

Tourism potential in Bangladesh

26th of march 2008



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 largest
 - river delta
 - mangrove belt
- 10 % forest
- Three 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
- Sundarbans
 - 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

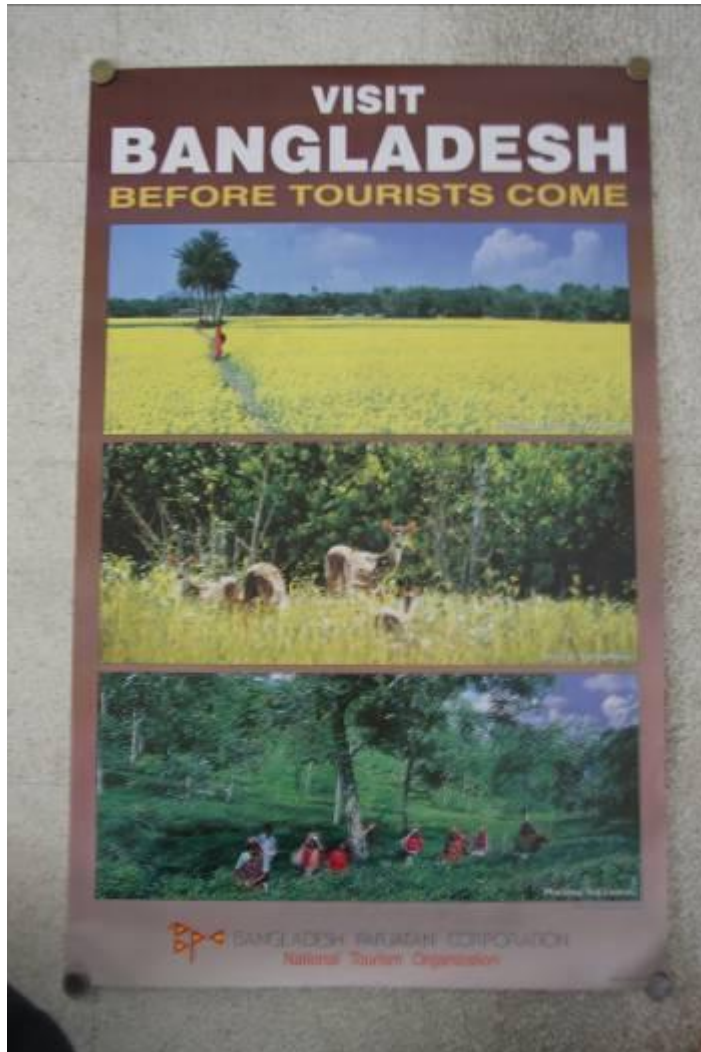
Recreational facilities since 1970s



- 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