

# Tourism in Bangladesh: Highlighting the Development Trend

Shegufta Haseen Chowdhury

## Abstract:

The tourism industry in Bangladesh is a thriving sector for its medieval resources, rich historical background, and fascinating natural beauty. This study set out to identify the current situation of tourism in Bangladesh and its economic effects. The research relied on secondary data sources. Over the last ten years, Bangladesh has experienced the same level and pace of growth in both the economy and tourism fronts. While there are no vast numbers of foreign tourists, Bangladesh boasts of millions of domestic tourists on regular holidays. In December 2018, the country's Tourism Revenue rose from 348 million USD in 2017 to 357 million USD. Considering the gradual, but consistent increase in revenue over the years, it is safe to say that the tourism sector in Bangladesh is thriving. This study also identified the primary challenges the country faces in developing this lucrative sector. From inadequate safety and security to poor infrastructure and transportation, Bangladesh lacks the most crucial development requirements. The study offered recommendations on how to develop Bangladesh's tourism to match global standards and expectations. However, the success of these hinges on the readiness of both the private and public sectors to jointly develop a long-term tourism development plan. This study will help the Government construct future strategies to develop this enormous potential industry which can play a significant role in the formation of the gross domestic product, providing employment for the population, and enhancing the foreign trade balance.



IJSB

Accepted 13 April 2020

Published 22 April 2020

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.3760204

**Keywords:** Economic growth, ecotourism, prospect, tourism industry, domestic tourists, foreign tourists.

## About Author (s)

**Shegufta Haseen Chowdhury**, Lecturer, Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, New Model Degree College, Russell Square, Sukrabad, Dhanmondi, Dhaka – 1207, Bangladesh.

## 1. Introduction

Bangladesh expects to join the league of middle-income countries over the next seven years. Over the last decade, Bangladesh has established several industries that have helped the economy and are on course, to create even more. Therefore, Bangladesh is considered a formal player in several sectors of the international market. Bangladesh's post-liberation period has been devoted to improving agriculture. The country focused on the production and export of tea, rice, and the golden fiber jute to strengthen the economy (Sultana 2016). More sectors are joining the trend. For instance, the Readymade Garments sector has been a strong economic player, boosting job creation, poverty alleviation, women empowerment, and most importantly, export earnings (Islam et al. 2016). The sector contributes the largest part (83.9%) of the total export earnings (BER 2019), with the other 16.1% coming from sectors like agricultural products, frozen foods, and jute goods among others. Bangladesh can relieve the ready-made garments and knitwear industry by helping the other sectors to grow fast. And the tourism sector has shown the highest potential among these other sectors. If nurtured well, the tourism sector can boost foreign exchange earnings, as well as economic development, by leveraging the country's hundreds of tourist spots, the welcoming nature of locals, the tourist-friendly weather, fascinating natural sights, and an overall calm environment.

About 83% of world countries rely on tourism as one of their top five export categories. Likewise, 38% of the countries have tourism as their number 1 source of foreign exchange earnings (Sultana 2016). Countries dominating the industry at the moment include the USA, UK, Italy, France, and other developed countries. The tourism industry, over the past decades, has grown and diversified incredibly, making it one of the most sought-after industries in the world. The World Tourism Organization described international tourism as the fastest growing sector in the last few years (UNWTO 2016). Tourism is one of the very few global sectors that integrate several other sectors (Afroz and Mahmud 2017). Therefore, despite being a single industry, tourism can turn around the fortunes of any country or region. When it comes to source markets, the industrialized American, European, East Asian, and Pacific countries are still the strongholds of international tourism. However, the last few decades have seen more developing countries growing fast enough by leveraging the increase in disposable income levels. Such countries represent the Middle East and Southern Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and Northeast and Southeast Asia. About four-fifths of the overall international travel happens within the same region, with the Pacific and Asia leading the park over the past years. The Asia-Pacific region's tourism industry is currently experiencing the increasing dominance of emerging markets. Situations obtainable in Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand, Maldives, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and India indicate that tourists are more interested in the natural beauty, nature, and climate of these areas (Pike 2002). Bangladesh's tourism industry, despite its current bleak future, remains promising. If carefully nurtured and developed, its potentials can be harnessed to boost the country's economy, alongside long-term development (Bhuiyan and Darda 2018).

Tourism in Bangladesh attained the status of a crucial industry in 1992 after the government framed a National Tourism Policy. Seven years later, the government declared tourism as a thrust sector. In 2010, the government took another step forward by reforming the National Tourism Policy, with the mandate to boost employment, improve environmental sustainability and purity, and drive economic development (Alam et al. 2009). The policy is largely expected to develop ecotourism by ensuring proper conservation of natural resources,

preserving the cultural values of the local communities, and delivering shared benefits to them, thereby ensuring their well-being. The government also launched an act of “Protected areas of tourism and special tourism zone” (Kabir et al. 2012). Despite these efforts, the Bangladesh tourism sector is not free of challenges, including inadequate infrastructures, absence of security, and safety, among others (Alam 2018). The increasing civilization of the world has made tourism a crucial aspect of the economic growth and mutual relations of several countries. Bangladesh’s tourism industry has not lived up to its potentials, as evident in its very slow growth. There is almost nothing to show for the almost fifty-year-long-journey; the Bangladesh tourism industry is still in the early stages compared to other countries. The global community is yet to see and regard Bangladesh as a known tourist destination. Putting the above-mentioned statements into perspective, this study set out to analyze the pattern and the present condition of tourism in Bangladesh, and make recommendations on turning the Bangladesh tourist sector around.

The experiences in this study will answer several questions raised by the study:

1. To ascertain the current situation of Bangladesh’s tourism industry.
2. To evaluate the tourism sector’s contribution to the Bangladesh economy.
3. To discover the key attractive tourist spots in Bangladesh.
4. To understand the issues preventing the development of tourism in Bangladesh.
5. To proffer recommendations on how to improve Bangladesh’s tourism sector.

## 2. Literature Review

Several research works have centered on the economic growth and tourism of many countries. However, not much descriptive works have been done on Bangladesh’s tourism (Hossain and Wadood 2020). Amin et. al. (2017) highlighted the problems and identified the potentials of rural-tourism with regards to the Bangladesh situation. There are 86,038 villages in Bangladesh, with lush green fields, fascinating local arts and crafts, rural festivals, river beds, wetlands, and wildlife. All these can be packaged and offered to both local and foreign tourists, although there are credible downsides also. Kobra et al. (2018) focused on the upsides and downsides of promotion-based investment in Bangladesh’s tourism industry. The study recorded the views of 120 stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. They concluded that while there is an inadequate investment, the sector is significantly and adversely affected by the unwillingness of different authorities to collaborate. Shamsuddoha and Nasir (2011) focused on Bangladesh’s Sitakunda ecopark situated in the Chittagong division, discussing, at length, the ecotourism opportunities in a suburban city. The researchers reported that Bangladesh is creating more ecoparks to keep the natural balance. However, most of these projects lack a minimum standard, with issues like inadequate infrastructures making it more difficult to come up with a suitable model for a good ecotourism culture.

The research of Shoeb-Ur-Rahman and Shadid (2012) centered on the increasing dilemma of tourism, particularly sustainable development and ecotourism regarding Bangladesh. The researchers painted the scenario of Bangladesh’s sustainable development partly depending on her ecotourism efforts. Likewise, the study offered marketing strategies and similar recommendations on how the sector can be developed into a major ecotourism destination. There have been suggestions, by researchers, of the chances of some Muslim countries offering halal tourism (Salama 2016; Bhuiyan and Darda 2018). There are only three countries with a larger Muslim population than Bangladesh in the world (World Atlas 2018). Bangladesh’s total population is 89% Muslim. The Bangladesh capital, Dhaka, is referred to as the ‘city of the mosque’. Several mosques, Islamic archeological sites, monuments, and shrines

are found in almost all parts of the country. The annual Bangladesh 'Ijtema' period is graced by almost 5 million Muslims from different parts of the year. All these points to the fact that halal tourism can attract tourists from other Muslim countries and non-Muslim countries alike to Bangladesh (Bhuiyan 2016). There were insights into the key areas authorities of any country trying to build the tourism industry should focus on. The first is accessibility – tourists must be able to access tourist destinations easily. This will necessitate the development of state-of-the-art transportation facilities, including waterway terminals, airports, railways, and roads. Another area is safety and convenience. Ali and Parvin (2013) recommended the development of these management factors so that tourism can develop to become a major economic contributor. They emphasized on the use of VRINE, PESTEL, and SWOT models to achieve these. Jahan and Amin (2014) emphasized the relevance of socio-cultural, political, economic, ecological, and environmental factors to a thriving tourism sector. They also recommended the development of basic infrastructures to ensure the smooth running of the tourism industry. Islam (2015) based his study on the sustainability of tourism. He showed the link between the sustainability of tourism and most 21<sup>st</sup> century issues we are dealing with, including social factors, environmental and ecological issues, and economic development.

The above review of the literature shows that there is no much work done on the analysis of the development status of Bangladesh's tourism, as well as its potentials and challenges. Hence, this study aimed to discuss this issue more broadly, while offering suggestions on how authorities can improve the tourism industry and make Bangladesh a sustainable tourism destination.

### 3. Methodology

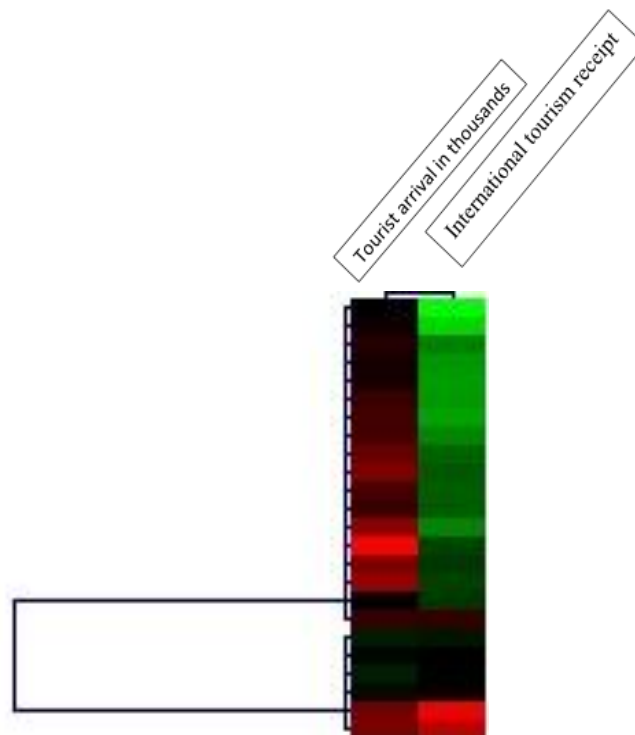
This study used secondary data sourced from various published articles, reports, websites, daily newspapers, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), and World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), among others. The analysis is based on multiple relevant statistical methods. The heatmap was derived from the MeV 4.9 software (Howe et al. 2011), which is well-known for its graphic representation (Hasibuzzaman et al. 2020).

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### Traveler's Trend in Bangladesh

No industry commands more prospects, dominance, and dynamism than the tourism industry worldwide. Tourism is currently a huge industry and trade sector (Ishtiaque 2013), considering the enormous employment opportunities and foreign exchange it brings to the table. According to the World Tourism Organization, there will be 1,561.1 million world tourist arrivals in 2020 (WTO 2001). Bangladesh's tourism industry is yet to develop into a normal industry. This is evident in the international tourism receipt and tourist arrival trend presented in Fig. 1. The gradient of color represents the trend, with green and red representing the lowest and highest values respectively. The highest peak of the tourist arrival was in 2008 (0.140 million). There was a consistent decrease from 2011 to 2015 (0.155 million to 0.140 million), followed by a gradual increase to date. From this, it is clear that the trend of tourist arrival in Bangladesh is increasing. The home countries and host communities usually enjoy huge economic benefits from tourism activity (SESRIC 2008). In the case of developing countries like Bangladesh, a key benefit of becoming a tourist destination is the resulting economic development as a result of the foreign exchange earnings and increasing business and employment opportunities. Almost all the countries of

the world have benefited from the recent growth in international tourism, particularly in tourist population and revenues, with significant improvements in their social, cultural, environmental, and economic affairs. Only a few international tourists see Bangladesh as a suitable holiday destination. Most visits to Bangladesh are strictly for business, as evident in the increasing numbers of international ship crews, students, and missionaries. Leisure and vacation only come after business on the list of top reasons for visiting Bangladesh (Oo 2008). The most common representation of international tourism is a rising tendency for tourists to check new destinations, alongside the diversification of tourism products and rising competition. Hence, there is a trend of rapidly developing new tourism destinations and ensuring their relevance in the world market. Despite the absolute increase in international tourist arrivals in Bangladesh, the trend has been far from regular, with negative growth rates observed in some years (Ishtiaque 2013). There is also a corresponding increase in the generation of the international tourism receipts (Fig. 1), from just 25 US million dollars in 1995 to 375 US million dollars in 2018. Right from the establishment of the tourism industry, Bangladesh has strived to attract more tourists to its destinations and position the industry to deliver more foreign currency. Statistics obtainable from the industry reveal that tourist arrivals and earnings in Bangladesh have been on the rise.



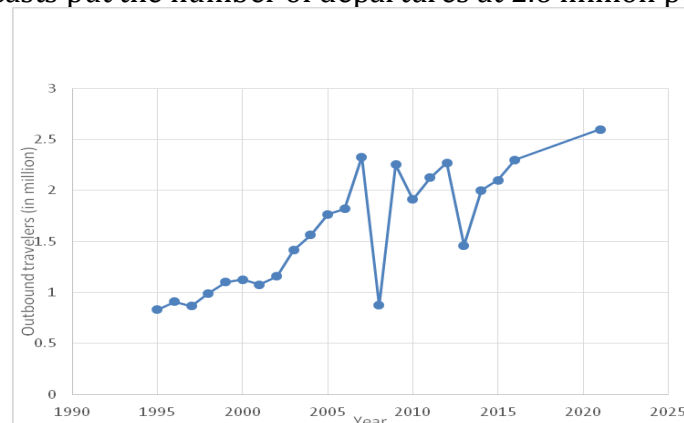
**Fig. 1. Bangladesh's international tourism receipt (in USD million) and tourist arrival trends.**

As a directly measurable activity, tourism gives room for more accurate analyses and more effective policies. Before now, the approximations from related areas of measurement, such as Balance of Payments statistics, drive the sector. However, these have now been replaced by instruments that can monitor the productive activities and the consumers that drive them, i.e., the tourists and excursionists. More countries are expanding and investing in tourism development. The industry drives the socio-economic efforts of these countries by boosting export revenues, creating more jobs and businesses, and developing infrastructures. Tourism,



as a service, thrives in the international market, with inbound tourism joining the list of the major trade categories of the world. Developing countries, on the other hand, consider tourism as a key foreign exchange income source and a crucial aspect of exports, capable of delivering more employment and development opportunities.

Tourism is either international or domestic. The former comprises two segments – outbound or departures tourism and inbound or arrival tourism. The outbound and inbound tourists' data shows the number of departures and arrivals and not the number of travelers. Statistical information on tourism primarily comes from the data on arrivals and overnight stays, and sometimes, the balance of payments information. Therefore, it is impossible to assess tourism as an economic phenomenon or access the information required for creating efficient business operations and effective public policies. To do this, there is a need for data on the significance and scale of tourism. Also, there is no adequate information on the expected impacts of tourism on national economies. Despite the reported progress of the World Tourism Organization in reconciling the measurement and definitions, the lack of common ground in national practices has made full comparability elusive. Departures data represent the flows of resident visitors leaving the country in question, and not the same as the number of arrivals documented by international destinations for the country in question. The common method of establishing visitors and trip characteristics is via the questions asked during border surveys, accommodation surveys, household surveys (in the case of outbound and domestic tourism), and on the entry/departure cards. The flows of inbound and outbound visitors are primarily obtained from the entry/departure cards, or the entry and departure records documented and reconciled by the immigration authorities. The cards follow a census-based method of collection, collecting information like name, age, sex, nationality, current address, date of arrival/departure. Other information of interest includes purpose(s) of the trip, the main destination visited and length of stay – expected on departure and actual in arrival for outbound visitors, or expected on arrival and actual on departure for inbound visitors. The three methods of data collection include observations from household surveys, considering that they are from resident households; border surveys; and using entry/departure cards. Either one or various combinations of these methods are used to get results. In the case of household surveys, the outbound trips information is documented at the same time as domestic trips. According to Fig. 2, the number of departures reported in 1995 was 0.83 million – a number that consistently increased to 2.327 million in 2007. A drop was recorded in 2008 (to 0.875 million), but since then, there has been an increase to date. Predictions and forecasts put the number of departures at 2.6 million people by 2021.

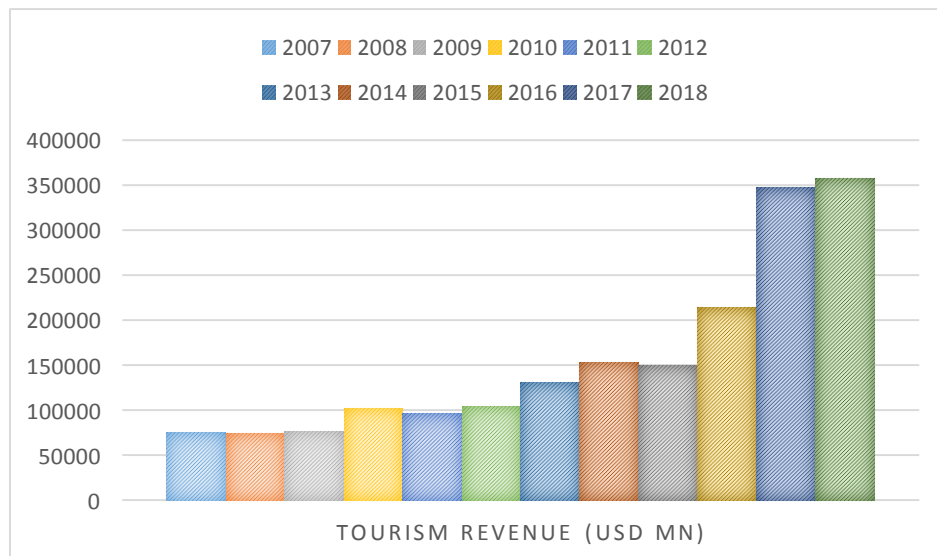


(Data source: BPC & Statista 2020)

**Fig 2. Outbound travelers' trends and predictions from 1995 to 2021.**

### Tourism for economic growth

The increasing number of sizable disposable income earners, over the last decade, shows that Bangladesh's economy is growing. However, the growth rate is the same as that of the tourism sector. Despite the relatively smaller number of foreign tourists, Bangladesh boasts of millions of domestic tourists who go on frequent vacations. The tourism revenue of Bangladesh increased from 348 USD mn in 2017 to an all-time record high of 357 USD mn in December 2018 (Fig. 3). The lowest revenue recorded in Bangladesh's tourism sector was 25 USD mn in December 1995. Fig. 3 shows a gradual increasing trend in revenue, and subsequently, a booming tourism industry. The revenue from the tourism industry has contributed significantly to the country's overall growth.



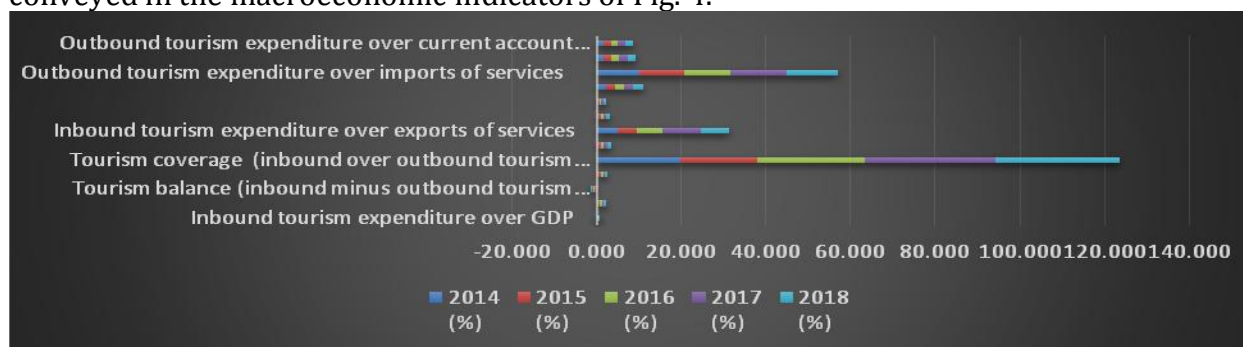
(Data source: CEIC 2018 & BBS 2018)

**Fig. 3. Bangladesh's tourism revenue from 2007 to 2018.**

Tourism is considered as one of the biggest industries globally, considering its immense contributions to economic growth. There are several sectors in the industry, including entertainment, leisure activities, transport, hospitality and tour operations, among others. This fragmentation facilitates its indirect and direct contribution to job and income creation in other industries. Despite the continuous influx of the hospitality and global tourism industry, the influence of economic and political events like the Middle East conflicts, the stunted economic growth in Asia, and the European sovereign debt crises, has removed any iota of certainty left in both new and developed global markets. The resulting uncertainty has led to a corresponding rise in demand. The economic influence of the tourism industry is huge in many countries of the world, especially its direct and indirect impacts on employment and other economic activities. Macroeconomic indicators are employed in assessing how a state is faring economically in any specific space of the economy – trade, market, industry, or others. The statistics from these indicators are periodically released by the government, a development that usually results in market volatility. The degree of volatility depends on how important the indicator in question is.

Other aspects of the economy where the tourism industry has been a major contributor is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment – two essential macroeconomic indicators. The labor-intensive nature of the industry means that there are opportunities for both unskilled and skilled workers. Hence, the tourism industry is responsible for the creation of a

large number of employment opportunities. Also, the industry has produced considerable amounts of foreign exchange earnings, especially through foreign tourist arrivals. Some of the macroeconomic indicators linked with international tourism in Bangladesh are shown in Fig. 4. The data covers trends between 2014 and 2018, with an increase observed in all the macroeconomic indicators listed. This further confirms that the Bangladesh tourism industry has continued to grow. Among other things, the Bangladesh Tourism Vision 2020 will critically review the past tourism plans and policies, while proffering actionable steps to arrive at a possible 1.3 million visitor influx by 2020, as opposed to the 0.5 million visitors predicted by the UNWTO forecasted visitor trends. The implementation of these steps is conveyed in the macroeconomic indicators of Fig. 4.



(Source: UNWTO 2019)

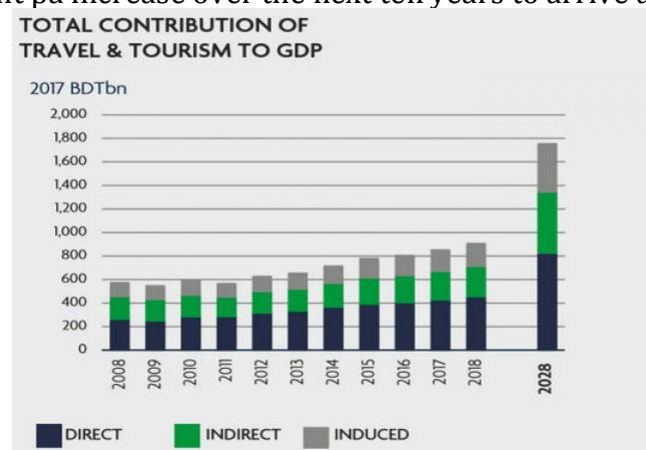
**Fig 4. International tourism's macroeconomic indicators.**

For more than two decades, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has consistently offered evidence measuring the employment and economic impact of Travel and Tourism on various countries. From the data in Fig. 5 and Table 1, it is clear that the travel and tourism industry has made healthy contributions to the economy of Bangladesh. The data also predicted improved contributions in the future. The 2018 research of the WTTC revealed that Bangladesh's tourism sector is on a growth trend, with increasing contributions to the economy. These findings, alongside the projection up to 2028, validate the potentials of the travel and tourism sector to champion the economic development of Bangladesh. Even with little or no help from the government, the tourism sector has made significant progress, making healthy contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). These contributions are expected to improve in the future. As of 2017, the Travel and Tourism sector contributed BDT 427.5 bn to the GDP, representing 2.2 percent of the overall GDP. A by 6.1 percent increase to BDT 453.5 bn was forecasted for 2018. These contributions are individual economic activities recorded from fragment industries like hotels, airlines and other passenger transportation services without commuter services and travel agents. Other fragments include activities of the leisure and restaurant industries, which rely on direct support from tourists. By 2028, the Travel and Tourism industry's direct contribution to the economy is expected to rise by 6.2 percent pa to BDT to BDT 824.0 bn, representing 2.1 percent of the GDP. In 2017, the contribution by the same sector stood at BDT 850.7bn, after factoring in the wider induced income, supply chain, and investment impacts, representing a 4.3 percent of the GDP. This is expected to increase by 6.8 percent pa to BDT 1,753.1 bn in 2028, representing 4.6 percent of the GDP. In the same year 2017, 1,178,500 direct jobs came from the travel and tourism industry, representing 1.8 percent of the total employment opportunities created for the year. This was expected to undergo a 3.0 percent growth in 2018 and increase to 1,214,000 direct jobs, representing 1.9 percent total employment opportunities for the year. These job opportunities include contributions from travel agents, hotels, airlines, and other passenger



transportation services, without commuter services. The statistics also factor in the activities of the leisure and restaurant industries, which rely on direct support from tourists. The travel and tourism industry is forecasted to be responsible for 1,648,000 direct jobs by 2028, indicating an increase of 3.1 percent pa. The overall contribution of Travel and Tourism to employment in 2017 was 2,432,000 jobs, representing 2.8 percent of total employment for the year, after factoring in the wider induced income, supply chain, and investment impacts. This was expected to increase by 2.5 percent in the following year (2018) to 2,492,500 jobs, representing a 3.8 percent of total employment opportunities for the year, and finally undergo 2.7 percent increase over the following ten years to leave the number at 3,244,000 jobs, representing 4.2 percent of the total employment opportunities for the year by 2028. The direct contribution of Travel and Tourism is influenced by visitor exports. The country generated BDT 18.4bn in visitor exports for 2017. The international tourist arrivals population is expected to rise to 293,000 by 2020. This will, in turn, produce BDT 35.8bn, representing a 6.2 percent pa increase. The capital investment of the travel and tourism industry stood at BDT 83.0 bn in 2017, with a forecasted increase to BDT 161.8 bn by 2028. The Travel and Tourism industry contributed 1.4 percent of the total national investment in 2018, with a forecasted increase to 1.5 percent by 2028.

About 85.2 percent of the direct Travel and Tourism GDP in 2017, i.e., BDT 596.9bn, came from both the domestic and inbound leisure travel spending, with just 14.9 percent amounting to BDT 104.1 bn coming from business travel spending. The leisure travel spending is forecasted to increase by 6.2 percent pa to BDT 1,161.5 bn in 2028. Similarly, the business travel spending is expected to undergo a 6.1 percent increase in 2018 to arrive at BDT 110.5 bn and then undergo a 5.4 percent pa increase in the next ten years to arrive at BDT 186.3 bn by 2028. Up to 97.4 percent of direct Travel and Tourism GDP in 2017 was sourced from domestic travel spending. Similarly, the visitor exports, including international tourism or foreign visitor spending, offered 2.6 percent. The expected growth of domestic travel spending was 6.3 percent in 2018 or BDT 725.9 bn. This is forecasted to undergo a 6.1 percent pa increase over the following ten years to arrive at BDT 311.9bn by 2028. Furthermore, the visitor exports value was to grow by 6.3 percent to BDT 19.5bn in 2018, and a forecasted 6.2 percent pa increase over the next ten years to arrive at BDT 35.8 bn in 2028.



(Source: WTTC 2019)

**Fig. 5. Total contribution of travel and tourism to Bangladesh's GDP.**

**Table 1. Forecasted contribution of travel and tourism to GDP up to 2028**

Bangladesh	2017	2017	2018	2028		
	USDmn	% of total	Growth	USDmn	% of total	Growth
Direct contribution to GDP	5310.4	2.2	6.1	10235.7	2.1	6.2
Total contribution to GDP	10567.4	4.3	6.4	21777.6	4.6	6.8
Direct contribution to employment	1178	1.8	3.0	1648	2.1	3.1
Total contribution to employment	2432	3.8	2.5	3244	4.2	2.7
Capital investment	1031	1.4	8.0	2009.7	1.5	6.1
Domestic spending	8479.2	3.5	6.3	16297	3.4	6.1
Visitor exports	228.5	0.6	6.3	444.9	0.7	6.2
Business spending	1293	0.3	6.1	2314.3	0.3	5.4
Leisure spending	7418.8	1.9	6.4	14428	1.8	6.2

(Source: WTTC 2019)

Tourism, particularly, ecotourism significantly contributes to both the social and economic aspects of life, especially in rural citizens and areas. Among other things, ecotourism offers job opportunities to rural people, alongside other benefits like housekeeping and care-giving to tourists. The direct results of thriving ecotourism in any area include infrastructure development, improved standard of living, and poverty reduction. Local people can also start various forms of local businesses to earn some money.

### Major tourist attraction spots in Bangladesh

There are several tourist attractions in Bangladesh, including different species of wildlife, forests and tribal people, picnic spots, beaches, resorts, and historical monuments (Table 2). The northern part of Bangladesh is dominated by the Rajshahi division, which is home to several archaeological sites such as the largest and oldest archaeological site in Bangladesh, the Mahasthangarh in Bogura; the temple city Puthia in Rajshahi; and the Paharpur in Naogaon, which is the individual largest Buddhist monastery. Others include the Kantaji Temple, the most ornamental terracotta Hindu temple, as well as several palaces of old zamindars and a couple of rajbaris. The south-eastern part of Bangladesh is the Chittagong Division. This area is naturally hilly; hence, it plays host to the Chittagong Hill Tracts and a couple of sandy sea beaches. Cox's Bazar is arguably the most popular beach in the area and is one of the longest unbroken sandy sea beaches in the world. However, there is no natural unbroken sea beach that is longer than the Cox's Bazar worldwide. The north-eastern part of Bangladesh is the Sylhet Division, which is famous for the green carpet of tea plants on small hillocks. There are also beautiful natural reserved forests, with an attractive army of migratory birds gracing the area in the winter. Lastly, the south-western part of Bangladesh is the Khulna Division. This is where the Sundarban is located – the world's largest mangrove forest, which plays host to the royal spotted deer and Bengal tiger. There is also the sixty-domed Bagerhat mosque, a famous and historic architectural masterpiece.

**Table 2. Major tourist attraction spots in Bangladesh**

District	Tourist attractions	Source
Dhaka	The Armenian Church, the Star Mosque, the National Memorial at Savar, the Central Shadeed Minar, Curzon Hall at the heart of the University of Dhaka, the National Museum, the Baldah Gardens, the National Botanical Garden, the National Zoo, the oldest capital of Bengal– Sonargaon	Khondkar & Anis (2014)
Chittagong	Harbor and port; Neval beach; Patenga Beach and hills; Karnaphuli River; Foy's Lake; Boga Lake; Vatiary Lake; Batali Hill; Chittagong Zoo; Dulahazra Safari Park; Butterfly Park Bangladesh; the shrine of Bayazid Bostami; the beautiful Chandanpura Mosque; Adher Manik Shanti Niketan Buddhist Monastery; Chatteshwari Kali Temple; Kaibalyadham Ram Thakur Ashram;	Khondkar & Anis (2014)

District	Tourist attractions	Source
	Zia Memorial Museum; Ethnological Museum; and Chittagong Commonwealth War Cemetery. Sitakunda, a holy place for Hindu pilgrims	
Cox's Bazar	Laboni beach, Kolatoli beach, Inani beach, Hinchari, Ramu, Aggmeda Khyang Monastery, Sonadia island, Maheshkhali, St. Martin's Island, Dulhazra Safari Park	Alam (2018)
Bogura	The 3rd century BC Buddhist monastery, which is still one of the largest to be discovered in Bangladesh.	Khondkar & Anis (2014)
Faridpur	Mathurapur Deul at Madhukhali Thana which is noted for highly ornate terracotta; rivers Padma, Modhumoti, Chandana, etc.; Majlis Awlia Mosque or Dighir Par Mosque; Jagodbondhu Sree Angon with Nat Mondir, The Roth, and Nouka Mondir; House of Poet Jasimuddin; the Mausoleum of Bongobondhu at Tungipara.	Khondkar & Anis (2014)
Dinajpur	Kantaji Temple and the Ramsagor Lake	Khondkar & Anis (2014)
Naogaon	Paharpur Buddhist Bihar	Khondkar & Anis (2014)
Khulna	Sundarban	Khondkar & Anis (2014)
Kuakata	Sea beach, tribal Rakhaines, their simple life-style, and century old Buddhist monasteries	Khondkar & Anis (2014)
Rangamati	Hills and tribal population, Kaptai Lake - the largest man-made lake in the sub-continent, the Parjatan Hanging Bridge, and Shuvolong Waterfalls	Khondkar & Anis (2014), Afroz & Mahmud (2017)
Khagrachari	Sajek, Alutila Cave, Richhang Falls, and the Hanging Bridge	Khondkar & Anis (2014), Afroz & Mahmud (2017)
Bandarban	Beautiful hills and valleys, It is the home of the Bohmong chief who is the Head of the Mogh tribe, Buddha Dhatu Jadi temple, Tahjindong, Mowdok Mual, and Keokradong picks, Raikhiang Lake, the highest lake in Bangladesh. Chimbuk peak, Boga Lake, and Sangu River are also highly noted features of the district	Khondkar & Anis (2014), Afroz & Mahmud (2017)
Sylhet	Bisnakandi, Ratargul swamp forest, Hakalukihaor	Afroz & Mahmud (2017)
Maulvibazar	Lawachara National Park, Madhabkunda ecopark	Afroz & Mahmud (2017)

(Data source: CEIC 2018 & BBS 2018)

### Challenges faced by developing tourism in Bangladesh

Despite the clear potentials of Bangladesh becoming a widely-accepted tourist destination, the country faces several challenges in fulfilling these potentials. The Bangladesh government is doing little or nothing to collaborate with the private and public organizations to help the tourism industry thrive in the country (Afroz and Mahmud 2017). Tourists can only move around conveniently if there are tourist-centered transportation systems in place. Most regions in Bangladesh lack these systems. The inability of the country to meet up with these international standards will deprive her of considerable amounts of foreign exchange (Reza

et al. 2009). Bangladesh has no efficient training institution that focuses on tourism. Although there are seldom training, seminar, and programs organized by the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and similar training institutions in Dhaka, there is still the need for more district-wise training programs (Khondkar and Anis 2014).

The remote locations of most tourist spots mean they are far away from standard medical services, telecommunication facilities, internet connections, hospitality services, and hygiene/sanitary services. This impairs the survival and convenience of both domestic and foreign tourists (Afroz and Hassanuzzaman 2012). Several potential tourists in Bangladesh are still relatively unknown and unexplored. This is due to the absence of adequate information, which is also needed for the development of adequate infrastructural systems (Reza et al. 2009).

Tourism development is a futile effort without adequate safety and security. Tourists will not visit even the best tourist spots if they feel insecure or are at the risk of abductions or robbery. While the Bangladesh army and district police administration offer tourist security in Bandarban, it is not enough to protect tourists. The security efforts of locals, if integrated into the system, will improve tourists' security and ultimately boost tourist development (Khondkar and Anis 2014). Without taking anything away from the commitment and efforts of the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, since its establishment in 1972, more needs to be done to put Bangladesh on the global map as a tourism-oriented country. The corporation must formulate a sustainable tourism policy that integrates key players in the industry, including restaurants, motels, and hotels. Such policies must also maintain conservation, respect tribes and cultures, follow current tourist trends, and market identification (Alam 2018). One of the ways to maintain the relevance of Bangladesh as a tourist spot is for the government to sensitize locals on the need to preserve the natural beauty of the country. Likewise, tourists, tour operators, and local communities must be educated and sensitized as well (Afroz and Hassanuzzaman 2012).

### **Recommendations on how to improve Bangladesh's tourism sector**

Considering the challenges described above, some recommendations are made to complement Bangladesh's efforts towards the development of the tourism industry. Adequate planning should be made by the government to create proper transportation infrastructures in Bangladesh's tourist spots. The concerted efforts of both the public and private sectors are needed to develop various tourist spots across the country. A formidable collaboration of the government and stakeholders is required to develop a long-term vision for the development of the ecotourism sector as a notable global tourism destination. The organization of adequate tourism-based training programs is imperative that will develop human resources for local people. Sensitization and education of the local people to preserve nature. The sensitization of the various tribes and locals living in cities and villages housing the tourist spots is crucial to harmonize their cultural differences, languages, and values, to ensure peaceful co-existence. The proper maintenance and upgrade of the tourist spots, with the introduction of fun and relaxation elements, as well as the provision of relevant, informative, and accurate information on these spots to the visiting tourists is very much essential to improve Bangladesh's tourism sector.

### **5. Conclusion**

Tourism brings a wide range of benefits to the table, including poverty alleviation, more employment opportunities, and the maintenance of ecological balance. The Bangladesh government recently saw the economic and social potentials of tourism. The development of

tourism in Bangladesh comes with a corresponding growth in several key sectors, including tour operations, retail establishments, caterers, car rental firms, restaurants and hotels, shipping, finance companies, and airlines, among others. This combined development, in turn, significantly boost the overall development of the economy of the country, alongside its cultural adaptation and diversification. While tourism is yet to become a key contributor to the economy of Bangladesh, it has shown enormous growth potentials and capabilities to drive the national economy in the years to come. However, this depends on how organized and structured the development of the industry is, especially in ensuring that it is widely accepted among both local and foreign tourists. To achieve this, Bangladesh must develop and adopt a more creative and holistic approach. The government, alongside its key ministries, investment promotion agencies, and the national chamber of commerce, must collaborate to make this happen. However, in the long run, the success of these plans and collaborations depends on the willingness and readiness of all Bangladeshi to make their country a successful and highly sought-after global tourist destination.

## References

- Afroz, N. N., & Hasanuzzaman, M. (2012). Problems and prospects of tourism in Bangladesh Bandarban district case. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 12(23), 1-9.
- Afroz, N., & Mahmud, M. S. (2017). Analyzing The Problem and Prospects of Ecotourism: A Review on Bangladesh. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 19(5), 59-65.
- Alam, G. M., Hoque, K. E., Khalifa, M. T. B., Siraj, S. B., & Ghani, M. F. B. A. (2009). The role of agriculture education and training on agriculture economics and national development of Bangladesh. *Afr. J. Agric. Res*, 4(12), 1334-1350.
- Alam, J. (2018). Problems and Prospects of Tourism Industry in Bangladesh: A Case of Cox's bazar Tourist Spots. *International Journal of Science and Business*, 2(4), 568-579.
- Ali, M. M. and Parvin, R. (2013). Management of Inbound Tourists for Economic Benefits: The Case of Bangladesh Business Review: Volume 09. Number 01 & 02, January to December. 2013. pp. 22-35, Business Administration Discipline. Khulna University, Khulna-9208 (ISSN 1811-3788)
- Amin, S. B., Murshed, M., & Rahman, S. (2017, February 8). Role of Rural Tourism Development in Bangladesh Economy, *The Daily Sun*, retrieved from: <https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/204066/Role-of-Rural-Tourism-Development-in-Bangladesh-Economy>.
- Bangladesh Economic Review (BER). (2019). *Macroeconomic situation*, P.1-30, Dhaka: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Retrieved from: <https://mof.portal.gov.bd/site/page/28ba57f5-59ff-4426-970a-bf014242179e/Bangladesh-Economic-Review>
- BBS. (2018). *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbs.gov.bd/site/page/29855dc1-f2b4-4dc0-9073-f692361112da/Statistical-Yearbook>
- Bhuiyan, A. H., & Darda, A. (2018). Prospects and Potentials of Halal Tourism Development in Bangladesh. *Journal of Tourismology*, 4(2), 93-106.
- Bhuiyan, M. A. H. (January 22, 2016). Introducing halal tourism in Bangladesh. *The Daily Observer*. Retrieved from: <http://www.observerbd.com/2016/01/22/132273.php>
- BPC. (2020). Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation. Retrieved from: <http://www.parjatan.gov.bd/>
- CEIC. (2018). *CEIC: Global Economic Data, Indicators, Charts & Forecasts*. Retrieved from: <https://info.ceicdata.com/api-and-data-feed-solution>
- Hasibuzzaman, A. S. M., Islam, A. A., Miah, M. G., & Hasan, M. (2020). Phylogeographic diversity and population structure of *Carica papaya* L. revealed through nuclear microsatellites. *Brazilian Journal of Botany*, 1-8.
- Hossain, B., & Wadood, S. N. (2020). Potential Unexplored? Tourism and Economic Growth of Bangladesh. *Journal of Tourismology*, 6(1).
- Howe, E. A., Sinha, R., Schlauch, D., & Quackenbush, J. (2011). RNA-Seq analysis in MeV. *Bioinformatics*, 27(22), 3209-3210.
- Ishtiaque, A. N. A. (2013). Tourism Vision 2020: A Case of Bangladesh Tourism with Special Emphasis on International Tourist Arrivals and Tourism Receipts. *Journal of Business*, 34(2).
- Islam, M. S., Rakib, M. A., & Adnan, A. (2016). Ready-made garments sector of Bangladesh: Its contribution and challenges towards development. *Stud*, 5(2).



- Islam, S. M. (2015). Study on Factors Influencing Tourism: Way Forward for Sustainable Tourism in Bangladesh. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Sports* ISSN 2312-5187 Vol.6, 2015
- Jahan, N. and Amin, M. R. (2014). Sustainable Tourism Development in Bangladesh: An Empirical Study on Sylhet. *Journal of Business Studies*, XXXV (2).
- Kabir, M. A., Jahan, K., Adnan, M. N., & Khan, N. (2012). Business model of e-tourism for developing countries. *International Journal of Computer and Information Technology*, 3(1), 30-34.
- Khondkar, M., & Anis, A. (2014). Bangladesh as an ecotourism destination. *DUJ Mark*, 17.
- Kobra, M. K., Bhuiyan, K. H., & Zayed, N. M. (2018). Well and woes of tourism promotion in Bangladesh: Investment perspective. *Academy of Accounting and Financial Studies Journal*, 22(3). 1-8.
- Oo, A. K. (2008). BIMSTEC-Japan Cooperation in Tourism Development: Myanmar Perspective. *CSIRD, India*.
- Pike, S. (2002). Destination image analysis—a review of 142 papers from 1973 to 2000. *Tourism management*, 23(5), 541-549.
- Reza, S., Ahmed, M., & Rehunuma, M. (2009). Opportunities and Challenges of Eco-tourism Marketing in Bangladesh. <https://bea-bd.org/site/images/pdf/new17/96.pdf>
- Salama. (December 15, 2016). Turkey launches first “halal cruise”. *Halal Focus*. Retrieved from <http://halalfocus.net/turkey-launches-first-halal-cruise/>
- SESRIC (2008), International Tourism in the OIC Countries– Prospects and Challenges, Statistical Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries, Organization for Islamic Conference (OIC).
- Shamsuddoha, M., & Nasir, T. (2011). Eco-tourism: A descriptive study on Sitakunda Ecopark in Chittagong division of Bangladesh. *International J. Educational Res. and Tech*, 2(1): 8-13.
- Shoeb-Ur-Rahman, M., & Shahid, R. B. (2012). A growing dilemma of tourism diffusion and sustainability: wows and woes for Bangladesh eco-tourism! *UTMS Journal of Economics*, 3(1): 57.
- Statista. (2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/726873/number-of-outbound-travelers-bangladesh/>
- Sultana, S. (2016). Economic contribution of tourism industry in Bangladesh. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Sports*, 22, 55-54.
- UNWTO. (2016). UNWTO Annual Report. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwto.org/archive/global/publication/unwto-annual-report-2016>
- UNWTO. (2019). UNWTO Annual Report. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwto.org/archive/global/publication/unwto-annual-report-2019>
- World Atlas (October 14, 2018). Countries with the largest Muslim populations. Retrieved from <http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-the-largest-muslim-populations.html>
- WTO. (2001), Tourism 2020 Vision: Middle East, Volume 5, World Tourism Organization, Madrid, p. 10.
- WTTC. (2019). World Travel & Tourism Council. Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2019, Bangladesh. Retrieved from: <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/regions-2019/world2019.pdf>

### Cite this article:

**Shegufta Haseen Chowdhury (2020).** Tourism in Bangladesh: Highlighting the Development Trend. *International Journal of Science and Business*, 4(5), 23-36. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3760204>

Retrieved from <http://ijsab.com/wp-content/uploads/527.pdf>

## Published by

