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Destination on the Move in the Mind of People: Investigating Destination Image of the Tourists

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Abstract

It goes without saying that destination image is one of the most important factors that keeps the tourist moving i.e. to travel. Image perception before and after travel also varies that has impact on tourists revisit and recommendation to others. In this research we have tried to measure the destination image perceptions of two different time periods so that the image gap can be bridged. Initially the variables are factor analyzed to find out the latent variables that shape the image. After that paired sample t test has been conducted to test if there is any significant difference between perceptions in two time periods. We have also tried to estimate the influence of cultural values on destination image using ANOVA. Finally future research scope has been explored. The empirical findings reveal the evidence of an image gap that should be bridged. And surprisingly no evidence of significant influence of cultural values on destination image was found.

Keywords: Destination image, perceptions, cultural values, before and after visit image perception

1. Introduction

Unlike many other service sectors tourism has many service segments. This service industry is highly dependent on the quality of the hospitality offered by employees who work at hotels, restaurants, attractions, and gift shops, to name a few (Fick & Ritchie, 1991). Tourists (regarded as guest) participate in a service transaction with specific service sectors and providers (regarded as host) (Fick & Ritchie, 1991; Saleh & Ryan, 1991; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1995). This experience is also represented and evaluated by a complete service encounter or image that the destination holds in a traveller's mind (Gunn, 1988; Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1995). Depending on the perceived service quality and image of the destination, travellers' mind is on the move to a specific destination and then finally they are physically on the move to that destination.

Within this industry the host is responsible for creating and delivering the service at the same time that the guest is consuming the service and to deliver individualized services, the host must be constantly evaluating the tourist's needs and satisfactions (Vogt & Fesenmaier, 1995). But for destination it is virtually impossible to give individualized or customized service as we can't bring Pyramid of Egypt to Bangladesh, neither can they take the Sundarban-the largest mangrove forest in the world there. But one thing can certainly be done that is to put a good image of the destination in the moving mind of tourists by providing augmented service satisfyingly.

Bangladesh tourism has been criticised for having low destination image that is not supposed to be. Preliminary investigation tells that image is worsening due to the poor services the tourists receive. So, even after first visit to a tourism place tourists are going back with dissatisfaction i.e. damaged image that prevents them from further visit and recommendation that is creating barrier to retain old and create new customers. During the age of globalization, flow of information, communication and interaction among people have been increased dramatically than ever before (Shariful Alam, Rajib, & Arefin, 2010). So, if people leave the destination with bad image then it will go viral among his contacts seen or unseen. In this research we have compared the image before and after visit by tourists, domestic and international, that will give us an idea about the direction we are heading and where should it be.

2. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

There are many concepts regarding destination image concept. The image of a destination consists of the subjective interpretation of reality made by the tourist (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001). So, it is bit difficult to identify the factors that construct the tourists' destination image. More importantly image will influence a tourist in the process of choosing a stay, the subsequent evaluation of that stay and in his or her future intentions (Bigne et al., 2001). All the

tourists have a destination image before the real visit whether it is positive or negative. If after visit image worsen then definitely it will affect their future intentions. In this research we have tried to identify their destination image before and after the visit. To conduct this we have constructed the following hypotheses:

a) *H_0= before and after travel image perception does not differ significantly.*

This null hypothesis is composed of four hypotheses:

i. Infrastructures and socioeconomic environment image perception values does not differ significantly
ii. Social and cultural image perception values does not differ significantly
iii. Natural environmental image perception values does not differ significantly
iv. Affective image perception values does not differ significantly

b) *H_0= There is no significant influence of cultural values on destination image*

3. Methodology

To conduct this research qualitative and quantitative approach was adopted at the same time that is supported by previous research (Bryman, 2006). Several justifications for this combination are identified in social research literature. Several hypotheses have been developed to conduct the research and to support the hypotheses empirical research was carried out at some tourist destinations in Bangladesh. So, we have regarded the country rather than any specific place as destination.

3.1 Sample design and data collection

The target population of the research was tourists above 18 years old. The sample was selected by convenience methods distinguishing between national tourists and international tourists. Measurement of perceived image involving two different time periods was made at the same time, in that respondents attempted to compare their perceptions. However, it would have been technically impossible to ask respondents to complete the questionnaire before and after the visit. There could have been ambiguities and fallible memory in the retrospective questions in such a cross-sectional survey (Lam & Zhang, 1999).

Out of 371 questionnaires 247 have been returned. Finally 203 questionnaires have been selected for analysis after rejecting the incomplete questionnaires.

3.2 Measurements

Several data analysis techniques were used. The measures of service quality were factor analyzed. Four factors were extracted based on eigenvalue more than one. Finally extracted factors were regressed.

Tourists' image were measured on a 5-point Likert scale; the higher the scores, the greater the image perceptions. Individuals were asked to indicate their levels of agreement on each image attribute on a 5-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Factor analysis was conducted to extract the factors from the 18 image attributes.

Paired sample t test was conducted to compare the means of image perception of two different time periods. Paired sample t test was conducted before and after the factor analysis. Image attributes were ranked according to the gap score of the perceptions of 2 periods. Finally influence of cultural values on destination image have been tested by ANOVA. Influence of cultural values were measured according to the tourists' country of origin (Beerli & Martín, 2004; Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Hui & Wan, 2003; Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Brown, 2001; San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008) with some modification.

On the basis of literature review, a primary questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire design with some modification follows the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991) instrument (Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy and Responsiveness). SPSS and STATA have been used for the mathematical computation.

4. Analysis (findings and discussion)

4.1 Profile of respondents

Profile of respondents shows that male respondents dominated the sample (72.8%). One of the reasons was that most of the domestic females were reluctant to respond. Most respondents fall in the age category of 30s. The majority of respondents were white-collar (42.4%). Recently pink-collar users have increased (14.7%).

4.2 Perceptions of destination image during two time periods and the gap values (Paired t test)

To investigate if the perceptions scores of two different time periods differ significantly I have used paired sample t test. Table 1 shows the respective perception means, gap means and t values regarding the image perceived by tourists.

Overall perception values before visit exceed perception values after visit in all the attributes. This means that there was negative gap in all 18 attributes and thus positive gap in none. So, apparently destination Bangladesh is developing a low image that is threatening to the tourism development.

The paired-samples t-tests between the respective means of all the 18 attributes shows that they were significantly different (t<=0.05). So, we can reject the null hypothesis that was developed earlier.

4.3 Finding the latent factors of image destination

4.3.1 Sample Size:

McCallum et al(MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999) have demonstrated that when communalities after extraction are above .5, a sample size between 100-200 can be adequate and when communalities are below .5 a sample size of 500 should be better. We have a sample size of 203 with most of the communalities above .5 and remaining near to .5, hence the sample size should be adequate. We do understand that instead of having huge population it is difficult to get a big working sample size. However, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .987, which is above recommendation of .5(Kaiser, 1974). This value is also 'meritorious' (and almost 'marvelous') according to Hutcheson & Sofroniou (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). So, the evidence suggests that the sample size is adequate to yield distinct and reliable factors (Andy P. Field, 2005; Andy P Field, 2010).

4.3.2Factor Analysis:

To do factor analysis we start with Bartlett's test so that we can justify factor analysis is appropriate.

Bartlett's test:

Bartlett's test of sphericity has been used to test the following null hypothesis:

H_0= the variables are uncorrelated in the population. (In other words the population correlation matrix is an identity matrix).

This tests whether the correlations between questions are sufficiently large for factor analysis to be appropriate (it actually tests whether the correlation matrix is sufficiently different from an identity matrix). In this case it is significant ($\chi 2$ (153) = 1373.757, $p < .001$) indicating that the correlations within the R-matrix are sufficiently different from zero to warrant factor analysis. So, null hypothesis that the population correlation matrix is an identity matrix is rejected by the Bartlett's test of sphericity.

Factor Extraction/ Determining the number of factors:

SPSS has extracted 4 factors based on Kaiser's criterion of retaining factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. According to the table of *Total Variance Explained* the variance contribution rate of four common factors is 16.120%, 15.909%, 13.432% and 10.973% respectively, cumulative variance contribution rate is 56.434%, indicating that the extracted four common factors could explain 56.434% of the total variance of original variables. The size of the total variance explained reflects the level of total questionnaire information. The greater the total variance explained, indicating that the greater the contribution of factors on the evaluation of service quality.

Factor Rotation

It is necessary for factor rotation to explain in the best way when the factor interpretability is investigated. The size of the composition coefficient indicates the relationship between elements and extracted factors after rotation, the larger the number in the range between -1 and 1, the stronger the relationship, which is called the factor loading. Through rotation, the factor matrix is transformed into a simpler one that is easier to interpret that can be seen in the table 4.

Interpreting factors

Interpretation is facilitated by identifying the variables that have large loadings on the same factor. That factor can then be interpreted in terms of the variables that load high on it. Another useful aid in interpretation is to plot the variables, using the factor loadings as coordinates. Variables at the end of an axis are those that have high loadings on only that factor and hence describe the factor. Variables near the origin have small loadings on both the factors. Variables that are not near any of the axes are related to both the factors. If a factor cannot be clearly defined in terms of the original variables, it should be labeled as an undefined or a general factor (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Labeling the factors

Labeling the factors usually facilitates the presentation and understanding of the factor solution and therefore is a justifiable procedure (Filiz, 2010; Hair Jr, Anderson, Tatham, & William, 1995). So, in the next step we will label the factors instead of merely representing by numbers.

Factor 1: Infrastructures and socioeconomic environment

In the rotated factor matrix, factor 1 has high coefficients for variables IAV5, IAV6, IAV4, IAV3, IAV10, and IAV8. Therefore, this factor may be labeled as Infrastructures and socioeconomic environment. Factor 1 is composed of 6 items that accounts for 16.12% of the variance.

Factor 2: Social and cultural features

Factor 2 is composed of 6 items that accounts for 12% of the variance. Factor 2 is highly related with variables IAV17, IAV18, IAV1, IAV2 and IAV9. Thus factor 2 may be labeled as Social and cultural factor. A plot of the factor loadings (appendix), confirms this interpretation.

Factor 3: Natural environment

Factor 3 is composed of 3 items that accounts for 13% of the variance. This factor has high coefficients for variables IAV12, IAV1 and IAV13. This factor may be labeled as Natural environment as the attributes in this factor relates to Natural environment items.

Factor 4: Affective image

Factor 4 is composed of 4 items that accounts for 9% of the variance. This factor has high coefficients for variables 15, 14 and 16 that focus on variables related with affective image. Therefore, this factor may be labeled as affective image.

From the above discussion we can summarize that tourists seem to construct destination image from four factors. It is mentioned earlier that the four common factors could explain 56% of the total variance of original variables which indicates that they cover most of the information of the original variable. One of the most popular reliability statistics in use today is Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951). The coefficient alpha/cronbach's alphas of the common factors are above or near to 0.5 which shows that the internal consistency of each factor is high. Overall cronbach's alpha is .799. Nunnaly (1978) has indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient but lower thresholds are sometimes used in the literature (Nunnally Jum & Bernstein Ira, 1978). We have also found that .5 is the cutoff value for being acceptable for early stage of research.

4.4 Paired samples statistics for factors (Distribution of destination image factor values between 2 period of time)

Based on the results of factor analysis, table 7 presents the results of perceptions, and gap mean scores for the four factors. The results show that the paired samples t tests between the two periods' perception means of the factors were significantly different ($p<0.05$).

4.5 Estimating the influence of cultural values on destination image

Distinction between national tourists and international tourists was made to capture the cultural distance concept (San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008). As tourist destination under investigation is located in Bangladesh and most of the tourists interviewed here are from Indian sub-continent, Bangladeshi cultural distance may not be shorter than the international tourists' cultural distance. Theoretically cultural distance should have impact on the image of destination choice.

Analysis of variance was performed to examine how cognitive/affective image is affected by cultural values of individuals (cultural distance).

One-way ANOVA is used to analyze the difference in attitudes towards destination image between the three groups because attitude towards destination image is interval data and there are three groups to be compared. The ANOVA test of the three groups' attitude towards destination image shows that the three groups do not differ significantly in their attitude. Therefore we can conclude the people of different culture do not have different attitudes towards destination image of Bangladesh. For factor 1: $F(2,200) = 1.252$, $p = 0.288$; for factor 2 $F(2,200) = 1.160$, $p = 0.316$); for factor 3 $F(2,200) = 0.215$, $p = 0.807$; for factor 4 $F(2,200) = 1.763$, $p = 0.174$).

The perceptions of the cultural groups (national tourists, Indian sub-continent tourists and international tourists) are not significantly different for all the four image factors. Tourists with similar values to the destination's culture (national tourists) don't have a different image of the place compared with individuals that have a higher cultural distance (international tourists). This contradicts with the previous research conducted by Martın (San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008).

5. Limitations and Further Research

Given the difficulties to collect information from the respondents sample size was relatively small. The result would have more authenticity if we could increase the sample size. Using convenient sampling method was another drawback.

I already mentioned that measurement of perceived image involving two different time periods was made at the same time, in that respondents attempted to compare their perceptions. However, it would have been technically impossible to ask respondents to complete the questionnaire before and after the visit. There could have been ambiguities and fallible memory in the retrospective questions in such a cross-sectional survey (Lam & Zhang, 1999).

Another limitation is that the sample of respondents in this study was dominated by male (72.8%). So, respondent bias due to demographic differences could have been created.

Destination image can be further explored by identifying some other latent factors. I considered the whole country image as the destination image. In future research can be extended considering all divisions or parts as different destinations.

5. Conclusion

The research findings revealed that before and after visiting there was a significant gap between tourists' perceptions of image destination, in terms of Infrastructures and socioeconomic environment, affective attributes, social and cultural features and natural environment. To bridge the gap no single effort can work. Destination image can be improved with the help of government and different service segments that are linked with hospitality industry. Silver lining in the dark cloud is that we have got the immovable destination right. We only have to fix the moving image that is largely dependent on auxiliary or augmented services.

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Table 1. Paired samples statistics (before and after travel image perception values)

Image Attributes	Image Perception before visit		Image Perception after visit		Gap means[a] (Mean differences)	T value	p
	means	SD	means	SD			
1	3.92	.898	3.17	.981	-.754	8.563	.000*
2	4.00	.718	3.32	.970	-.680	8.502	.000*
3	4.19	.743	3.07	1.069	-1.123	11.793	.000*
4	4.16	1.007	3.17	1.131	-.990	9.349	.000*
5	3.79	.933	2.95	.961	-.842	8.694	.000*
6	3.98	.879	3.06	1.023	-.921	9.960	.008*
7	3.84	1.047	3.02	.895	-.818	8.136	.000*
8	4.00	.859	3.32	1.015	-.675	7.158	.000*
9	4.08	1.041	3.05	1.107	-1.030	9.896	.000*
10	3.81	.889	2.97	1.007	-.842	9.463	.000*
11	3.73	1.043	2.91	1.035	-.823	7.453	.006*
12	3.89	1.028	3.11	1.028	-.783	7.473	.000*
13	3.91	1.113	3.19	1.280	-.724	5.671	.000*
14	3.73	.839	2.86	.990	-.867	9.210	.000*
15	3.73	.989	2.95	1.052	-.783	7.717	.000*
16	3.94	1.025	3.00	1.171	-.931	8.324	.000*
17	3.93	1.124	3.03	1.112	-.901	8.164	.000*
18	3.72	1.032	3.01	1.175	-.704	6.550	.000*

Notes:

1. **t*-test two-tail with probability <0.05.
2. [a]Gap mean is defined as perception mean after visit - perception mean after visit.
3. SD=Standard deviations.
4. Tourists' perceptions were measured on a 5-point Likert scale; the higher the scores, the greater the perceptions.
5. Negative mean differences indicate that the perception after visit was worse than before visit.

It is mentionable that in my research I took all the positive attributes. There might be some negative attributes. In that case a negative difference would indicate the reversed perception.

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.798
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1373.757
	df	153
	Sig.	.000

Table 3. Total Variance Explained

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	6.057	33.651	33.651	6.057	33.651	33.651	2.902	16.120	16.120
2	1.572	8.735	42.386	1.572	8.735	42.386	2.864	15.909	32.029
3	1.313	7.297	49.683	1.313	7.297	49.683	2.418	13.432	45.461
4	1.215	6.751	56.434	1.215	6.751	56.434	1.975	10.973	56.434
5	.984	5.469	61.903						
6	.915	5.081	66.984						
7	.826	4.591	71.575						
8	.743	4.127	75.702						
9	.722	4.010	79.712						
10	.679	3.772	83.484						
11	.589	3.271	86.754						
12	.533	2.960	89.714						
13	.436	2.422	92.136						
14	.390	2.167	94.302						
15	.304	1.689	95.991						
16	.287	1.596	97.587						
17	.255	1.414	99.001						
18	.180	.999	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
IAV5	.784	.202	.075	.045
IAV6	.719	.136	-.087	.282
IAV4	.674	.062	.337	.195
IAV3	.509	.480	.260	.113
IAV10	.506	.169	.453	.034
IAV8	.505	.449	.052	.085
IAV17	.003	.778	-.122	.264
IAV18	.160	.684	.053	.112
IAV1	.350	.614	.324	.019
IAV2	.158	.546	.471	.082
IAV9	.321	.464	.345	-.135
IAV7	.379	.463	.162	.275
IAV12	.103	-.126	.740	.173
IAV11	.012	.278	.738	.127
IAV13	.196	.181	.583	.373
IAV15	.099	.133	.020	.751
IAV14	.057	.130	.212	.701
IAV16	.252	.061	.221	.641

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Table 5. reliability coefficient of the factors

Attributes	Factor loading	Communality	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative Var. %	Reliability Coefficient	Factor
IAV5	.784	.664	6.057	16.120	16.120	0.805	1
IAV6	.719	.622					
IAV4	.674	.609					
IAV3	.509	.570					
IAV10	.506	.491					
IAV8	.505	.467					
IAV17	.778	.689	1.572	15.909	32.029	.777	2
IAV18	.684	.508					
IAV1	.614	.605					
IAV2	.546	.552					
IAV9	.464	.455					
IAV7	.463	.460					
IAV12	.740	.604	1.313	13.432	45.461	.591	3
IAV11	.738	.637					
IAV13	.583	.550					
IAV15	.747	.592	1.215	10.973	56.434	.453	4
IAV14	.715	.556					
IAV16	.666	.527					

Table 6. Factors influencing image formation for destination

Factor interpretation	Variables included in the factor
1. Infrastructures and socioeconomic environment	IAV5: Shopping facilities(Hsu, Tsai, & Wu, 2009; Kim, McKercher, & Lee, 2009; San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008)
	IAV6: Good value for money (Kim et al., 2009; San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008)
	IAV4: Quality accommodation (San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008)
	IAV3: transportation system is well developed(Kim et al., 2009)
	IAV10: tourism industry is well developed(Kim et al., 2009)
	IAV8: night entertainment is well developed (Kim et al., 2009)
2. Social and cultural features	IAV17: it is a safe country(Kim et al., 2009) (San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008)
	IAV18: local residents are kind(Kim et al., 2009)
	IAV1: it is rich in historical tourism resources(Kim et al., 2009)

	IAV2: A lot of cultural attractions (San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008)
	IAV9: Interesting cultural activities (San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008)
	IAV7: cultural assets are well conserved(Kim et al., 2009)
3. Natural environment	IAV12: Variety of fauna and flora (San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008)
	IAV11: cities and tourist attractions are clean(Kim et al., 2009)
	IAV13: Beautiful landscapes (San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008)
4. Affective image	IAV15: Arousing destination(San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008)
	IAV14: Exciting destination (Kim et al., 2009; San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008)
	IAV16: Pleasant destination (Kim et al., 2009; San Martin & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2008)

Table 7. Paired samples statistics for factors

Factors	before visit Image Perception means (SD)	after visit Image Perception Perceptions means (SD)	Gap means (after visit mean-before visit mean)	T value	*p*
1	3.99(0.885)	3.09(1.034)	-0.90	13.478	.000*
2	3.92(0.977)	3.10(1.040)	-0.82	12.665	.000*
3	3.84(1.061)	3.07(1.114)	-0.77	8.438	.000*
4	3.80(0.951)	2.94(1.071)	-0.86	11.136	.000*

*indicate the values that are statistically significant

Table 8. ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
factor 1	Between Groups	2.497	2	1.249	1.252	.288
	Within Groups	199.503	200	.998		
	Total	202.000	202			
factor 2	Between Groups	2.316	2	1.158	1.160	.316
	Within Groups	199.684	200	.998		
	Total	202.000	202			
factor 3	Between Groups	.434	2	.217	.215	.807
	Within Groups	201.566	200	1.008		
	Total	202.000	202			
factor 4	Between Groups	3.499	2	1.749	1.763	.174
	Within Groups	198.501	200	.993		
	Total	202.000	202			

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