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Department of Higher Education  
Yangon University of Distance Education**

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## **International Tourist Arrivals in Myanmar Naing Ngan**

Win Pa Pa Myo<sup>1</sup>, Myo Myo Khine<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is located in the north western part of Indo-China Peninsular or Mainland Southeast Asia. The Union of Myanmar extends 2050 km kilometers from Himalayas in the north to the Andaman Sea in the south. It comprises of Seven States and Seven Regions. The total area of Myanmar is estimated to be about 677, 00 square kilometer (261,228 square miles). This paper studies the tourist arrivals in Myanmar from the geographical point of view with the emphasis on international tourist's arrival or foreign tourist's arrival. This research basically includes the geographic factors, tourism development and tourism sites of Myanmar Naing Ngan. It is one of the interesting places for tourist attraction. It has the natural, cultural, historical site and religious buildings. The result indicates that Bagan is an interesting place for international tourists. The highest periods of tourist arrival are dry season, from October to April. The highest numbers of tourists come in December and January. From May to September are not favourable for visiting because of heavy rains. January is a very good season for visiting to golden land Myanmar.

Key words: Tourist arrivals and tourism development

### **Introduction**

Myanmar is recognized as a tourist destination with a rich cultural heritage blessed with a unique natural environment, snowcapped mountains, beautiful lakes and waterfalls; long navigable rivers, lush tropical forest, unspoiled beaches and archipelagos. Tourism in Myanmar started to develop when Myanmar first opened its doors in the late 1988. Tourism was systematically established with the formation of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism in 1992. Tourist industry has become one of the most important economic activities for earning foreign exchange. The aim and objectives are to point out international tourist arrivals, to examine tourism development and to assess the tourist attraction sites in study areas. The secondary data obtained from the offices concerned and field surveys as well as primary data from questionnaires and unstructured interviews are ordered and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Myanmar has unique natural area and sightseeing. Therefore, there are many attractive sites such as historic and cultural heritage, beaches, and ecotourism sites. The accessibility to the area and within the area is high and one can get easily to the destinations.

### **Aim and Objectives**

- To point out international tourist arrivals in study areas
- To examine the development of tourism and
- To assess the tourist attraction sites

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## Methodology

Both primary and secondary data were collected from the office concerned and field survey. For illustration, analysis method, graph, topographic maps and digital photos were used.

## Study Area

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is located between north latitudes  $9^{\circ}30'$  and  $28^{\circ}31'$  and east longitudes  $92^{\circ}10'$  and  $101^{\circ} 11'$ . The Tropic of Cancer passes through the northern part of the country near Tiddim (Chin State), Tagaung (Sagaing Region) and Kutkai (Shan State). (Source: Hla Htun Aung, 2003 May). Most of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar lies within the tropics. It covers an area of about 261,228 square miles. The Union is delineated and constituted by seven regions, seven states and the Union territories. It has an elongated shape and roughly resembles a kite with its tail at coastal Tanintharyi strip. It has many attractive tourist sites.

Myanmar's neighboring countries are Bangladesh and India in the west, China, Laos and Thailand in the north and east. Most of the boundaries between Myanmar and its neighbors are of a physical nature. (Figure.1). It is bounded with land and water boundaries, so, it has natural beauty spots for tourist industry.

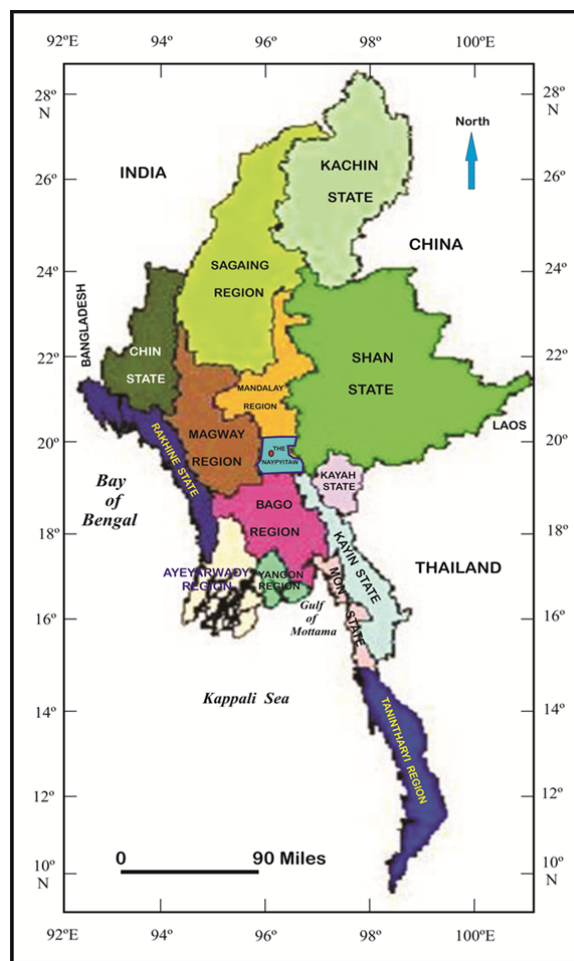


Figure 1. Location of Myanmar Naing Ngan

Source: Google Earth Image, 2012

### **Geographic Factors**

Myanmar is a mountainous country. It is surrounded by mountains on all sides except in the south, facing the Bay of Bengal and Katpali Sea (Andaman Sea). It is natural beauty scenes for tourists' attraction place. Myanmar may be divided into four physiographic divisions, namely, the Western Mountain Ranges, the Eastern Highlands and their continuation southward, the Central Basin and Rakhine Coastal Region.

Two-third of Myanmar's surface drains into the Ayeyarwady river system. There are several subsidiary river systems. Climate of Myanmar, in general, is said to be tropical monsoon. However, because of its north-south elongated shape and its physiography, almost all the major climatic types (according to Koppen's classification) are found in Myanmar. Climate of Myanmar, in general, is said to be tropical monsoon. However, because of its north-south elongated shape and its physiography, almost all the major climatic types (according to Koppen's classification) are found in Myanmar.

Rakhine, Tanintharyi and lower deltaic Region experience Tropical Monsoon (Am) type of climate. All the lowland areas, except those in the Dry Zone, experience Tropical Savanna (Aw) type of climate. The Dry Zone of Central Myanmar experiences a Dry Steppe (BSh) type of climate. Many areas of Chin, Shan and Kachin States enjoy Humid Mesothermal climate (Cwa, Cwb). In northern Myanmar experience Humid Microthermal (Dw) type of climate while the highest mountain peaks experience ET and EF types of climate. Types of tourism different depend on climate and physical features in the study area.

Social factors are also important factors for the development of a tourist destination. Population is one of the important factors in studying tourism. An area of high population concentration may be able to attract more tourists if it has interesting recreational natural resource, scenic beauty for recreation and historical sites.

Cultural factors are dominant factors for tourism. The ethnic groups are indigenous people and foreign ethnic groups. Religions play also very important role in the tourist industry. Buddhism is the most religion as in study area thus; the largest population of is Buddhists, about 80 percent of the total population. Therefore, there are many historic ancient pagodas, monasteries, Buddha images and stone inscriptions along the mountain range of the study area. Beside, traditional festivals, events and donation ceremonies are held the whole year within the study area. It is important part of tourism industry. International tourists are interested in pagodas, temples, traditional art, festivals and life style of the local people. It has become attractive customs to international tourists.

### **Accessibility for the International Tourists**

Accessibility includes not only the ease to travel between origin and destination but also the ease to get entry-visa or visa on arrival. Travel time and travel cost need to be reasonable, when compared to other competing destinations. In 1962, the entrance visa was issued to foreign tourists who are allowed to stay only for 24 hours within Myanmar. It was extended to three days in 1969, a week in 1970 and 14 days in 1989. To be able to accelerate the pace of development in tourism, the stay visa was extended to 28 days in 1994. Today an increasing number of tourists enter Myanmar through the gates at certain border areas, and leave the country from Mandalay and Yangon by airlines. A valid passport with Entry Visa is required for all visitors. The entry visa to Myanmar is applicable at Myanmar Embassies and Consulate General Offices abroad and it is valid for 28 days.

Overland entry is permitted to Thai, Chinese and Indian tourists with border passes and to third party tourists with visa at designated check points along Myanmar-Thailand, Myanmar-China and Myanmar-India borders. Tourists with valid passports and visa can leave by air from Yangon.

Visa on arrival is generated only to packaged cruise - liner and chartered flight tourists and to packaged tour groups from places where there are no Myanmar representation. Visa on Arrival is applicable only through licensed travel agencies registered in Myanmar. The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism will endorse the Immigration on a case by case basis.

### **Assessment on Tourism Site in Myanmar by International Tourists**

In order to know the perception and assessment of international tourists on Myanmar Naing Ngan, questionnaires were distributed to 120 international tourists. Their responses were differentiated into 5 levels as very good, good, fair, poor and very poor.

As regards with the attraction, 95 (79%) tourists responded as very good, 20 (17% ) as good, 5 (4%) as fair, but no one as poor or very poor. This indicates that the most tourists enjoy beauty Myanmar.

The interesting places is Bagan with 65 percent for international tourists, Inle is the second place with 21 percent and Mandalay is the third interesting place with 12 percent .Other places are 2 percent.

For accommodation, lodging facilities are viewed as very good by 65 ( 54 %), good by 35 ( 29%) and fair by 20 ( 17%) and nobody responded as poor or very poor. According to their answers, most tourists prefer the hotels to be furnished with local products like bamboo, rattan and teak. Most hotels are well decorated, furnished and facilitated with high quality teak furniture and doors, swimming pool, exercise room, library, mini-cinema hall and even separate room for meditation. That is why all the respondents gave positive answers related to accommodation. As regard with accommodation, all the hotels are well facilitated with modern accessories and kept clean for the comfort of the guests. However, the fees charged for lodging are high, much higher than those of other countries. For those who can afford, the attractiveness is the chief factor in determining the choice for destination. However, the majority usually choose the places which may cost them less.

Most tourists like the Myanmar's traditional foods. Therefore, 55 (46 %) out of 120 respondents said that the foods were very good and delicious, and a few even showed with the sign of hand as excellent, above very good level. There were 28 respondents (23%) that regarded the foods as good and 37 (31 %) as fair, with no respondents believing as being poor or very poor. They like the monhinkha, Shan noodle and pickled tea leaf best.

According to the responses to questionnaires communication at Myanmar is not satisfied with the existing facilities. To 54 respondents (45 %), the communication condition was very good, which while 30 (25%) perceived as being good and 22 (18 %) as fair. However 9 respondents (8 %) said the condition was poor and 5 (4%) regarded it as very poor. In any places in Myanmar, if possible all the hotels should have internet access for easy communication through e-mails.

### **Tourism Sites in Myanmar**




In Myanmar, many ethnic groups have different cultures, but with less interesting unique attitudes, except a few. The most attractive cultural practices that can attract tourists are Naga Festival, Ancient Bagan Cultural structures and unique boat rowing and floating garden



of Inle. There are a lot of tourism sites in Myanmar. Well known places are Yangon, Bagan, Inle, Mandalay, Sagaing, Myauk-U, Ngapali Beach and etc. The most popular place is Bagan. Buddhism is the most dominant religion as in study area, therefore; pagoda and monasteries are found in all places. These pagodas and monasteries of architecture and civilization are interesting for international tourists. The best buildings are pagodas in these areas. Ngapali is popular for natural beauty sites. International tourists are mostly interested in the annual festivals and events of famous pagodas and seasonal donation ceremonies. Traditions, culture and festivals are held throughout the year. Famous festivals are Pagodas festival, water festival, Thadingyut and Tazaungmone festivals. Tourist attractions are one of the factors supporting the development of tourism.

Table 1. Tourist Attraction Sites in Myanmar Naing Ngan

No.	Attraction Sites	Photo	Location
1.	Shwedagon Pagoda		Yangon
2.	Bagan		Mandalay Region
3.	Inle		Shan State
4.	Phaung- Daw- U Pagoda		Shan State
5.	Indawgyi wildlife		Kachin State

No.	Attraction Sites	Photo	Location
6.	Ngapali Beach		Rakhine State
7.	Mingun Pagoda		Sagaing Region
8.	Myauk -U Pagoda		Rakhine State

Source: Field Observation

### Tourism Development in Myanmar

Myanmar is recognized as a tourist destination with a rich culture heritage blessed with a unique natural environment, snowcapped mountains, beautiful lakes and waterfalls; long navigable rivers, lush tropical forest unspoils beaches and archipelagos. Tourism in Myanmar started to develop when Myanmar first opened its doors in the late 1988. Tourism was systematically established with the formation of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism in 1992. Tourism was systematically established with the formation of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism in 1992. Ministry of Hotels and Tourism was established on September 24, 1992. On 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1992, the government formed the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism and licenses were issued to the private entrepreneurs for the registration of hotels and motels which were suitable for the accommodation of foreign tourists. Tourism Department and Management Committee (TDMC) was formed on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1994 and the term of visa was extended from 28 days to 70 days. In order to boost tourism industry, the year 1996 was recognized as Visit Myanmar Year. After 2014, tourism has gradually been developing in Myanmar with the development of tourism, hotels, motels and guest houses have been mushrooming. (Khin Thidar Oo, 2017) .

### International Tourists Arrival in Myanmar

Tourist arrival analysis is based on the number of tourists and nationalities of foreign tourists. Tourism industry increased sharply in last years. The growth rate of total international tourist arrivals was one of the fastest over two last years; 53 percent in 2014-15 compared with 2013-2014. The five main nationalities who arrived at Yangon and Mandalay international air

ports were Thai (21.1%), Chinese (8%), Korean (6.8%), French (6.1%), and American (6.1%). Arrivals from Thailand, China, Korea, France and USA increase by 34 %, 15.6%, 11.9%, 23.5% and 12.3% respectively in 2014-15 as compared to the previous period. (Myanmar Statistical Yearbook, 2015).

Table. 2 International Tourist Arrivals (1995-96 to 2014-15)

Year	By Air	By Sea	By Land	Total
1995-96	136883	3391	67954	208228
2000-2001	211187	101386	125907	438480
2005-2006	233453	162130	257966	653549
2010-2011	334278	125223	333237	792738
2011-2012	425847	137437	303705	866989
2012-2013	681376	159643	498423	1339442
2013-2014	924401	253644	1069072	2247117
2014-2015	1123706	245897	2073406	3443009

Note: Includes visitors with visa and daily or overnight travellers with border pass.

Source: Myanmar Statistical Yearbook (2015)

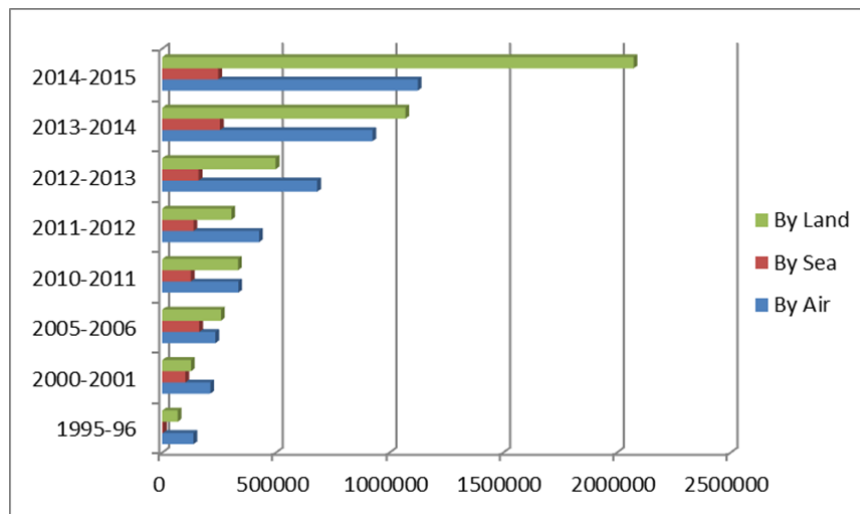


Figure 2 International Tourist Arrivals (1995-96 to 2014-15)

Source: Based on table 2.

Generally, the number of arrivals in Myanmar has been increasing. Table (2) and figure (2) show the number of international tourist arrivals from 1995-96 to 2014-15. It was 208228 visitors in 1995-96 and this number increased to 3443009 in 2014-15. In 2014-15, the number of international tourist's arrivals by sea (245897 visitors), by air (1123706 visitors), by land (2073406 visitors). The highest number of international visitors arrival by land with 60 percent of total visitors. The second largest number of international tourists arrived by air with 33 percent and the lowest number arrived by sea with 7 percent. The number of international tourists in Myanmar has slightly increased. As a result, tourists have to rely only on pamphlets from Travels and Tourism agencies in Yangon. Therefore, they do not have access to some

places of interest which are in obscurity. Places of interest should be exposed and local guides with good regional knowledge should be turned out.

### Nationalities of International Tourists Arrival

According to table 3 and figure 3, in 2005-2006, 144628 international tourists arrived at Myanmar. It increases to 545636 in 2014-15. Of there, 138255 or 25 percent were Thai, 45298 or 8 percent were Chinese, and 36986 or 6.8 percent were from Korean, and 36722 or 6.7 percent were from French. Tourists from Pakistani were 437 or 0.08 percent. It is very few. In 2005-2006 and 2014-15, among the tourists to Myanmar, Thais were the greatest in number, followed by Chinese and Korean. Altogether tourists from Asian countries were highest in proportion.

Table 3. Tourist Arrival at Yangon and Mandalay International Airports by Type of Nationality 2014-15

No.	Nationality	2014-2015
1	Thai	138255
2	China	45298
3	Korean	36986
4	French	36722
5	American	33299
6	Japan	32809
7	Germany	27090
8	British	24454
9	Malaysia	20662
10	Taiwanese	16655
11	Singaporean	16245
12	Australian	15622
13	Italian	10495
14	Swiss	10027
15	Canadian	7586
16	Indian	6215
17	Belgium	5032
18	Russian	2579
19	Israeli	2016
20	Bangladeshi	1042
21	Indonesian	588
22	Pakistani	437
23	Others	55516
	<b>Total</b>	<b>545636</b>

Source: Myanmar Statistical Yearbook (2015)

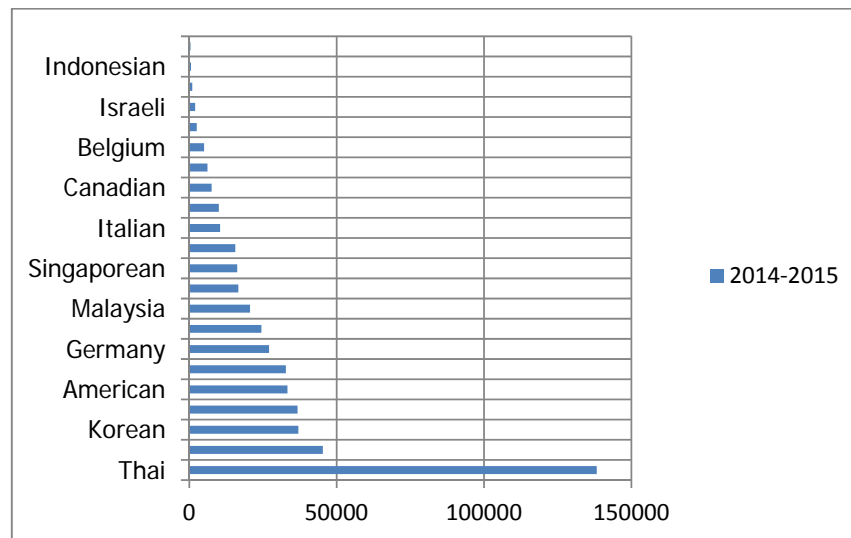


Figure 3. Tourist Arrival at Yangon and Mandalay International Airports by Type of Nationality 2014-15

Source; Based on table 3

The tourist industry of Myanmar has significant increase in the number of international tourists.

In 2005-06, the study area had 653 numbers of hotels, motels and inns. In 2014-15, the hotels, motels and Inns in the study area increased to 1214. New hotels, guesthouses have emerged to satisfy the increasing demand.

### **Tourist Arrivals by Gender and Age Group**

Among the tourists under questions (120), 75 percent are females and 45 percent are males. According to survey, the number of females exceeds that of males. The ages of the respondents are classified three groups (a) under 16 years, (b) between 16 and 60 and (c) over 60 years. The 16– 60 years age group was highest with 67 percent, the second group was over 60 year's age group with 24 percent and followed by, under 16 years which was 9 percent. Most of the respondents were in the middle age group.

According to questionnaires survey, the visit was the first time for 69 percent, second time for 23 percent and frequent 8 percent.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

Tourism has been recognized as an effective means in the solution of certain global problems. Responsible Tourism Day was held in England which enhances the awareness related to the responsibility of tourism. Tourism, to a large extent, helps conserve the cultural heritage of the areas concerned as well as natural resources. However unless necessary measures are taken, the natural beauty as well as cultural and historic structures can be spoiled by the impact from the great number of people visiting such sites. Such cases can lead tourism to the stages of stagnation and decline. Ni Ni Aung, (2010)

In order to conserve the invaluable national treasure, conscious efforts must be undertaken through the coordination and cooperation of travel agents, hotel and transportation

staff as well as the tourists or clients. If the individuals concerned take their own responsibility with increasing awareness of the importance of conserving the natural and cultural resources, Sustainable development of tourism in Myanmar is likely to develop further.

Since very recently, ecotourism has become very popular among the tourists i.e., travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural area with the sole objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery, its wild plants and animals. Accordingly, more attractive ecotourism sites as well as short adventure trips should be established, as its immediate environment still remains unspoiled.

As entertainment services, the enjoyable traditional practices like Festivals, interesting traditional ceremonies, and etc., should be systematically arranged.

Nowadays in Myanmar, there has been an increase in the number of foreign visitors by year. With the increasing number of travelers, more places are needed for them to stay. In order to conserve the invaluable national treasure, conscious efforts must be undertaken through the coordination and cooperation of travel agents, hotel and transportation staff as well as the tourists or clients.

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