



Factors Affecting the Selection of Tour Destination in Bangladesh: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

Although multifaceted problems are causing the frustrating scenario of the country's tourism sector, Bangladesh has the potentials to develop its tourism sector and earn huge foreign currency and generate employment opportunities like the neighboring countries, such as India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Nepal who attract substantial number of tourists every year and thus generates huge amount of foreign currencies. The paper looks at different preferences of the tourist and examines the tour intention in selecting different tour destination. The study utilizes both exploratory and empirical research approach. The study collects data through interview with a structured self-administered questionnaire from 146 tourists, in utilizing convenient sampling technique. A multiple regression model was estimated to examine the effects of different factors on the tourists tour intention where nine factors related to different aspects of tourism such as service quality, natural beauty, known destination, convenient lodging, adventure, security, effective and efficient transportation, safe and quality food and shopping facility were used as indigenous variables where tour intention was used as exogenous variable of the model. The regression result shows that Service quality, Natural Beauty, Security and Shopping Facility are statistically significant indicating 24.6% of the variation in explaining the intention to select a tour destination in Bangladesh. The study outlines some policy implications.

Keywords: Tourism, Tour intention, Destination

1. Introduction

Tourism is a growing industry not only in developed countries, but also in developing as well as in underdeveloped countries (Tasci, *et al.*, 2004). The tourism industry generates substantial economic benefits to both host countries and tourist's home countries. According to the World Tourism Organization, 698 million people traveled to a foreign country in 2000, spending more than US\$478 billion. In terms of receipts, tourism earned US\$ 129.7 billion for developing countries in 1996 (excluding fares), which is 29.9% of the global total (WTO, 1998). International tourism receipts combined with passenger transport currently total more than US\$ 575 billion – making tourism as the world's most export earner (WTTC, 2005).

For many indigenous communities, particularly in tropical developing countries, tourism has indeed represented a first or stronger connection to capitalist markets (Campbell, 1999; Honey, 1999; Johnston, 2000; Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Rodriguez, 1999). In these countries, tourism is a catalyst of change in household economies, leading to new opportunities for employment, new sources of cash income, and new information about technologies (Barkin, 1996; Eadington & Smith, 1992; Levy & Lerch, 1991; Liu, 2003).

Bangladesh having various kinds of natural variations e.g., hilly areas, sea beaches, mangrove forest and many historical places, has a huge potential in the scenario of world tourism (Islam, 2006). But the basic structure required for attracting the domestic as well as foreign tourists is yet to be developed. Whereas the neighboring countries like India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Nepal attract substantial number of tourists every year and thus generates huge amount of

foreign currencies. Though Bangladesh, since the industrial policy of 1999, that integrated tourism has been treated as an industry and termed it as a thrust sector (Islam, 2006), could not develop its various tourist destination sufficiently attractive to the foreign tourists. The performance of a tourist destination and satisfaction of visitors with the destination are of paramount importance to the destination competitiveness since the pleasantness of the experience is more likely to influence visitors' future behavior. (Baloglu, *et al.*, 2003).

Bangladesh, although, having the longest sea beach of the world at Coxes Bazar, the largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, attractive hilly areas in Hill Tracts cannot attract sufficient number of foreign tourists. Multifaceted problems are causing the frustrating scenario of the country's tourism sector. In Bangladesh, insufficient infrastructural development at various tourist spots, lack of proper facilities for the tourists, scarcity of skilled and professional tour service providers and poor promotional programs are responsible for the lower response from the foreign tourists. Therefore the target customers are not being properly addressed and thus the tourism sector in Bangladesh is not flourishing in that pace as expected. The paper thus looks at different preferences of the tourist and examines the tour intention in terms of selection of different tour destination.

2. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

In a review of customer satisfaction research in the hospitality and tourism industry, it is found that most of the studies undertaken by hospitality researchers have focused on identifying the sources of customer satisfaction and discovering effective ways to determine customer wants and needs. While most researchers disagree on the number of key attributes, they all agree that satisfaction must be measured on a multi-attribute scale (Cai & Zhang, 2003; Neal, 2003; and Yourtseven, 2000).

In a post-modern society, tourism is often conceptualized as a highly complex series of production-related activities (Pretes, 1995). Recently, the concept of customer value has become an important key to building a sustainable competitive advantage (Woodruff, 1997).

Customer satisfaction related to service quality during the vacation experience is of paramount importance to the travel and tourism industry (Neal, 2003). Customer satisfaction has generally been conceptualized as the 'outcome' for the customer after exposure to the service product (Crompton and Love, 1999). A major focus in any hospitality and tourism service model should be the personal linkage between the service provider and customer (Noe and Uysal 2001).

Service quality and customer satisfaction have been critical concepts in the fields of recreation and tourism as well as in marketing because they may be used as indicators of profitability and the successful achievement of organizational objectives. Most studies have paid attention to the distinctiveness of these concepts, the ways and means to measure them, and their interrelationship vis-à-vis their influence on outcomes (Lee, *et al.*, 2004). It is the task of the event management to provide quality of service elements for each type of visitors. Visitors expect the service elements to demand their expectations with full satisfactions (Yourtseven, 2000). Regardless of the type of tourism management tool used, the authentic qualities of the destination and community need to be preserved to keep the local identity of the destination. (Tasci, *et al.*, 2004)

International tourism industry comprises of various sub-functions of overall tourism industry in forms of transportation, food and lodging also security in some cases. Attractiveness of the spot, historical aspects and entertainment facilities are also major actors for tour attractions. It is required to provide a basket of services in all those fields in order to satisfy customers (Neal, 2003). For providing maximum level of customer satisfaction, it is necessary to understand what the customers really want. Various tour organizations thus adopt offensive strategy which involves providing consumers variety of services.

The tourism industry would cease to function without an efficient and effective transportation system (Cook *et al.*, 2007). To become a 'destination', a historic city or city centre needs to be easily accessible. Those off major rail or road transportation networks have been significantly losing out. For many, ease of access needs to be considered with adequate parking facilities that are convenient to the city centre – yet at the same time do not detract from the character of the historic environment. With retail becoming a leisure activity, studies show families visiting retail parks and the like on weekends can easily ignore an historic centre or major historic attraction that is only a few kilometers away (Kroshus, 2003). Transport is the cause and the effect of the growth of tourism. To start with, the improved facilities have stimulated tourism, and the expansion of tourism has stimulated transport. Accessibility is the main function behind the basics of tourism transport. In order to access the areas that are mainly aimed, tourists will use any transportation mode. However, air transport is the main mode for international tourism (Kroshus, 2003).

Although accommodations can be found in many shapes and sizes, these facilities have commonly been grouped under the umbrella term lodging. Accommodations create temporary living, quarters for guests through a variety of sources, including bed and breakfasts, condominium properties, timeshares, conference centers, hotels, motels recreational vehicle parks, and campground. Lodging properties, which provide the bulk of overnight accommodations, can be traced to biblical times. Lodging properties are more than just mortar, bricks, and sticks. Once the physical facility has

been constructed, a staff must be hired, trained, organized, and motivated to meet guest needs. This task often begins long before reservations are made or guests arrive. Depending on the size of a property, guests may encounter a whole host of service employees (Cook *et. al.*, 2007).

According to Middleton and Clarke (1999), accommodation plays a functional role by providing the facilities that make travel convenient and comfortable. Hall (1995) regarded accommodation as one of the more critical components on the demand side as accommodation has a major influence on the type of visitors who come to a destination. Cooper *et. al.*, (1996) suggested accommodation provides an essential support services to satisfy the wider motivation that brought the visitor to the destination.

Food obviously plays a major role in tourism and therefore services related to food are very crucial. The required and preferred food items in destinations' vastly depend on the cultural and geographic background of the guests (MacDonald, 1997). Foodservice operations are not simply in the business of providing food and beverages; they are in the business of creating guest enjoyment. Achieving this goal requires attention to detail and preparation that begins well in advance of welcoming the first guest. The guest experience is determined by a variety of interrelated factors from menu design and place settings to plate presentation and style of service. Each of these factors plays a significant role in achieving guest satisfaction and must be made within the physical and human constraints of the operation (Cook *et. al.*, 2007). Food and beverage are vital components of the tourism experience, and are increasingly being seen as prime travel motivators in their own right.

Safety and security are vital to providing quality in tourism finally affect in tourists destination selection. More than any other economic activity, the success or failure of a tourism destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors. This was highly evident in the aftermath of the tragic events of 11th September 2001 (Besculides *et. al.*, 2002). We cannot be complacent, since there is an emerging consensus that crime - which raises safety issues - is a growing concern among tourism stakeholders who fear the potential damage that it may inflict on the perception of safety and, by extension, the industry (Volker and Sore'e, 2002). Of even greater concern than crime is the issue of visitor harassment, which also impacts on the tourist's sense of safety. It may be claimed that, although varying in severity, it is a widespread phenomenon.

Entertainment is closely related to leisure is the availability of entertainment facilities in historic centers. Opera, theatre or concerts, especially those taking place in historic and atmospheric settings add to the visitor appeal of a place and can become an important factor in determining an overnight stay. To be sustainable they need to appeal to local interests and remain accessible. Other forms of entertainment, such as nightclubs, may be less welcome in the historic environment, even though they have come to be an important economic contributor in places. (MacDonald, S. 1997)

Many resorts and estimations were simply developed in locations with natural beauty, favorable climates, and easy transportation access. In fact, one popular classification system that has been used to describe resorts relies on the historical seasonal operations patterns that defined the markets of many resorts (Gee, 1988).

People have always been attracted to new, unusual, or awe-inspiring attractions and events in every corner of the world. In the days before recorded history, travelers may have journeyed for miles just to experience the beauty of the setting sun across a mountain valley or to participate in a religious festival in honor of bountiful harvests. Today, we may expect more, but we are still inspired to travel by the appeal of special attractions and events. No matter whether it is the chance to attend a rock concert, to witness Shakespeare being performed in the rebuilt Globe Theater, to climb to the top of the Eiffel Tower, or to view the solitude and majesty of Ayers Rock, tourists are constantly seeking new sights, sounds and experiences as well as the opportunity to participate in a variety of leisure activities (Cook *et. al.*, 2007).

Attractions are similar in some ways to live entertainment alternatives. Visiting attractions or enjoying entertainment opportunities requires travelers to make choices about how they will use their leisure time. Some attractions are planned around historic sites and natural settings while others are designed and constructed around planned activities, themes and events. Depending on the purpose or setting, they may be controlled an operated by not-for-profit organizations that are dedicated to preservation and interpretation or commercial organizations dedicated to meeting guest's needs while making a profit. Live entertainment opportunities may also be found in these same settings and many be operated on a not-for-profit or a for-profit basis. However there are some key-differences between attractions and live entertainment venues (Cook *et. al.*, 2007).

Attractions are natural location, objects or constructed facilities that have a special appeal to both tourists and local visitors. In addition to these attractions, tourists and other visitors are also drawn to see and be part of a variety of live entertainment opportunities. While most attractions are permanent, entertainment alternatives are often temporary. In contrast, events such as fairs and festivals are temporary attractions that include a variety of activities, sights and live entertainment venues (Cook *et. al.*, 2007).

Shopping may be part of the travel experience or it may be the primary focus of travel. Shopping is an activity that crosses all market segments. As long as cities have existed, the pattern of going into town has included a leisure

experience, and visiting towns is an essential part of the tourist market (Jansen, 1991). While some visitors simply pick up necessities or a souvenir as a reminder of their travels, others may travel to specific locations for the primary purpose of shopping. Nearly nine out of ten, or 89% of overseas travelers report that they shopped during their visit to the United States, according to a study conducted by the U. S. Department of Commerce and Taubman Centers Ind. (Knight 1999).

In review of the above-mentioned research outcomes the study anticipates the following hypotheses:

H1: Tourists perception on the service quality is positively related to their visit or revisit intention.

H2: Tourists perception on the natural beauty of the tour destination is positively related to their visit or revisit intention.

H3: Tourists awareness on the tour destination is positively related to their visit or revisit intention.

H4: Tourists perception on convenience of lodging facility of the tour destination is positively related to their visit or revisit intention.

H5: Tourists perception on adventure of the tour destination is positively related to their visit or revisit intention.

H6: Tourists perception on security of the tour destination is positively related to their visit or revisit intention.

H7: Tourists perception on effective and efficient transportation in reaching the tour destination is positively related to their visit or revisit intention.

H8: Tourists perception on the safe and quality food of the tour destination is positively related to their visit or revisit intention.

H9: Tourists perception on shopping facility in the tour destination is positively related to their visit or revisit intention.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design, Sample, and Procedure

A descriptive research design was used to test the hypotheses, proposed for examining the effects of various factors to the tourists' tour intention and /or revisit intention, with data collected from different tourists in Bangladesh through a self administered structured survey instrument. The survey questions were adopted from the literature and exploratory techniques. A convenient sampling method was used to select the sample considering the total citizens of Bangladesh as population of the study. The sample for this study is selected from the prospective tourists of 4 divisions in Bangladesh such as Dhaka, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet. Different types of tourists have been included in the sample, which is stated in the sample profile, to make the sample representative. A total of 150 surveys were conducted in April 2008-August 2008 while 146 questionnaires were received as complete thus used for further analysis.

3.2 Data Analysis

To address nine independent variables of the study 28 items were generated, that were purified and validated through the factor analysis and internal consistency of the items were examined using cronbach alpha.

For the purposes of this study, items measuring the independent variables were simultaneously subjected to a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. The result yielded a 9 factor solution with eigen values greater than 1.0 (as shown in Table 2). The factor analysis further reveals that all the items were retained within the 9 factors those are anticipated for the study that cumulatively explained 66.79% of the total variance.

4. Research Findings

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the responding companies.

The reliability statistics among study variables are presented in Table 4. As shown in the table:4, the internal reliabilities of scales for most of the factors found satisfactory is clearly acceptable (Nunally, 1978) although perceived quality, known destination, security, safe and quality food and shopping facility were below 0.70. All of the factors reliability score were above .60, except the shopping facility which was the lowest score that was very near to .60, thus, is acceptable for further analysis.

As shown in Table 4, regression model shows a good fit with F value 4.934 ($p < .01$) and R^2 value 0.246 indicating 24.6% of the variation in the travel intention can be explained by the independent variable. Service quality, Natural Beauty, Security and Shopping Facility are statistically significant in explaining the intention to select a tour destination in Bangladesh. The model result indicates that peoples perception on security, quality service and natural beauty of the destination are the stronger predictors followed by shopping facility of the destination.

5. Discussion

The purpose of the research was to examine the influence of various factors affecting the tour intention of the citizens in Bangladesh. This study analyses various factors that affect the people's tour intention adapted from different previous

literature as well as using field survey. Finally the study examines the effects of the factors in explaining the tourists' tour intention.

Nine factors related to different aspects of tourism such as service quality, natural beauty, known destination, convenient lodging, adventure, security, effective and efficient transportation, safe and quality food and shopping facility were used as indigenous variables where tour intention was used as exogenous variable of the model.

As hypothesized, service quality, natural beauty, known destination, convenient lodging, security, effective and efficient transportation, safe and quality food, adventure and shopping facility have positive correlation with the tour intention of Bangladeshi tourists. The regression analysis have indicated significant correlations between service quality, natural beauty, security and shopping facility of the destination with the tour intention where Service Quality, Natural Beauty, and Security are positively correlated which means that the positive perceptions of these three characteristics or attributes led to higher purchase intention. On the other hand, shopping facility is negatively correlated with tour intention, which means that the perceptions of more advanced shopping facility in the tourist spot led to lower visit or revisit intention. Although the shopping facility of the tour destination is observed significant in tourists' destination selection, disagree with previous researches as most of the researches explain the significant positive relation in between shopping facilities in destination and the destination selection (Knight 1999; and Jansen, 1991).

Security emerged as the strongest factor in terms of degree and magnitude affecting the tour intention of Bangladeshi tourists. The security issue is significant as people go for tour for pleasure and amusement. The amusement or entertainment is not possible if the place is not secured. It is thus an important aspect to be considered by the government of Bangladesh to ensure the security in various tourist spots in order to gain the tourist attention and acceptance.

Quality of service emerged as an important factor affecting the tour intention of Bangladeshi tourists. The service quality issue is significant because it deals with the tourists' perception on the pleasure.

Natural beauty of the destination also emerged as another important factor affecting the tour intention of Bangladeshi tourists. The natural beauty issue is significant as it deals with tourists' perception on the importance of the destination and its attractiveness to be considered as a place of destination. Natural beauty is in fact considered as core service of the tourism products.

Shopping facility exist in the tourist spot inversely affects the tour intention of Bangladeshi tourists. The result is not complementary with the tourists' intention in foreign countries. In international environment the tourists' fundamental desires are to make amusement with different tourism facilities that include convenient shopping facility. Purchasing different souvenir and gift items with indigenous products is one of the common tasks of general international tourists. The study findings implies that the people of Bangladesh are not interested to spend much money in purchasing products or commodities rather they are interested to spend almost entire money only for tourism purpose. In the case of group tour, tourists are bound to spend some money for shopping some fashion and fancy goods in response to their peers, friends or group fellows' pressure. It provides negative impact on their satisfaction. Unusual shopping and spending much money during the tour are not required if the destination has not adequate facility of shopping. The tourists of the country, due to their limited earnings, thus prefer to visit those destinations that don't provide adequate shopping facility or to push them to spend substantial amount of money in shopping.

6. Conclusions and Implications

Bangladesh is trying to foster its economic development through utilizing country's resources and expertise in service sector by the side of its main foreign currency earner manufacturing industry, the RMG industry and others. The government of Bangladesh has declared tourism is one of the thrust sectors of the country. The indigenous culture, climate, geographic location, currency exchange rate, price of essential commodities and services; and price and convenience of lodging and quality of food are extremely favorable for developing an organised and professional tourism industry in Bangladesh that can contribute a substantial amount of money each year in the national exchequer. It will also generate huge employment opportunities that will ultimately help develop country's overall economic environment. Although the tourism industry has the potentials of contributing a substantially large amount of money in national economy, the government's initiative, people's perception on the tourism, and country's culture hinder the development of the sector. The political instability, strike, blockage and ban in different issues and the emergence of political and religious rebellions and terrorism are to be considered as major barriers of emerging tourism industry in Bangladesh. Infrastructures like technological, legal, financial, human resources are also to be considered as important influencer in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a country where different types of tourism elements and destinations are available such as historical places, holy places, indigenous cultures, natural beauty, sea beach, hilly areas etc. The tourist places like Sylhet, Zaflong, Cox's Bazaar, Mohesh Khali, Cent. Martin island, Inani beach, Kuakata beach are important tourists areas that should be adequately developed for attracting both foreign and domestic tourists. The government should provide a positive look at developing the human resource infrastructure required for developing

tourism sector in the country. Highly professional and technical human resource competent in tourism can contribute positively to satisfy diversified needs of different tourists. A specialized institution thus may be established for tourism education in Bangladesh. The recent trends of rebellions and terrorist attacks and their possible growth are also hindering Bangladesh's tourism industry development and its sustainability. The initiatives to establish regional inter-country taskforce initiated by the present Govt. of Bangladesh to combat the possible terrorism attacks and activities may contribute positively in tourism sector. Besides the above mentioned supports and services the entrepreneurs in the field of tourism industry should be supported and encouraged by establishing government's grants and subsidies and adopting country's tourism policy that may be used as the guideline for the rapid expansion of this sector. The study is believed to be supported by its academic proponents and professionals.

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Table 1. Respondents Profile

Description	<i>f</i>	Percent
Respondents Age		
Below 25 years	12	8.2
25 to 45 years	103	70.5
46 to 60 years	30	20.5
Above 60 years	1	.7
Occupation		
Student	11	7.5
Government Job	44	30.1
Private Job	75	51.4
Business	11	7.5
Others	5	3.4
41 and Above	43	19.4
Gender		
Male	131	89.7
Female	15	10.3
Marital Status		
Married	110	75.3
Single	36	24.7
Education		
HSC or below	1	.7
Graduate	75	51.4
Post Graduate	70	47.9
Area		
Dhaka Division	26	17.8
Rajshahi Division	37	25.3
Khulna Division	75	51.4
Sylhet Division	8	5.5

Table 2. Principle Component Analysis

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.638	16.565	16.565	4.638	16.565	16.565	2.691	9.611	9.611
2	3.237	11.562	28.127	3.237	11.562	28.127	2.504	8.943	18.555
3	2.163	7.724	35.851	2.163	7.724	35.851	2.293	8.190	26.744
4	2.107	7.524	43.375	2.107	7.524	43.375	2.242	8.006	34.750
5	1.872	6.687	50.062	1.872	6.687	50.062	2.108	7.530	42.280
6	1.288	4.600	54.662	1.288	4.600	54.662	2.094	7.479	49.759
7	1.229	4.389	59.051	1.229	4.389	59.051	1.656	5.914	55.673
8	1.103	3.940	62.992	1.103	3.940	62.992	1.645	5.874	61.547
9	1.064	3.801	66.793	1.064	3.801	66.793	1.469	5.246	66.793

Table 3. Factor Matrix

		Component								
		Standard	Natural Beauty	Knowledge	Lodging	Adventure	Security	Transportation	Food	Shopping
1	q30	.453	.031	.040	-.205	.531	.085	.024	.146	.093
2	q31	.270	-.084	.029	-.140	.770	.097	-.022	.027	.122
3	q43	.105	.401	.119	-.012	.680	-.032	-.022	.053	-.060
4	q39	.009	.798	.072	-.030	.029	.006	.052	.107	-.017
5	q40	.000	.770	.029	.145	.029	.193	-.034	.064	-.001
6	q41	.191	.535	.035	.107	.481	-.215	-.026	-.035	-.006
7	q42	.140	.766	.068	-.046	.069	.053	-.014	-.041	.118
8	q6	.234	-.058	.164	.685	-.185	.295	.074	.120	.078
9	q8	-.037	.042	-.176	.643	-.103	-.014	-.068	-.010	.073
10	q9	-.143	-.018	-.015	.666	-.112	.077	.170	.205	.139
11	q10	.058	.187	.219	.663	.337	.025	.035	.094	-.255
12	q32	.694	.037	-.087	-.349	.354	.025	-.012	.107	-.038
13	q5	.655	-.018	-.063	.104	.209	.114	.047	.215	.064
14	q7	.782	.086	.077	.186	-.027	-.058	-.062	-.029	-.038
15	q27	.670	.243	-.022	-.125	.299	-.003	.157	.112	.112
16	q34	-.113	-.009	.678	.042	.021	.153	.054	.122	.032
17	q35	.278	.057	.684	-.056	-.093	.006	.150	-.320	.108
18	q36	-.118	.207	.701	-.094	.051	.194	.114	.092	.066
19	q37	.038	.021	.748	.068	.120	-.105	.024	.069	.035
20	q46	.116	-.014	.117	-.062	-.061	.062	.880	.081	-.090
21	q47	-.048	.010	.149	.205	.043	.020	.827	.130	.168
22	q16	.027	.077	.017	.115	-.021	.811	.023	-.049	.189
23	q17	.160	.196	.054	-.019	.040	.782	-.032	.183	-.122
24	q18	-.133	-.099	.185	.160	.059	.688	.127	-.251	.158
25	q1	.079	.086	.163	.107	.231	-.135	.148	.783	.039
26	q3	.289	.066	-.013	.221	-.079	.061	.119	.708	.063
27	q24	-.033	.104	.043	.168	.084	.068	.126	-.078	.866
28	q25	.199	-.010	.248	-.057	.017	.183	-.100	.303	.653

Table 4. Regression Statistics

Variables	Standardized Beta	Alpha
Quality Service	.252**	.692
Natural Beauty	.247**	.738
Known (Knowledge) destination	.007	.697
Convenient Lodging	.036	.652
Adventure	-.103	.757
Security	.261**	.698
Transportation	.087	.705
Safe and quality Food	.060	.646
Sopping Facility	-.175*	.551
R ²	.246	
F Value	4.934**	
Durbin-Watson	1.872	

** p < .001, * p < .05