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Potentials of Establishing Eco-tourism in Cox's Bazar: Understanding Tourist Perspectives and Preferences for a Right Marketing Mix

Abstract

Cox's Bazar is the leading tourism destination of Bangladesh but unplanned and improper development is leaving a trail of environmental injuries to the sector's sustainability. Eco-tourism is perceived to be the ideal solution to the problem but thus far has not been suitably implemented. This study was carried out to understand tourist perception of environmental conservation and eco-tourism, with specific allusion to Cox's Bazar in order to determine market potential and marketing avenues for a sustainable eco-tourism program. An online survey coupled with focused group discussion was conducted to gather data and deeper assessment of the mindset of Cox's Bazar tourists. The information was analyzed based on McCarthy's 4Ps classification of marketing mix using percentage analysis and measures of central tendencies and variability. The findings is that tourists are generally ready to enjoy eco-tourism in Cox's Bazar and a mix of nature adventure activities, which, if moderately priced and ideally located in Enani/Teknaf, can be promoted through online media to attract and retain steady tourist traffic in the region to regenerate funds into its ecological conservation projects. Such programs should be pursued through a public-private partnership venture to realize the strongest resources of both sectors. The research can contribute to the works of tourism policy makers and project developers to ensure a holistically lucrative and manageable eco-tourism program in Cox's Bazar. However, given that the study was conducted on a limited sample frame and size, further data should be collected to verify the findings and eliminate statistical errors before use.

Keywords: Cox's Bazar, eco-tourism, 4Ps of marketing, tourist perception

1. Introduction

Today, tourism and hospitality is one of the fastest growing industries in Bangladesh. The total contribution of travel and tourism to Bangladesh GDP was BDT 394.8 billion (4.3% of GDP) in 2012 with an expected rise by 7.5% to BDT 424.3 billion (4.4% of GDP) in 2013. It is expected to grow further by 6.8% per annum to BDT 819.4 billion by 2023 (4.7% of GDP). Thus, out of 184 countries, Bangladesh ranked 22 in 2013 growth forecast and 12 in 2013 long-term growth forecast. Its employment contribution alone, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry, was 3.7% of total employment (2,714,500 jobs) in 2012 with an expected rise to 4.2% of total employment by 2023 (WTTC, 2013).

Of all, the most developed tourism destination of the country has incontestably been Cox's Bazar. As far back as the British occupation of the region, this sand and sun prospect has always received primary focus in the country's tourism expansion plans. This aspect coupled with Bangladesh government's latest bid to promote its proclaimed "longest natural beach in any nation" as one of the Seven Wonders of the World has geared a further acceleration in its advancement. As with any industrializing economy, this rampage of tourism expansion in Cox's Bazar, too, threatens a number of detrimental effects to its natural environment, including its local community and culture. Excessive crowding, poor waste management and its resulting pollution, lax security, and especially unplanned hotel constructions that has been burgeoning in the area to support its growing tourist population is not only causing temporal disturbance to its ecosystem but portends to eradicate its most attractive feature –uninterrupted exotic beach (Zahra, 2013). As such, the action calls for a restructuring of its tourism development plan to ensure sustainability of the industry by incorporating the positive evolution of its native social and economic touchstones, i.e. a need to inject eco-tourism into the product mix.

1.1. Eco-tourism for Sustainable Tourism Development

Over the years, many have tried sufficiently to define the concept of "eco-tourism", perhaps the most succinct and widely accepted demarcation has been

"Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of the local people" (TIES, 1990).

Sustainable tourism, for the matter, is declared to be

“Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (WTO, 2005).

The roots of eco-tourism sprouted from the movement to incorporate the preservation of our natural environment as constructive goal in any organization domain, popularity known as sustainable development. The idea was well documented in the Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*, which was published by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. Although the report spoke generally about the need to minimize the impacts of corporate pursuits on our natural world today so that our future generations may continue to enjoy tourism resources without hindrance tomorrow, as a major contributor to world GDP, the tourism industry followed suit to comply with this new global prerequisite, as the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, published in 1993, voiced. In fact, the synergy of eco-tourism, the most popularized of alternative tourisms, with mass tourism is expected to be the main direction for the future of tourism (Hirotsune, 2011).

Without a doubt, well-structured and conscientiously implemented policy frameworks for eco-tourism may lead to numerous positive impacts such as labour emancipation of the indigenous population, promotion of local handicraft industries, opportunity to self-finance protected areas hence enabling better preservation of natural flora and fauna as well as wildlife, etc. Moreover, while eco-tourism may help to educate world travellers about local communities and natural resources of the specific destination, the knowledge that nature conservation can lead to a source of long-term income may also motivate local communities to contribute to the preservation of their natural habitat and safeguard their co-existing species. Also, greater economic growth in eco-destinations may prevent emigration of local people to the cities, hence maintaining the population distribution balance between cities and rural areas (Nash, 2011).

1.2. Tourism, Eco-tourism and Cox’s Bazar

As already stated, the progression of the tourism sector of Cox’s Bazar has taken on an avalanche-like attribute. In the last decade, over 200 hotels have mushroomed between Cox’s Bazar Town to Enani, which is only a 33 km fragment of the 120 km long beach and employs nearly 4,500 employees within the vicinity; there are now over 50 tour operators and guide houses employing 15 people on average; nearly a quarter shy of 200 restaurants

with average 20 kitchen and service staff; and over 5,000 construction workers and engineers working for the development and maintenance of its hospitality properties. In addition, tourists hiring beach umbrellas called 'kit-kot', driving small sand vehicles locally known as 'z-ski', purchasing conch shell items from street peddlers and such amusement pastimes further generate revenue and employment. All these activities cater to a growing tourist population in the region that balloon to a proportion of nearly 2 million visitors (daily average of 30,000 tourists) during peak season, i.e. November to March (Azam and Ahmed, 2010).

Yet, despite the growing number of travelers, their perception towards Cox's Bazar as a tourism destination favors strongly towards only attributes such as attraction of the beach and surrounding natural sceneries and horizon, availability of local transportation and cost, service quality and availability of local residential hotels, and behavior and hospitality of local community, while strongly disfavoring the conditions of existing emergency services such as lifeboat and first aid, waste disposal facilities, public and private toilet facilities near beach areas, cleanliness of beach area, etc. (Dey et al., 2015). This suggests tourists' inherent inclination towards Cox's Bazar's natural environment and local community involvement factors.

It should be noted that despite the rapid growth of tourism in Cox's Bazar, it is driven mostly by the large local (i.e. Bangladeshi) tourists rather than international tourists, as opposed to the general scenario with most popular tourist beaches around the world. A preliminary inquiry with the top 10 largest and most popular (according capacity and occupancy rate, respectively) hotels in the area revealed that, in 2013, on an average, 52.68% of guests were residents of Dhaka, followed by 16.87% from Chittagong, only 6.97% were foreigners, 4.08% from Khulna and the rest from other districts of Bangladesh. Additionally, occupational profiles of guests revealed Bangladeshi business and private service professionals as the greater majority and students as the next largest group.

The lack of diversity among guests, with specific regards to overseas visitors, is generally due to the negative destination image of Bangladesh as whole in terms of political, economic and social volatility as well as lack of tourism information in home countries, while the burgeoning local tourist population is caused by the increased purchasing power of Bangladeshi nationals that faces a lack of alternative outlets for travel demands within the country (Zahra, 2012). Moreover, the haphazard planning and construction of tourism facilities and lack of educated guidance for

developers and locals further places Cox's Bazar on the precipice of losing the tourism potential it grasps.

It is widely accepted that developing countries may benefit from eco-tourism by increasing international visitor motivation through promotion of exotic locations, especially when locals show equal enthusiasm to get involved in the process (Clifton and Benson, 2006). Cox's Bazar, with its natural resources and the easy hospitability of locals, is the ideal destination for purporting eco-tourism. The region already harbors a host of public natural parks and reserves (e.g. Dulhazra Safari Park), cultural hubs (Aggmeda Khyang), wildlife protection facilities (Marine Alliance Bangladesh), etc. Sadly, they see little tourist traffic around the year, mostly due to the lack of ready information or promotion.

However, till date, there is only one private hospitality facility that actively promotes eco-tourism and that is Mermaid Eco-tourism Ltd, a venture established by a local businessman of the region, which has gained some popularity amongst tourists and has managed to "put itself on the map". Unfortunately, despite having launched seven SBUs in Cox's Bazar and Dhaka to promote its ideologies, only three operations still remain in Cox's Bazar and one in Dhaka, whereas, none of its promotional campaigns created sustainable impact due to lack of follow up programs and business is still generally struggling to bring in steady profit to ensure its self-sustainability. Ironically, its eco resort near Enani, despite its remote geographic position, attracts considerable foreign guests though incurs few repeat guests. It seems both the public and private eco-tourism facilities in the region have shown, thus far, a possible absence of proper product planning and promotion.

1.3. The Need for a Right Marketing Program

It has been established that Cox's Bazar is the leading tourist destination in Bangladesh and that, despite its gaining popularity, it chances to lose its greatest appeal due to unstructured tourism planning and ungovernable operations. Policymakers, academicians and business professionals have also acknowledged that its tourism operation can benefit from incorporating eco-tourism into the product mix. Yet few public or private eco-tourism facilities have emerged in the region as yet and those that are already in place have seen little success. This leads to assuming that unsystematic product and marketing planning could be the root of the stunted progress of eco-tourism in Cox's Bazar and this predicament can be stemmed if a right

marketing program is established. Thus, this study was conducted with the aim to understand the perspectives of current tourists in order to establish whether the type of travelers that make up the general tourist segment of Cox's Bazar are perceptually prepared to participate and enjoy eco-tourism within the region, and if so, to identify the kinds of eco-tourism benefits that can attract steady local and international clientele to the region in the future so as to help develop sustainable tourism.

2. Materials and Methods

The research chiefly employed online survey methodology to gather primary data, following it with focused group discussion (FGD) among a specific segment of the sample population to verify the significance and depth of the data gathered. To ensure tropical focus and consistency of data variables, the same structured questionnaire has been used to aid in gathering responses from all the data sources. However, while the online survey helped ensure data collection from a larger and wider number of samples to minimize deviation as well as cost, the FGD allowed deeper observation of respondent sensitivities with regards to the subject matter that eventually assisted in developing the qualitative analysis of the data thereof gathered. Surveys were self-administered; using the online survey tool called "kwiksurvey" to build the questionnaire and gather data, selected for its user friendliness, time efficiency and cost effectiveness. A total of 26 fields were applied to the questionnaire, where MCQ (single entry), MCQ (multiple entries), rated scaling, and order ranking were used to determine the necessary findings.

Quota sampling was conducted on Dhaka residents (middle to upper class with minimum graduation completed) as the lion share of the sample constituency, as previous studies have revealed this group as the majority of Cox's Bazar tourist segment. As most studies have recognized increased international visitors to be of great importance to tourism sustainability, samples were taken from overseas markets. All samples were of tourists who visited Cox's Bazar within the last 5 years as they are expected to possess greater understanding of the recent developments and drawbacks of the region's tourism prospects. The data respondent demography, as relevant to the purpose of this study, is as follows:

- 11 tourism professionals who have also visited Cox's Bazar on tourist capacity (sample set first participated in the multiple choice questionnaire survey and then the FGD in order to supply additional expert opinions on research matter);

- 22 tourism professionals who have also visited Cox's Bazar on tourist capacity (additionally surveyed online to reduce response deviation of sample segment);
- 93 non-tourism professionals (online survey to represent the majority tourist segment);
- 30 tourism students at tertiary level (online survey to gather perspective of emerging tourism leaders of the nation);
- 57 non-tourism students at tertiary level (online survey to represent current second largest occupational tourist group);
- 64 recent international guests (online survey to represent significant criteria of potential tourists).
- Note that the respondent demography is overlapping. In total, responses from 192 individual participants were utilized to collect and analyze data.

For the purpose of developing the questionnaire variables and analyzing the resulting data, McCarthy's 4Ps classification (product, price, promotion and place/distribution) of marketing mixes were used to identify consumer needs for potential eco-tourism offering. Whereas marketing mix describes a set of tools that marketers may use to generate sales, i.e. by delivering desired value to customers by identifying their needs, the 4Ps of marketing is one of the most traditional and widely used tools for creating, communicating and delivering the desired value to customers (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Upon completion of data collection, descriptive statistical analyses were greatly employed to interpret the information gathered. Measures of percentage analysis, central tendencies and variability were also used to help describe the data results and then understand the statistical significance of data findings, which also assisted to incorporating qualitative inferences in the discussion. In some cases, correlation coefficient relations were also demonstrated. As per the objective of this study, the findings from the data collected have been presented and analyzed under two major segments:

- Assessing tourist perception of environment conservation in general as well as with particular effect to tourism in Cox's Bazar to determine whether there is market potential for eco-tourism in the region;
- Understanding tourist preferences with regards to eco-tourism to identify the mix of marketing programs that marketers may effectively implement.

The second class of information and analysis has been provided adhering to McCarthy's 4Ps classifications of marketing mix.

3. Results

3.1. Tourists' Perception of Environmental Conservation

The level of concern and consciousness towards environmental conservation among tourist who visited Cox's Bazar within the last five years were measured using a scale of below average < average < above average (Figure 1, 2 and 3). Findings here were assessed on three specific points of focus: Tourists' level of concern for climate change, tourists' level of environmental consciousness while travelling and tourists' level of environmental consciousness when at home.

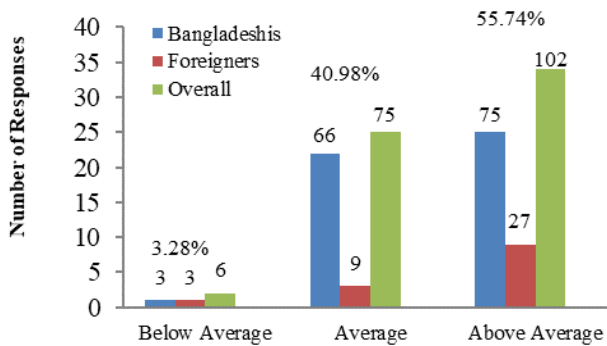


Figure 1: Tourists' level of concern for climate change.

Only 3.28% of respondents evaluated themselves as possessing below average level of concern for climate change, as opposed to the 40.98% of respondent who believed they possess average level of concern and an even greater percentage of respondents at 55.74% who consider themselves above average in their concern. Therefore, the total number of respondents who show from average to above average level of concern for climate change is a significant 96.72%. The level pattern between Bangladeshi tourists and foreign tourists appears similar.

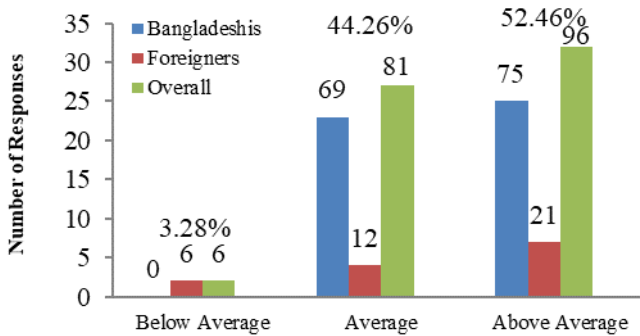


Figure 2: Tourists' level of environmental consciousness when travelling

Again only 3.28% of respondent evaluated themselves as possessing below average level of environmental consciousness when travelling, while 44.26% of respondent believed they have average level of environmental consciousness and even a greater percentage of respondent at 52.46% considered themselves having above average level of environmental consciousness, together again making up 96.72% of the respondents. The level pattern between Bangladeshi tourists and foreign tourists appears similar here as well.

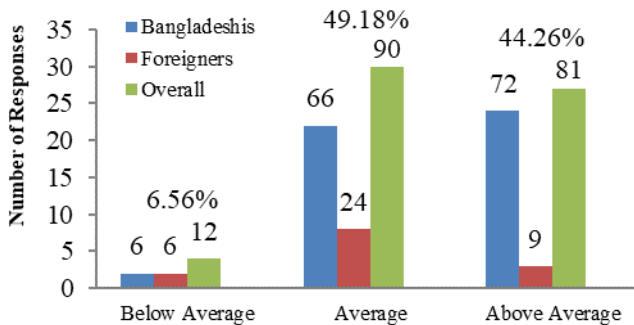


Figure 3: Tourists' level of environmental consciousness while at home

While only 6.56% of respondent evaluated themselves as below average in their level of environmental consciousness while at home, a total of 93.44% respondent show from average to above average level of environmental consciousness, constituting of 49.18% at average and 44.26% at above

average level individually. The level pattern between Bangladeshi tourists and foreign tourists again appear similar though percentage of responses for above average level of environmental consciousness is less than that of average level.

3.2. Tourists' Perception towards Environmental Conservation in Cox's Bazar

Here, Figures 4 and 5 reveal tourists' perception of whether the increased tourism activities in Cox's Bazar have led to negative environmental impact and if they have found that efforts have been made to curb any impact. On the other hand, Figures 6 and 7 reveal differences in response patterns amongst Bangladeshi and foreign tourists in their want of eco-tourism and willingness to participate.

A disturbing 72% of tourists noticed negative environmental impact due to increased tourism activities when they visited Cox's Bazar, while 19% were unsure and only 9% disagreed to any negative impacts.

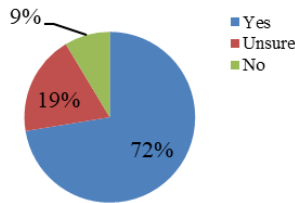


Figure 4: Tourists' awareness of negative environmental impact from increased tourism activities in Cox's Bazar

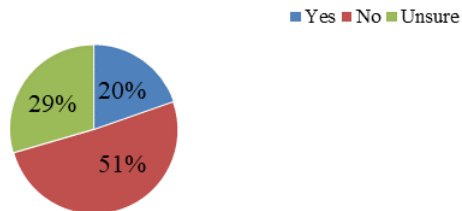


Figure 5: Tourists' awareness of efforts made to curb negative environmental impact in Cox's Bazar

Only 20% of tourists noticed efforts being made to curb any negative environmental impact in Cox’s Bazar, while 29% were unsure and a majority 51% did not see any such efforts.

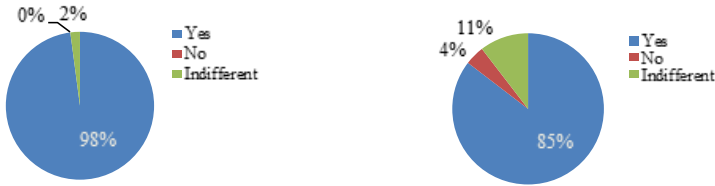


Figure 6: Comparison between Bangladeshi tourists’ want of eco-tourism program (left) to willingness to participate (right)

While a significant 98% of Bangladeshi tourists think eco-tourism should be integrated into Cox’s Bazar’s tourism program, the rest 2% stating that they are indifferent, a surprising 10% were unsure whether they would participate if such a program were to be implanted and another 4% were sure that they would not.

Percentage of foreign tourists who think there should be eco-tourism programs in Cox’s Bazar and those who claim will participate in such a program is consistent at 92%, the rest 8% claiming themselves as indifferent.



Figure 7: Comparison between foreign tourists’ want of eco-tourism program (left) to willingness to participate (right)

3.3. Tourists’ Preferences in Eco-tourism Product

Table 1 demonstrates the levels of preferences among Cox’s Bazar tourists towards various eco-tourism programs suggested during the survey, measured on a rating scale, in which mean score of >4.00 are considered to

have highest level of product potential, mean score 3.00 to 4.00 have moderate level of product potential, mean score of 2.00 to 2.99 have moderately low product potential, and scores <2 have poorest product potential. Figure 8, on the other hand, demonstrate tourists' opinion in which party should take on developing and implementing such eco-tourism programs:

According to the table, wildlife watching, nature safaris, beach cleaning and bike paths with rentals shows the highest level of potentials in descending order, where wildlife watching presents the most uniform responses, followed by beach cleaning, while both nature safari and bike paths with rentals show moderate level of uniformity. Guided hiking/trekking, subsidy on local products, certified interpretive ecological conservation seminars, restrictions on tour/hotel operators, and camping all shows moderately high level of product potentials in descending order, where subsidy on local products demonstrate least uniformity, guided hiking/trekking and certified interpretive seminars show moderate uniformity, and camping and environmental restrictions on tour/hotel operators showing most uniformity. Both mountain climbing and direct environmental taxes on tour/hotel operators show moderately low product potentials, though mountain climbing demonstrates the least uniformity in response in the array and directly taxing operators one of the most uniformity. Directly taxing tourists shows the poorest product potential with moderate level of uniformity in responses.

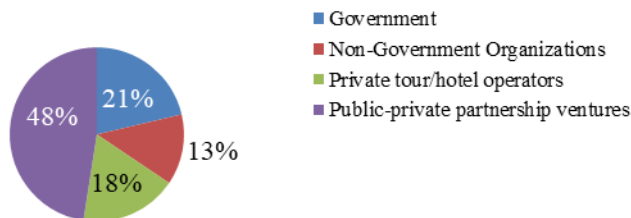


Figure 8: Tourists' choice of responsible eco-tourism provider

Most tourists would prefer a public-private partnership venture to take place in order to develop and operate an eco-tourism program in Cox's Bazar at 48%, while 21% tourists preferring government to take on the responsibility solely, 18% preferring private tour/hotel operators, and only 13% showing confidence in non-government organizations.

3.4. Tourists’ Preferences in Eco-tourism Price

Taking hotel accommodation as the allocation base of spending level while travelling, respondents who are willing to participate in eco-tourism programs in Cox’s Bazar were directly surveyed on whether they would be willing to pay more to stay in an eco-hotel, and 78.92% agreed that they would, while only 21.08% respondents stated their reluctance. Furthermore, Figure 9 illustrates the correlation coefficient between tourists’ willingness to participate in eco-tourism and prices willingness to pay, alluding to the parity between preferences among Bangladeshi tourists and foreign tourists. Measures of willingness to participate were 1=Yes, 2=Unsure and 3=No, while measures of prices willing to pay are in ascending order, scaled to proportion:

The correlation coefficient relationship between willingness to participate and prices willing to pay among Bangladeshi tourists is slightly positive ($r^2=0.09$), showing that the more they do not want to participate, the more they are willing to pay. Contrarily, the correlation coefficient among foreign tourists is moderately negative (-0.55), showing that the more they are sure not to participate, the less they are willing to pay.

Table 1: Potentials of various eco-tourism programs

Programs	Mean	± SD	CV%
Wildlife watching	4.44	0.39	8.71
Safari on nature conservatory/parks	4.23	0.51	12.06
Beach cleaning program with local schools/colleges	4.21	0.39	9.23
Bike paths on all routes of Cox's Bazar with rental stations to decrease pollution	4.15	0.69	16.71
Guided nature hiking/trekking	3.98	0.61	15.26
Subsidizing local handicrafts, herbal products, etc.	3.90	0.94	24.17
Interpretive education seminars on ecological conservation with certification offers	3.87	0.59	15.12
Environmental restrictions on tour/hotel operators	3.72	0.41	11.07
Camping/nature living	3.02	0.29	9.68
Mountain climbing	2.95	0.75	25.35
Direct taxing tour/hotel operators to fund ecological conservation	2.54	0.26	10.27
Direct taxing tourists to fund ecological conservation	1.82	0.32	17.47
<i>Mean ranges from 1 (most lacking product potential) to 5 (assuming highest product potential); n≈183</i>			

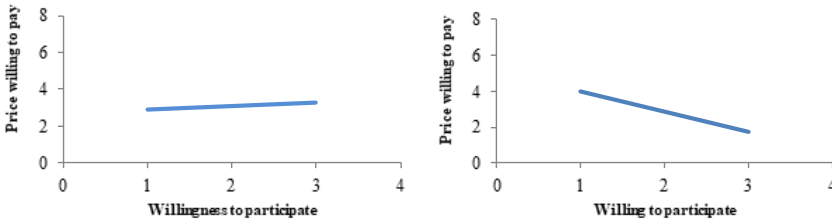


Figure 9: Comparison in responses among Bangladeshi tourists (left) and foreign tourists (right) in the correlation coefficient relationships between willingness to participate in eco-tourism and price willing to pay

To elaborate, the following figure shows how much overall tourists visiting Cox's Bazar are willing to spend on accommodations in eco-hotel, which was set as the allocation base for tourist spending on eco-tours. Note that here survey responses are from those respondents who stated they wished to participate in eco-tourism programs in Cox's Bazar.

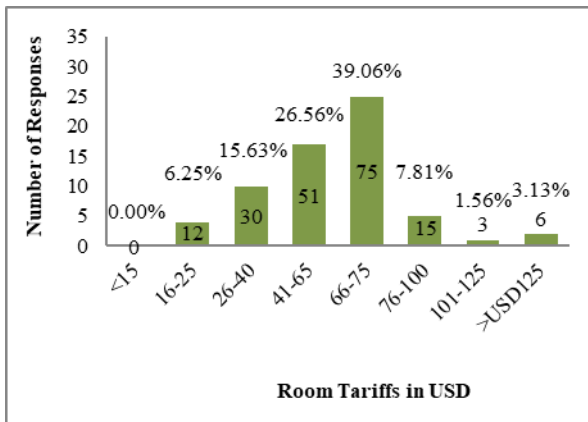


Figure 10: Tariffs Cox's Bazar tourists are willing to pay for eco-hotel accommodations [USD 1= BDT 80]

Majority of tourists (39.06%) are willing to pay USD 66-75 on eco-hotel accommodations in Cox's Bazar, closely followed by 26.56% willing to pay USD 41-65 and 15.63% willing to pay USD 26-40, making up total of 81.25% of tourists. A total of 9.37% tourists are willing to pay between USD 76-125, with only 3.13% willing to pay more than USD 125. There are also 6.25% tourists who are willing to pay only USD 16-25. None prefer to pay less than USD 15 (Figure 10).

3.5. Tourists' Preferences in Eco-tourism Place

In general, all respondents were asked if there were to be any eco-tourism program in Cox's Bazar, where in their opinion would be the most ideal location. Figure 11 illustrates tourists' location preferences for eco-tourism activities.

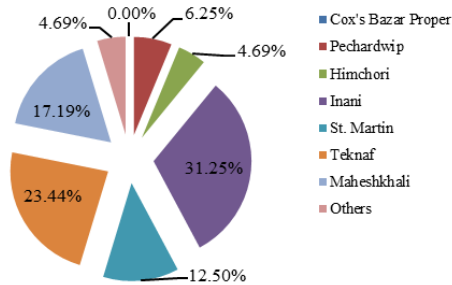


Figure 11: Tourists' location preferences for eco-tourism activities

Most popular choice for eco-tourism location is currently Enani at 31.25%, followed by Teknaf at 23.44%, Maheshkhali at 17.19%, St. Martin at 12.50%. The rest 15.63% of the tourists' responses were for Pechardwip, Himchori and other regions. None of the respondents preferred Cox's Bazar Proper as a suitable venue for developing an eco-tourism program.

3.6. Tourists' Preferences in Eco-tourism Promotion

Respondents were also surveyed on how they gathered information to plan their visit to Cox's Bazar on a series of options to determine the most effective communication tools and channels of tourism promotion. Multiple selections of choices were allowed in the questionnaire and a total of 411 responses were made through multiple-field entry. Figure 12 illustrates the information gathered.

As the figure illustrates, majority (69%) of tourists planned their tours by utilizing online media, with the next most utilized channel being print media at 19%, followed by TV/Radio media at 7%. Hotel sales forces and tour operators make up an insignificant share of media utilization at 2% each. Comparatively, hotel and tour operator websites make up the lion share of communication tools used at 22%, closely followed by sales promotion at 18% and search engines at 17%.

Next most used were direct marketing at 12%, public relations and travel directory equally at 9% and advertising at 7%. Government/Cox's Bazar promotional websites and events and experiences make up an insignificant portion at 6% combined.

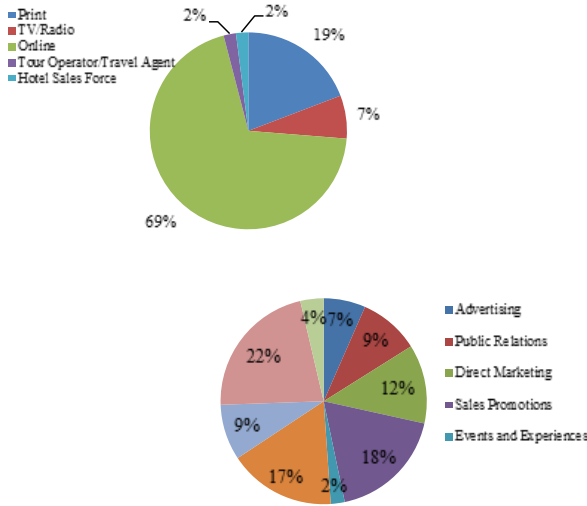


Figure 12: Tourists' choice of communication channels (top) and communication tools (bottom) to prepare travel plans

4. Discussion

In general, findings from the online survey conducted relatively matched those gathered through the FGD, verifying, and in many cases, reinforcing much of the information analysed in the previous section. However, apart from allowing deeper insight to the collective data, the FGD also instigated more critical comparison of certain information collected that may have been otherwise overlooked, particularly with regards to disparity among the direct responses of Bangladeshi and foreign tourists apropos their want of eco-tourism in Cox's Bazar and willingness to participate, or their expected spending on such tours, for that matter. Thus, it allowed for more profound

inference of the data gathered, collectively and within their respondent segments, as follows.

4.1. Rising Need for Eco-tourism Among Cox's Bazar Tourists

With only 3.28% of tourists considering themselves possessing below average level of concern for climate change with 96.72% of tourists showing levels of concern ranging from average to above average in ascending ratio, it can be deduced that there is a general growth in the level of concern for environmental preservation among tourists. Moreover, this trend is prevalent among tourists in their level of environmental consciousness during tours, too, where by respondents demonstrated similar percentage of self-evaluation, indicating that tourists' growth in concern for climate change may also impact their travel decisions. In contrast, tourist responses have shown fewer above average level of environmental consciousness when at home than number of responses for average level. Participant in the FGD presented their affirmation as well that while environmental setbacks cannot always be avoided, when going on vacation, an environmentally clean and rich destination is essential. From this information, we may interpret that regardless of how individuals lead their day to day lives, when making travel decisions, environmental health plays a significant part in their choices. Hence, developing and implementing a proper eco-tourism program in Cox's Bazar may be imperative to the destination's sustainability.

This factor is especially a point of concern when interpreting the fact that while 72% of tourists responded that they can surely confirm there have been negative impact on the environment in Cox's Bazar due to rising tourist activities in the region, only 20% agreed to have had seen efforts to curb these impacts, a significant 51% claimed there have been no such effort and the rest 29% remained unsure of any effort. This information relates a worrying conclusion that while the environment continues to deteriorate in the leading tourist destination of the country, hardly anything is being done to replenish its natural resources. Such evaluations of the condition of Cox's Bazar were similar among Bangladeshi and foreign tourists alike.

However, discussion with tourism experts presented one very valuable insight into the evolution of Bangladeshi tourists that was later confirmed through closer look at the data pertaining to the willingness to participate in eco-tour programs that has significant relevance to whether Bangladeshis

are ready to delve into eco-tourism. Whereas, an impressive 98% of Bangladeshi responded that they would like there to be proper eco-tourism program in Cox's Bazar, a fewer 86% only agreed that if given the opportunity to participate in such a program they will participate. In contrast, though a smaller 92% percent of foreign tourists responded to wanting an eco-tourism program in the region, the same percent also showed willingness to participate. This also shows more conscientious response trends among foreign respondents and may be indicative of a limitation of the study.

In fact, this interpretation is reaffirmed when looking into correlation coefficient between tourists' willingness to participate in eco-tour and amount they are willing to pay to stay at an eco-hotel. Bangladeshi tourists responses illustrated that they were willing to pay more when they were more sure not to participate, whereas among foreign tourists the correlation coefficient was negative, demonstrating that willingness to pay for an eco-hotel stay dropped when they were not willing to participate in eco-tourism. From expert opinion, it was gathered that Bangladeshi tourists are less evolved in their choice of travel experiences, seeking out luxury travel packages rather than "roughing it out" with nature. Another interpretation maybe that the origins of most Bangladeshis still remain very adherent to agricultural background hence their need "to return to nature" is less acute than those of the more urbanized foreign counterparts.

However, whether Bangladeshi tourists actively seek out to participate in eco-tourism or not, their rising level of concern and consciousness of environmental preservation can mean that they too may soon seek out this alternative course of tourist activities, just as the foreign tourists have already begun to do so. For when such time comes, it is necessary that Cox's Bazar be readied to cater to this growing need.

4.2. Rising Need for Eco-tourism Among Cox's Bazar Tourists

The study is conclusive of the fact that Cox's Bazar is ripe for a proper eco-tourism program from a marketing perspective. Though there are some discrepancies with regards to Bangladeshi tourists' (who make up the largest segment of Cox's Bazar tourists) willingness to participate in eco-tourism programs, the general trend indicate that overall tourists are becoming more environmentally conscious about their activities, especially with regards to making travel plans. Moreover, the study has established that proper eco-

tourism program may attract more foreign tourists into the region and that may influence greater influx of foreign currency circulating for the utilization of ecological conservation of Cox's Bazar.

The study also discovered a number of key benefits and tools that may be utilized to develop a holistic marketing program to attract and retain tourists to participate in eco-tourism in Cox's Bazar, thereby, propelling the sector's sustainability. A public-private partnership venture offering new age adventure activities such as wildlife watching, safari park tours, trekking, etc. may find considerable success, especially among young or foreign tourists. Moreover, the ideal platform has been discovered to be online media, which, employing a combination of communication tools such as SEO, OTA, online promotions, etc. may reach a wide range of tourists both locally and abroad. Findings have also suggested an array of price brackets that may cater to tourist needs and a host of locations ideal for such programs.

Findings, here, presented and analyzed can be utilized by government policy makers as well as hotel and tourism experts who wish to develop and implement sustainable eco-tourism programs in Cox's Bazar. Data presented the mind-set of the target market and is especially relevant as respondents have first hand experience of recent tourism conditions of Cox's Bazar to make known appropriate options to develop effective marketing mix for sustainable development of the sector. However, it should be noted that the study was limited to a small group of samples due to time, accessibility and monetary constraints. Though the finding and analysis have met the objective of the study, the survey would need to be exposed to larger number of samples in order to pose any applicable value to the targeted audience. Moreover, looking at certain discrepancies in response patterns of the sample, especially among Bangladeshi tourists, a question arises whether every field in the questionnaire was filled conscientiously by respondents, and if not, their motivation to do so. Hence, increasing the number of samples may also allow correcting any statistical errors in the collected data.

It is, therefore, recommended that further study needs to be conducted using a wider pool of respondents who represent a more elaborate population frame of tourist in Cox's Bazar and to allow room for utilization of more significant data. For this purpose, on field random sampling may be used. Focus for future action plans may also be to conduct individual study on the various marketing tools and mixes here identified as relevant and useful for promoting and implementing sustainable eco-tourism in Cox's Bazar.

Ideally, simulation exercise with sample tourists may be conducted to gauge the effectiveness of the marketing program formulated. Such types of studies may help us understand more thoroughly what the most efficient course of actions would be in order to ensure environmental preservation as well as economic growth through tourism activities.

5. Conclusions

It is evident from the secondary data and interviews that to find out the necessity of value chain analysis of mango supply chain in Bangladesh will help the students and business person who are involved with agro-business and to understand how values are added in different stages in the supply chain. It will also help the farmers and the business persons where they should minimize the cost to earn more yield to be more efficient and to be more responsive to the customer with quality mangoes with an affordable price. It is also evident that not only the intermediaries in supply chain are responsible for price increasing, but also farmers are responsible for that. Because of not following the rules and regulations on production and maintenance process, costly transportation, absence of fruit market information, inadequate government investigations, more intermediaries in supply chain are the main influences for increasing the price of mango when it is sold into the market to the end customer.

Government must take affordable initiatives to train the local farmer for being them educated on agriculture education, so that they can understand all ins and outs about the importance of quality. An appropriate training is needed regarding the use of pesticides should be done by every farmer. Building consumer awareness and knowledge is necessary. Government should be strict to reduce the extortions by giving proper security on the transportation mode and in the market. Farmers should follow the agricultural specialist's guideline for better quality of production, thus their cost will not be increase, and for sure, it will decrease. Extensive field data is required for getting more conclusive findings, which could not managed, due to limited time period of research.

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