

## Branding Bandarban: Limitations and Opportunities

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**Abstract:** Bandarban in one of the main tourist's attraction of Bangladesh. It is bounded with natural beauty. The place has tremendous potentiality to provide hiking, tracking, kayaking experience to the people who search for expedition. As a consequence the place can be a heaven for those people who loves adventure, excitement with the touch of wild nature. At the same time the place provides peace of mind to those who love to enjoy the nature by just looking it. Though the place have all kind of resources to capture the attention of tourists from all the prospects still the revenue from tourism of bandarban is not up to the mark. This particular issue signifies that the number of travelers visiting different places of bandarban at a time is not rational. The main focus of this article is the problems related with the three major services, transportation, accommodation and safety that should be ensured with high quality to formulate any destination as a branded one. Possible recommendation about how this problem can be overcome without hampering the eco system of bandarban has been discussed. On the other hand how certain experiential or adventure activities that can facilitate in Bandarban to make it a more attractive destination brand has been recommended.

**Keywords:** Branding destination, Tourism, Accommodation, Transportation.

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### I. Introduction

Moonlight disappears down the hills, mountains vanish into fog and I vanish into poetry.

-Sanobor Khan, A thousands flamingos.

From the ancestry nature is the main nourishment for human minds. Monotonous life and ailment of mind can only be healed by nature. Whenever people need to bring peace to their mind travelling to different nature beauties is the main solution. However when one group of people needs to fulfill their psychological needs through travelling another group is in search of economic wellbeing of them by branding different tourists spots. It is very important to apprise people about the place where they can enjoy the nature at the fullest. At the same time the accessibility of those places and comfort level should be ensured.

Bandarban, one of the three hill tracks of Bangladesh is a dearest creation of nature. The district is situated in the south-eastern part of the country and falls under Chittagong division. The place is considered as one of the most attractive travel destination of Bangladesh. Along with that this is the remotest district of the country with least population around 292,900. The three highest peak of Bangladesh tajingdong, keokradong and Mowdok Mual are situated in Bandarban chimbuk, bogalake are another two Attractive features of the district. All over, the entire district is a place of heavenly beauty.

Every year during the peak season around 2000 tourists visits bandarban per day including both local and foreign people. However majority of the people who visits bandarban are civilians. The main reason behind it, is lack of promotion of the place. Like cox bazar, Shundorban bandarban also has huge prospective to attract tourists from all over the world. The place has tremendous potentiality to provide hiking, tracking, kayaking experience to the people who search for expedition. As a consequence the place can be a heaven for those people who love adventure, excitement with the touch of wild nature. At the same time the place provides peace of mind to those who love to enjoy the nature by just looking it

Though the place has all kind of resources to capture the attention of tourists from all the prospects still the revenue from tourism of bandarban is not up to the mark. Which means that the number of travelers visiting different places of bandarban at a time is not rational. This is a result of low infrastructural development around the district, minimum tourist's facilities, inefficient transportation system, safety issues, minimum accommodation quality and availability etc. In order to present Bandarban as one of the world class travel destination all this facilities with efficiency should be ensured at a time.

The main focus of this article is the problems related with the three major services, transportation, accommodation and safety that should be ensured with high quality to formulate any destination as a branded one. Possible recommendation about how this problems can be overcome without hampering the eco system of bandarban has been discussed. On the other hand how certain experiential or adventure activities that can facilitated in Bandarban to make it a more attractive destination brand has been recommended.

**II. Literature Review**

In recent years, the tourism destination has initiated to play an significant place in the tourism literature. Some authors (Leiper, 1995, Martini, 2001 and Pechlaner, 2000) that have studied the tourism destination from a demand perspective identify a destination as a set of products, services, natural and artificial attractions able to draw tourists to a specific place, where the geographical location is simply one of the factors that comprises a destination. Tamma (2001) and Brunetti (2001) define destination as a supply system correlated with a specific area. A few researches focus on consumer preferences and expectations from branded tourist destinations.

Keller (2000) explained that people often use region, district, area, and locality as synonyms together with the adjective tourism to mean tourism destination. All of the elements that shape a tourism destination are influenced by the role of companies’ attitudes and their willingness to co-operate (Fyall, Oakley, Weiss, 2000; de Araujo, Bramwell, 2002). Different places might present complex challenges for management and development in that they must serve a broad range of the tourist’s needs and the tourism-related businesses as well as the resident community, local businesses, and industries (Howie, 2003).

A large number of authors have given their significant contribution to the understanding and practical research of competitiveness of tourist destinations (De Keyser, Vanhove, 1994; Evans, Johnson, 1995; Pearce, 1997; Hassan, 2000; Kozak, 2001; Mihalic, 2000; Ritchie, Crouch, 1993; Thomas, Long, 2000; Alavi, Yasin, 2000; Enright, Newton, 2004; Ruhanen, 2007; Cracolici, Nijkamp, 2009).

**III. Methodology**

Qualitative case study method was applied as a preliminary analysis to acquire ground information on Cox Bazar. A survey was conducted over a sample size of 103 respondents. The survey questionnaire contained both open ended and close ended questions. Snow bowling sampling technique was used for the purpose of selection of respondents and random travelers were chosen. The secondary data utilized were gathered from multiple sources: reviewing documents (tourism promotional materials, printed documents, reports, and administrative data from public and private organizations), surfing internet websites (travel websites, journals, magazines and organizational websites), Content analysis method was used to analyze data.

**Exploratory Findings and Discussion**

**Scope of Improvement in Transportation**

A survey on the tourism of bandarban which includes 103 respondents projected that 59.4% people think that the roads are not convenient for travelers, 12.9% think that the transportation service is very poor and 17.1% (70 respondents) people don’t want to travel bandarban again just for the poor transportation system.

Form the responses it gives a clear view that the transportation system of bandarban is very vulnerable for communication. The only way to travel bandarban is by road. The road vehicles that are used to visit the tourists spot inside the district needed to have 4 wheeler engine capacity. But it is a matter of regret that availability of this type of transport are very low. Along with that the “chander gari” which is the main mean of transport inside the district are not able to ensured comfort and safety of the tourists. Sometimes during the peak season the vehicles carry people more than its capacity which tends to be very dangerous.

Bandarban is one of the most perilous hill track area in Bangladesh. Here the roads shapes are like Zigzag, sometimes it going uphill and sometimes downhill. For that reason to travel there it is must to have skillful driver. And that is why people prefer the local transport to travel there. In Bandar ban there are several package system for transportation like:

1. Bandar ban – Golden Temple – Meghla – Nilachol – Bandar ban,
2. Bandar ban – Milonchori – Shoilo Propat – Chimbuk – Nilgiri – Bandarba,
3. Bandar ban – Golden Temple – Meghla – Nilachol – Milonchori – Shoilo Propat – Chimbuk – Nilgiri – Bandar ban.
4. Bandarban – Ruma – Bogalake – Bandar ban.

And all of these packages costs are above 5000/- to 12000/- .Moreover if anyone want to stay there overnight then that will cost more than 2000/- , which is too high. According to our survey we came to know that middle class people are much more interested in traveling to Bandar ban. So for them it is beyond limit.

| Sl | Name of Tourist Spot        | Distance from Bandarban | Name of Upazila |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Meghla Parjatan, Meghla     | 4 Kilometer             | Bandarban Sadar |
| 2. | Nilachal, Tiger Para        | 4 Kilometer             | Bandarban Sadar |
| 3. | Shoila Propat, Chimbuk Road | 8 Kilometer             | Bandarban Sadar |
| 4. | Prantik Lake, Holudia       | 14 Kilometer            | Bandarban Sadar |
| 5. | Chimbuk, Thanchi Road       | 26 Kilometer            | Bandarban Sadar |

|     |                                 |               |                 |
|-----|---------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 6.  | Boga Lake, Ruma                 | 69 Kilometer  | Ruma            |
| 7.  | Keokradong, Ruma                | 84 Kilometer  | Ruma            |
| 8.  | Tahjindong, Ruma                | 79 Kilometer  | Ruma            |
| 9.  | Shangu River, Bandarban         | 00 Kilometer  | Bandarban Sadar |
| 10. | Golden Temple, Balaghata        | 3 Kilometer   | Bandarban Sadar |
| 11. | Nilgiri, Thanchi                | 45 Kilometer  | Thanchi         |
| 12. | Mirinja Parjatan, Lama          | 82 Kilometer  | Lama            |
| 13. | Upabon Parjatan, Naikhong Chari | 110 Kilometer | Naikhong Chari  |

Figure 1: Tourists spots and there distance from Bandarban (Bandarban:heaven of Bangladesh, 2011)

Moreover if people don't take any packages and want to visit by local transport then that will also cost a huge amount. However there most of the available form of transportation is Rickshaw. And for going outside of the town they use three-wheeler taxis. And there is a rent car station near to the hotel Hill Bird. Another type of transportation is regular public transit system of ancient four-wheel-drive vehicles, which is locally known as "Chander Gari".

Furthermore the tourists spot are not nearest to the town, people have to go a long distance to visit any palce, and return back. So for that good transportation is like a basic need there. For example: Buddha Dhatu Jadi is located 3km away from town, and then people have to feet 60 meter to reach there. Shoilo Propat, Meghla and Nilachal is almost 4km away from town, in addition people cannot go there directly or by one transport they have to change their vehicle according to road which costs more. Chimbuk is one of the tallest peaks in Bangladesh and lies some 14 km from the town. Bawm villages around Chimbuk and Mru villages a little further off are also lie within a day's journey from the town. To travel their both the road and river transport is necessary. After that Boga Lake is almost 200ft away. Then to go there people might have to use several transports like bus, car, rickshaw, river cruise and bumpy jeep of Bandar ban which is called "chander gari" and then by walking to the desired destination of Boga Lake. And different typed of transportation demand different amount to reach the destination, and the driver of that car are so arrogant as they know that tourists have to go there and they won't refuse so they are like blackmailing people.

In addition, going so far away from the city it takes huge time as there is different transport for different area and people have to change that after a few while. Which just wasted time, like the "Praktan Lake" 14 km away from Bbandarban city, and "Tajindong", "keokaradong" people need to feet more than 1331ft to reach there. Overall the transportation system need nourishment to prepare bandarban presentable to all categories of people.

**Some recommendation:**

- Introducing cable car can enrich the system. It can include travel value as well. Though it is offered in meghla parjoton to a short range it can be used as one of the main transportation ways around Bandarban using cable car can be appropriate to travel nilachol to meghla, nilgiri to chimbuk, and ruma to Bogalake.
- Introducing toy train service can also be a good option. But one problem with this that it needs huge amount of infrastructural development. The service is possible to offer and through this the route of Bandar ban – Golden Temple – Meghla – Nilachol – Bandar ban, can be easily covered.
- Apart from this the availability of 4 wheelers should be increased.
- Training facilities on driving on the zigzag and hilly roads should be provides to the local drivers.
- The well skilled and trained drivers should be listed under the Bangladesh Porjoton Corporation who will provide service to the tourists.
- The transportation cost of visiting each spots on bandarban should be listed and provided in each and every spots and hotels.
- Tourists police increased to observe if any violation of rules regarding costs is occurring or not and to take instant steps.

**Scope of Security Improvement**

Safety is a major issue why bandarban tourism is not flourishing that much. Moreover, for safety issues foreigners have to go through a lot of formalities before travelling Bandarban to ensure safety for them. However government takes vary minimum interest to improve the situation. There are some common issues for which violations are occurring.

In a survey on bandarban tourism we asked 103 people the reasons behind the security issues in Bandarban 24.3% of them said that Lack of road lights around the places,30% said Lack of tourists police, 24.3% projects Conflicts between local and tribal people and 21.4% thinks that the Negligence of low enforcement committee are the main reasons .

It becomes clear that each and every point are equally important here. As it is a hilly area from the late evening places starts to get dark. Because of insufficient road lights criminals get the opportunity to rob the tourists. However kidnapping, hijacking are also some common problems. On the other hand the amount of tourist's police is very low and people do not get expected response from them. Sometimes the police themselves are indulged in corruption.

Conflict between tribal and civilians are one of the major security issues. Sometimes the conflicts become so acute that local government have to impose section 144 around the district. Strikes, road blocking, transportation halt are some of the common impacts of this issue. Apart from this some of the common safety requirement related to each spot of Bandarban in discussed here.

#### **NILGIRI:**

Since NILGIRI is the highest hill resort of Bangladesh, we all have desires to visit that place once in a lifetime at least and who have visited once desires to go there again and again. But alone with its beauty there are some safety issues that must be solved or necessary initiatives should be taken to keep this heavenly beauty unquestionable.

- First of all there are few boundary railings on the top of the hill beside the cottage area. Often tourists go there with their families including children. So, more boundary railings should be made considering the safety issues of children.
- There are only five cottages on the top of the hill that are also maintained by Bangladeshi Army. So there are no safety issues regarding accommodation. But more cottages should be built so that more tourists get the chance to enjoy the heavenly beauty of the immense nature.
- Electricity is available only from 6-9 pm. Electricity should be provided until dawn at least.
- The roads to reach the hill top are very narrow and in some places even broken. Anytime any kind unwanted accident can take place and create a huge issue regarding the poor infrastructure.
- There is barely any lamp post on those hilly roads. Sufficient amount of road lights and lamp post should be on that risky road to ensure safety while travelling.
- There are few police check box seen on the way to NILGIRI but that are only for the checking vehicles riding there. More police check box and control room should be established to ensure proper security to the tourists.

#### **NILACHOL:**

NILACHOL is often referred as the DARJELING of BANGLA. The whole Bandarban city can be seen at glance from NILACHOL hill top. It is one of those places in the world where cloud touches land. The fascinating natural beauty can get out of the list if some immediate initiatives are not taken by the authority.

- There is no resort to stay in order to enjoy the heavenly beauty. One round shape rest house is there only. That is also a local one so that gives the floor open to ask the question regarding safety and security.
- No restaurant or food is available there. Tourists need to bring the food on their own for the time being.
- Roads are so steep and narrow, yet no boundaries are there for protection.
- Only local jeep called " Chander gari " is allowed to ride that risky roads.

#### **BUDDHA DHATOJADI/GOLDEN TEMPLE:**

BUDDHA DHATOJADI locally called GOLDEN TEMPLE is the modern creation of architecture representing Buddhist cultural heritage. There are some undeniable safety issues regarding this beautiful creature that must be solved in no time.

- The temple is situated on the top of the hilly area so people need to take under-developed stare to reach there. Local people might not find any difficulties but tourists find it difficult. So necessary initiatives must be taken to provide safety for tourists.
- As it is a holy place for the Buddha, shoes are not allowed to take in. From the entrance gate of the temple people must take off their shoes. Sometimes shoes get lost as a result of lack of proper guarding. Locker facilities can be provided to reduce this problem.

#### **NAFA-KHUM:**

Nafa-khum is one of the charming tourists place in Bandarban In fact it is one of the largest waterfall in the country for its volume of water. Nafa-khum has not yet been become a popular tourist spot, as it very dangerous to reach except winter season. The major safety concern with Nafa-khum, located in very remote area

at Remkri under Thanchi upzila. It is very hard to communicate from Bandarban town to Nafa-khum because roads are very dangerous to travel. Tourists have to hire boat from Thanchi as there is no boat there and boats are not so safety and do not have adequate safety instruments for the travelers. Any accident may happen any time. Essentially this made Nafa-khum very unsafe journey.

#### **KEOKRADONG:**

It is one of the most visited and popular tourist's spot in Bandarban It is arguably the largest hill in the country located near to Myanmar border. It attracts mostly adventurous and courageous people to travel. There are numerous mountains and hill are standing beside Keokradong. Major safety issues are, transportation system is not well furnished. Tourists have to depend on Old and uncomfortable Zeeps which are risky. Medical facilities on the top of Keokradong are very meager for the travelers. Supplementary, cottage and resorts are not available there. Poor telecommunication system suffers tourists a lot.

#### **CHIMBOK HILL:**

Chimbok hill is the third largest and very fascinating areas for the sceneries of sun set and sun rise. You can easily see Bay of Bengal from there. Uncourtly Chimbook will fascinate tourists with its natural beauty. Roads are very narrow and Zigzag which is very risky to drive. For unknown driver it becomes harder to drive. Maximum road accident happens for these Zigzag roads. Telecommunication system is poor which a truly big concern.

#### **MIRINJA:**

It is a mostly visited tourist spot located at 16 km away from Fashiakhali-lama-Alikadam road of Bandarban in Bangladesh. Bay of Bengal can be seen from there. Unfortunately tourist cannot pass night without permission of local govt. authority and only one govt. rest house available there.

Overall the security service is very poor in Bandarban to improve the situation infrastructural development is very much needed. The whole district should be monitored by security cameras. Basic medical training should be provided to local people who are engaged in tourism sector. To reduce the conflict the central government should work with the local government. Without ensuring the safety for the travelers it is impossible to introduce quality tourism in Bandarban

#### **Scope of Improvement in Accommodation**

Bandarban has been recently so popular destination among the Bangladeshi tourists. As a result the number of hotel has been increasing for the last few years. Though the hotels are concentrated mainly in Bandarban Sadar, the number of hotel is increasing in Sub-districts like Ruma and Thanchi and other places as well, which are popular for some unique natural attractions. Main form of the accommodation facility in Bandarban followed by some co called guest houses and some resorts. Other than that there are some tribal people who sometimes give their houses at rent.

There remains a huge shortage of quality hotels during the peak seasons. 4 star hotels are really rare and they charge huge amount during tourist's season. There are very few hotels that are situated in the prime location where tourist can enjoy their staying, but when it comes to price it is very high and also not well maintained. Keeping in touch with the people is another most important thing that seems to lack in this tourist place, as sometimes no network coverage is found in that area.

The regular hotels there are not well maintained therefore it creates problem for many tourist, but they are helpless as they got no other option. Scarcity of electricity and water supply, poor service in accommodation, no good facility for sleeping and washroom emergency, poor quality of food, hygienic restaurant are another main problems that are responsible for poor accommodation.

Considering the location, the overall accommodation facilities are so-so but there are lot of scope for improvement. Keeping that in mind we found out some lacking as described below-

- **Increase the number of quality cottages:**

There should be more cottages for staying over. People who often visits hill tracks in Bandarban find it difficult to stay there at nights. If more people visit, then there will be a scarce for accommodation. So, keeping that in mind cottages need to be increased .moreover the quality of the existing cottages should be increased.

- **Develop strong network coverage and Wi-Fi service:**

Lack of mobile networks and internet connections in Cottages also was one of the major problems in Bandarban. Sometimes it becomes very difficult to trace the people through mobile. Travelers often look for free and easy access to the internet so they can share their feelings in different social media such as in Instagram, Facebook etc. So that sibilings know easily where they are staying, who they are travelling with

and other things about them easily. Not only that, for necessary purposes like- exploring, knowledge sharing, report writing, presentation related work would get a leap frog because of this extra feature.

- **Provide intercom service:**  
Another important thing in Bandarban that the travelers found it hard to know the exact timing of the breakfast, lunch and dinner. It would have been easier if there was availability of intercom system. So the communication between the travelers and the management would have been easier, faster and gentle.
- **Unhygienic Bed Cover:**  
In the cottage rooms there were some bed covers which were unhygienic. Those were not in well conditions. Properly washed and relatively new bed sheets always gives a warm feeling to everyone.
- **Sanitary Conditions:**  
Sanitary conditions in the cottages were good but it could have been better. Scarce of toilet was an issue for everyone. There is space for improvement for toilets/washrooms and number needs to be increased.

#### **Some Recommendation about Adventure Activities which can be Facilitated in Bandarban.**

We asked 100 people what would be the reason if you ever visit Bandarban 59.7% of them responds that experiencing adventure was and would be the main reason for them to visit Bandarban so increasing the adventure activities around bandarban can work as a spark on branding Bandarban. Adding the following features can help to attract the attention of foreign tourists as well as civilians to a great extent.

##### **1. Paragliding:**

Paragliding can give the amazing feeling of flying like a bird to travelers. Paragliding in Bandarban is possible if safe and sound takeoff and landing place can be selected.

##### **2. Kayaking in Boga lake:**

Kayak riding is one of the most preferred exciting experience that travelers want to have. Boga lake can be a perfect place for offering kayak riding to travelers.

##### **3. Mountain trekking:**

Mountain trekking opportunity to a little extent available in bandarban but the safety issue and lack of experienced guide hampers the opportunity. As bandarban is the home of the three highest peak of Bangladesh facilitating mountain trekking can be a good choice.

##### **4. Rafting in shangu:**

Rafting is perfect for rough water body. During the monsoon the shangu river can be a best place for rafting.

##### **5. Camping:**

Anyone can have the experience of living with the wild nature in Bandarban Travelers can campaign in nafakhum, amiakhum, chimbuk, and beside shangu river.

Though the nature of Bandarban has all the resources to facilitate all those activities but it need a quality amount of investment to enable all those services.it is possible if private sector can invest on those segment with the collaboration of government. Furthermore, skilled labor and trained human resource are the major requirements to introduce and aid all the adventurous activities. Yes it will take time but if the government take a 10 years gradual development plan on bandarban then it will be possible to present Bandarban as one of the top most travel destination brand of the world.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Tourism industry now a days is developing so fast. Huge amount of profit can be raised from this segment. Countries like Malaysia, Singapore, India, Maldives, Srilonka earn a remarkable amount of profit from tourism sector. This adds value to their GDP a lot. Bangladesh has also the resources for tourism but all it needs is investment and nourishment from both the private and public sector. Cox bazar , Shundorban attracts huge amount of foreigners as it ensures some of the safety issues. In case of Bandarban because of the safety issues the foreigners are not interested to go there. Moreover if the quality of transportation and accommodation with safety are ensured the destination will become a more preferred one.in addition if the destination can be enriched with the adventure activities it will be a good branded destination to visit

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