

Strategic Performance for Bangladeshi Tourism Industry: Competitive Advantage but Non-Performing Capability?

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Abstract: This paper aims at highlighting the potentials and challenges of tourism as an industry in Bangladesh that can be termed as strategic advantage as well as the causes of lower performance and growth in this industry which can be defined as non-strategic performance in decision making and implementation. In this regard, dependent variable is the perceived performance (satisfaction of participants) and two independent variables are participants' perception regarding security and local infrastructure. The study was based on a sample size of 600 local individuals who travel frequently within Bangladesh and have visited at least one foreign country as well as 400 foreign visitors who visited Bangladesh from 2016 to 2017 for different purposes. Selective Judgment Sampling method has been applied to identify whether the participants consider themselves as frequent travelers (tourists) or not. Results indicate that the two independent variables have a strong positive correlation with the dependent variable. The paper might be useful for those who want to extend their research on this area and also for the policy makers seeking some recommendations from the empirical study.

Keywords: Tourists, Tourism, Bangladesh, Competitive advantage, Safety, Infrastructure, Satisfaction.

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I. Introduction

The word "tourism" indicates the process of traveling for recreation, leisure, enjoying vacation, business trip or any other purposes from one place to another (within or outside national boundary) for about six months or less than a year (Bangladesh Tourism Board, 2016). A tourist, sometimes called a visitor usually visit places of natural beauties, historical attractions, fairs or carnivals even may be just to explore new places and cultures. There might be two types of tourists- internal, who visit the places of attractions within the national boundary (local tourists) and foreigners who cross the national boarder for a visit (Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, 2016).

Historically, the tourism was just a process of entertainment since the countries before were not that much connected. The other reason is that the communication especially the transportation facilities among many countries were poor. But once the states becoming connected with each other for various interests, people of different countries, especially the developed ones, have started to explore another part, region or country. The objective may not be always to explore, rather may be business, to see/meet the relatives or even may be to attend different meetings, seminars or conferences. The scenario has largely been opposite particularly from mid 19th century when tourism was accepted, by many countries, as a source of national income. In fact, this sector became an opportunity for many countries that belong attractive natural ambience or historical attractions. The tourism sector has originated as a major income-driving industry to the multiple developing/middle-income countries in the world and there is a sufficient number of literature and studies showing positive thriving tourism sector can have positive impact on economic growth and development of countries (Khondker & Ahsan, 2015). As a result, the governments are not only investing in tourism but also in areas of hospitality such as hotels, motels, restaurants, convention centers etc. (Sarker & Begum, 2013).

II. Tourism In Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a country blessed with natural beauties and attractions. As a vacation destination, she has many facets and strengths. She is endowed with almost all the natural potentials that attract tourist (Shahid, 2004). She has hills, forests, rivers, sea and eye-pleasing green plain land. She is also the holder of some ancient place of interests like Shat (sixty) Gombuj Mosque, Paharpur Bihar, Moinamoti, Kantojir Temple, Ahsam Monjil, Lalbagh Fort etc. She has all the possible opportunities that can be turned into a well-performed tourism sector or industry. Moreover, reverie beauty, colorful tribal culture and simple village life are the main factors

for attracting visitors (Hasan S.R., 2005). All these opportunities are some kind advantage the can be viewed as strategic advantage which a country has but others (or few others may have) does not have like:

Table:1 Strategic advantages for Bangladesh tourism

Places of natural attractions	Sundarban (the largest mangrove forest in the world)	Royal Bengal Tiger (can be found in a very few countries)	Cox's Bazar sea beach (the largest se shore in the world)
Expenditure of food, living and transport	Food is one of the cheapest in the world	Living cost is also cheaper than many tourist destinations	Transport cost is also not that expensive
Entry Fee into the tourist spots	Most of the natural spots do not have entry fee for the visitors	Most of the historical tourist attractions are free, some charge a nominal fee	
Permission needed	Only needed for some specific areas of hill tract and Sundarban.	Not needed for majority of the historical spots	

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Despite of having a lot of opportunities and strategic advantages, there are also some lacking in Bangladesh that are not favorable for tourist attractions (can also be considered threat for this industry) like:

Table:2 Competitive incapacibilities for Bangladesh tourism

Infrastructure	Not well developed. Time spent on the roads and rail is much more than expected because of traffic jam.
Security of tourists and their belongings	Except Cox's Bazar, no activity of tourist police can has been seen any other tourist places. Less security for tourists and their belongings than most other countries.
Other Facilities	Lack of tourist facilities like good transport system (e.g. availability of taxi service) and leisure facilities for tourists like bar, club etc.

Source: Field Survey, 2017

III. Objectives Of The Study

The objectives of this study is mainly limited to the hidden causes that are holding the Bangladesh tourism sector backward despite of having a lot of competitive advantages that could be otherwise used to gain competitive performance (satisfaction).

Another objective of this study is to provide some justified recommendations based on the primary information gathered from the participants' remarks.

IV. Theoretical Implication And Rationale Of The Study

This empirical study will be hopefully beneficial for the academicians who are doing their investigational research in this sector and also for the responsible authorities who formulate and implement strategic policies.

V. Methodology Of The Study

5.1 Questionnaire design

The study was totally relied on primary data based on a questionnaire containing both open and closed end questions. It had altogether 32 statements and 2 open end questions. A 5 point Likert scale had been used to get the observations from the respondents.

Table-3 Questionnaire design

Categorization	Number of questions
Security of tourists	10
Infrastructure	10
Strategic performance (satisfaction)	12
Total	32

The sample size was 1000 among which 600 were local tourists and 400 were foreigners visiting Bangladesh. All the local 600 participants have been to at least one foreign country for visiting. Selective Judgment sampling had been used to choose the participants.

Secondary data have not been considered as it was too difficult for the author to find the most recent ones from any sources like Bangladesh Tourism Board or Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation.

5.2 Respondents' profile

There were 600 local participants visiting at least one foreign county.

Table-4 Respondents' profile (Local)

1.No. of country(ies) visited	1	2	3-5	More than 5		
No. of participants	289	233	57	21		
2. Gender	Male	333	Female	262	Others	5

400 participants in this study were foreigners (Non-Bangladeshi).

Table-5 Respondents' profile (Foreign)

1.Purpose of visit	Sight seeing	Business	Family reunion	Others		
No. of participants	218	137	26	19		
2. Gender	Male	220	Female	161	Others	19

VI. Analysis And Findings

Pearson's correlation coefficient has been utilized simply to observe the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable.

Table-6 Pearson's correlation for selected independent variables and strategic performance

Independent variables	Dependent variable (Perceived satisfaction)
Perceived security issues	0.86
Perceived infrastructural issues	0.81

It can be observed from table-6 that the two independent variables are strongly correlated with the dependent variable. Therefore, the findings from the participants' observation clearly indicate that those two issues have a substantial impact on tourism performance (satisfaction of the tourists).

VII. Limitations, Research Gap And Further Scope Of Study

The study has several limitations. First, it was conducted based on only primary data as secondary information was not available (the recent ones). Second, the sample size was not big enough to come into a concrete conclusion. Third, it was conducted only on one country.

Based on the previous limitations, the author suggests that further study can be conducted in this area with a large representative sample on multiple countries or cultures. Therefore, there is a very good scope of conducting or extending this kind of research into next level.

VIII. Suggestions and conclusion

As already mentioned earlier, there were two open end questions to the participants regarding their expressions on the natural/historical sites and seeking some recommendations on tourism of Bangladesh. Those suggestions have been summarized below.

1. Priorities should be given to the tourist areas regarding security like more police patrolling, creation of special tourist police department, making special security zone etc.
2. Investing more on infrastructure like roads, hotels, motels etc. equipped with all kinds of recreational facilities like bar, swimming pool, playground etc.
3. Special attention should be provided to the tourists on airports.
4. Organizing more and more promotional campaigns like tourism fairs, cultural fairs, festivals home and abroad.
5. Strengthening the tourism cell on the foreign missions to advertise more about Bangladeshi tourism.

There are neighboring countries like India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand who are earning very good revenue from tourism and this is contributing to their GDP on a large scale (Turner & Feeiermuthf, 2016). But unfortunately, Bangladesh cannot utilize its vast natural gifts only lack of proper plan and strategy. So it can be considered as strategic or non-performing capability.

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Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

Section-1(Personal Information)

Please circle or tick the correct option:

1. Age: (a) Less than 19 (b) 20 to 30 (c) 31 to 40 (d) 41 to 50 (e) 51 and above
2. Gender: (a) Male (b) Female (c) Other
3. Number of Country or Countries Visited: (a) 1 (b) 2 (c) 3 to 5 (d) More than 5
4. Purpose of Visit: (a) Sightseeing (b) Business (c) Family reunion (d) Others

Section-2 (Statements regarding perceived safety and security of the tourists)

1=Strongly disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat neutral or no comment 4=Agree 5=Strongly agree

Statements		Scale				
1	I feel secured traveling around Bangladesh	1	2	3	4	5
2	Bangladesh is free from all kinds of security threats	1	2	3	4	5
3	I do not feel any stress here as I can freely move	1	2	3	4	5
4	If I were given an option between two countries, I would chose Bangladesh as there is no security threat	1	2	3	4	5
5	According to me, security is the most important issue for tourism	1	2	3	4	5
6	In my visit to Bangladesh, I did not come across any loss or fear for the lack of security	1	2	3	4	5
7	The police or other security personnel are very helpful and proactive	1	2	3	4	5
8	I have no hesitation to stay here with my family	1	2	3	4	5
9	It is safe in Bangladesh to move along even at night	1	2	3	4	5
10	I feel positive about visiting Bangladesh as a tourist	1	2	3	4	5

Section-3 (Statements regarding perceived feelings regarding tourist infrastructure)

1=Strongly disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat neutral or no comment 4=Agree 5=Strongly agree

Statements		Scale				
1	Bangladesh is a unique place for tourists with well established infrastructure	1	2	3	4	5
2	All the tourist spots are well equipped with tourist information facilities	1	2	3	4	5
3	The average time spent on the roads and airports are satisfactory	1	2	3	4	5
4	The authority/authorities take(s) special care for foreigners at airports and railway stations	1	2	3	4	5
5	There are good number of hotels and resorts where tourists can stay	1	2	3	4	5
6	The tourist places can meet all types recreational demands of the local and foreign tourists	1	2	3	4	5
7	The local people are very friendly towards tourists	1	2	3	4	5
8	The tourist places are preserved with utmost care by proper authorities	1	2	3	4	5
9	I am satisfied with the facilities regarding tourist infrastructures in Bangladesh	1	2	3	4	5
10	The local people are involved with tourism business as a better reflection of the govt. policy regarding tourism industry's development	1	2	3	4	5

Section-4 (Statements regarding perceived feelings regarding tourists' satisfaction)

1=Strongly disagree 2=Disagree 3=Somewhat neutral or no comment 4=Agree 5=Strongly agree

Statements		Scale				
1	I am satisfied with the overall issues regarding security and infrastructure	1	2	3	4	5
2	As a foreigner, I have made a mistake coming here in Bangladesh for visit	1	2	3	4	5
3	The govt. of Bangladesh is really taking good initiatives for tourism development	1	2	3	4	5
4	As a local tourist, I can easily move from one place to another, i.e. there is no restriction to move around	1	2	3	4	5
5	I came here with great expectation, but now I am frustrated	1	2	3	4	5
6	People in this country are very tourist friendly	1	2	3	4	5
7	Bangladesh has a rich culture with a lot of natural attractions	1	2	3	4	5
8	Bangladesh can earn a lot of currency from local and foreign tourists	1	2	3	4	5
9	Bangladesh is a quality tourist destination	1	2	3	4	5
10	I would come again to visit Bangladesh in the near future	1	2	3	4	5
11	I am well satisfied as a tourist coming here	1	2	3	4	5
12	I would recommend anyone to visit Bangladesh	1	2	3	4	5

Section-5: Open end questions (General comments and Suggestions)

1. As a local tourist, what are your general observations and suggestions regarding local tourism industry?
2. As a foreigner, what are your general observations and suggestion to improve local tourism facilities?

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