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The Consequence of Destination Image on Travel Motivation: Evidence from Bangladesh Ecotourism

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ABSTRACT

The precipitous expansion of ecotourism destinations has intensified competition in the tourism business. Thus, the present study investigates the connection between destination image and travel motivation that marketers must comprehend and focus on establishing ecotourism in Bangladesh. Despite a growing number of works on destination image, there has been little investigation on the relationship between travel motivation. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the effect of destination image and travel motivation on tourists' selection of ecotourism destinations. In contrast to previous research, which primarily focused on identifying destination features, this study employed a structured questionnaire directed at tourists during their on-site experiences. Using SPSS-SEM, the suggested structural model was evaluated with a sample of 326 tourists from various Bangladesh ecotourism destinations. The results confirmed that "cognitive" and "affective" destination images significantly influence travel motivation. It also indicates a better understanding of the relationship and significant managerial implications for destination marketing managers.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism frequently works as a catalyst for other development by providing a diverse range of employment opportunities. In recent years, the tourism business has expanded tremendously throughout the world. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2019) has demonstrated that tourism earning is the most sustainable source of foreign exchange for developing nations. Bangladesh's tourism sector is still emerging, equated to other Asian countries. It is a small part of the global tourism market compared to its neighbouring nations. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2019) reported that inbound tourists visited Bangladesh in 2019 for a total of 323,225, from 139,106 in 2010, while local tourists numbered approximately 4.2 million. The number of tourists has steadily increased yearly, but this figure is significantly lower than that of other developing countries. Among the challenges facing tourism marketers are guaranteeing the quality of tourism services and the competitiveness of tourism destinations, which will undoubtedly result in a rise in tourists. Bangladesh's government must seek a tool and collaborate with the private sector to boost the tourism business in such instances.

Ecotourism planning and sustainable development positively impact economic contribution (Bashar, 2018). It has reached in deep relationship with the overall tourism industry worldwide. Ecotourism concentrates on environmental and social concerns. It is an alternative to conventional tourism resulting from understanding the global tourism business. Numerous research on ecotourism has been conducted but rarely on the impact of ecotourism destination image and motivation that affect tourists' destination selection decisions. As the researchers defined motivation as a set of needs, much effort has been directed toward tourist motivation over time (Swanson & Horridge, 2006). Álvarez (2012) points out that ecotourism attractions are the key motivation for travel to the natural environment. Since Bangladesh has enormous potential for ecotourism, it also requires a distinctive marketing campaign to attract tourists (Islam, Iftekhar & Islam, 2012). As the discussion progresses, this study's objective is to determine the effect of destination image on tourists' travel motivation in selecting ecotourism destinations. Therefore, it uncovered these factors and specified the advancement of ecotourism in Bangladesh.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecotourism Destination

Numerous studies have been conducted on the potential of ecotourism in the interaction between environmental preservation and development. It unites this form of tourism in preserving the natural environment and the forefront travellers to diverse ecotourism destinations (Gunter, Ceddia & Tröster, 2016). Thus, understanding the broader tourism market for ecotourism operations is needed to support the economy and enhance social strengths. It also maximises ecological resources and economic strength (Bashar, 2018). However, research indicated that strategies and initiatives are essential for enhancing tourists' visitation and developing ecotourism destinations (Mondino & Beery, 2018). Under these settings, it is necessary to undertake thorough research to ascertain the reality of Bangladesh's varied and inadequately defined ecotourism destination market. Hence, the justification of this study may achieve tourists' attention in future and demonstrates the field of ecotourism destination development in Bangladesh. The tour destination selection and decision-making

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largely depend on the tourists' psychology, needs, wishes, and desires (Svenson, 1996). Extended time may often be required when conflict arises with the destinations tourists select. On the other hand, re-visitation usually takes less time to decide as tourists have gained some experience (Ezebilo, 2013). Therefore, understanding tourists' preferences is equally crucial for destination marketers to meet their expectations.

Destination Image and Dimensions

Destination image becomes an essential element in tourism marketing research. Gallarza, Saura and García (2002) found and stated four essential characteristics of destination image: complex, multiple, relative, and dynamic. Several complex situations may arise in the destination image attributes. Thus, it is necessary to evaluate its complicated nature. As stand by the characteristics of the tourists, not all of them have come from a favourable environment, and some of the prospective tourists may come from different knowledge and experiences backgrounds (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Their intention and motivation may differ, adding complexity to the destination image perspective (Sirgy & Su, 2000; Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002). Supporting this notion, researchers have asserted that the convolution of destination image may arise in various types of tourism activities. However, Gallarza, Saura and García (2002) further stated that multiple aspects might come into the tourists' minds towards the enrichment of destination image as it focuses on destination marketing, sustainable development, and management.

From a similar perspective, researchers also emphasised that the dynamic nature of a destination image is subject to influence and conditional, which responds appropriately to the changing environment (Gallarza, Saura & García, 2002). Destination marketers should be mindful of these forces and adapt strategies (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). The significant role of destination image in understanding tourist travel behaviour and effective tourism marketing strategies emphasises tourists' travel decisions (Chi, Pan & Del Chiappa, 2018). Moreover, it can be vital for the destination's marketing managers to ensure the tourists' expectations in achieving competitive advantages.

However, it is suggested by the researchers that image is usually used to identify the necessary forms of the judgement of any products or destination evaluation process (Li, Liu & Soutar, 2021). Thus, an image can enable tourists to experience and motivate destination selection (Souiden, Ladhari & Chiadmi, 2017). Supporting this notion, researchers have asserted that destination image has three main components – cognitive, affective and conative elements (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Gartner, 1993; Trauer & Ryan, 2004).

Cognitive images are the views or understandings of evaluating a destination's features (Wang at el., 2011). Upon motivation, people's values for particular places are affective images (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010). According to Gartner (1993), the cognitive component is "the total of an object's ideas and attitudes that results in some internally accepted image of its features." The reasons why a traveller chooses one location over another are connected to the affective component. Images created during the cognitive stage and assessed during the emotional stage are what the conative component is dependent on (Yoon & Uysal, 2004). It is stated that destination image is vital and plays several roles in making decisions. All decision-making elements, including money and time, depend on image to meet the motive of the decision-maker (Gartner, 1993). In addition to its direct effect, research indicates that one's knowledge of a destination (the cognitive component) indirectly influences their overall view through the affective component of the destination image (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Baloglu and McCleary (1999) found that cognitive image influences emotional image perceptions significantly more than the overall image, and affective images influence the efficacy of overall image on tourist behaviour to some extent.

Travel Motivation

Motivation is the process that causes individuals to act as they would. It begins when a consumer wants to satisfy a need (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). It is also an organisational process that has prompted researchers to consider leisure and recreation travel as psychological activities. Knowledge about travel motivation is essential to understanding travel trends. Still, for ecotourism marketers, a separate inquiry relating to ecotourism travel motivations is required to plan effectively and attract tourists. To better understand travel habits and demand, it is necessary to investigate the tourists' travel motivation. Awareness of travel motivation would also help tourism marketers develop tourism products to meet the tourists' needs and wishes (Otoo & Kim, 2018). Different theories have given distinct definitions of operations toward the concept of travel motivation. Based on the preceding debate, this current study directs the necessity to understand the image considerations of destination and travel motivation to attract tourists to visit Bangladesh ecotourism destinations.

Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

For this study, an integrated model of destination image dimensions and travel motivation has been constructed based on the literature, emphasising the interactions between cognitive, affective, and conative components. However, this relationship has not been thoroughly explored in the context of ecotourism in Bangladesh. Therefore, with all the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The cognitive component of the destination image has a direct and positive effect on travel motivation.

H2: The affective component of the destination image

has a direct and positive effect on travel motivation.

H3: The conative component of the destination image has a direct and positive effect on travel motivation.

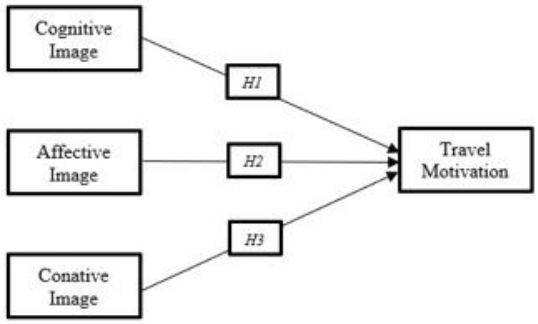

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHODOLOGY

This study followed the quantitative method. SPSS-AMOS was employed for data analysis. A total of 326 valid responses were analysed by using SPSS software. The sample size is the most crucial factor for SEM, and minimal sample size is recommended by Hair et al. (2015). A structured questionnaire including socio-demographic variables (gender, age, nationality), nineteen items measuring multi-dimensional destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary,1999), and seven items measuring travel motivation (Ryan, 1995) were designed for this study. Respondents were asked to evaluate the level of agreement on each measurement item using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

This study collected data using non-probability purposive sampling, and the study location comprised popular ecotourism destinations (Cox's Bazar sea-beach area; St. Martin island area; Nilgiri; Sajek valley; Foy's lake area; Jaflong waterfalls; Madhobkundo waterfalls) around Bangladesh. The study's target population was those tourists who visited or are currently visiting different ecotourism destinations in Bangladesh.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After the initial screening, there were a total of 326 valid responses, which exhibits a distinct collection of demographic information concerning gender, age group, nationality, monthly income and frequency of travel. (Table 1).

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profile

Items	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	231	70.86
	Female	95	29.14
Age	18-25	83	25.46
	26-35	118	36.20
	36-45	88	26.99
	46-55	25	7.67
	56 and above	12	3.68
Nationality	Local	297	91.10
	Foreigner	29	8.90
Monthly Income	Less than BDT 25000	59	18.39
	BDT 25001-50000	72	22.36
	BDT 50001-100000	62	19.02
	Above BDT 100000	49	15.03
	Others	84	25.2
Frequency of Travel	Monthly	24	7.36
	Quarterly	89	27.30
	Yearly	161	49.39
	Others	52	15.95

Validity and Reliability of the Measurement Model

The validity of a scale indicates the extent to which it measures a parameter. In this study, principles component analysis has been conducted to investigate the validity of the construct. The set criteria were to retain the items with loading greater than or equal to 0.5 (Hair et al., 2015). The results reveal that all items met the criteria and were retained.

First, the composite reliability measured the internal consistency reliability, with an adequate number recommended higher than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2015). Accordingly, the results demonstrated that all the constructs' composite reliability values were statistically accepted.

The convergent validity was evaluated using the factor loading and the average variance extracted (AVE) values. According to the findings, most factor loadings of measurement items were more than the cutoff values.

In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) may not be less than 0.5. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All AVE values were more than 0.5, as indicated by the findings. Consequently, it was determined that the measurements of all model constructs had provided an optimal convergent validity.

Using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker,1981), the discriminant validity was evaluated by applying the square root of AVE. Consequently, the square root of AVE for each construct was more significant than its correlation values with other variables (Table 2).

However, convergent and discriminant validity is required for an appropriate measurement model (Hair et al., 2019). Table 2 provides the factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, average variance extracted, and composite reliability of the variables. These statistics were required to determine the measurement model's suitability. All composite reliability results were above 0.60, indicating that latent variables had a high level of internal consistency. When the average variance extracted is used to evaluate

Table 2: Assessment of the Model

Construct/ Dimension		Items	Loadings	(α)	CR	AVE
Destination Image	Cognitive Image	COI1	.619	0.809	0.879	0.661
		COI2	.723			
		COI3	.722			
		COI4	.801			
		COI5	.624			
		COI6	.678			
		COI7	.813			
	Affective Image	AFI1	.737	0.931	0.874	0.517
		AFI2	.581			
		AFI3	.771			
		AFI4	.741			
		AFI5	.836			
		AFI6	.719			
	Conative Image	CON1	.683	0.819	0.873	0.517
		CON2	.791			
		CON3	.695			
		CON4	.675			
		CON5	.816			
		CON6	.719			
Travel Motivation	nil	TVM1	.815	0.826	0.831	0.513
		TVM2	.617			
		TVM3	.622			
		TVM4	.543			
		TVM5	.513			
		TVM6	.651			
		TVM7	.716			

convergent and discriminant validity, the average variance must surpass 0.50 to meet the criteria (Hair et al., 2015). In conclusion, the preceding discussion determined that all assessment criteria for reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were fulfilled, providing support for the model in the present study.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Research Constructs	Correlations			
	COI	AFI	CON	TVM
COI	.861			
AFI	.319	.739		
CON	.234	.510	.774	
TVM	.387	.351	.394	.747

The Structural Model

The primary condition for measuring the structural model is calculating the R2 value. In this study, the R2 coefficients for Cognitive Image (COI) (0.43), Affective Image (AFI) (0.39), Conative Image (CON) (0.59) and Travel Motivation (TVM) (0.63) suggest the model's constructs were well predicted (Chin, Peterson & Brown, 2008; Hair et al., 2015). To investigate these relationships further, CFA is utilised to analyse the measurement model's reliability and validity with modifications. Concerning the relationship between destination image and travel motivation, all indices of the measurement model, RMSEA = 0.052, CFI = 0.931, and df = 266, indicated a perfect model fit. At the 0.01 level, t-value indications associated with the entirely standardised loadings were significant in most cases.

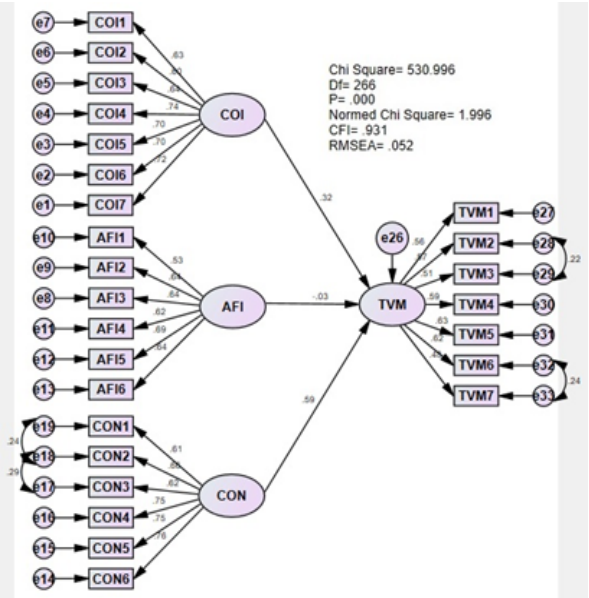

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Hypotheses Testing

The structural coefficients served as the foundation for testing the hypotheses. Table 4 displays the path coefficient results accompanying t-values and p-values. The path analysis revealed that the cognitive image of destination influenced travel motivation directly (β = .043, t = 5.04, p< .001). Thus, hypothesis H1 was accepted. This means a strong relationship between the constructs. The respondents who visit ecotourism destinations based on the cognitive image have a higher selection attitude toward ecotourism destinations in Bangladesh. It is consistent with the concept and findings in the prior research that the cognitive image is highly connected to ecotourism destination choice (Prayag & Ryan, 2011; Jiang & Ritchie, 2017).

This study found an insignificant relationship between affective image and travel motivation towards ecotourism destination selection (β = .044, t = -.442, p > .001). In other words, when tourist motivation for travel is low, even if the destination's image is solid and effective, the intention to visit will be low. Therefore, the interaction terms between the affective image and motivation did not show statistical significance. Even though many previous studies (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991, Alcañiz, García & Blas, 2009) evidenced a significant relationship, and thus H2 was not supported.

The SEM analysis also confirms the statistical significance of hypothesis H3. Conative image effected travel

Table 4: Hypotheses Results

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	S.E.	t-value	p-value	Results
H1	TVM<COI	.219	.043	5.041	***	Supported
H2	TVM<AFI	-.020	.044	-.442	.658	Not Supported
H3	SED<CON	.445	.059	7.481	***	Supported

motivation directly (β = .059, t = 7.481, p > .001), resulting in, H3 is accepted. Moreover, it can be concluded that a conative image of the destination had the strongest direct effect on travel motivation. The finding also reveals that the conative image of the destination is the most powerful motivating factor for visiting ecotourism destinations in Bangladesh. Additionally, this conclusion confirms prior tourism and destination image studies (Hahm & Wang, 2011; Zhang & Peng, 2014).

Implications

The study aims to examine how the components of the destination image dimensions interact with tourists in the different ecotourism destinations in Bangladesh. These findings add to the existing body of knowledge in tourism. Destinations are frequently seen in extensive lists since they have similar characteristics. It emphasises the necessity for each destination to build a distinct image, placing them in direct competition. As a result of these insights, tourism-related businesses may tailor their services to match the demands of tourists and achieve the desired outcomes. However, the competent authorities may also analyse the affective dimension of the destination's image when it becomes crucial for ecotourism destinations in Bangladesh to boost ecotourism.

Limitations and Future Directions

Time and expense have been essential factors for gathering data. The researchers incurred the expenses involved in this study, such as the travel expenses, software licenses, and gift items for respondents, posing a limitation to this study. Future research should employ theories established in a comparative framework and generate hypotheses supported by more empirical evidence.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that cognitive and conative images on travel motivation impact tourists' decisions to visit Bangladesh ecotourism locations. Destination management organisations and marketers must continually comprehend their destination's image to maintain positive and alter unfavourable perceptions among potential tourists. In addition, companies must analyse why most tourists come to the destinations, segment their guests, and develop tourism offerings accordingly.

Last but not least, expanding this study to include more destinations and perhaps different tourist contexts might provide additional evidence on how destination image perceptions and behavioural intentions are developed across diverse consumer groups.

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