

# Tourism Sector in Bangladesh: Insights from a Micro Level Survey

Narayan Chandra Nath\*

## *Abstract*

*Tourism is now-a-days one of the most important service industries around the world, but despite its immense potential in Bangladesh for earning foreign exchange and generating employment and income, the tourism sector has not developed in the country. Based on a survey of tourism activities in the country's most attractive tourist spot, Cox's Bazar, and perceptions of various stakeholders - tourists, local people, hotels and restaurants, tour operators etc. - gathered from the survey, the paper highlights the major problems faced by the tourism industry and makes a number of recommendations for the development of tourism in the country.*

## **1. Introduction**

This report is based on a micro level survey of tourism activities at Cox's Bazar, the most important tourist spot of Bangladesh. Carried out 2000, the survey covered ten stakeholders: domestic and foreign tourists, restaurants, hotels, tour operators, transport agencies, rickshaw pullers, shopkeepers, enterprises of products for the tourists and local population. The issues covered under the survey were related to problems of tourism development, its prospect for future development and the probable measures needed to be taken for tourism development in the area. Though the survey was limited to Cox's Bazar, it has a wider implication for the country. Besides Cox's Bazar, the researcher has visited different tourist spots of the country to have insights into the problems of the tourism sector of the country.

Tourism has been defined by us as traveling to a place or places other than the residence or work place, and on an excursion, a journey or visit for pleasure, rest or recreation and other purposes than for earning or involving in activities leading

---

\* Research Fellow, BIDS

to permanent residence. Our understanding is that one can travel within the boundary of home country from one place to another to gather experiences and make pleasure during holidays or their leisure time. Traveling may be to a foreign country. It may be personal, it may be in groups. It may also be family tour taking all the members of the family to unknown interesting, and pleasing environment for bringing the members closer to each other.

Tourism is now one of the most important service industries, and has become one of the most important invisible export sectors in many countries of the world. It fetches foreign exchange, generates income and employment not only directly but also through multiplier effects in the economy through creating demand for other sectors which are indirectly related to the sector.

The position of tourist arrivals as well as earnings from tourism in Bangladesh is very poor not only compared to the world but also to the South Asian region and countries of similar cultural background in Asia. However, since tourism offers great opportunities for earning foreign exchange, Bangladesh needs to explore and exploit its potentials. Little is known, however, about the status and importance of tourism in the country. Despite its immense potentials and importance for the economy, the sector has remained an under researched one in the economy. The present study has been designed to give an overview of the present status of tourism, pinpoint the key problems, and identify the potential dimensions to address the development of the tourism sector on the basis of micro level investigation.

## **2. Objectives and Methodology**

### **2.1. Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of the study are the following:

- a) Analysing the present status of different components of tourism sector;
- b) Analysing the supply side problems including infrastructural facilities (transport, communication, electricity, food, accommodation), tourist spots (archaeological relics, beaches and resorts, security and law and order situation, information flow, guide services, tour programmes and overall socio-cultural and ecological environment for tourism;
- c) Analysing the perceptions of different stakeholders about the suggestions for development of tourism in the tour spots; about the way of developing tourism taking into account of the need for harmonising local interest, country interest and the interests of the tourists;

- d) Addressing the prospective dimensions of sustainable tourism development in Bangladesh;

## **2.2. Methodology and Data**

Quantitative and Qualitative information is used to highlight the environment in which tourism of Bangladesh operates. Opinions and observations of divergent stakeholders have been integrated with a triangular approach to discern the perceptions of the people and synthesise the information provided by them from different interest angles on tourism. Qualitative analysis predominated in the entire study. The importance of different problems and suggestions was assessed on the basis of the weights assigned by the tourists and other stakeholders.

The data sources for studying the problems were basically primary. The primary data were collected through conducting field survey at Cox's Bazar, the tourist town of Bangladesh. Four sets of questionnaires were administered: one for the enterprises involved in tourism service, one for the hotels and restaurants, one for the tourists (foreign as well as local) and one for the local population including shops and crafts. Key informant systems were also applied to get into the details of the problems.

First, a survey with an administered questionnaire was conducted on a sample of 77 domestic tourists and 34 foreign tourists regarding their assessment of tourism facilities provided to them and the main problems faced by them in getting the expected services.

Second, a sample of 43 private units of hotel and 49 restaurants services were randomly selected, and their opinion surveyed.

Third, a perception survey was conducted on a sample of 40 respondents from the local population of Cox's Bazar highlighting the problems and effects of tourism at local level.

Fourth, an opinion survey was conducted on a sample of 20 private units of travel services to gather their views on the problems lying in the way of development of the sector.

We have selected 49 manufacturers of handicrafts and handloom product related to tourist requirements. Next we have selected 33 shopkeepers who sell their goods to the tourists. We have selected 41 samples of Rickshaw-pullers who not only carry the tourists in their entertainment vehicle rickshaw but also act as guides and security men for the tourists. Besides, we have selected 50 hotel boys and 49 restaurant boys for investigation on tourism related services and issues.

Overall size of our sample was about 460. We have designed questionnaire separately for each group considering its specificity in relation to Tourism services.

Although this study regarding the problems and prospects of tourism development in Bangladesh is basically based on field investigation in Cox's Bazar, we have used secondary information on the country and visits to important tour spots in the country. We regarded Cox's Bazar as the main tourist spot of Bangladesh and tried to highlight its status to see the condition of Bangladesh at micro level. With the longest natural sea beach of the world with the background of green forests, wild life, hills, islands and rivers, it has unparalleled scenic beauty and tremendous value as a tourist spot of Bangladesh. But unfortunately inflow of foreign tourists to this spot is very low. And so far it has virtually become a spot for the domestic tourists of the country.

However, Though our main field investigation was on Cox's Bazar, we have visited several important tour spots of the country. We have visited Kuakata (Barisal), Islands of Bay of Bengal (Saint Martin and Maheshkhali), Sundarban (Khulna), Mahasthan Garh (Bogra), Rangamati (Chittagang Hill Tracts), Sitakund (Chittagong), Ashulia (Dhaka), Dhaka City, and Sonargaon (Narayanganj).

Though the main data source was primary, we have used the published data and documents of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh Bank, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and United Nations and the data generated in the individual studies to address the problem under study

### **3. Socio-Economic Background of the Tourists**

#### **3.1. Individual Socio-economic Background of the Tourists**

##### **3.1.1 Place or Country of origin of the Tourists**

Majority of the domestic tourists have birth place in Dhaka and they also have working place in Dhaka (74%). Next importance place of origin of domestic tourists is Chittagong. Among the foreign tourists, majority are European tourists (74%). Only 3% of tourists are from USA. Among the Asian tourists, majority are Chinese, Indian, Thai and Philippines, constituting together 21%.

##### **3.1.2. Age Distribution of Tourists by Country of Origin, Sex and Marital Status**

Majority of the tourists domestic or foreign as per their age distribution belongs to younger and middle age group up to 40 years. About 93% of the tourists have

age exceeding 20 years and none of them is above 70 years. Among the unmarried segments of tourists, 100% of domestic of tourists and 94% of foreign tourists have age below 35 years. Among the married domestic tourists, around 88% are below 35 years as against 24% of the foreign tourists in this age group. On an average, 7.2% of the tourists have age exceeding 50 years. Domestic tourists having age 50 years are 2.6% while foreign tourists of this age group constitute 22% which means that though domestic tourists of older generation are not many, number of foreign tourists in this age group constitute a considerable number. So tourism authorities should take the case of age as an important consideration for development of products and security for tourism. Different age group needs different tourism facilities including health and guidance services.

### **3.1.3. Education Level of the Tourists**

Educational status of the tourists both domestic and foreign is high with majority with a graduation level of education. Educational level of foreign tourists is a bit higher. Among the female domestic tourists, about 87.5% are above graduation level. On the other hand, about 70% male domestic tourists have graduation and 7% are below SSC level. Among the foreign tourists, 90% male have graduation level and 86% of female have graduation; none of them is below intermediate level. Thus education and traveling have been found correlated in all tourist groups irrespective of their place of origin and gender types.

### **3.1.4. Occupational Pattern of the Tourists**

Major portion of male domestic tourists belongs to students (38%), service holders(23%) and businessmen(25%). Among the female domestic tourists, about 25% are service holders, 37% are students and 25% are housewives. Most of the foreign tourists are service holders, students or businessmen. Among the male foreign tourists, about 57% are service holders, 23% businessmen and 14% are students. Among the female foreign tourists, 54% are service holders, 31% are students and 14% are housewives.

## **3.2. Socio-Economic Background of the Households of the Tourists**

### **3.2.1. Father's Occupation**

In respect of occupation, fathers of the tourists belong in most cases to service holders or businessmen (85% in case of male and 88% in case of female) i.e. economically stronger persons. In 9% cases, fathers of the tourists are in teaching profession. It is striking to note that though the country is agricultural, only 0.4%

tourists have fathers engaged in cultivation. All this means that father's occupational background of the tourists is an important factor for the existing composition of the tourists.

### **3.2.2. Father's Education**

Educational background of father is important in having impact on the habit of traveling of the tourists. Most of the tourists have higher education level than the average population. In 94% cases of domestic tourists, father's education is above 10 years of schooling and in 29% cases, father's education is Master's degree and above. Thus educational background of the father/family is contributing significantly to the demand of domestic tourism.

### **3.2.3. Income Level of the households of the Tourists**

We have analyzed the income level as per type of the tourists. We have categorized all the tourists in five income groups: lower income, lower middle, middle group, upper middle and rich income groups. Most of the tourists belong to middle (50%) and upper middle income group (27%). Sexwise, female tourists in the rich income group constitute a higher proportion than their male counterparts. According to marital status, the situation is different as per sex. Among the unmarried, majority of the female tourists belong to the middle class. No upper middle or rich classes were found among unmarried female tourists. Even among the unmarried male tourists only 29% belong to upper middle class and none belongs to rich income group. The reason why among the unmarried tourists, there is none from rich class is that there may be greater concern for security in the richer family for their children. Concern for security for the unmarried female tourists is more in the richer class as evidenced by the fact that not a single unmarried female tourists belongs to even upper middle class not to talk of the rich income group. Most of the tourists in upper middle and richer class are married. Most of the rich tourists belong to married group and they constitute 27% of married tourists. This implies that the package for the rich tourists should consider the taste and interest of the married tourists. Thus income level and marital status are important factors for domestic tourism development. Among the foreign tourists 88% belong to rich income level. Sexwise, male tourists are a bit richer than female tourists. Thus, income level of the tourists is important for tourism. It is obvious that considerable amount of money is required for transport, accommodation, and food involved in travel. Duration of stay and distance of tourist destination depends upon the capacity of the tourists to bear the expenses of traveling.

### **3.3. Source of Financing of Traveling**

The main source of tour financing is own savings (71%) followed by assistance of parents. In case of foreign tourists, proportion of own saving is much higher and in case of female, proportion is around 80%. Other important sources of financing the tour are the companies in which the tourists work and close relatives. Financing has become a problem in 54% cases. But in case of foreign tourists, about 77% tourists have no financial problems.

## **4. Motivating factors, Reasons of Attraction to visit Cox's Bazar**

### **4.1. Motivating factors and purpose of traveling**

The main motivators to visit Cox's Bazar are family members, husband and wife, children and other relatives. Sometimes parents also motivate to visit the place. Other motivating factors in order of importance are (1) recreation and enjoyment of freedom and pleasure, (2) the desire for sunbathing, (3) the desire to see the hills and hilly road beside the sea, (4) the desire to see the culture of local people, and (5) the desire to see the natural beauty with thick hills, on the one hand, and wavy sea on the other. Among other motivating factors were own desire to visit, business purpose, proper time to travel, good weather, relative's presence at Cox's Bazar and symposium. Sometimes, childhood memories also acted as motivating factor to visit the place.

Recreation, as the main purpose of visit has been more prominent among the domestic tourists than in the case of the foreign tourists. Among the foreigners, about 19% of tourists identified knowledge gathering, and about 21% identified visiting friends as the main purpose of their visit. It is striking that no foreign tourist talked about sight seeing or sunbathing as the purpose of visit to a sea beach as Cox's Bazar.

### **4.2. Special Reasons of Attraction to Cox's Bazar and Most enjoyable things here**

Among reasons of attraction of Cox's Bazar as tourist spot as perceived by the tourists, the most important is sea sight with its wave, sound, tide and ebb. Next in importance are its sandy sea beach and sunbathing facilities, fine weather with fresh air, its natural beauty created by treeful hills and wavy sea and the sandy sea beach in between the hill and the sea, and the beautiful scenario of sunrise and sunset. Cox's Bazar is not important only for hills and sea sights but also for historical relics and Buddhist and Hindu temples together with Muslim mosques.

Another important area of attractiveness is the cultural life of local people, especially tribal cultural life.

Majority of the tourists, about 66% of the domestic tourists and about 23% of the foreign tourists, cited sea beach as the most important object of enjoyment. Foreign tourists cited wandering on the beach, natural scenery, boat tour, life style of local people, tribal culture, peoples' hospitality, clean weather, fresh air and sun setting as important objects of enjoyment. According to the domestic female tourists, most enjoyable objects were sea beach, Burmese goods, natural scenery, hills and wandering in the sea beach. Very few tourists talked about sunbathing as the most enjoyable object contrary to one's expectation. It may be associated with the lack of privacy in bathing in the sea and sunbathing on the sea beach.

#### **4.3. Type of Tour of the Tourists**

Five different types of tour are found prominent in Cox's Bazar. These are: group tour (47%), individual tour (22.5%), family tour (18%), official tour (4.5%), honeymoon (4.5%) and package tour (2.7%). While domestic tourists concentrate on group tour (47%), family tour (23%) and individual tour (17%), foreign tourists concentrate on group tour (50%) and individual tour (35%). Female domestic tourists belong more to family tour than their male counterparts (18%), who give more emphasis on group tour. In major cases, both male and female come under group tour. Among the foreign tourists, individual tour for both the male and female is much higher than the domestic tourists.

#### **4.4. Activities of Tourists during their Stay and Gains Derived**

The tourists (463 responses) have identified their activities in the tour spot during their stay here. Major portion of the tourists identified wandering, sight seeing, sunbathing, visiting historical places, knowledge gathering and pleasure trips as important activities (83% responses) they did while staying there. Other important activities of the tourists were recreation, resting, visiting friends, cultural interaction and study. The activities like study, recreation, seeing rural life style have been mentioned only by the foreign tourists.

The most important gains as expressed by the tourists were: knowledge gathering and knowing different people and traditional rural life style of the population. Both male and female foreign tourists emphasised on gains in seeing the family value and life style of Bangladesh, knowing the people of Bangladesh in general and meeting relatives and friends in Bangladesh.



#### **4.5. Problems of visit to other place**

The most serious problem of visiting other places of the country, as cited by tourists is the long, uncomfortable and boring journey. The second important problem as they reported is related to insecurity at night. Another important problem is related to problem of accommodation at the places to visit. They complained about the traffic jam and ferry problem, the absence of recreational facilities at the tour spots, low food quality, the problems of disturbance and cheating by the local people, backward communication infrastructure, and unclean townships. They also complained about the absence of nice tour resorts and overcrowding of the local people and problems of language to interact with the local people.

Main suggestions they made to overcome the problems were to ensure the security in tour spots, to develop accommodation facilities in the areas of tour spots, to develop transport and other infrastructural facilities, and ensure stricter application of traffic law. They have suggested for increased education and awareness of the local people about tourism and for more government care in creating recreational facilities, cleanliness, and making exclusive zone for foreigners. They have emphasized on demonstration of tribal people and their culture. They have suggested for making zoos, parks, and museum at the tour spots. They have suggested for more involvement of educated people in tourism services in the tour spots. They have also suggested developing township in and around the tour spots.

#### **4.6. Serious Missing things in Cox's Bazar**

According to the foreign tourists, the most serious missing thing in Cox's Bazar was the lack of cultural and recreational facilities. The second important missing thing was good accommodation. The third missing thing was that they lacked someone special (fiancée or girl friend/boyfriend) for wandering with in and around the tour spot. They pointed out that they missed privacy utterly in Cox's Bazar. They complained about the lack of good shower and dressing room in the sea beach. Another important missing thing, as they pointed out, was exclusive zone for the foreigners. They felt for increased security, arrangement for dance floor and undisturbed environment for sunbathing. Among the domestic tourists, near about one-third did not talk of missing things. Majority of them talked of missing cultural and recreational facilities like the foreign tourists. They felt for dance floor and night recreation such as night club etc. They felt for more security and freedom of wandering in and around the tour spot. Sex-wise, the female

tourists felt for cultural facilities while male tourists were more for night recreation such as night club. While female tourists talked more of the lack of dressing room in the sea beach, lack of someone special, exclusive zone for the foreigners, the male tourists emphasized on sports facilities, dance hall, swimming pool and good environment for the tourists. Regarding the lack of good accommodation, both male and female tourists hold the similar position.

## **5. Hotel Facilities and Accommodation Problem**

### **5.1. Types of Hotel Facilities**

Accommodation facility is important in as much as this is where the tourists would take complete rest away from home and work place. About 87% of the tourists lived in hotel . Only 9% lived in guest houses and about 4% were in houses of friends and relatives. There are different types of hotels: super grade, first grade, second grade and low grade hotels. Super grade hotels are three star hotels like hotel Shaibal and Saimon with good service delivery and different facilities including bar for the tourists. First Grade hotels are high cost hotels with good service and cleanliness. They are mostly two star hotels like Hotels of BPC, Palanki, Sea Queen and so on. Second grade hotels are reasonably cheap hotels with good service and cleanliness mostly of one star category like, Sagarika, Bilkis. Low category hotel is cheap but not so clean and without good service delivery and without good physical structure and reasonable size of the room and without good sanitation and bathing facilities. Major portion of domestic tourists (53% live in second grade hotels, while major portion of the foreign tourists. live in first grade hotel (65%) or supergrade hotels (15%). Only 27% of the domestic tourists availed of the accommodation in first grade and super grade hotels. However, female domestic tourists stayed in better hotels (53%) than their male counterparts (24%). But in case of foreign tourists, 82% male enjoyed accommodation in high class hotels, while 62% female could afford first grade hotels. No female tourist in our sample was in the super grade hotel unlike domestic female tourists (15%). About 15% of the female tourists lived in second grade hotel as against 9.5% of their male counterparts.

### **5.2. Satisfaction of Tourists on Hotel Facilities**

Though a number of hotels have developed in Cox's Bazar, the tourists in general are dissatisfied with the hotel facilities such as sleeping facilities, bathing facilities and facilities of entertainment. Difference of the tourists' satisfaction depends upon the quality of the hotel. It is natural that a high quality hotel provides better services with higher skilled manpower. The tourists are not

satisfied with the rental charges in hotel. Food prices in the hotel are also very high, though the quality of food is not so high. Cleanliness of hotel is not at satisfactory level. Thus hotel facilities need to be improved to attract the tourists.

Overall satisfaction of the tourists is not very high and remains at a level of only 53%. Low level of satisfaction has been found in respect of sleeping facilities (36%), entertainment (34%), bathing facilities (30%), rental Charge (at the level of 45% given the structure) and food price in the hotel (46%). High satisfaction has been expressed in respect of hotel courtesy, quality of the hotel food and lighting. In case of domestic tourists, the female tourists are more satisfied than the male while in case of the foreign tourists, female were found less satisfied.

### **5.3. Capacity utilization of hotel facilities**

Capacity of the utilization of the hotel is on average 58% and ranges from 48 to 68. It has been found that only four months are the peak months of the hotel business. The reasons of under utilization of capacity are mainly lack of tourists, bad climate like heavy rainfall, lack of facilities in the hotel, unstable political situation and seasonal nature of the business. Other important factors for under utilization capacity are lack of tourists network, competition, disturbance from outsiders for foreigners, distance of the hotel from the sea beach, no possibility of sex trade, and reasons of being not industrial area and dirty townships.

Main complaints about the hotels are to poor cleanliness, poor services of the hotel boy and problems of lack of water supply. There are also complaints regarding lack of facilities, poor lightings, neat and clean hotel, noise pollution, lack of poor quality furniture, absence of recreational facilities and disturbance of mastans.

The main problem they hotel authorities face in the tour spot of Cox's Bazar is irregular electric supply. Next very important problem is harassment by police who want money and room. Besides, there is harassment by mastans. There are problems related to lack of gas supply. There is problem related to supply and price of food materials. Noisy young customers create problems in the hotel. There are problems related to non-availability of customers, high tax and customs duties, insecurity and interruptions in business during rainy seasons.

Hotel authorities have put forward a number of suggestions for development of tourism. Their first suggestion is for appropriate government measures to develop tourism. They suggested government subsidy in the lean seasons, loan support at lower interest rate, increased access to government loan, reduction of government

tax, guidance of private hotel, security to protect hotel owners from police and mastans, land for the hotel near the sea beach, adequate beach facilities, development of tour programme, development of islands like Saint Martins and Sonadia, development of railway system, development of telephone facilities at subsidized rate, creation of proper sunbathing facilities, arrangement of restricted area for a foreign tourists, development of recreational and cultural facilities, and development of a tourism network with other SARRC countries. Other suggestions are for the development of transport facility to and in the tour spots, for more trained manpower to service the hotel, and for ensuring safety in the sea by netting. There is a suggestion for a marine drive and for enough lighting in the sea beach at night. They have suggested to focus indigenous culture and more advertisement of tour spots. They have stressed on arrangement of package tour to different islands and nearby tour spots. They have advised that there should be no residential area or slum in the sea beach area. There should be interpreter service and guide facilities for the foreigners. There is a suggestion to upgrade the Poursava Cox's Bazar to a tourists' town and develop it accordingly, making linkages with other tour spots within the country and within the region of SARRC.

We have asked the tourists about the transport they wanted but not got. Only 57% percent of the respondent responds to that question. Most important type of transport is private car. They wanted taxi, motorbike, sea board and public transport. Among the foreign tourists references are mostly train, private car. They wanted also public support. We have asked about the problem of transport to reach the tour spots. Four important problems cited were long & risk journey, broken road, traffic jam and high cost making the journey uncomfortable.

The assessment of the foreign tourists about the state of customs, immigration and overall condition of airport was not very satisfactory. They are not very happy with the services provided and are not sure if they will visit the country next time.

#### **5.4 Complaints of tourists against hotel facilities**

The major problems the foreign tourists complain about are dirty bed and bath room and lack of water supply, lack of adequate hotel boy service, fear of insecurity, poor maintenance, absence of recreational arrangement, mosquito problem, language problem, and lack of safe water. Both domestic and foreign tourists have complaints of dirty bed and dirty bathroom and lack of regular water supply in the hotel. Domestic tourists complained against high price and bad quality of accommodation, but among the foreign tourists such complaint is insignificant.

## **6. Status of Food and Restaurant Condition**

One of the most important components of tourism service is food. Though normally satisfied with the quality and taste of food, tourists expressed their dissatisfaction about the food price and quality of drinking water. All types of tourists expressed their preference for seafood. Foreigners were interested in Bengali food along with seafood. About 35% domestic tourists and 68% of foreign tourists stated that they did not get the food they wanted. Domestic tourists mainly wanted quality seafood and fresh food which they feel they did not get according to their liking. About 30% foreign tourists felt the absence of European food, 6% felt for vegetarian food, some 9% felt for boiled food. Some wanted Chinese food. Some wanted pork and pasta. Though domestic tourists told that they did not get cheap food, foreign tourists did not bother for price of food, rather they emphasised on quality, taste and freshness of food.

## **7. Mode of Transport reaching the Place & Local Transport**

### **7.1. Mode of Transport to reach the Tour Spot**

Next in importance to food and accommodation in the of tourism service is transport. Major portion of the tourists uses bus transport direct (58%) or railway and bus mixed to reach the tour destination. After bus, the most frequently used mode of transport is private car, specially by of foreign tourists. Microbus is also important transport mode. A significant number of domestic and the foreign tourists prefer train and bus as a mixed mode of transport.

### **7.2. Mode of Local Transport and Problems**

For movement in the tour spot rickshaw has been the predominant mode of transport for both the domestic and foreign transport. The female tourists used rickshaws more than their counterparts whether domestic or foreign tourists. Private car and microbus along with rickshaw have been used by both male and female tourists. A large portion of the foreign tourists prefer private car to wander around the tour spot quickly and economise time. Boat has also been an important preference mentioned by the foreign tourists both male and female. Some male foreign tourists expressed their preference for motorbike.

Main problems of transport in the tour spot identified by the tourists are traffic jams, broken road and high rickshaw fare. The foreign tourists talked about uncomfortable journey and dusty road. Domestic tourists complained of high fare and bargaining.

### **7.3. State of Airport Customs & Immigration Clearance in the eye of the Foreign Tourists**

The assessment of foreign tourists about the state of customs, immigration and the overall condition of airport was not very satisfactory. They are not satisfied with the immigration services either, and indicated that they were not interested to visit the country next time.

## **8. Structure of Expenditure of the tourists**

Information about tourists' expenditure indicates that foreign tourists spend more than 7 times spent by domestic tourists. Major portion of tourist expenditure was for shopping (38%), transport (27%), hotel (13%) and food (13%). Other expenditure was for beverage and cigarettes. Female tourists spent more on shopping than their male counterparts. Domestic tourists spend proportionately more in hotel and food though in absolute terms foreign tourists spend many times more than the domestic tourists in these items. This is because of the larger volume of total expenditure and specially of large volume of shopping expenditure of the foreign tourists. For domestic tourists about two-thirds of expenditure on shopping is on imported items whereas nearly the whole of shopping expenditure of foreign tourists is on local products. This fact goes against the misconception about foreign exchange leakage out of international tourism. The foreign tourists are more interested in local items rather than the foreign items unlike the domestic tourists. This is a very striking observation for the policy makers in tourism development.

Most important item of shopping by the tourists specially the foreign tourists are jewellery, followed by RMG products, footwear, decorative items and the baggage. Other important items are hand tools, towel and other textiles, electronics and cosmetics. All these items together constitute 73% of their total expenditures. There are some differences in between the domestic and foreign tourists in matters of shopping. Though jewellery items constitute more than one third of the shopping of the foreign tourists, jewellery items constitute only 3% of the total shopping of the domestic tourists. In the same way, electronics items constitute a significant item of shopping by foreign tourists. On the other hand, lungi, cosmetics, household item and hand tools are the significant items of shopping of domestic tourists, Proportion of RMG products and footwear shopped is similar in case of both domestic and foreign tourists. In case of baggage items, foreign tourists went for big baggage, while domestic tourists went for hand baggae. It is important to note that foreign male and female tourists were equally

interested in jewellery, footwear, RMG products and big baggage. Electronics items, small handbag and handloom products are of greater interest to female foreign tourists relatively to male foreign tourists.

The structure of expenditure of tourists shows multifarious linkages of tourism in the economy. Increased tourism means increased demand for transport, increased hotel and restaurant facilities generating demand for construction materials and increased employment. Hotel facilities create demand for furniture, textile items, household and cosmetic items. Restaurant facilities create demand for different food items and spices. Increased flow of tourists increase the demand for handicrafts, jewellery, baggage, footwear, ready made garments, handloom products and other textile products. Thus tourism development has both backward and forward linkages. Tourism development would induce development of infrastructure, agriculture, industries (specially agrobased industries) and service sector specially communications and recreational facilities.

## **9. Natural & man-made heritages & Relics and Environment**

The most important natural heritage liked by the tourists was the sea beach, the country is proud of. Among the foreign tourists, female tourists gave more importance to the sea beach. Rivers and forests also received attention by the tourists. The tourists specially the foreign tourists regarded village people and tribal people as a part of natural heritages and valued highly their culture and lifestyle as environmental heritage of the country .

The female tourists, both domestic and foreign, attach importance to the status of environment of the place. They were dissatisfied sometimes with noise pollution but were appreciative of nice weather, modest temperature, clear sky, fresh air, scenic beauty, wavy sea, healthy forests, young islands, and the green hills.

## **10. Overall state of Tourism Sector, its Problems and Prospects and Suggestions for its development**

### **10.1. Overall Performance in Key Components of Tourism Service**

Our evaluation of tourism service was conducted in respect of transport facility, hotel service, restaurant condition, recreation facilities, health service, courtesy of the people, shopping service, service of tourist guide, tourist information, scenery of tour spot, attitude of the local people and immigration & customs at airport. As shown in table 1, the level of satisfaction with the overall tourism facilities and services is at a level of 51%, about 50% in the case of domestic tourists and 54%

**Table 1 : Overall Performance of Tourist Industry of Bangladesh:  
the case of Cox's Bazar  
(On the basis of 17 Indicators weighted)**

Type of Tourists Sex Indicators of Performance	Domestic Tourists			Foreign Tourists			All Tourists		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Overall courtesy	3.16	3.38	3.21	4.33	3.92	4.18	3.46	3.62	3.50
Overall drink	2.75	3.06	2.82	3.33	3.23	3.29	2.90	3.14	2.96
Overall food	2.90	3.44	3.01	3.24	3.08	3.18	2.99	3.28	3.06
Overall hotel facilities	3.54	3.13	3.45	3.05	2.62	2.88	3.41	2.90	3.28
Overall hotel services	3.02	2.88	2.99	3.19	3.00	3.12	3.06	2.93	3.03
Overall Restaurant	2.95	3.38	3.04	3.14	3.00	3.09	3.00	3.21	3.05
Overall shop facilities	3.08	3.25	3.12	3.05	2.69	2.91	3.07	3.00	3.05
Overall shop services	2.74	2.81	2.75	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.80	2.90	2.83
Overall local travel agency	1.2	0.94	1.14	1.57	1.00	1.35	1.29	0.97	1.21
Overall transport services	2.61	2.81	2.65	2.43	2.58	2.48	2.56	2.71	2.60
Overall tour information	1.18	1.06	1.16	1.52	1.54	1.53	1.27	1.28	1.27
Cultural Show	0.97	0.94	0.96	1.38	1.08	1.26	1.07	1.00	1.05
Advertisement	0.98	0.94	0.97	1.05	0.77	0.94	1.00	0.86	0.96
Night Entertainment	1.00	1.06	1.01	1.29	1.31	1.29	1.07	1.17	1.10
Scenery	4.07	5.00	4.26	4.52	4.23	4.41	4.18	4.66	4.31
Attitude	2.85	3.00	2.88	3.48	3.15	3.35	3.01	3.07	3.03
Local transport	2.57	3.19	2.70	3.19	3.23	3.21	2.73	3.21	2.86
Overall Performance	2.45	2.60	2.48	2.75	2.55	2.68	2.52	2.58	2.54
Standard Performance	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Level of Performance (%)	48.91	52.06	49.56	55.01	51.09	53.51	50.47	51.63	50.77
Number of Tourists	61	16	77	21	13	34	82	29	111

in the case of the foreign tourists. The tourists judged very poorly the level of night entertainment, tour information, advertisement and traveling agency services. They judged highly the scenic beauty of the tour spot. They appreciated the courtesy of the hotel employees. They were somehow well satisfied with the food. They were satisfied with hotel facilities marking it at reasonable level. They valued shopping facilities at a reasonably medium level.

## 10.2. Problems for Tourism Development

We have asked different stakeholders on the problems of tourism development in Cox's Bazar. We sought perceptions of domestic and foreign tourists, the local people, the hotel and restaurant owners and the shopkeeper, the rickshaw pullers, tour operators, the manufacturer of handloom products and makers of handicrafts, and the knowledgeable local people about the main problems in tourism development in Cox's Bazar.



Responses were diverse from domestic and foreign tourists though many of the problems are common to both. For the domestic tourists, number one problem is lack of recreational facilities followed by the problem of insecurity and dirty and unclean environment. Fourth problem is related to lack of good accommodation. Next problem is absence of beach facilities. Sixth problem is related to lack of good transport facilities to reach the tour destination as well as in and around the tour spots. Next important problem is the lack of shower or bathroom and toilet facilities around the beach. Next problem they cited is related to disturbance of hawkers and high price of tourism products. There is the lack of good communication information centre and there prevails traffic jam in the tour spots. Domestic tourists have also cited the problems of carelessness from the authority, lack of advertisement and lack of store in the beach, cheating by the local people, lack of boat tour, absence of tour guide, lack of discipline, lack of privacy, and lack of decoration or attractiveness, lack of good infrastructure, difficulty of free movement of girls and absence of lighting in the sea beach at night.

For foreign tourists, number one problem is the dirty and unclean environment followed by disturbance by the local people and lack of security. Foreign tourists felt that the tour spots are crowded and affected by pollution. They cited the problem of lack of good communication or information centre. They talked of uncomfortable transport due to broken road and lack of good transport. They stated that there was no feeling for the foreigner. They felt for recreation facilities, sunbathing facilities and dressing room in the sea beach. They felt for up-to-date bar. They faced very often the problem of language. They felt for a single market place to buy all the products they require.

The main problems cited by the local people in the way of tourism development are related to political instability, insecurity and incidents of hooliganism, inadequate hotel facilities, backward transport facilities, inadequate telephone and other communications services, irregular supply of electricity and inadequate quality of restaurants. They cited also the problems of unfavorable social attitude of local people towards the tourists, lack of good shops and shopping centers and backwardness of tourists facilities.

### **10.3. Perception about Prospect of Tourism in Bangladesh**

Given the so many problems, the question arises whether there is any prospect of development of tourism in Cox's Bazar. We have made expectation and perception study and found that in spite of the problems stated by the tourists, about 82% of tourists express bright prospect of tourism in Bangladesh in general and Cox's Bazaar in particular. Among the domestic tourists, this optimism is

greater (about 90%). The number of tourists seeing no prospect is only about 12% of the tourists. Even among the foreign tourists, only 18% i.e. very few see no prospect of tourism in Cox's Bazaar.

#### **10.4. Suggestions for tourism development at Cox's Bazar**

Suggestions received from stakeholders for development of tourism in this place were, in order of priority, for development of standard hotel and restaurant, to ensure security, for development of recreational facilities, including night entertainment, for development of transport and development of tourism infrastructure in the area, for cleaner environment in the hotel and the town, for exclusive zone reserved for the foreign tourists, preservation of nature and development measures for fauna and flora, the development of information service in the area, for better quality and increased variety of food items, arrangement of shower and bath room by the side of sea beach, for improving sun bathing facilities with care for maintaining privacy, ensuring free movement of girls, unhindered scope for wandering in the sea beach or in the town, proper lighting in the sea beach and in the streets of the town, and making the town more decorated and attractive. There was suggestion for adoption of measures for safety in the sea through providing information regarding rules and time of bathing and arrangement of netting or otherwise. It is striking to note that both the domestic and foreign tourists suggested for dance hall and night entertainment. The tourists suggested for show of tribal culture. All the tourists seem to emphasise on recreational facilities to make the tour full of worth and enjoyment. Other concrete suggestions include more beach resorts, development of facilities, proper health facilities, alternative local transport, extra facilities for the foreigners specially for drinks and dance floor, more advertisement on the tourist attractions of the area, English speaking service, child care facilities, ensuring fresh food and safe drinking water, making the vegetarian food available, speed boat service in different links, ticketing to wander at the beach, park and sitting facilities, ensuring a fixed hotel rent, arrangement of tour guide with proper training, sincere local administration to serve the tourists, commitment of the government to develop the sector as a thrust sector for the development of the tourist places of the entire district, training of local people in tourism services, arrangement for marine drive, arrangement for sea tour, political stability, better marketing facilities, promotion of national product as per needs of the tourists specially the foreigners, minimum tourist facilities in every tour spot of the district, arrangement of diverse cultural programmes and package tours in the area so that the tourists can spend the time joyfully.

### **10.5. Suggestions for tourism development in the Country**

For the development of tourism in the country, the first suggestion was for ensuring personal security of the tourists. Next suggestion was for the development of infrastructure for tourism. Third suggestion was for standard hotel and restaurant. Next important suggestion was for the development of recreational facilities for the tourists such as dance floor and other cultural night entertainments. There has been a felt need for wide advertisement of the tourism resources and tourist attractions of the country. There was suggestion for development of information and communication network, both national and international. Political stability has been found a special concern for the tourists. Proper maintenance and preservation of natural heritage also came in the suggestion for development of tourism. Ensuring free movement and wandering of girls is of special importance for developing tour spot. Other suggestions include development of island tour spots, cultural programmes, zoo/park facilities, better health services, shopping centre, promotion of national products, focus on tribal and national culture, minimum beach facilities, safety in the sea, arrangement of tour guide, ensuring safe and free movement of the tourists without any disturbance, alternative journey by railway, sport facilities, arrangement of bar in the tour spots, diversified sub-tour spots in the area of main tour spots, strong government commitment to consider the tourism sector as a thrust sector, and modernisation of the sector with all possible means with least leakage of resources.

### **11. Conclusion**

It is unfortunate that Bangladesh could not develop its tourism sector to an expected level in spite of having the largest natural sea beach in the world, beautiful scenery with sea, hills, islands, plain land, rivers, clean sky with moon lit night, tribal life, traditional life style of the villagers, relatively cheap hotel and food, scope of traveling by land and sea, scope of easy traveling to Chittagong Hill Tracts by bus and scope of seeing side by side Muslim culture, Buddhist Culture, Hindu Culture and tribal culture. Main problems of the sector despite immense potentials are both social and infrastructural. There is a difficulty in free movement of girls, and there is the lack of recreational facilities, specially night entertainment. There is the lack of adequate security and lack of safety in bathing in the sea and absence of good arrangement for sun bathing. There is absence of adequate advertisement of tourist attractions and arrangement for local tour. There is no separate and special treatment to the foreigners. There is a cultural conflict

of local population with the tourists in respect of ways of enjoyment of life. Western tourists feel the fear of being disturbed by the local people. This is more so specially for the women tourists to this country where freedom of movement of girls is said to be restricted by social and religious values and culture. There has been a bad image of the country for tourism (as a cyclone prone and flood prone country, conservative Muslim country, poor country and less known tourist attractions). There is no availability of exclusive zone for foreign tourists. Hotel and restaurant facilities are to be developed further. Transport system needs to be developed with extension of railway service upto Technaf. Local transport should be developed as per needs of the tourists. Rickshaw should be fostered further as an entertainment vehicle in the local area . There is adequate scope for attracting the tourists to the natural sea beach with access to islands, scope for expansion of several sea beaches, scope for sea tour to Myanmar and Thailand, scope for development of tourism in the islands like Saint Martin and Sonadia and scope for regional cooperation in tourism network with the development of regional investment cooperation.

There should be a thrust on tourism by creating infrastructural facilities on priority basis (transport, hotel, parks, restaurants, gymnasium, recreational and cultural facilities), giving attention to security (in free movement) and safety (in bathing) to the tourists, developing competitive beach facilities with fair and free access to the tourists twenty four hours with provision of regular information on the situation of the sea and total environment and helping to maintain privacy of the tourists with proper lighting and dress room facilities, providing recreational facilities including night entertainment, dance floor, sports & games, theatres, music, songs and other cultural functions, developing cultural tourism cultural diversity and divergent cultural shows whether tribal, national or foreign, promoting national product package for the tourists, developing package tour in the local areas with proper information flow of time schedule and charges, stressing on adventurous tourism in the sea, to the islands and hills, developing exclusive zone for the tourists, both national and foreign, and developing border tour package (to and from) Myanmar and Indian states, and development of Cox's Bazar as a Tourist Town in a planned and comprehensive way with an eye to health, comfort, culture and beauty.

There is the need for fostering internationalism while giving thrust on tourism and declaring the whole country as a tourist spot with some key sub-tour spots well linked with each other through a sound network of transport, information and communication system. While making tourism development plan, there is a need

to give emphasis on sea-beaches of Cox's Bazar and Kuakata, river tourism in Barishal, Faridpur, Dhaka, Khulna, island tourism in Maheshkhali, Saint Martin, Sandwip, Kutubdia, Sonadia, Hatia, tribal life tourism in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Bogra, historical sites tourism in Dhaka, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Chittagong, Dinajpur, religious tourism in Bagerhat, Chittagong, Dhaka, cultural tourism in Dhaka, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Chittagong, Mymensingh, Cox's Bazar, wild life and forest tourism in Sundarban, Sylhet, Chittagong Hill Tracts, village tourism throughout the whole of Bangladesh, including islands and hilly areas, life style tourism in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Mymensingh and the rest of the country and sea adventure tourism by ship or trawler for sight seeing or fishing. Consideration should be given to the varieties of tourist types and variation of their needs in respect of accommodation, food, recreation and transport facilities. There should be emphasis not only on supply capacity building but also on aggressive marketing for attracting the tourists from all over the world. There is a need for development and effective advertisement of tour spots highlighting their uniqueness. There should be diffusion of information through internet about the tour facilities in different parts of the country and linking routes in between the tour spots of the country and the South Asian region.

***Reference***

- Nath, N. C, May, 1994, "Export Performance of Bangladesh" in Roy Grieve and M. Huq Ed. *Bangladesh Strategies for Development*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka.
- 1995, "Balance of Payment Constraint on Growth and External Competitiveness of Bangladesh Economy- A time series analysis", presented in the Eleventh Biennial Conference of Bangladesh Economic Association held on 29-31 July 1995.
- December, 1994, "Role of Exports and its Link with Growth- a theoretical overview and empirical evidence in the context of a less developed country like Bangladesh", presentation made in a seminar organised by Developing countries' Research Unit, Strathclyde University, Glasgow, U.K.
- December, 1992, "Trade Strategies for Industrial Growth and their Determinants -An analytical Overview of Developing Countries", paper presented in the 1992 India and South East Asia Meeting of the Econometric Society, Dec.19-22, held in Bombay, India.