Main urban cities
  - Western culture and modern values
  - Strong connection family and ‘native village’
  - National pride, bad government
  - Low expectations
- Social status by wealth and education
  - Emigration work and studies
  - 12 millions passport holders
  - Vacations in Bangladesh
Target groups
The expatriate community

• Total number?
  – India (5000-6000)
  – USA, Pakistanis and UK (2000-2500)
• Dhaka or Chittagong
• Average stay 2-4 years?
• Individuals and families
  – One provider
  – International urban club life is important
• Several vacations
  – Bangladesh (few!)
  – South Asia
  – Home country
Target groups
The expatriate community

• Reasons not to go
  – Dhaka = Bangladesh
    • Pollution and local attention
    • Travel time and safety
  – Information
    • Difficult to find
    • Promotion to good to be true?
    • Word of mouth essential
  – Expenses not important
    • Western service and shopping concept
    • Relax in beautiful natural surroundings
The Bangladeshi tourism industry
SWOT discussion

- Strength
- Weakness
- Opportunity
- Threat
Closing statement

- Net working is crucial!
- SWOT input