

INVESTIGATING BARRIERS IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract

The study investigates the tourists' encountered barriers during their tour in Bangladesh. The main purpose of this study is to explore whether they face problems in the services and facilities in accommodation, transportation and safety and security in Bangladesh. Qualitative method had been conducted to prepare this study on this topic though making self-administered interviews. For this purpose, international tourists were selected as sample to attain primary data. The findings show that international tourists are dissatisfied with the services of accommodation, transportation and safety and security in Bangladesh. Moreover, respondents were very disturbed for the transportation system in Bangladesh because of its heavy traffic jam, poor traffic and signal system. However, very few studies have been written on the tourists encountered barriers during their tour. Hence, this study will contribute a lot in the current literature. Recent authors who are interested to know the tourists encountered barriers in case of developing countries, this study will be very beneficial for them. Furthermore, the recommendations and suggestions those are given in this study will be helpful for the tourism authorities who are responsible to promote and provide services for the domestic as well as international tourists.

Keywords: Barriers, international tourists, developing countries, tourism authorities

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is a developing country. Previously, agriculture was a main income source of Bangladeshi people. But now scenario has been changed. Industrial sector has been main employment source for people. Tourism industry is developing day by day in Bangladesh. But it is reached at the standard level so that much more international tourists can be attracted. Although authorities are now more concern, some major problems hinder to develop tourism sectors in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) and Bangladesh Tourism Corporation (BTC) are the two organizations under the ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism. These two organizations are responsible to promote tourism sectors in Bangladesh as well as to provide services and facilities to the domestic and international tourists. Bangladesh is rich in cultural and natural attractions those are valuable ingredients for the development of the tourism sectors. But there are some major problems or barriers that are encountered by tourists. Consequently, tourists' arrivals were not satisfactory in the previous years. These problems include lack of good transportation and communication system, lack of well-planned accommodation facilities, poor facilities of food, entertainments and other facilities to satisfy diverse tourists (Rahman, Hossain, Miti, and Kalam, 2010). Moreover, Rahman et al. (2010) claimed that the issue of safety and security for tourists should be taken in the consideration by the authorities of BTB and BTC.

This study has been conducted in the qualitative method through interviewing ten international tourists whether they may face problems in case of accommodation, transportation and safety and security during their tour in Bangladesh. The next section, literature review, shows various barriers those can be encountered by tourists. But this study has only focused three major problems such as accommodation, transportation and safety and security that tourists face a lot while visiting in the developing countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Ganesh and Chockalingam (2010) focused on fifteen problems and their intensity level in developing countries like India. The findings showed that low intensity of problems include service, safety and security, poor infrastructure, unwanted expenses and arrangements; moderate intensity of problems relate to transport facility, guidance and accommodation; as well as high intensity of problems significantly affect tourists demand with regard to corruption, pollution, heavy rush, beggars, health care, local language and sanitary conditions. Moreover, the study showed that there is significant difference in the problems encountered by the tourists based on their different demographic characteristics like nationality, gender, age, occupation, and income level.

Therefore, Taleghani, Ghafary, Asgharpour, and Bekiai (2014) was investigated some barriers including multiplicity of decision-making centres, weaknesses of infrastructural facilities and marketing activities as well as lack of culture related to accepting tourists. Kim (2003) found out and ranked specific barrier factors that create negative perception towards tourist destinations. These are sequentially pollution, global communicable diseases (AIDS, the plague, malaria), lack of safety and security, lack of foreign language training and lastly, fear of terrorism and civil unrest.

Ghaderi, Saboori, and Khoshkam (2017) added that the most important factor on which tourism development depends is safety and security issue. Moreover, the success and failure of tourism destinations depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for tourists because tourists are highly sensitive about the security in the tourist spot during their traveling. But many tourist destinations of developing countries are unsafe for visitors (Kim, 2003). Security fears including terrorism, war, crime, and political unrest are tourism development barriers and also create misperception of the tourists. If there have lack of security in tourist destinations, tourists do not eager to visit or revisit and consequently, it cannot make positive tourist perception (Sharifinia, 2014). It can be exemplified that if tourists face any undesired incidences or political chaos, it can affect their confidence to a destination and disrupt them to move normally that influence perception of tourists about the destination (Sandeep and Vinod, 2014).

Furthermore, Parvaneh (2013) described that “infrastructure barrier is another major barrier in tourism development including lack of or poor transport vehicles for passengers, intercity roads, shopping centres, power, water and telecommunications, sanitation and hygiene networks in tourism areas” (p. 352). Taleghani et al. (2014) assessed a significant relationship between weaknesses of infrastructural facilities and underdevelopment of tourism industry. Tourism infrastructure includes roads, railways, airports, health care systems, services and public services. Additionally, it includes some ancillary and complementary facilities, equipment, systems, process and resources that are necessary for the functioning of any tourist destination (Jovanović and Ilić, 2016).

Basically, literature showed three types of infrastructures that collaborate at a regional level to create an attractive tourist destination. Firstly, transport infrastructures including roads, airports, and railways; secondly, social infrastructures referring to hotels, convention centres, stadiums, galleries, and other necessary facilities and thirdly, environmental infrastructures consisting of national parks and marine parks that are all necessary for attracting and making positive perception of tourists (Jovanović and Ilić, 2016). Many developing countries are still facing serious problems in tourism development because tourism infrastructure such as roads,

vehicles, airports and national and marine parks are limited and very poor condition for meeting the tourist demand as well as making good perception of tourists.

According to Kantawateera, Naipinit, Sakolnakorn, and Kroeksakul (2015), lack of or poor public transportation system and traffic jam are major problem in many destinations of the developing countries. Although some destinations can be reached by air, flight options are not enough for meeting all demands of tourists and other passengers. Moreover, the rail transportation is not up to the standard while bus services are not reliable. Even, public transportation system that link to the tourist destination is mostly seen difficult to access. For these reasons, Kantawateera et al. (2015) claimed that transportation problem is one of the main causes that hinders tourism development.

Therefore, the issue of inadequate and poor hospitality and other related services are also considered as major problems for making negative perception of tourist that can be obstacle for tourism development. These hospitality and other related services include accommodation, food and beverages, amusement, entertainment as well as travel related shopping (Gee, Makens, and Choy, 1984). Basically, tourists always expect a good quality lodging services that many developing countries cannot provide or countries face problem with unavailability of accommodation facilities. Even, many of these countries have few luxury hotels and motels. Furthermore, in maximum case, there have not any nearby restaurants of tourist destinations or have some restaurants those are not meeting tourist expectation. While many advanced countries are applying many effective techniques for attracting tourist's attention to their dishes, developing countries are lagging behind in this regard (Ardabili and Rasouli, 2011). This is because unavailability of restaurants, fast foods and cafeterias or not nearby from tourist lodging facilities is another big problem for tourist in the developing countries.

In the current situation, many developing countries suffer from inadequate water supply and improper sanitation that threaten to the tourism development (Frone and Frone, 2013). These problems include inadequate water treatment, low access to centralized water, poor sewerage network, and waste water system jeopardize both tourists and environmental safety. Frone and Frone (2013) claimed that insufficient and inefficient waste water treatment system has a direct negative impact on the tourist perception that affects inversely the tourism industry. Because many developing countries face the lack of trained staff and thus, the effectiveness of water treatment reduces. Consequently, tourists face sanitation problems.

Generally, tourists visit any tourist destination for passing their leisure time joyfully. But entertainments, shopping facilities, nightlife, sports and recreation facilities for tourists are not sufficient and properly managed by many developing countries because tourists are confronting with unsecured nightlife as well as illegal operations found in several gaming or gambling

activities. Gaming and gambling are contentious issue because it is in both legal and illegal forms in many countries. For those reasons, managing entertainment facilities for tourists properly is regarded another problems for tourists (Leung, Lam, and Wong, 1996).

According to Arabzadeh, Arabzadeh, Bavarsad, and Arabzadeh (2015), there is a shortage of promotional campaigns and marketing representatives particularly in many developing countries to promote and market their tourist destinations internationally. Gnanapala (2015) mentioned that numerous promotional and marketing activities can attract more tourists and improve their perception towards tourist destination. Basically, two marketing weaknesses are considered as major deterrent in tourism development. These include the absence of information about destinations in tour operators' catalogues as well as lack of international promotional campaigns and marketing representatives (Samardali-kakai, 2013).

This is because lack of funding is another challenge because maintenances of the tourism infrastructures, prerequisite for tourism development, is quite impossible without sufficient finance (Abdullah, Abdul Razak, and Jaafar, 2014). Many governments of developing countries do not give enough support in terms of funds allocation. Even, countries do not undertake the needed activities for the encouragement of the potential investors (Ndanusa, Harada, and Islam, 2014). This is because lack of funding is a very crucial barrier in the development of tourism.

On the other hand, Taleghani et al. (2014)referred another important problems towards tourism development that is lack of culture of accepting tourists. Cultural differences between tourists and host may create unpleasant and negative perceptions and it is included as social and cultural barriers in tourism development (Parvaneh, 2013). It can be exemplified that sometimes low awareness of the host communities about the needs and demands of tourists can be a reason for negative perception of tourists and on the other side, lack of knowledge of tourists about the host culture can also create some problems (Arabzadeh et al., 2015).

In addition to cultural difference of local community, language barrier also creates some problems those generate negative perception of the tourists. As service providers speak in English, many ELS (English as a second language) and low literate tourists may face difficulty in communicating and attaining necessary information about tour services (Kim and Mattila, 2011). Even, ELS or low literate tourists cannot collect necessary information about services and facilities or complain about service failures. Hence, language barrier is another issue that may influence tourists' experience. Apart from this, shortage of tour guides who can speak foreign language also considered as major problem. Many tourists can expect assistance during their traveling as well as can expect small smile, small talks and assistance before requesting.

Hence, poor communication skill among front liners who handle tourists directly is regarded as another important problem that can significantly influence tourists' perception.

Furthermore, Shaikh and Syed (2013) claimed that the quality of tourism management education of developing countries is not satisfactory because the courses offered by universities and institutes are theoretical in nature and do not fulfil the industrial requirement because students only attain theoretical knowledge, not practical knowledge. Hence, the curriculum is not being revised and designed in consultation with the industry. Even, the coursework of tourism management is not being revised frequently to meet the continuous changing requirement of the industry (p. 70).

Additionally, human resource challenges are also considered as a major issue in tourism development in case of shortage of qualified manpower; shortage of tourism training infrastructure and qualified trainers; working conditions in the tourism sectors; and lack of proper strategies and policies for human resource management. For these reasons, employees cannot maintain hospitable manner with tourists that can influence tourism development (Shaikh and Syed, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Qualitative method has been selected to investigate the barriers in tourism development because of the need to know the perception of tourists about barriers during their tour in Bangladesh. Thus, tourists can provide valuable information about tourism barriers to the researchers. According to Henderson and Bialeschki (1995), data collected through the qualitative methodology can provide the better insights and understanding about any specific context than the quantitative research methodology. Hence, semi-structured interview has been chosen the most perfect option to investigate the tourism barriers in Bangladesh.

Selection of the Sample

Total 10 respondents have been asked about accommodation, transportation and safety and security in Bangladesh. Only three questions have been asked to the respondents to know their perceptions about accommodation, transportation and safety and security in Bangladesh. The respondents for this study have been selected from the international tourists who have come Bangladesh for the tour purpose. Participants have been selected to take interviews from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Bangladesh.

Data Collection Method

As qualitative research method has been used for this study, semi-structured interview has been selected for the purpose of collecting and analysing data. The respondents have been allowed freedom and flexibility to answer all questions. According to Pope, Van Royen, and Baker (2002), semi-structured interviews are principally based on flexible and comfortable questions. Hence, international tourists are asked questions with flexibility and comforts so that they can expose their encountered problems frankly while making tour in Bangladesh. The respondents have been interviewed about 10 minutes.

FINDINGS

Of those interviews for the purposes of this study, four of the ten study respondents were Japanese. Two of them were Indians and rests of them were Europeans. Most of the international tourists were middle aged. They reported that they had higher education with university certificate.

Accommodation

The majority tourists especially Europeans claimed that accommodation was not appropriate for tourists. They said that there were lacks standard accommodation facilities for tourists in Bangladesh. On the other side, Indian tourists claimed that some hotel rooms were very expensive to afford for tourists who are mainly from developing countries. Even facilities related to the accommodation were not satisfactory. Furthermore, when the researcher went to the Japanese tourists to take interviews, they exposed that they were not satisfied in the accommodation services for them in Bangladesh.

Transportation

After asking this question related to the transportation service for tourists in Bangladesh, every tourist expressed their dissatisfaction because of poor road, vehicles as well as signal system. Moreover, they claimed that heavy traffic jam created problems them to move them one easily and timely. They also exposed that inside condition of public transportation were not satisfactory at all.

Safety and Security

Although Indian tourists had no objections about safety and security issues in Bangladesh. But Japanese tourists had high confusion whether Bangladesh is appropriate as a tourist

destination. They complained that after 10 pm it is not safe for women to move alone in Dhaka city at all. Even, European tourists were not satisfied about safety and security in Bangladesh.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some recommendations for development of tourism sectors in Bangladesh that are based on tourists' encountered barriers regarding accommodation, transportation and safety and security are given below:

- ❖ The government has to play a key role for preparation of policy guideline for planning and development in transportation system.
- ❖ Some initiatives can solve the traffic jam problem such as withdrawal of rickshaw, van and lorry type vehicles and start some other public transportation so that public can easily move here and there without help of rickshaw and vans.
- ❖ Traffic police should be more concern about rules and regulations about roads and signal systems.
- ❖ Tourism authorities should undertake some initiative so that tourism investment can be properly utilized. Hence, accommodation and other facilities for tourists can be properly made for tourists.
- ❖ Travel agencies and tour operator should be more conscious about the safety and security issue for the tourists. Moreover, various new rules should be initiated, and some strategies should be undertaken so that previous rules are strictly maintained by everybody.
- ❖ Local communities should be sincere and careful so that tourists may move here and there very safely. Local communities can suggest where should go or not got. Then tourists can understand before taking steps.

CONCLUSION

The study findings report that international tourists are dissatisfied with the services of accommodation, transportation and safety and security in Bangladesh. Respondents were very disturbed for the transportation system in Bangladesh because of its heavy traffic jam, poor traffic and signal system. Moreover, they claimed that the issue of safety for tourists are not satisfied at all. For these reasons, this study recommends that local communities, government as well as tourism authorities should come ahead to solve these barriers so that tourists become satisfied with the services of accommodation, transportation and safety issue.

There are some limitations to prepare this study on this topic. Firstly, tourists were not interested to expose their perception and opinions regarding tourism services of Bangladesh. Secondly, time was very limited to investigate on this issue. And lastly, they were unwilling to

express authentic information about accommodation, transportation and safety issue about Bangladesh as a tourism destination. Previously many researches were undertaken about perception of services and facilities in tourism sectors. But very few studies have been written on the tourists encountered barriers during their tour. Hence, this study will contribute a lot in the current literature. Recent authors who are interested to know the tourists encountered barriers in case of developing country, this study will be very beneficial for them. Furthermore, the recommendations and suggestions those are given in this study will be helpful for the tourism authorities who are responsible to promote and provide services for the domestic as well as international tourists.

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