

## An exposition of career projections of tourism and hospitality in Bangladesh

Mariyam Akhter Siju

Lecturer, Department of Tourism & Hospitality Management, Faculty of Business and Industrial Management, European University of Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh

### Abstract

The growing need for relaxation travel and incredible tourism and hospitality development in Bangladesh has dictated a high level of human resource management in order to fulfill the current demand. The tourism and hospitality industry is on bloom and it can only go forward from there. The industry can employ competent staff or worthwhile personnel which are the core of outstanding and prompt service delivery system. Many graduate students of Tourism and Hospitality Management have yet to explore and rediscover their potentiality regarding the career prospects of the industry. In addition, many students of the program are still not fully aware of the paths which will unfold with the growth of this industry in the near future. Tourism and Hospitality generates varied employment prospects in diverse sectors like travel agencies, tour operators, hospitals, transportation services, airlines, accommodation, food and beverage establishments, and so on. This study focuses on the career opportunities and challenges of Tourism and Hospitality employment in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** tourism and hospitality; career prospects, tourism and hospitality career list; positive views, negative views

### Introduction

Tourism is travel for pleasure or business; also the theory and practice of touring, the business of attracting, accommodating, and entertaining tourists, and the business of operating tours<sup>[1]</sup>. Tourism may be international, or within the traveler's country. The World Tourism Organization defines tourism more generally, in terms which go "beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activities only", as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes"<sup>[2]</sup>. It is the assortment of activities, services and industries that deliver a travel experience including attractions, transportations, accommodations, eating and drinking establishments of retail shops, entertainment, business and other hospitality services provided for individuals or groups of travelling away from home. As an industry tourism is vibrant and competitive, and is recognized widely as one of the world's largest growing industry. The continuous expansion of new tourism products has led to an increased need for knowledge, flexibility and inspiration for the industry. On the other hand information technology has provided the consumer with tools to seek out special services and better value. At the same time, with the rapid growth, we can also expect some abnormalities which may affect the natural environment of a tourist attraction, and that is another path which demands extensive study and utmost significance<sup>[3]</sup>. As a result, the tourism industry continues to feed an ever-growing system of subsidiary services. Based on these, the need for well qualified and dedicated professionals to manage this rapidly growing industry is on the increase.

It should be noted that tourism and hospitality is a multi-dimensional industry that cuts other sectors like catering

services, transportation, travel agencies/airline operators, etc. It is extremely labor intensive and a significant source of employment<sup>[4]</sup>. It is among the world's top creators of jobs requiring varying degrees of skills and allows for quick entry into the workforce for youth, men and women. Thus, there is a very bright future for the graduates of this field.

Tourism and hospitality industry creates many employment opportunities in several areas like accommodations, transportation, attractions sites and so on. Therefore, the availability of skilled and trained manpower is a vital element in the achievement of any tourism development plan or program. However, the constraints of employment in tourism industry in our country are still unstable in blue collar community, low job status for majority, long antisocial working hours and low pay. The immediate and most obvious consequences of such a situation is the difficult recruitment procedures for appropriate staffing and high rate of turnover, which can be cost heavy and inefficient for the industry<sup>[5]</sup>.

Tourism and hospitality as a career is therefore designed to develop skills and provide training to the interested students to enable them handle tourism-related matters as well as to equip them for careers in Schools, Ministries, Embassies, Tourism Institutions, Tourism Corporations and Boards, Hotels and related areas<sup>[6]</sup>. This paper is also designed to respond to the need for tourism professional and prepare interested students at undergraduate level to enter different types of business organizations of this demanding industry. This paper will be a guideline for the students to develop a better understanding of the world around them.

The objectives of this study are

- To identify the career opportunities of Tourism and Hospitality in Bangladesh
- To investigate the challenges and barriers for different

career paths

- To find the possibilities of integration of passion with career
- To identify the people's perception of a career in The Tourism and Hospitality Industry.

### **Methodology of the study**

In order to fulfill the objectives data was taken from both the primary sources and secondary sources. The secondary data was collected from different reports, published articles related to employment opportunities and challenges of tourism and hospitality oriented organizations, websites of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Daily newspapers etc. Moreover, questions relating to employments in tourism and hospitality sectors and challenges and opportunities were identified. The study also incorporates some statistical data, reports and proceedings published by World Travel and Tourism Council, World Tourism Organization and other sites.

### **Literature Review**

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, travel and tourism accounts for 8% of the world's jobs and has the highest potential for growth of any industry. International travel alone accounts for more than 840 million tourists annually. The economic, social and environmental impact of tourism is significant and vital to creating sustainable jobs and quality of life. As a vast, dynamic and growing industry, hospitality and tourism provides tremendous opportunity for ambitious students who enjoy working with people. The hospitality and tourism industry operates in a highly competitive environment [7]. It is important that those seeking careers as successful professionals develop a strong business foundation and customer service skills. Graduates of hospitality and tourism management programs are well rounded with a combination of business and life skills that are in high demand with employers.

While hospitality and tourism has traditionally been an industry that emphasized hands-on experience, the competitive nature of the business now requires a combination of experience and higher education to build a successful management career [8]. To meet the needs of the industry, hospitality and tourism programs offered by colleges and universities have grown rapidly in Bangladesh. Today programs are offered by a variety of public and private institutions, colleges and both public and private universities. Options range from short-term skills-oriented certificates to post-graduate degree programs.

### **Present status of the tourism and hospitality management degrees in Bangladesh**

In recent years; the demand for Tourism and Hospitality Management as an educational hub has increased significantly in Bangladesh. Certificate courses in the various branches of the 'Tourism and Hospitality Management' discipline have been institutionalized in many renowned university all over the world. To catch up with the trend, lots of universities in Bangladesh also added Tourism and Hospitality Management in their arsenal. These programs were introduced by the

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation in the late '80s. After that, numerous privately owned educational institutes brought about similar 'Certificate Courses' and training programs; often in conjunction with more resourceful foreign institutes or universities. From the beginning of year 2000 these courses were invariably offered by public and private universities of Bangladesh such as Dhaka University, American International University-Bangladesh, Presidency University, IUBAT, Victoria University, People's University, IBAIS, Shanta Mariam etc in the banner of "Tourism and Hospitality Management". At present many new universities such as European University of Bangladesh, Primeasia University and Fareast International University also offer this program. Along with these universities, there are also three privately run institutions named Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management and Advanced Hotel Management Institute (AHMI) started offering various certificate and diploma courses in selected areas of hospitality management [9]. Many small institutions are situated in Dhaka which are giving quality education to the potential students in this field. The increasing demand for such organizations are a positive indication of the sustainability of tourism and hospitality sectors. Presently, fresh graduates of Tourism and Hospitality Management are joining in several universities and training institutions of this field. This is a positive sign of the sustainability of this industry. Additionally, the professionals of five star hotels in Dhaka and Bangladesh Parjatan Board also serve as adjunct faculties. Since public and private universities are offering relevant courses (e.g., diploma, undergraduates and post graduates), the graduates have minimum certifications but the opportunities for momentous skill development and practical experience is still inadequate in this sector.

The demands for these programs are driven by the expanding tourism and hospitality industry of Bangladesh as well as the employment and immigration opportunities that these qualifications can open up to the graduates. In the last five years a number of five star hotels such as Le Meridien Dhaka, Four Points by Sheraton, The Way Dhaka have been added to this field and have employed a large number of people including youth, men and women. Moreover, some big international chain hotels such as Intercontinental Dhaka, Novotel, JW Marriott, Courtward Marriott etc will start their operations in near future in the city of Dhaka. Domestic tourism is increasing throughout the country [9]. Sreemongal, Cox's Bazaar and Kuakata have received a lot of attention in the form of investment and media coverage. Heritage sites like Sundarbans, Rangamati and St. Martin's Island are more popular now to the domestic and international tourism travelers than any other time in the history of the country [10]. Numerous business pioneers are investing in eco-resorts, hotels and tourism programs privately. Skilled management and labor needed to serve this expanding sector can be supplied by the universities and institutes as they get more involved in capacity building by offering formal education and training.

### **Findings and Analysis of the study**

Owing to the continuous growth of this service-oriented, high-energy and productivity driven Tourism and Hospitality

industry, there is a high demand for skilled labor. The sector itself, according to experts in the field, will have difficulties finding enough qualified talent for the forecasted 80 million jobs yet to be generated over the next ten years according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). The WTTC predicted that by 2023, travel and tourism will directly generate 1,785,000 jobs and support an overall total of 3,891,000 jobs, or 4.2 percent of the country's total employment<sup>[11]</sup>. Hospitality and tourism career opportunities will abound not only in Bangladesh but also all around the world.

### **Tourism and Hospitality career list in Bangladesh**

#### **Tour Operators and Travel Agencies:**

At present Tour operators are specialized in creating holiday packages by combining various services and resources across carriers such as airline tickets, accommodation, rentals and sightseeing tours<sup>[12]</sup>. Typical tour operator jobs, involve working alongside travel consultants across various travel agencies in order to organize and sell leisure packages<sup>[13]</sup>. Depending on the travel agency, tour operators can offer services either in commercial or business travel while acting on behalf of other travel and leisure entities.

#### **Hotel Operations**

- 1. Banquet & Conferences:** At present the need for a banquet and conference facilities are increasing significantly. Today, banquets serve many purposes from training sessions, to formal business dinners. Business banquets are a popular way to strengthen bonds between businessmen and their stakeholders. It is common that a banquet is organized at the end of an academic conference. Therefore, a huge manpower demand also arises to serve this field<sup>[14]</sup>.
- 2. Food And Beverage Management:** Food and Beverage Management (F&B) is responsible for all things related to food and beverage from ordering products to hiring staff and balancing profit and loss sheets. The career requires exceptional social and analytical skills<sup>[15]</sup>. The ideal candidate is organized, calm under pressure, service oriented and business minded<sup>[14, 15]</sup>. Tourism and Hospitality Management program emphasis this field highly, and enthusiast graduates can join this field after completion of the study.
- 3. Front Office Reception:** From the very first moment of a guest's arrival, the front office serves as the face of the company and its standards of service. Knowledgeable not only about the products they offer, these individuals are friendly, customer service oriented and can give insights on the surround area. Every students of Tourism and Hospitality Management has to go through an elaborated course of Front Office Management as a part of their course curriculum<sup>[13]</sup>.
- 4. Restaurant Management:** A dynamic position leading a team of employees servicing food and beverage. A day in the life of a restaurant manager can go from monitoring guest satisfaction to controlling each and every services of restaurant. Also responsible for the overall function of the operation, inventory, ordering and budgeting often top the list of a manager's to-do list. Based on the size of the

operation the position can be customer service focused or more business based, handling all the marketing, schedules, and training<sup>[16]</sup>.

- 5. Spa and Wellness Management:** It is a specialized service offered by some hotels and resorts. A group of highly trained professionals in sophisticated way are responsible for the day-to-day operations of a health or beauty spa.
- 6. Housekeeping Operations:** Housekeeping deals with the hygiene and cleanliness of a hotel, hospital or resort and it is one of the most important operational departments of tourism sector<sup>[17]</sup>. Tourism and Hospitality Management offers an illustrative and practical course on housekeeping management.

#### **Event Management**

Tourism and Hospitality Management students can also join any event management firms. At modern era people want to organize any event like birthday, wedding, reception etc. through a renowned event management firm. This simplifies their effort and saves time for organizing the party<sup>[18]</sup>. It is a rewarding career for the right individual, making lasting memories.

#### **Airlines**

Joining airlines industry can be a dream job for the Tourism and Hospitality Management students. The job gives opportunity to jump on board and travel the world as a flight attendant. Manage the in-flight services taking care of food and beverage, duty free and other customer service requests. Although this service sector requires lots of other criteria, but the course offered in Tourism and Hospitality Management such as Aviation and Flight Management can certainly help the students and prepare them for more complex and comprehensive learning<sup>[17, 18]</sup>.

#### **Amusement Parks**

This can be an interesting field for the Tourism and Hospitality Management students. Although not yet fully understood in our country, but Amusement Parks all over the world are few of the greatest tourism attraction spots. In our country, such parks are operated by regular technical people whose job is to switch on and off and maintain different rides and equipments. But its more than that, when we follow renowned Amusement parks like Disneyland or Magic Kingdom, we are destined to find there are lots of careful planning and operations are going on inside, solely based on how to attract more tourists and serve them better. A new course can be introduced over this industry itself, still we have to put it up with some other unexplored potentiality. Although the basic business studies already refers to manage the overall operations as a member of the leadership team or be ready to welcome amusement park goers behind the desk selling tickets, supervising a food and beverage outlet or controlling the rides themselves<sup>[19]</sup>.

#### **Catering**

Although Catering is blended with Food service operation in terms of institutionalized course curriculum for Tourism and Hospitality Management, it has its own distinctive field which

can differentiate it from other Food services. In our country, we are still largely dependent on our traditional Caterers which are most often called a team of "Decorators" led by a chef also known as "Baburchi", we can actually integrate the international methods of catering with this system. After all, tourism doesn't necessarily indicates to adapt all the newer methods and replacing them over the traditional; always. We have seen many of those renowned "Baburchi" becoming famous Icons in the food industry of our country. At the same time, many youngsters also has the misconceptions that a caterer and a "Baburchi" is the same thing. A modern day caterer is much more than a chef, and this field is a mash up of sales, project management and food and beverage, this is a fun and vigorous career. Whether a chef creating the menu or a coordinator organizing the vendors, this position is constantly on-the-go fielding queries and giving instructions <sup>[20]</sup>. It is a great position incorporating sales with event planning.

### Consulting

A consultant can work for a firm or start his/her own business, this career requires a base of experience in order to advise the clients. Whether in hotels, restaurants or travel, becoming an expert in this trade will allow someone to give the soundest guidance.

### Positive views regarding the tourism and hospitality careers

- **Variety of career choices:** Due to the booming development of the tourism and hospitality industry, many new hotels and restaurants are opened for catering the needs of both the visitors and locals. It facilitates a huge demand of labor in the market.
- **Opportunities to meet people with different backgrounds:** The success of a hospitality service highly depends on the human contact between staff and customers. Having a chance to work in the industry, particularly in some front line positions means that there would be many opportunities for one to meet and communicate with people with different backgrounds and cultures. For example, a hotel receptionist can perceive his/her position as a tourist ambassador, which can be enjoyable and challenging. The job satisfaction through winning customers' smiles, as well as its' interactive nature make hospitality industry attractive to youngsters with an out-going character.
- **Long-Term Career Development:** It is common that most people have to start their careers from the entry-level. However, the career paths are always quite clear for employees and there are always opportunities for them to get promoted and proceed to management levels based on their experience and performance. Successful stories are numerous in this sector and someone starting from room attendant or receptionist can finally turn into the general manager of a hotel or the CEO of a company.
- **Fringe Benefits Enjoyed by Employees:** Different from other business and service operations, staff working in hotels and food service operations can usually enjoy some other benefits in addition to the basic salaries, annual bonus and insurance coverage. For example, hotel and restaurant staff are normally provided with 2 duty meals in

their work days. Some hotel staff are also allowed to enjoy a discount rate or associate rate for booking rooms, which can be even applied to hotel outlets under the same brand all over the world. Different fringe benefits are also available in every other wing of the industry.

### Negative views regarding the tourism and hospitality careers

- **Long and non-regular working hours:** Shift works are very common in food and beverage and accommodation sectors. Despite of morning and evening shifts, some positions require staff to work overnight, such as night auditors in the front desk and security officers. As there are no such things of public holidays, staff are always required to work on weekends or special days, such as Eid and other festivals and national days. Long working hours seem to be the implicit norm of many positions in the hospitality industry. Over-time works due to the shortage of labors and peak seasons of businesses are frequent to both operational staff and managers <sup>[13]</sup>. The concerns about the bad effects on one's health and family life lead to people's hesitation in joining the industry. Long working hours are also present in the tourism field. Most of the long tours are operated on the weekends and based on some vacations <sup>[14]</sup>.
- **Work under pressure:** In most situations, staff are expected to provide quick and high quality services without keeping their customers from waiting. The pressure of maintaining the service efficiency and consistency, especially in peak seasons could be tremendous <sup>[20]</sup>. The need for frequent communications with customers has especially created intense pressure to staff in front line positions. Receiving complaints or handling angry customers are resistances for people in starting their careers in this industry.
- **Low starting salary:** Tourism and Hospitality industry offers many relatively low-skilled entry level jobs. With the exceptions of management or positions which require fluency of languages or specific skills, staff with no experience generally have low starting salaries. The differences between large-scaled and small-scaled hotels or food service operations lead to further variations in staff salaries <sup>[21]</sup>.
- **Perceptions of low job status:** As mentioned above that many positions are low-skilled in the Tourism and Hospitality industry, some people would think their job status are relatively lower when compared with other industries, such as banking and finance. The misperceptions of being a servant to others in the Bangladeshi culture plus other negative views introduced above have also discouraged many graduates from joining the industry <sup>[17]</sup>.

### Recommendations

**Creating awareness:** Tourism and Hospitality industry has a huge employment opportunities, people of our country are not that much aware of the industry. Still some people think working in a hotel means working in a restaurant of their local areas. Many of them are not even aware of the difference between a hotel and a restaurant. They don't even know how

sophisticated a hotel or a restaurant can possibly be. To be honest, these misconceptions are still inherited by a major share of people in our society, and somehow they tend to hold on to those conceptions rather deeply and cannot integrate their thoughts with the better and brighter world<sup>[22]</sup>. Which is why many students still think working in a hotel will diminish their social status. This view must be changed by generating some awareness program that will reach the mass people. But the time will change eventually, since they are most likely the older generation of the society and will soon wither away along with their misconceptions<sup>[13]</sup>. At the same time, it is the time for the youth to take up the mantle and respect their job as well as make their job respectable in the process. Our country is still a bit behind on this, thankfully we are catching up at a satisfactory pace.

**Tourism fairs:** A tourism fair can reach a large number of people at a time. Thus the tourism and hospitality organizations can make people know about their existence in the country.

**Boost the sales of the industry:** No industry can survive, if the sales is not up to the mark. That is why we need to ensure that the business is going well by ensuring all the logistic and other support activities. Thus the industry will require more workers to fulfill the increasing demand and more work opportunities will be created in this sector.

**Lessen the working hours:** In Bangladesh, the working hours of the hospitality workers are too much long to maintain a good health. For example, a service manager may have to join work at 6:00 am and continue till late nights. If this happens for long time he/she may have severe health problem. On an average a hospitality staff has to work 13 to 14 hours a day. This actually demotivate people to join the industry. Thus the industry may not find perfect employees for some posts. If the working hours strictly can be monitored and controlled by the management this problem can be diminished.

**Paying incentives for working on special days:** As we know that Tourism and Hospitality workers need to work on special days like Eid, Christmas, Durga Puja and other national days. When the whole world enjoys holidays then the Tourism and Hospitality workers work to serve them and facilitate their holiday programs. If the workers who works during these days are paid some attractive incentives, they may not be demotivated towards working hard on special days.

**Work-life balance:** We work for our families. If we cannot spend time with families and cannot be with them when they need us, our work is worthless. Arranging some family days programs and maintainable working hours can give the employees the opportunity to maintain work-life balance.

## Conclusion

Tourism and Hospitality industry is one of the prominent part of the world economy. It plays a significant role on improving balance of payment and employment opportunities. Diversified career paths can improve the status quo of the people of a country and this industry is undoubtedly the most varied and numbered employment provider. The career prospects of all the graduates in this field should not be exaggerated, but can be complimented, since there are many people from other field of study who are needed in the industry as well. At the same time, it can be comprehended as

that this industry not only attract people from native field, but from the other fields as well, meaning it is an open hub for career for every students who have yet to discover their potential career path. Both the private and public sectors are good playing ground for tourism graduates. Their job opportunities range from government establishments to private-oriented outlets. Career opportunities from airlines, tour operators, travel agencies, hotels, to transportation sector require a large amount of manpower. It gives the enthusiastic students a gist of what the discipline is like as well as equipping students with basic information which is enough for them to find their right track.

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## Conflict of interest

The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

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