

Perspectives and problems of the tourist industry development in Asia-Pacific region

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Abstract: The article estimates the possibilities of tourism industry development in the countries of the South Asia. It also considers challenges of this development and proposes some decisions for solving problems of tourist industry development.

Keywords: tourism, recreation resources, Asia-Pacific region, Tourism Promotion Organization for Asia Pacific Cities (TPO)



Map of Asia-Pacific region



The Top Award being handed over by Regional Vice President West Asia & Africa, SIA, Lee Lik Hsin to Director & General Manager, Ceylinco Travels, Nilan Krisnaratne, from left, Director, Aitken Spence Aviation, Keethi Jayaweera General Manager Sri Lanka, SIA, C.H. Chia and MD Sashi Ganeshan, Aitken Spence Aviation- GSA for SIA



BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation)

Asia-Pacific region is the steadily developing region with the rapid economic growth. There is a huge climate and landscape variety and a plenty of recreation resources. It's obvious that development of Asian recreation area is very fruitful for regional economy, but besides the profit, it brings many problems. The purpose of this article is to value and estimate prospects and problems of the development of Asian recreation resources.

As far back as the early 1980s, the World Tourism Organization (now UNWTO) set up a Secretariat in Colombo for South Asian Tourism Promotion and attempted to promote the region. This initiative failed because of inadequate support and interest from the individual nations' state tourism organizations.

In the 1990s, the SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) began a Nepal-based initiative to promote tourism to the region. A special tourism committee was formed and several rounds of meetings were held. A promotional tagline "Magic That Is South Asia" was coined, and talks of a regional tourism development year were initiated. It was thought that tourism would improve if private sector business and tourism stakeholders took the lead in moving regional tourism initiatives forward. Several South Asian tourism business and trade marts have been held since the 1990s [1].

In addition, also in 1997, another initiative was created to link some of SAARC's countries with Myanmar and Thailand, as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation 262 Renton de Alwis (BIMSTEC), to take advantage of the historical link and turning them into economic opportunities. Named BIMSTEC to represent Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand Economic Cooperation, it set up a Tourism Working Group and has conducted several rounds of meetings, but up to date, it has not achieved much progress. Since 2005, the ADB has supported this initiative as well. South Asia can indeed be described as a dichotomy [3].

In 2000 the establishment of an international organization which focuses on tourism marketing for Asia Pacific cities was proposed at the Asian-Pacific City Summit (APCS). In August 2002, after two years' discussions at the working-level meeting of the APCS, the Tourism Promotion Organization for Asia Pacific Cities (TPO) was established. Nowadays, TPO, a growing international organization in the field of tourism, performs various marketing activities in the major Asia Pacific tourism markets to support member cities tourism promotion, including holding the travel trade meetings, running joint promotion booths in the well-respected international travel fairs, and organizing mission calls to overseas travel agencies to develop member cities' tourism products, and etc. TPO's Centre of Tourism Information is developing effective media channels to distribute member cities' tourism information to travelers around the world, including TPO website www.aptpo.org, TPO magazine *Tourism Scope*, and TPO e-newsletter *Tourism News Patrol*. TPO also holds tourism education program called the TPO Tourism School to train tourism officers of member cities and provide them with up-to-date information on the movement, issues, and concerns of tourism. TPO's Centre of Tourism Network has more than one hundred organizations including city governments, NGOs, and businesses across the Asia Pacific region, setting up an extensive and powerful network for vigorous inter-city tourism exchanges and cooperation. And Centre of Inter-City Cooperation of TPO pursues a positive and cooperative relationship among member cities by designing and implementing a wide range of activities for raising spirit of cooperation and friendship [5].

Prospects for tourism in Asian countries are based on it's historical and cultural background, which is attractive for people from all over the world. We can specify following points of Asian potential.

Asia is a cradle of ancient civilization which monuments and records have survived for the present day. Local traditions and diversity of craft are famous all over the world and certainly attract tourists. Moreover, Asian medicine and religion became more and more popular in the modern world.

Variety of climate and landscape is another reason of popularity of Asian countries. There are mountains, canyons, deserts and prairies. Very soft climate allows to host visitors at any time.

Low costs for accommodation, food, clothes and other cheap things are also very attractive for people [1]. But this cheapness results from the low live standards which in most cases cause many problems rather than are a favourable condition for a greater part of tourists.

The problems facing tourism in Asian countries are diverse as each country has own touristic features, level of development and national development policies.

In some countries there is still a fundamental lack of basic cognisance of the economic importance of tourism as an industry and it's positive impact as a potential source of foreign exchange and employment.

Many Asian countries lack the sufficient infrastructure necessary for the development of the successful tourism sector. Primary amongst these are hotels and lodging services, transportation and communication, safety and security and tourist information services. This makes it difficult to provide the standards of facilities and services which tourists require.

The safety of tourists is among the primary factors of any success tourist industry and should, thus, be one of the basic objectives of tourism planning and provisions. Due to low living standards and high rate of the criminal Asia is considered a dangerous place, that's why governments of Asian countries should pay more attention to this question [2].

To develop a tourism promotion plan for South Asia, the following elements are needed: a conducive environment for attracting international visitors, an effective potential demand on which the region can rely, and a program of promotion to deliver the region from the shackles it has been bound by in the past. The reality on the ground is far from meeting those needs Adeney and Wyatt 2004. The South Asian region possesses all the ingredients needed to be a prime international tourism destination. Given the successes achieved by India and Maldives, individual countries have the opportunity to get it right. However, as a regional entity, South Asia needs to be repositioned in the minds of the international visiting public by erasing a negative perception that is currently associated with the region's poverty, chaos, and disorganization. Getting this perception right requires deciding what must come first. To deliver on the promise of successful tourism, the region needs to get its collective act right, or create a desired promotional platform as a pull factor for the region's stakeholders to get the act right eventually. Intraregional tourism promotion is a precursor to promoting the region for international visitors. Taking that route will strengthen the capacity within the region to develop better structures and institutions to correct some of the problems that are endemic in the region's policy [4].

Discussing the problem under consideration, Asian countries have a necessary base for developing tourism industry, but some problems inhibit this development. Now the future of Asian recreation resources depends on governments' policy. For a successful development of the region it is necessary to flow huge amount of capital into this industry, to improve accessibility, to work out the infrastructure at heritage / tourist sites, to improve living standards and to eliminate crime.

To improve accessibility, proper transportation facilities are needed. Key distances are covered by planes or trains. It is necessary to make air access between SAARC countries more liberalized, facilitating all the SAARC airlines to cooperate with other countries of SAARC without any restriction. Next it is needed to support highway road and railway and water based transportation of tourists of the SAARC through improving road and railway transportation options, liberalization of ferry and shipping services operation. Then it is useful to undertake joint initiatives at both regional and bilateral levels to develop in cooperation institutions and infrastructure needed to develop tourism operations and attract investments flowing mainly from private partnerships. Besides, it is crucial to start common programmes at both private and governmental levels to support not only regional but also bilateral thematic tour circuits. And finally, publishing a year in advance to the events an annual public events directory will attract more people to the event tours.

To meet infrastructural needs at heritage sites ,first of all, a proper level of accommodation and food service for tourists must be provided even in the most distant areas. Secondly, the educational value of heritage sites must be remembered. Theatres to show educational video about the history and interesting features of a heritage site should be presented. At that, companies should include the cost of such videos in the tour cost for parents not to sacrifice their children's needs. Thirdly, restaurants serving a variety of local food as well as foreign cuisine to suit diverse tastes should be placed at heritage sites. The restaurants should pay a special attention to supplying bottled water of high quality to the health conscious visitors. Fourthly, properly maintained adequate urinal, toilet and bathroom facilities are needed at heritage sites. Fifthly, all the facilities must have healthcare centers to provide fatigue relief, minimum stress and first aid. Sixthly, it is necessary to make available sufficient space for shops to offer local garments, handicrafts and traditional items to attract tourists interested in local souvenirs. Seventhly, heritage sites providing the facilities mentioned above should allot some land nearby for rides and parks of amusement which will attract additional income and raise employment. Eighthly, tourist sites need ATM and Bank facilities. It would be advantageous for national banks to provide ATM facilities at or near tourist sites. And finally, disposal of waste requires special managing. It requires workers trained to dispose waste with proper equipment, to replace the damaged soil, to transport wastes to recycling facilities. Also it requires police officers to fine people performing littering acts and to watch tourists not to create unmanageable wastes or the ones that pollute the environment.

One of the serious problems facing economy of Asia-Pacific region is the severe regional disparities among diverse territories and states in terms of per capita poverty, income, infrastructure availability and social economic development. That's why to improve standards of living it is necessary to reduce regional variations by supporting industrial development in the backward regions. Since now industries still have a tendency to concentrate around port cities and urban areas. It is partly because services and manufacturing

rather than agriculture being the engines of growth. So, the government of these regions should take efforts to reduce the unevenness by offering cheap land and tax holidays, for example.

To eliminate crime in Asia-Pacific region a range of preventive measures should be taken by governments. The policy of drug control should be improved and a wide-ranging strategy should be introduced to link internal departments across different organizations. Improvement of drug control means not only direction of efforts at eliminating criminal activities, but also at promoting an international alliance to tackle the problem at the global level. Intercontinental drug control strategies must by no means be limited to merely controlling the demand and supply of arms and drugs; they should be aimed at controlling their production, trafficking as well as sale, which requires financial and technical support of multilateral agencies.

So, first of all, to promote tourism in Asia-Pacific region it is necessary to insure accessibility to all its countries and areas, which suggests development of land, air and water-based transportation facilities needed. It is necessary to support thematic tour circuits and publish annual public events directories as well. Next, it is crucial to form a proper infrastructure at heritage / tourist sites. Here a special attention should be given to accommodation and food service, educational videos about heritage sites, the combination of local and foreign cuisine, quality of water, toilet facilities, primary healthcare, local handicrafts, amusement parks and other entertainment facilities, banking facilities, and waste disposal facilities. Then, to improve standards of living, to even regional economic variations steps should be taken to encourage industrial development in the interior regions, to introduce tax holidays, cheap land etc. And last but not least, to eliminate crime in Asia-Pacific region the government should improve drug control policy first and foremost. It needs cooperation of internal departments of all the countries of the region, controlling and preventing the illegal production and trafficking and sale of arms and drugs. All this needs involvement of multilateral agencies.

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