

Destination Image: Identifying Attributes and Obstacles of Tourism places in Bangladesh

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Abstract:

Bangladesh faces challenges in developing the tourism industry whereas destination image is one of the foremost factors. The purpose of the study is to identify the attributes and obstacles of tourism places which contribute to construct the destination image. The primary data is collected from different location in Dhaka city to know about the travel experience of tourists who travel in Bangladesh. The exploratory research design is used to gain insight of domestic tourism which establishes priorities for further research. The findings revealed that domestic tourists consider cognitive and affective attributes of destination image prior traveling. As Bangladesh is a developing country, the tourists face several obstacles during traveling; mainly mentioned infrastructural and security problems. On the whole, the tourists' satisfaction and revisit decisions are depending on evaluation of attitudes and obstacles of destination place. Considering the perception on destination image, the study will make contribution to understand the travel behavior of domestic tourists.

Key words: Tourism, Tourists, Destination, Destination image, Cognitive attributes, Affective attributes, Tourists' satisfaction, Domestic tourists

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry is one of the fastest growing service industries which contribute in the economic development. At present tourism is a growing and popular global leisure activity that includes the large intake of money for business with the goods and services like taxicabs, airlines, bus, accommodations, foods, hotels and resorts, amusement parks, shopping malls etc (Rahman 2014). According to Webster's New University Dictionary, tourism means "traveling for pleasure; is a type of business that involved in arranging tours and providing services for tourists," and a tourist means 'one who travels for pleasure' (Merriam-Webster 2015). From Theobald's analysis, tourism can be defined as the act of leaving and then returning to the initial beginning point. Consequently, one who takes such a journey can be called a tourist. Therefore, tourists are the temporary visitors staying at least 24 hours in the country visited, and whose purposes are for leisure, business, family, mission, or meeting (Theobald 2005).

Destination image is a significant aspect of destination choice process of the tourists, regardless of the destination image is actually characterizing the place what it has to offer (Cai 2002). Initiating and managing a pertinent destination image is an imperative element to effectively positioning in the tourists' mind. For this reason, the destination marketers need to focus on the essential attributes of the destinations at the time of developing promotional activities for constructing a successful destination image (Hosany et al. 2006).

Though Bangladesh have numerous attractive destinations with natural scenery, impressive monuments and architectural establishments and cultural heritage (Alam 2002), the tourism industry of Bangladesh endure for insufficient infrastructure, lack of facilities at destinations, transportation insufficiency and unavailable information (Hossain 1999).

Therefore it is necessary to build strong favorable destination image by locating attributes of destination place and communicate with tourists and identify the obstacles to overcome. As a result tourists will feel interest and secure to make revisit decision at same destination place.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted to get the idea about the travel experience of tourists who traveled within Bangladesh. The primary focus of the study was on finding the attributes that tourists consider as important factor while traveling as these attributes were ultimately forming the destination image of a specific place. It is also needed to identify the main obstacles that the tourists faced during traveling. After the travel, the satisfaction level of tourists was necessary to measure so that it could know that who wanted to travel the same destination again.

Therefore, the specific objectives of the study were-

1. To know about the travel experience of Tourists in Bangladesh
2. To find out the important attributes affecting tourists to build a destination image based on travel experience.
3. To discover the tourists' satisfaction level and important obstacles based on the travel experience.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Prospects of tourism industry in Bangladesh

In spite of some problems and constraints, the tourism sector of Bangladesh has huge potentials. We can earn a lot of foreign remittance by exploring and nourishing the prospects of the tourism industry of Bangladesh. Bangladesh Porjaton Corporation 3,03,386 number of tourists visit Bangladesh in

2010 that is 11% higher than 2009 reflecting the prospect of the tourism industry in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Tourism Board 2015). Bangladesh's tourism industry can contribute around 4.0 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2017 if the government develops infrastructure to encourage more local and foreign travelers, (Thomsen 2015).

World Travel and Tourism Council reveals the key facts about the tourism sector of Bangladesh at the country report of Economic Impact 2015. Travel and tourism sector contributed directly to GDP by BDT 296.6bn (1.9% of total GDP) in 2014. Moreover, the total contribution to GDP was BDT 627.9bn in 2014 that is 4.1% of GDP. Additionally, the direct and indirect jobs supports by the travel and tourism contributed 3.6% of total employment in 2014. On the other hand, in 2014, the investment in this industry was BDT60.9bn or 1.4%of total investment that expected to rise by 2.7% in 2015. Bangladesh made earnings BDT10.2bn in visitor exports ¹in 2014. The interesting finding was that the domestic travel spending² generated 97.9% of direct travel and tourism GDP whereas 2.1% for visitor exports in 2014 (WTTC 2015).

Ziaul Hoque Howladar published a report where he mentioned that the domestic tourism is increasing day by day, and it will accelerate the foreign tourists' arrival in Bangladesh in the near future. Based on the Bangladesh Parjaton Corporation (BPC) statistics, it is found that more than 800 tourist attractions have already been identified. Presently, around 6 million tourists visit each year in 25 landmark tourist attractions. Approximately 1.5 million tourists visit Cox's Bazar each year, of which 5% are foreign tourists, more than 500,000 visited in 2013 (Howladar 2015).

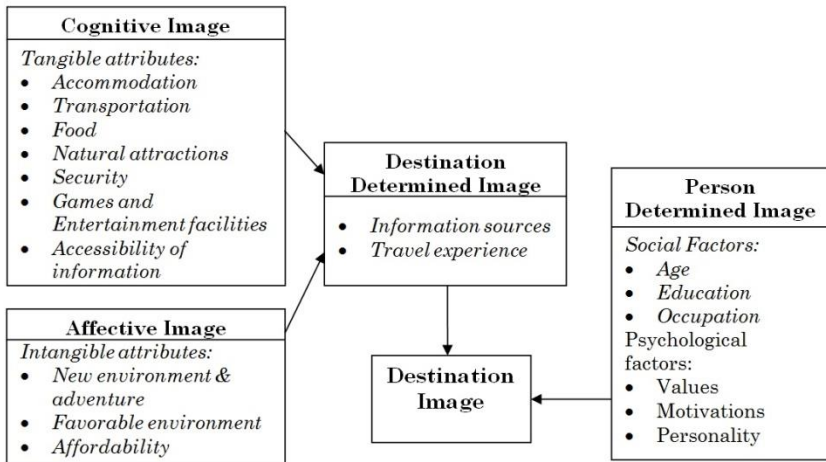
3.2. Destination image:

¹ Visitor exports mean money spent by foreign visitors to a country that is a key component of the direct contribution of Travel and Tourism.

² Domestic travel spending means the spending of a country's residents within that country for both business and leisure trips.

A destination image is a reflection that is the outcome of a tourist’s perception about a specific destination’s attributes (Lumsdon 2000, 229). Gartner (1986, 636) also defined destination image as “a function of brand and the tourists’ perceptions of the attributes of activities or attractions available within the destination area”.

Figure 1: Destination Image Formation



Sources: Constructed by authors using the theory from Lai & Vinh 2013 and Lim & Weaver 2012.

Many researchers agreed to describe destination image as a multidimensional construct with the two core dimensions like cognitive and affective (Baud-Bovy & Lawson 1977). The cognitive dimension consists of beliefs and knowledge about the physical attributes of destination whereas the affective dimension means the evaluation of the affective quality of feelings toward the attributes and surrounding environments of the destination (Baloglu & McCleary 1999). Any destination may face larger challenges in developing and supervising attractive and optimistic imagery therefore, it is necessary to establish enduring competitive advantage along with accumulate as many positive image attributes with the destination as possible (McCartney 2008). Aside from any

precise reason an image of destination does not come into a tourist's thought naturally specifically when the tourist can correlate the image with certain attributes (Zhou 2005).

3.3. Satisfaction of tourists:

From the marketing point of view, 'Satisfaction is the extent to which a product's perceived performance matches a buyer's expectations' (Kotler and Armstrong 2006). Marketers need to understand customer satisfaction as it often serves as a key driver (Wells & Prenskey 1996). In case of getting the idea about tourism behavior, satisfaction measurement acts as a fundamental concept (Ross and Iso-Ahola, 1991) as satisfied customers make positive behavioral reactions like repurchase, revisit, recommended to acquaintances and favorable word of mouth (Dube et al, 1994).

3.4. Relationship between satisfaction of tourists and destination image:

Many scholars agreed that in the tourism research, the choice of destination, destination image, and satisfaction of tourists are all the essential focus (McLellan and Fousher. 1983; Selby et al., 1996). The tourist decision process is intangible in nature and is greatly motivated by different factors such as perceived image of destination, former travel experience, information about destination, and cultural impact (Money and Crofts, 2003). The satisfaction of tourists is depending on the destination image attributes which incorporate basic requirement like accommodation, food and food related services, transportation; attraction related requirements like recreation, adventure, shopping, games and entertainment facilities, diverse culture, friendliness of local people; and destination competitiveness (Qu and Li 1997).

3.5. Obstacles in tourism places in Bangladesh:

Bangladesh does not put enough effort to establish a favorable destination image for the reason of lack of information source, insufficient infrastructure, facilities and security (Mitra 2005).

4. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Since the study is trying to have an insight of the aspect of the tourism industry in Bangladesh, exploratory research is most suited here (Malhotra 2006, 137). This study has been prepared by analyzing both primary and secondary data. For the theoretical foundation and analysis, the existing literature was investigated by collecting published journals, periodicals, newspapers, related magazines, the internet etc. The study was geographically confined to Dhaka city, initially formed the sampling frame for the study. Convenient sampling procedure is used to collect the primary data of the study. Only local or domestic tourists were chosen as respondents within the sampling frame simply due to the fact that without the augmentation of domestic tourism, developing international tourism would be almost impossible (Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, 2004, p. 118). Usually the sample size for the exploratory research is small (Malhotra 2006, 318) therefore the total number of respondents was 70, due to incompleteness of the questionnaire 56 respondent's data were measured as a final sample size. A survey questionnaire has been used to collect the primary data from the different places in Dhaka City. The questionnaire was developed following a structured format as per the objectives of the study. Both the metric, non-metric types of data were collected for the study. The five points Likert scaling method was used in the study. A pretest was conducted for testing the reliability of the questionnaire. To analyze the collected data, different qualitative measures have been taken. The frequency distribution, mean value and

crosstabs analysis were done on the primary data by using SPSS and MsExcel software.

5. FINDINGS:

5.1. Respondents' profile:

In the study, the respondent's profile was organized by four factors: gender, age, income, and education. Most of the respondents were male (85.7%). Age group between 26 to 35 years old was responded 50%, on the other hand, age group from 36 to 45 years old was 25% and the young people age group from 18 to 25 years old was 23.3%. According to monthly income, 28.6% of respondents were between tk.20001 to 30000 and 10.7% of the respondents were between tk.30001- 40000. On the other hand, 14.3% of the respondents did not agree to reveal the monthly income information. In the study 53.6% of the respondents were post graduated on the other hand 39.3% of the respondents were graduated.

Table 1: Respondent's basic information

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)	Age	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	48	85.7	18-25	13	23.2
Female	8	14.3	26-35	28	50.0
Total	56	100.0	36-45	14	25.0
			46-55	1	1.8
			Total	56	100.0
Monthly Income	Frequency	Percent (%)	Education	Frequency	Percent (%)
No comments	8	14.3	SSC	2	3.6
<5000	4	7.1	HSC	2	3.6
5001-10000	5	8.9	Honors/Degree	22	39.3
10001-15000	4	7.1	Masters	30	53.6
15001-20000	4	7.1	Total	56	100.0
20001-30000	16	28.6			
30001-40000	6	10.7			
40001-50000	5	8.9			
50000>	4	7.1			
Total	56	100.0			

Source: Primary data

5.2. Information about travel experience:

5.2.1. Assessment about traveling frequency: In the study, to get the idea about travel experience, the data was collected in two basis; firstly based on five years travel experience and secondly latest travel experience. It is found that 53.6% of respondents regularly travel where travel means the respondents visit the places outside from their habitual places [Graph 1]. It is also found that among the respondents who regularly traveled most of them traveled monthly (30%) and within three months (30%) time period. Only 10% of the respondents are found who travel over one year difference [Table 3].

Table 2: Status of traveling regularity

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	30	53.6
No	26	46.4
Total	56	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table 3: Frequency of respondent's traveling

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Monthly	9	30.0
Within 3 months	9	30.0
Within 6 months	5	16.7
Yearly	4	13.3
More than one year	3	10.0
Total	30	100.0

Source: Primary data

5.2.2. Evaluation of travel behavior within 5 years time interval:

The information about particular time period may give a precise scenario of the respondents travel behavior, for this reason, five years time interval was selected in the study. Within five years period, 98% of the respondents traveled at least once [Table 4]. 40% of the respondents traveled more than 5 times and 34.5% of the respondents are found who

travel 2-3 times within last 5 years. On the other hand only 10.9% of the respondents travel just the once [Table 5]. The respondents who traveled within last 5 years, 45.5% go in January to March season in contrast only 10.9% of the respondents traveled in April to June season [Table 6].

Table 4: Traveling within last 5 years

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	55	98.2
No	1	1.8
Total	56	100.0

Table 5: Frequency of respondent's traveling within last 5 years

One time	6	10.9
2-3 times	19	34.5
4-5 times	8	14.5
More than 5 times	22	40.0
Total	55	100.0

Table 6: Last season of traveling within 5 years

January-March	25	45.5
April-June	6	10.9
July-September	13	23.6
October-December	11	20.0
Total	55	100.0

Source: Primary data

5.2.2. Evaluation of travel behavior based on latest travel experience:

Based on latest travel experience, in the study it is found that 96.4% of the respondents travel within Bangladesh and only 3.6% of the respondents traveled abroad [Table 7]. 73.2% of the respondents stayed at the travel place from 2 to 7 days and 14.3% stayed for single one day [Table 8]. In the study it is found that mostly the respondents like to travel with a group of 2 to 5 members (55.4%). Conversely, the respondent own self alone or with one partner traveled and more than 20 group members traveled 14.3% [Table 9]. The respondents were asked the reason for traveling, mostly answered that they traveled to

spent time with family and friends (44.6%) and to visit the attractive and beautiful place (17.9%). Additionally the respondents traveled for professional purpose (12.5%) and for recreation (12.5%) [Table 10]. In case of getting information about travel place, maximum respondents referred the source from relatives and/ or friends (67.9%) and secondly they mentioned the available information from the internet (10.7%). On the other hand, only 3.6% of the respondents know about the travel place from travel agencies, airlines or government tourism organizations [Table 11].

Table 7: Traveling within Bangladesh (Last visit)

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	54	96.4
No	2	3.6
Total	56	100.0

Table 8: Number of days respondent stays at travel place (Last visit)

0-1 day	8	14.3
2-7 days	41	73.2
8-15 days	5	8.9
One year >	2	3.6
Total	56	100.0

Table 9: Number of people in total traveled (Last visit)

0-1	8	14.3
2-5	31	55.4
6-10	5	8.9
11-20	4	7.1
20>	8	14.3
Total	56	100.0

Table 10: Reasons for traveling (Last visit)

Family & friends	25	44.6
Professional reason	7	12.5
For visiting attractive & beautiful place	10	17.9
For recreation	7	12.5
For spending the leisure time	2	3.6
For medical purpose	1	1.8
Others	4	7.1
Total	56	100.0

Table 11: Sources of information to know about travel place (Last visit)

Relatives &/or friends	38	67.9
Internet	6	10.7
Travel agency/ airlines	2	3.6
Government tourism organizations	2	3.6
Different media	3	5.4
Others	5	8.9
Total	56	100.0

Source: Primary data

5.3. Attributes of destination Image:

It is necessary to identify relevant destination attributes accordingly in this study destination attributes are selected after reviewing previous studies. Several destination attributes may vary with specific destination even though most frequently used attributes are selected which apply to Bangladesh perspective. The difference of values among the attributes was slight. Attractiveness had the highest mean value (6.9) whereas the arrangement of games and recreation had lowest mean value (4.0). Attributes such as new environment and adventure, the arrangement of accommodation and favorable weather were close to the highest value. The average value for the attribute security of the place was comparatively third important factor (5.7) and next to this attribute, arrangement of transportation and communication, affordable travelling cost and variation of foods had mean values of 5.4, 5.3 and 5.3, respectively [Table 12].

Table 12: Important attributes of destination image (Last visit)

	N	Mean
Attractiveness or natural beauty of the place	56	6.9
New environment and adventure	56	6.0
Arrangement of accommodation	56	6.0
Favorable weather	56	6.0
Security of the place	56	5.7
Arrangement of transportation and communication	56	5.4
Affordable traveling cost	56	5.3
Variation of foods	56	5.3
Availability of information	56	4.6
Arrangement of games & recreation	56	4.0

Source: Primary data

5.4. Satisfaction aspect of tourists:

Among the tourists, 64.3% showed interest to visit the same destination on the other hand 10.7% did not show any interest to visit the same destination. 25% tourists were neutral about visiting the same destination [Table 13].

Table 13: Interest of travel in the same destination again

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	36	64.3
No	6	10.7
Neutral	14	25.0
Total	56	100.0

Source: Primary data

A high percentage of tourists were satisfied with the overall travel experience that is 57.1% however 41.1% tourists were neutral regarding satisfaction in traveling. On the other hand, a small percentage of the tourists (1.8%) were not satisfied in traveling [Table 14].

Table 14: Overall satisfaction in traveling

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Satisfied	32	57.1
Not Satisfied	1	1.8
Neutral	23	41.1
Total	56	100.0

Source: Primary data

In the study, it is found that among 57.1% of the satisfied respondents 42.9% had the interest to travel again at same place whereas 8.9% did not want to travel again. On the other hand, the respondents who were neutral about satisfaction level (41.1%), concerned to travel again (19.6%) and impartial about travel again (19.6%) [Table 15].

Table 15: Important attributes of destination image (Last visit)

			Travel again			Total
			Yes	No	Neutral	
Satisfaction level	Satisfied	N	24	5	3	32
		% of Total	42.9%	8.9%	5.4%	57.1%
	Not satisfied	N	1	0	0	1
		% of Total	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%
	Neutral	N	11	1	11	23
		% of Total	19.6%	1.8%	19.6%	41.1%
Total	N	36	6	14	56	
	% of Total	64.3%	10.7%	25.0%	100.0%	

Source: Primary data

5.5. Obstacles during traveling in Bangladesh:

As significant barriers in tourism sector of Bangladesh, it is found that insufficient infrastructure facilities, scarcity of modern and competent recreation and tourist facilities, short of human resources in the sector and so forth (GOB 2011). In the study, unsatisfactory quality of roads had the highest mean value (3.86) which was faced by the tourists mostly amid the problems while traveling. Next to quality of roads, political unrest(3.80), unavailability of law and order authority (3.70) were considered as problems during traveling that had high mean values. The mean values of unsatisfactory transportation fare, accommodation fare, and the price of food, unavailability of transportation, quality of food, and quality of accommodation had little differences. Lack of friendly environment was considered as the least of the problems (2.98).

Table 16: Problems during traveling (Last visit)

	N	Mean
Unsatisfactory quality of roads	56	3.86
Political unrest	56	3.80
Unavailability of law and order authority	56	3.70
Lack of security	56	3.64
Unsatisfactory transportation fare	56	3.45
Unsatisfactory accommodation fare	56	3.39
Unsatisfactory price of food	56	3.23

Unavailability of transportation	56	3.21
Unsatisfactory quality of food	56	3.16
Unsatisfactory quality of accommodation	56	3.04
Unavailability of accommodation	56	2.98
Lack of important information availability	56	2.98
Unfavorable natural environment	56	2.95
Unavailability of food	56	2.91
Lack of friendly environment	56	2.75

Source: Primary data

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY AND CONCLUSIONS

In Bangladesh, the tourism sector is a promising sector as Bangladesh has tremendous natural beauty, and the tourists have huge interest in visiting the country. The Study discovers valuable insights of tourism places in Bangladesh which may assist the planners and marketers for taking strategic decisions and the future development of the tourism sector in Bangladesh.

Development and improvement in infrastructure sector of Bangladesh such as accommodation facilities, transportation, and communication will foster the tourism industry in Bangladesh. For this it requires integration of private and public tourism related organization to support, communicate and promote the tourism industry

The tourism industry of Bangladesh can play an indispensable role in the economic development of the country nevertheless it requires right tourism marketing plan which should be conveyed through integrated marketing communication channel.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

Although this study makes an important theoretical significant addition to identifying the key attributes of destination image and obstacles in Bangladesh, it contains several limitations. The limitations are important to acknowledge for the

clarification of the study. The attributes used in this study may not fully reflect all the attributes of destination. Moreover, the study was conducted based on the information from a small number of respondents, for this reason, the results of the study may not be generalized to the large population. There was lack of secondary data source as the study requires more information to represent the real picture of the tourism sector in Bangladesh. Future studies should explore the relationship between the attributes of destinations and satisfaction levels of consumers.

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