Factors Affecting Tourist Satisfaction in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT:

Background: The recent development and the forecasted high growth in tourism sector of Bangladesh give an insight that it has great potentials to develop into a world class tourist zone and requires examination.

Aim: The aim of this study is to investigate the factors that impact tourist satisfaction in Bangladesh.

Research Methods: A questionnaire survey design was applied in order to determine the influential factors that have substantial impact on tourist satisfaction. Respondents from all over Bangladesh participated in the survey.

Results: The results indicate that the identified factors affect tourist satisfaction. From among the factors¸ information significantly influence tourist satisfaction. The findings suggest to put emphasis on information¸ accommodation¸ safety and security factors for boosting the level of tourist satisfaction.

Conclusion: The paper provides enhanced information for tourism authorities¸ and tour operators/managers about the tourists' perception in Bangladesh. By understanding how and what kind of different services and benefits are to provide¸ they can take actions for enhancing tourist satisfaction. The study offers an insight on tourists' perception in Bangladesh. It also expands the literature on the relevant field.

Keywords: Tourist satisfaction; Affecting factors; Bangladesh

1. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is a country of natural beauty where the tourism, as an industry, has immense opportunity to boost up the economy. Tourism has direct impact on social, cultural, educational, and economic sectors of any country and also on their international relations. It has been significantly influencing some businesses¸ like transportation, accommodation, food, shopping mall, entertainment and hospitality etc. All these businesses can enhance the economic development process by creating jobs, developing infrastructures and entrepreneurial skills, improving balance of payments, and increasing foreign exchange earnings. According to the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB)¸ in 2015¸ a total of 6,43,094 tourists visited Bangladesh by which the country earned US$ 145.74 million¸ although the amount was US$ 158.09 million in 2014 (The News Today¸ May 21 2018). The direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in 2015 was BDT 407.6 billion which was 2.4% of GDP, by generating 11,38,500 jobs directly which was 2% of total employment (Rashid, 2016). Amin *et al.* (2016) forecasted tourism will directly contribute to GDP by BDT 566.3 billion (1.90% of GDP) as revenue and it will also support 24,92,000 jobs (3.60% of total employment) by 2025.

Bangladesh is a home of the longest unbroken sandy sea beach and the biggest mangrove area in the world. Beaches, forests, hills, tribal community¸ culture, cottage industry, large river ways, agriculture etc. have made the country attractive for tourism. The country has bountiful resources to offer the tourists with its scenic beauty, ethnic diversity, unique cuisine, rich heritage and historical sites, profound religious sentiments and much more (Amin *et al.*, 2016). Despite the impressive beauty of nature, Bangladesh has remained an unattractive destination for tourists, according to Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (WEF¸ 2017). The report stated that Bangladesh is the least attractive destination in South Asia for foreign tourists in the 2017. Bangladesh stood at 125th (Score 2.9 out of 7) position out of 136 countries, whereas neighboring India was ranked 40th, Sri Lanka 64th, Bhutan 78th, Nepal 103th and Pakistan 124th (WEF, 2017). Thus¸ Bangladesh is lagging behind compared to other SAARC countries like India, Maldives and Nepal (Molla, 2017).

There are some reasons that hinder the development of tourism sector of Bangladesh such as - lack of quality accommodation facilities, decent public transports, safe and secured roads, well-equipped hospitals, and access to clean water, hygienic foods, uninterrupted access to electricity, well-trained tourist guide, entertainment facilities (shopping malls, movie theatres, theme parks, museums) and lack of community support (Amin *et al.*, 2016)**.** Political instability is also playing a negative role for attracting the foreign tourists (Molla¸2017). Dissatisfied tourists discourage and forbid others to visit the destination where they felt dissatisfaction earlier. Thus¸ it may create a chain reaction in the tourism of Bangladesh. Therefore, this study takes into consideration to find out the influential factors of the tourist satisfaction in Bangladesh.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
The objectives of the study are:
   2.1 To recognize the factors that influence tourist satisfaction in Bangladesh; and
   2.2 To measure the degree of influence of these factors on tourist satisfaction in Bangladesh.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The data were collected from 350 tourists who had completed and/or very close to complete their tour. These tourists were either domestic tourists or inbound tourists of Bangladesh, i.e. who came from abroad. A group of MBA research students collected the data from five star, three star and equivalent hotels, and domestic and international airports of Bangladesh. They seek out prior permission from the authorities first. Thus, the convenience sampling technique was adopted for selecting the sample size, because it is less expensive and less time consuming technique.

After studying the relevant literatures, five factors were identified that affect tourist satisfaction - *Information, Transportation, Accommodation, Safety and Security*, and *Tourism Spot*. By considering these factors, a structured questionnaire was developed that included fifteen different statements¸ as shown in Appendix 2. A five point Likert scale was used there for collecting and measuring the responses.

However, 37 questionnaires were cancelled due to incompleteness and rest 313 questionnaires were taken for measuring the tourists' satisfaction. The collected data were initially fed into and processed

by the SPSS-20 software. The instrument was examined by the validity test and the reliability test first. For testing the validity of the instrument¸ a correlation analysis among the variables was done. Later¸ data were analyzed through the regression analysis for measuring the influencing factors of tourist satisfaction.

4. HYPOTHESIS

H_0: Information, transportation, accommodation, safety and security, and tourism spot do not affect tourist satisfaction.

H_1: Information, transportation, accommodation, safety and security, and tourism spot affect tourist satisfaction.

5. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURES

The significance of tourism is viewed from many angles - economic, social, cultural, political, etc. (Ferdaush and Faisal, 2014). Tourism contributes to three high-priority goals of any country: income generation, employment creation, and foreign exchange earnings (Rahman, 2013) that creates immense opportunities for both business and employment. In developing and least developed countries, tourism is considered to be one of the fundamental pillars of their economic development (Parveen, 2013). It is one of the world's fastest growing industries, a major source of foreign exchange earnings of a nation, and a measure for resolving interstate and inter community conflict¸ as Chutia (2015) stated. By the year 2020, tourism will play a remarkable role in the economy of Bangladesh by contributing significantly to its GDP, through increased international tourist arrivals and increased tourism revenues¸ according to Ishtiaque (2013).

Customer satisfaction is extremely important in the service based business especially in tourism sector (Hayat and Supinits, 2016), because it has consequences on future prospects. Xu and Wang (2016) mentioned that service quality affects the tourist loyalty significantly. Chutia (2015) recognized tourists' interest factors - beauties of nature, architecture, peace of mind and fulfillment in religious places, new and different variety of food, culture of the people and uncommon adventure. Haque and Islam (2015) identified sightseeing, relaxation, health, work, and fun as the reasons of visiting. Hayat and Supinits (2016) revealed a positive relationship between the tourists' socio-demographic characteristics and their satisfaction. They found out tourists' satisfaction depends on scenic beauty, hotel services, transportation, food services, recreation facilities, safety and security of the destination. They revealed the attributes of destination as - accessibility, accommodation, architecture, arts, atmosphere, climate, culture, expensiveness, festivals, food, galleries, handicraft, historical building, information system and museum to measure the overall tourist satisfaction. Roy and Hoque (2015) found a positive correlation between brand image of destination and tourists' loyalty. They emphasized on quality-price ratio for building strong brand image of Cox's Bazar. Hassan and Shahnewaz (2014) observed that tourists were mostly satisfied with amenities related to destination management, with a natural attraction and relaxation facilities¸ while they were disappointed with health and emergency services, transportations, tour guides, information¸ night life etc.

Ahmed *et al.* (2010) examined the effects of nine factors on tourists' tour intention - service quality, natural beauty, known destination, convenient lodging, adventure, security, effective and efficient

transportation, safe and quality food, and shopping facility. They found that service quality, natural beauty, security and shopping facility are statistically significant to select a tour destination. Roy and Roy (2015) attempted to highlight the factors such as updated tourism policies, privatization of tourism spot and organization, introduction of hotel and tourism management education, infrastructures, rail connectivity between Cox's Bazar and Chittagong, political stability and security system at the tourist place. Som *et al.* (2012) indicated that destination image, and relaxation and recreation are the most important destination attributes and travel motives for repeat visitors. Assaker *et al.* (2011) confirmed that satisfaction has a significant, positive, and direct impact on immediate revisit intention; while agents, accommodation providers, transportation providers, tourism information offices, local inhabitants, and natural and artificial resources intervene in the travelers' experience.

Chutia (2015) discovered that tourists have some common demands - clean, hygienic and comfortable accommodation, good transportation system, decent shops (catering to ethnic art), entertainment (represents cultural heritage) etc. He also identified that absence of tourism policy, insurgency, lack of information and infrastructural facilities, lack of coordinated efforts among the agencies and absence of trained tourist guides hampered tourism of Assam. Tuhin and Majumder (2011) appraised tourism industry development in Bangladesh and identified 'lack of adequate marketing practices' as a reason of failure of this industry. They suggested to the government for formulating a tourism policy immediately and to the concerned authorities for concentrating on the marketing strategies for getting rid of the industry failure. Chowdhury *et al.* (2013) studied the prospects of tourism with the help of public private partnership projects in Bangladesh. They found that lack of infrastructure and supporting facilities restrain the potential opportunities to fully access the diverse tourism sights and attractions in Bangladesh.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

6.1 Demographic Profiles of the Respondent

Total number of respondents were 350 out of which 313 responses were accepted in this research. Among the total respondents, 220 were domestic tourists and rest 130 were international tourists. The respondents were also distributed according to their tourism destination, as shown in Appendix 1. The considering thing is all the respondents were not touring for entertainment and amusement. 28 respondents were for medical purpose, 18 were for shopping, 24 were for having training, 28 were for official assignment, and finally 252 were for entertainment and refreshment. It was observed that a large number of respondents (280) were in a short duration tour, i.e. 1 day to 5 days' tour, while a small number (10) were in a long duration tour, i.e. more than 10 days' tour.

Interestingly, a considerable number of respondents (175) completed their tour in 4 to 7 persons' group, whereas 1 to 3 persons' group tour were made by 98 respondents. Cost effectiveness and convenience in a group were the causes of this scenario, although only 77 respondents were participated in a bigger group (more than 7 persons). However, the research also took into consideration the cost factor of the tourists. It was found that relatively smaller number of respondents (37) spent higher cost (more than BDT 50000 per person), although 20 respondents

spent BDT 31000 to BDT 50000 (per person) for their tour purpose. In addition¸ a large number of respondents (156) spent below BDT 10000 (per person)¸ while 137 respondents spent BDT 11000 to BDT 30000.

6.2 Validity Testing

For testing the validity of the instrument¸ the critical correlation coefficient (r_c) is calculated first. Here¸ sample size (n) is 313¸ significance level (α) is 0.05 and it is a 2-tailed test. The corresponding critical correlation value (r_c) is 0.111. To be a valid instrument¸ the r value of all the variables should be greater than the r_c value (i.e. r > 0.111).

Table 1: Correlations

		Information	Transportation	Accommodation	Safety and Security	Tourism Spot
Tourist Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.524**	.216**	.385**	.288**	.234**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From Table 1¸ r value of Information¸ Transportation¸ Accommodation¸ Safety and Security¸ and Tourism Spot is 0.524¸ 0.216¸ 0.385¸ 0.288 and 0.234 respectively. It is found out that the instrument is valid¸ because the r value of all the variables is greater than r_c (0.111).

6.3 Reliability Testing

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.734	16

Table 2 shows the reliability of variables that were used in this research. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.734¸ which indicates the instrument is reliable and the variables are internally consistent.

6.4 Regression Analysis

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.619[a]	.383	.373	1.211

a. Predictors: (Constant), Tourism Spot, Information, Safety and Security, Accommodation, Transportation

In Table 3¸ the value of R (coefficient of correlation) is 0.619 which proved that the rela tionship between the five independent variables and the dependent variable is significant. The value of R^2 (coefficient of determination) implies that 38.3% of the total variance in tourist satisfaction

are explained by the predictor variables¸ i.e. Information, Transportation, Accommodation, Safety and Security, and Tourism Spot.

Table 4: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	279.469	5	55.894	38.083	.000[b]
	Residual	450.582	307	1.468		
	Total	730.051	312			

a. Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Tourism Spot, Information, Safety and Security, Accommodation, Transportation

Table 4 shows that the P value is 0.00 (<0.05). Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to reject the Null (H$_0$) Hypothesis at 5% level of significance. It means that the Information, Transportation, Accommodation, Safety and Security, and Tourism Spot significantly affect the Tourist Satisfaction.

Table 5: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-2.285	.472		-4.838	.000
	Information	.779	.094	.411	8.295	.000
	Transportation	.015	.137	.005	.112	.911
	Accommodation	.434	.091	.228	4.755	.000
	Safety and Security	.513	.124	.193	4.145	.000
	Tourism Spot	.308	.148	.098	2.077	.039

a. Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction

Table 5 shows the regression coefficients of independent variables. Almost all the variables have a very good influence on the dependent variable. Three variables – Information¸ Accommodation¸ and Safety and Security are significant at the .001 level. Tourism Spot is significant at the .039 level. But Transportation is not that much significant¸ as suggested by the model. The standardized coefficient beta (ß) indicates that Information has the highest influencing power which is followed by Accommodation¸ and Safety and Security. Based on the findings of Table 5¸ the following regression equation can be developed:

$$Y = -2.285 + 0.779 + 0.015 + 0.434 + 0.513 + 0.308 + \text{Error Term}$$

Here¸ Y means Tourist Satisfaction.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Tourism contributes to the national GDP as well as to the employment by creating jobs. In today's Bangladesh¸ there are many tour operators¸ travel agents¸ transportations¸ hotels and so on. But it is ignored by the authorities that there are different types of tourists with different purposes¸ like medical treatment¸ shopping¸ official assignment¸ amusement etc. That is why¸ all types of tourists should not be treated equally. Therefore¸ tourism authorities and policy makers should design

different types of policy and strategy to attract different types of tourists and ensure their satisfaction. With the aim of investigating the factors that affect tourist satisfaction in Bangladesh, the research is conducted. It also measured the degree of influence of these factors on the tourist satisfaction. The results of the research suggest that the selected variables adequately elucidated tourist satisfaction and that the policy makers should focus on the factors that affect tourist satisfaction in Bangladesh.

Tourists are pleased if they receive updated information, use adequate transportation, access quality accommodation, enjoy safe and secured tour, and have a neat and clean tourism spot with proper facilities. One of the important findings of the research indicates that the selected factors are positively correlated with tourist satisfaction in Bangladesh. Another finding directs to reject the null hypothesis, i.e. the research got enough evidence to accept the alternative hypothesis, which means *information, transportation, accommodation, safety and security, and tourism spot* influence the tourist satisfaction in Bangladesh. A specific discovery from the regression coefficients indicates that greater emphasis should be given towards information, accommodation, and safety and security in order to boost up the level of tourist satisfaction. This study will lead the future research, specifically, with more sample size and to explore more influencing factors of tourist satisfaction and to test the collected data with multiple statistical tools.

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