

A Study of European Tourists' Image of Bangladesh

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The objective of the thesis project is to identify European tourists' image of Bangladesh. The tourism industry in Bangladesh is one of the most important industries and is a vital resource for the country's economy. Concerning this issue, the country seems not to be a very exoteric holiday destination for European tourists compared to other Asian countries. This is why the main focus of this project is European tourists and their image of Bangladesh. To get a clear picture of the target group, the following research questions will be examined: How do European tourists choose their holiday destination? What are the expectations of European tourists when they visit Bangladesh?</p> <p>To build an image of any specific place it is necessary to promote tourism through marketing. This will increase the number of tourists in that particular place. In this case, the assigned body looks first at the target markets and identifies the customers' needs and expectations. It will also closely observe what competitors offer their target groups to bring uniqueness to their services. In this twenty-first century, it is helpful to use online tools and social media marketing to build an image of a specific place. People's behavior, climatic conditions, geographical conditions, travel duration, travel operators, and the political situation directly impact a person's expectations of a specific destination.</p> <p>In this project, the theoretical part is based on the concept of tourism, tourism in Bangladesh, the image of the destination, and the 15 Cs marketing framework towards the destination. The survey research was conducted from November 2021 to February 2022. The survey used a quantitative research method. On the other hand, some open-ended questions were included to overcome the restrictions of the quantitative research process. The survey was conducted through Webropol (an online survey tool). The findings can be used for the promotion of tourism in Bangladesh and to attract European tourists to visit Bangladesh.</p>	
<p>Keywords</p> <p>Bangladesh, destination marketing, destination image, branding, tourism</p>	

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1 Introduction

The proposed topic of the thesis is a study of European tourists' image of Bangladesh, considering Finland, Sweden, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK, Norway, and Denmark. The author conducted the research in combination with Bengal Tours Ltd. Bengal Tours has been operating tours in Bangladesh for inbound tourists and outbound tours for the locals for the last 20 years. It has around 70 personnel in two work divisions, one in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, and the other in a divisional city, Khulna. The company has 12 full-time interpreters for Japanese and ten English speakers for European tourists. It would like to see more European tourists visit Bangladesh and to operate the inbound tour for them. Currently, the company has a network in Europe through different tour organizations and travel agents. The tour company wanted to know more about European travelers' behaviors, expectations and decision-making, and their choice to travel in Asian countries—more specifically, what make a tourist choose a certain destination, including the pull and push factors.

The commissioning company of the thesis provides different types of tour services for Europeans who are willing to visit Bangladesh. It is very interested in the image of Bangladesh for European travelers, including what makes a destination a good and attractive destination and why people choose a certain destination. The commissioning company is inclined to increase the progressive image of Bangladesh to attract more tourists to travel to Bangladesh. From the commissioner's viewpoint, the results of this research will help the company to plan new tour packages, design new services, and offer safe and enjoyable trips to Bangladesh for European customers.

The author was born and brought up in Bangladesh. It has scintillating natural beauty, a rich culture, religious diversity, and lots of potential to promote tourism from across the world. Unfortunately, Bangladesh is still not well known, mainly in European countries. There needs to be an effort to build a destination brand image, including branding and marketing communication. Very little research has been conducted in relation to tourism in Bangladesh. There are a few articles and blogs published on the internet promoting Bangladesh as a tourist destination, but sadly these are not enough to brand a country as a tourist destination all over the world. From my experience in the European context, most European people do not know Bangladesh is a country of nature, a combination of forests, rivers, Saint Martin island, long stretches of sun-soaked beaches, venerable shrines, fearsome wilds, green fields, tea gardens, and so on.

Moreover, According to Wikipedia the world's longest natural sea beach, Cox's Bazar, is situated in Bangladesh. It is clean and consists of miles of sand. The world's largest single mangrove forest is also in Bangladesh and is a unique attraction to catch a rare glimpse of the Royal Bengal tiger in its natural habitat. The country has a beautiful network of rivers, connected with one other. In addition, it has rich archaeological sites in different districts in the country, among them Paharpur, Shalbon Bihar, Mahasthangar, and Mainamoti. In 1985, UNESCO declared Paharpur a world heritage site. Also, in the capital area of Bangladesh, there are many famous monuments that are symbols of beautiful Bangladesh, like Husseini Dalan, Ahsan Manjil, Sonargaon, Dhakeshwari Temple, and Lalbagh Fort (Shahan 2015.)

1.1 Research objective

The driving force for this study is determined by the company's internal demand, as well as the need for tourism and tourism development and the trend of European tourism to Bangladesh. This research strives to define the image of Bangladesh as a holiday destination for European travelers while proposing a plan for Bengal Tours to develop its promotional strategy in Europe. On account of this, this research aims to amplify the present condition of tourism marketing of Bangladesh in Europe to improve the image of Bangladesh and attract European tourists.

To get a valuable result for the research question of how to improve the image of Bangladesh and attract European tourists, the following points will be investigated:

1. Define the image of Bangladesh as a holiday destination for European tourists through research and analysis of their tourism behavior.
2. Identify problems and challenges of promoting Bangladesh tourism in Europe.

1.2 Proposal for the company

Recently, the number of European tourists to Bangladesh has increased, and the commissioning company of the present thesis, Bengal Tours Ltd., wanted to discover the best way to attract these tourists. From my side, it was important to formulate a strategy as a research agenda—firstly, tourists' expectations and drivers towards Bangladesh; secondly, research on destination image and communication strategies; and finally, internal analysis of the product and services offered by the commissioning company. The commissioner of this thesis provided me with information, helped me with data collection, linked me with or gave me access to interviews with different agents in Europe, assisted me in undertaking interviews with locals, and guided me whenever I needed it.

2 Tourism in Bangladesh

Tourism in Bangladesh has become one of the most important economic resources since 1972, right after the country gained independence. In 2012, around 600,000 tourists came to visit Bangladesh and enjoy its diverse attractions. According to 2013 statistics, the total contribution of tourism to the country's GDP was 4.4%, which is a remarkable source for the development of the country's economy: 2.8% came from tourism employment, and the remaining 1.5% from investment. However, Bangladesh has some limitations, and it has failed to introduce itself as a holiday destination country (Roy & Roy 2015, 53–61).



Figure 1. Map of Bangladesh (Geology.com 2019)

Bangladesh is situated between India and Myanmar with the Bay of Bengal to the south. It is one of the smallest countries in the world and gained freedom firstly from Britain in 1947 as a part of Pakistan. After a bloody liberation war, it gained sovereign independence from Pakistan in 1971. The official language of the country is Bengali, but there are many other tribal languages (Roy & Roy 2015, 53–61.) The good thing is that people are relatively conscious of communicating in English with

foreign people. In every institution around the country, English is taught as the second most important language, and it is obligatory for every student in school to learn it.

2.1 Attractive Places

2.1.1 Cox's Bazar

Cox's Bazar is known as the tourism heart of Bangladesh. It is well known all over the world for its wide and longest unbroken natural sandy beach: the length is 125 km, and it has a gentle slope. This city is located 150 km south of Chittagong, close to the Myanmar frontier on the southeastern side. It is also known by another name, Panowa, the verbal interpretation of which is "yellow flower". Its other primitive name was Palongkee. The modern Cox's Bazar got its name from Captain Hiram Cox (died 1799), an officer who worked as a Superintendent of Palonki (today's Cox's Bazar) in the British East India Company. The weather in Cox's Bazar is almost equal to the rest of the country. Moreover, it is characterized by its coastal location. The yearly average temperature in Cox's Bazar is a maximum of 34.8°C and a minimum of 16.1°C.



Figure 2. Cox's Bazar Sea beach (Google 2019a)

The key attraction of Cox's Bazar is the lofty sandy beach that stretches from the mouth of the Bakkhali River all the way to Teknaf and is commonly known as Cox's Bazar beach. Cox's Bazar stretches far beyond the area and is mainly known for its beautiful sea beach and sunsets (Novoair 2019).

Himchari is located about 18 km south of Cox's Bazar along the sea beach. It is a nice place for picnicking and film shooting. This picnic spot is famous for its waterfalls. The road to Himchari runs by the open sea on one side and hills on the other, which makes the journey to Himchari very attractive. Another attraction is the Christmas tree (Novoair 2019.)

2.1.2 Mangrove Forest

Sundarbans is the world's largest mangrove forest, covering almost 10,000 square kilometers. The central part of the forest is in Bangladesh, but about 40% is situated in India. Sundarbans is famous for the Royal Bengal tiger. UNESCO has declared it a world heritage site (Roy & Roy 2015, 53–61).



Figure 3. Sundarbans mangrove forest (Google 2019b)

2.1.3 Sajek Valley

Sajek is situated 1,800 feet (550 m) above sea level. It is known as the Queen of Hills & Roof of Rangamati. The valley is surrounded by natural beauty like mountains, rivers, grasslands, hill tracks, and dense forest (Wikipedia 2019b).



Figure 4. Sajek Valley (Google 2019b)

2.1.4 Bandarban

Bandarban is called the heaven of Bangladesh. In recent years it has been one of the most famous tourist destinations in Bangladesh. It has many attractive places, among them Nilgiri mountain (Udin 2019).



Figure 5. Bandarban (Google 2019a)

2.1.5 Other attractions

Minamoto, Lalmai, and Shalbon Bihar are historical places in Comilla and are famous for beautiful archaeology. The world's largest tea gardens are in Srimongal, which is known as the tea capital of Bangladesh. Also, it is called 'the land of two leaves and a bud'. Kuakata is situated in the district of Patuakhali. It has a large sandy beach from which one can watch the sun rise and set. There are also Lalbagh Fort, Mahasthanagar, and Chandpur, famous for the national hilsa fish and scintillating river views, and the deltas of three rivers, the Padma, Meghna, and Dakatia (Roy & Roy 2015, 53–61).



Figure 6. Mainamati Ranir Kuthir (Wikipedia 2019a)

2.2 Culture of Bangladesh

Culture is natural, and every country across the globe has its own culture. Bangladesh is a country that has a rich and diverse culture. The culture of Bangladesh has developed through beliefs, practices, ways of living, intelligence, art, food habits, language, and the economy. Cultural activities give the country a Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist or another identity. Three of these have great influence in Bangladesh but there is great harmony among all of them. Traditional music in Bangladesh is pretty much the same as in the Indian subcontinent. It has been classified into three different categories: modern, folk, and classical. In this traditional music, the main musical instruments used are the bamboo flute and drums, known locally as banshi and dole. Musical instruments of Western origin are also used, like guitars, drums and saxophones. Bangladesh has a well-known clothing culture: women wear saris and men traditionally wear the Punjabi tamba, but nowadays most men wear pants and shirts. Across the country, the land, the river, and the lives of common people vary from their neighboring regions. Bangladesh has developed a cultural diversity of various social groups (Azad, Hassan & Kamaluddin 2016, 137).

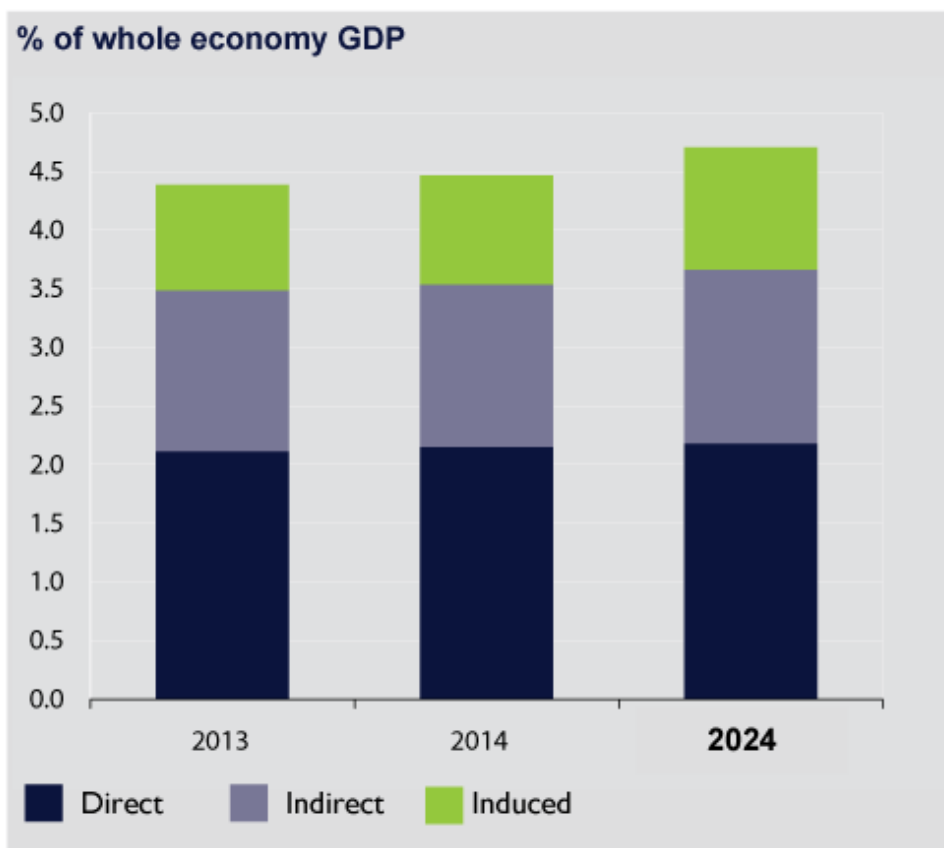
Bangladesh has a vibrant food culture. At different times of the year, it has different types of delicious food. People celebrate with food on different occasions all year round. There are many festival days, like the Eid festival, Pohela Boishakh, Victory Day, Muharram, Vishwa Estima, Rabindra, Nazrul Jayanti, Durga Puja, Christmas, Buddha Purnima, Pohela Falgun, Valentine's Day, Lalon Mela, weddings, Jobbarer Boli Khela, Nobanno Utshob, Language Movement Day, Independence Day, and celebration of the cuisine of Bangladesh and sports (Azad, Hassan & Kamaluddin 2016, 137–145). In

Bangladesh, people are friendly, helpful, hospitality-oriented, and curious about foreigners—even more, curious about Europeans; they respect foreigners and are ready to say welcome to Bangladesh. So, from the author's point of view, Bangladesh is a beautiful place to visit, but there is not sufficient development in the tourism field.

2.3 Tourism's contribution to the country's economy

Figure 7 shows that the total contribution of tourism to the country's economy was 4.4% in the year 2013; this increased by 7.9% in 2014 and contributed to 4.5% of total GDP. It is predicted that it will rise by 6.5% every year and contribute to 4.7% of the total GDP by 2024. The contribution chart comprises direct, indirect, and induced contributions (Roy & Roy 2015, 53–61).

BANGLADESH: TOTAL CONTRIBUTION OF TRAVEL & TOURISM TO GDP



Source: WTTC Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2014

Figure 7. Tourism's contribution to Bangladesh GDP

2.4 Country's Image

A country's image is like the brand image of a company or a product. A country's image is just as important as its progress, success, and prosperity. These facts are disclosed to influence the country's behavior and attitude toward its target visitors: tourists, business holders, investors, business entrepreneurs, international students, jobs, donors, and many others. Nowadays there is great competition between countries for a world's share in business, politics, and culture. In this context, a country that has a reputation for poverty, corruption, danger, high risk, trouble, a lack of culture or backwardness will find it difficult to attract citizens from other countries. In contrast, a country with a good reputation creates trust, dignity, integrity, respect, and increases the expectation of quality (Anholt 2009, ix–xvi).

In tourism, the national image is highly important, and the board of tourism has a responsibility to sell the country across the globe. It might gradually become easier or remain a struggle, depending on its reputation and whether the messages are welcoming or not. A country with a positive image needs to make less effort and invest less money to promote itself in the world market. To build real long-term progress in tourism, it is essential to have a specific long-term national strategy (Anholt 2009, ix–xvi).

Image is considered very important for a country to attract tourists to visit. It is said that the better the image, the more people will want to visit the country. The main challenge is to offer a balanced representation of the country. Objectivity is an extremely elusive quality when a product does not produce from the industry and people are trying to market it as they were born, grown, schooled, and trained as well. In the case of the country's image, objectivity is important, and lack of it can be fatal to the country's strategy (Anholt 2009, ix–xvi).

It is far better that countries do not need to compare themselves against countries that are much bigger, richer, and more successful. What they can do is look for their real genius, their unique ability, potentiality, and thus make a class of their own. Every country all over the world, if it looks hard enough, will find something naturally unique and competitive. Furthermore, a country's image does not change rapidly if a person spends only a few minutes each year thinking about a particular country. It is not surprising if their view of a country remains unchanged for a number of years (Anholt 2009, ix–xvi).

When people spend a few moments every now and then thinking about big issues for some countries, like climate change, political movements, religion, diseases, poverty, living costs, oil prices, news media, and so on, their opinions can change relatively quickly and frequently. These changes affect the image of a country as well as its target audiences.

Three areas are crucial for a country's reputation: perceived environmental credentials, technology, and self-improvement (personal advancement in a destination) (Anholt 2009, ix–xvi).

According to tour operators and information based on previous research, as well as the experience of the European tourist, Bangladesh has a very poor image. The main shortcomings are political and social instability. Many tourists have had different experiences in Bangladesh: they mentioned the hot climate, extreme poverty, colorful and interesting wildlife, culture, beaches, low prices, overcrowding, and busy places. People are very friendly, but they have inadequate communications skills, which means service was of a poor standard. Most of the tourists did not visit any unique tourist attraction as they had limited knowledge about tourism products in Bangladesh. A few mentioned that the largest mangrove forest, Sunderbans, Royal Bengal tigers, Shat Gambuj Mosque, and the food and culture of Bangladesh were unique. On the other hand, lack of good accommodation or hotels, flood, poverty, bad roads, traffic jams, unstandardized hygiene, insufficient safety and security, etc. were mentioned, though these are obviously not unique to Bangladesh. The tour operator (007Traveler) said the majority of European travelers visit Bangladesh for the garments business. Bangladesh has a high reputation in the garments industry across the globe. Unfortunately, there is a huge lack of good tourist information and vacation packages in Bangladesh. Even though Bangladesh has a rich history and culture, there has been a failure to market this tourism product to the traveler.

2.5 Reasons for less popularity

There is no research on branding Bangladesh as a travel destination for the traveler, mainly European travelers. The statistics show that in the year 2017, India received 10.4 million foreign travelers; Nepal also received an adequate number of international travelers, slightly under 1 million (Tourism.gov 2017). In the case of Bangladesh, the number of foreign travelers is dropping continuously; in 2010, more than 300,000 international travelers visited, this number falling to 125,000 in 2014, while at the same time the number of tourists in India and Nepal increased significantly (Moretaza 2018).

India and Nepal have a branding destination and image policy all over the world. India is known as incredible India; similarly, Nepal is known as “naturally Nepal”. Visiting India is the dream of every

foreigner because of the boundless travel opportunities it presents, along with its rich heritage and culture, and varied flora and fauna. It is among the most ancient countries in the world and yet is a thriving contemporary power, too. Although rich in cultural heritage, Bangladesh is still struggling to establish a specific identity such as India and Nepal enjoy. In this context, a positive image and branding the country in the foreign traveler's mind is essential, especially for European travelers. As the statistics show, the rate of European travelers' visits to Bangladesh is low compared to Asian travelers. Furthermore, due to the lack of strategies, practical plans, or efficient utilization of resources, Bangladesh is losing revenue continuously (Moretaza 2018).

2.6 Relationship between Bangladesh and Europe

The European Union is the most significant export destination for Bangladesh. The EU-Bangladesh relationship started in 1973. From 1973 until today, the EU has played a considerable role in Bangladesh's economy, institution building, democracy, and human rights. In 2001, an agreement was made which covers major developments and other political issues. The EU has committed to spending 690 million euros under the 2014–2020 multiannual indicative program. The EU recommends that Bangladesh undertakes a policy reform to promote its business environment and attract more trade and investment. In 2019, the EU started two extensive programs, one in public financial management, the other in national security reforms. Moreover, the EU assisted funding for many international issues such as Rohingya refugees. Most of the refugees live in one of the most famous tourist places, Cox's Bazar (European Parliament 2020).

The EU has worked closely with Bangladesh on the structure of the EU-Bangladesh cooperation agreement since 1976. According to some research, Bangladesh is getting business benefits from the EU. This agreement allows wide scope to extend multiple business environments, including the tourism business with the EU. Bangladesh exports mainly ready-made garments to the EU market within the competitive advantage of quota-free access. Moreover, the EU is a vital development partner of Bangladesh and maintains a good friendship. Half of the total exports of Bangladesh go to the EU market. It is a positive background against which to brand Bangladesh to encourage European travelers to travel to the country (Iqbal & Islam 2014).

2.7 SWOT Analysis of Tourism in Bangladesh

A SWOT analysis is one of the most useful tools in any business to analyze the internal and external environment within the company or organization. The internal environment indicates strengths and weaknesses, while the external environment refers to opportunities and threats (Dess, Lumpkin &

Taylor 2005, 76). Using secondary sources, a SWOT analysis has been undertaken regarding tourism in Bangladesh. Table 1 offers an overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for Bangladesh as a tourism destination.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of Bangladesh as a tourist destination

<p>Strengths</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unique natural resources 2. People are friendly and helpful 3. Famous for hospitality 4. Affluent cultural heritage 5. Religious equity and harmony 6. Greenery and natural beauty 7. Reachable by air 8. Accommodation facilities are available throughout the country: Radisson Blu, Rupushi Bangla, and Westin hotels are in the capital city 9. Archaeological and historical places 10. Hills and island 11. Wildlife 12. Bengali cuisine 13. Sports 14. Cheap garments 15. On-arrival visa for European and other nations (conditional) 	<p>Opportunities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Branding the country 2. Promoting tourism through social media 3. Advancement of social media 4. Making tourist spots attractive and enjoyable 5. Accessible tourism policy 6. Organizing international events (football, cricket, hockey, etc.) 7. New products and innovation in tourism 8. Improvement of infrastructure
<p>Weaknesses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tourism sites are not properly identified and managed 2. Lack of destination image 3. Language skills and communication 4. Lack of enough investment 5. Lack of infrastructure development 6. Scarcity of safety and security 7. Lack of accessible infrastructure 8. Lack of good quality services 9. Insufficient good quality hotels 10. Very few travel operators, lack of national airlines 11. Lack of professional guides 12. Lack of exclusivity when offering tourist products and destination packages 13. Inadequate promotional marketing plan in tourism (publicly and privately) 	<p>Threats</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Political instability 2. Terrorist attack 3. Natural calamity 4. Communication gaps with local and tourists 5. Corruption 6. Image crisis 7. Competition with India and Nepal in tourism 8. Lack of emergency rescue plan 9. Misconception regarding Bangladesh as a tourist destination 10. The conflict between tribal and Bengali people 11. Losing forests 12. Pollution 13. Too much traffic on the road

In the SWOT analysis, there are many weaknesses and threats. The most relevant issues are that tourism sites are not properly identified and managed, there is no real destination image, and language skills and communication are weak. Weaknesses can be changed into opportunities, and threats can be minimized by taking proper steps and building awareness across the country.

3 Image of destination

Every tourist has individual thoughts and feeling toward their targeted destination. These might be positive or negative. It is necessary to create a great impression for the visitor to visit that destination, which is why destination image has such an impact in tourism marketing. The aim of the destination image is to show the variety among destinations. It influences a traveler in their decision-making process regarding selection of a travel destination. The image of a destination is fully based on a traveler's perspective. The main point for destination management organization is the need to understand the destination's image for fruitful destination marketing strategies. There are two main components of the destination image—the cognitive image and the affective image. The cognitive image means beliefs and knowledge about physical attributes of the destination (Wang & Pizam 2011, 130–131).

3.1 Branding

Branding is one of the most important parts of the product. In tourism, it is about the image of the destination. Tourism organizations strive to define their brand in view of the fact that a recognized brand gives it tangible value in tourism services. Tourist services are largely insignificant (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 164). Having a strong brand identity or image enables a company to deliver the right kind of quality message and implications to customers. According to the American Marketing association (AMA), the brand is a name, design, term, symbol, or any other form that identifies the difference or uniqueness of one seller's goods from other sellers. Branding is a process which includes planning, designing, and communicating the name and identity of the service or product (Anholt 2007, 4). Destination branding is becoming a consequential tool for tourism marketers: its purpose is to differentiate the destination from others by focusing on the distinctiveness of the destination and consolidating the value of the destination. A good long-term initiative will make the destination emotionally appealing and more attractive to consumers (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, 111).

3.2 Destination marketing

Destination marketing plays a remarkable role in the tourism industry. It is becoming extremely competitive and key from a global perspective because of potential tourists' ability to select any destination, as there are thousands of destinations around the world. Selecting a destination depends on tourists' self-awareness and closeness with the destination and marking the process of the destination. It means a recommendation from a friend or some promotional offer through marketing or another commodity which refers to a destination that a traveler likes to visit for a holiday or another occasion (Kozak & Andreu 2006, 73–75.)

Generally, external factors have a pivotal impact on the tourist's perception of a destination. These factors make it difficult for destination management and for domestic tourism businesses to influence the tourists. Factors such as the economic, political, personal, experience, attitude, expectation, motivation, risk, culture, and price are considered. Image is therefore a key factor in destination marketing as it is directed outside a country. It is widely acknowledged that destination is the most difficult product in the travel and tourism industry to manage and market (Kozak & Andreu 2006, 73–75).

3.3 Consumer behavior in tourism

It is a highly important part of the tourism business to understand the purchasing nature of tourists. Most likely, visitors who are purchasing are also nurturing their lifestyle as they have an emotional relationship with the buying process (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 60–61). Clawson and Knetsch (in Chon 1990, 3) suggested a model that identified the traveler's behavior before travel, during travel, and after travel, in a five-phase activity:

- Anticipation: trying to make a plan and imagining the tour.
- Traveling to the site: moving to travel destination.
- On-site behavior: being in the travel destination and engaging in activities there.
- Return travel: coming back home from the travel destination.
- Recollection: memories from the trip, recalling and reflecting on them, retention.

It is very important in the tourism business to know the target customers and their preferences. Kaden (2006, 7) stated that consumer analysis is one of the major analyses in marketing, allowing a deep perception of the customer. For a marketer, it is also vital to realize and experiment with consumer behavior, as it is influenced by various factors (Schiffman, Kanuk & Håvard 2012, 18). Moreover, consumer behavior in the tourism and hospitality industry is competitive, and it encourages the

researcher to analyze the market deeply so that they can provide the service needed and build potential marketing communications. Obviously, it is pivotal to realize the connection or network between the consumer response and marketing stimuli (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2010, 150).

Figure 8 shows the basic consumer behavior model in the hospitality and tourism industry.

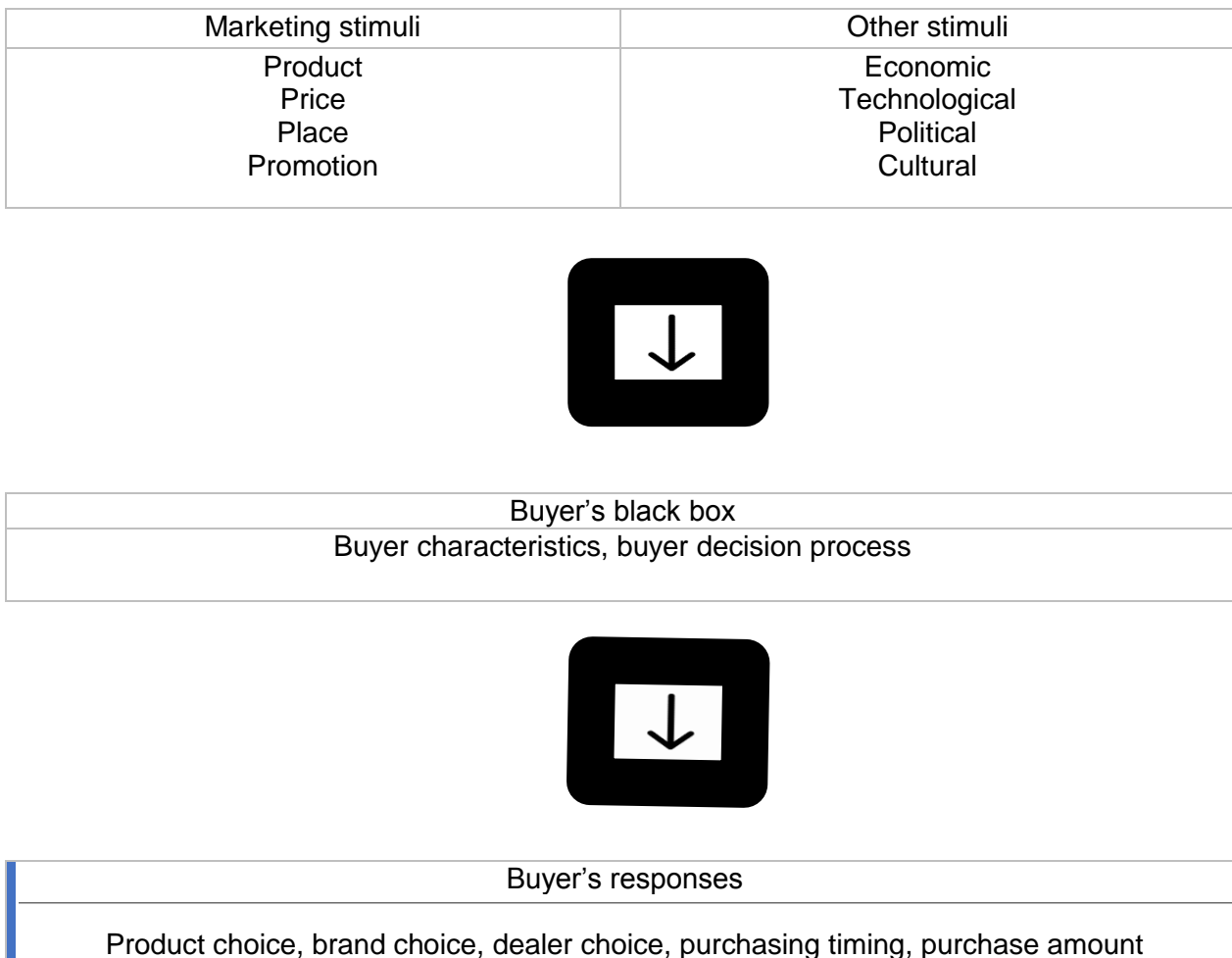


Figure 8. A model of consumer behavior (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2010, 151)

In the figure, it is shown that marketing stimuli consist of four Ps: product, price, place, and promotion. Besides these stimuli, there are other stimuli related to the consumer's environment: economic, technological, political, and cultural. All of these come into the buyer's black box, which consists of buyer characteristics and the buyer decision process. At the end of the process, some specific responses are generated concerning the product choice, brand choice, purchase timing, and purchase amount (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2010, 151).

3.4 Decision-making process

The decision-making process for a person to travel to a particular destination is related to the image of that particular area the person has in mind (Morgan & Pritchard 2004, 60). Usually, travelers do not choose their destination randomly. Selecting a destination involves different stages before making a final decision. There are two factors that influence the final decision to visit a specific destination: firstly, the visitor's own expectations and perceived image of the destination; and secondly, buying decisions sooner or later that could have been unreachable (Chon 1990, 3). Berkman and Gilson (in Chon 1990, 3) point out that to make a final decision to purchase, a visitor goes through four different stages; in a fifth stage, they make a post-purchase assessment. The stages are as follow:

- Need recognition: there is a reason for buying. It might be a biological or psychological desire, a need for that particular service or product.
- Information search: after meeting the need recognition positively, the purchaser will seek more information about the service.
- Evaluation of alternatives: here, the buyer will consider alternatives to the product.
- Choice of product or service: the buyer will make the final decision for the product or service.
- Post-purchase evaluation: after buying the product or service, it will be evaluated in terms of whether or not it meets expectations.

Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010, 151) designed a table presenting numerous factors that influence buyers' decisions.

Table 2. Factors influencing the buyer's decision-making process

Cultural	Social	Personal	Psychological
Culture Subculture Social class	Reference group Family Roles and status	Age and lifecycle stage Occupation Economic circumstances Lifestyle Personality and self-concept	Motivation Perception Learning Beliefs and attitude

Source: Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010, 151)

Cultural factors have a great impact on the tourism business, influencing the buyer a lot in their decision-making stage. Cultural factors are subdivided into culture, subculture, and social class. Culture varies country to country; there is also an existing subculture, and marketers should consider the different demographic and social features to recognize the subculture (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2016, 151–153). Social class refers to many aspects— how people locate themselves in a social structure; the categorization of people by their income (for instance, upper class, lower class, and middle class); and it is a relational illustration of the economic life chance (Mallinson 2007, 152–153).

Social factors allude to the reference group: a sorority, coworkers, a cohort or group, or family; family members, roles, and statuses; the position of an individual (a woman plays the role of mother to her children, but in her workplace, her role is that of a product service manager). All of these have a great influence on customers' behavior and their decision-making process (Durmaz & Durmaz 2014, 257). Personal factors include age, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, personality, and self-concept. All of these are related to consumer behavior and the decision-making process. Preferences and attitudes change over time. Entertainment and excursion activities are significantly age-related. Family lifecycle pertains to whether a potential traveler is married or unmarried, with children or without children, which positions vary in their needs. Business directors and employees have different choices and needs (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2016, 155–156). Psychological factors influence individuals to decide whether or not to buy a product, and these are categorized as the individual's motivations, self-belief, attitude, learning, and perceptions (Durmaz 2014, 195).

3.5 Understanding the Tourism industry

The tourism industry is undergoing rapid transformation. The service that exists today may not be the same five years from now. It is therefore important to understand marketing concepts, and this understanding will help analyze the market. The tourism industry is the world's biggest industry, and it is global by nature. The world travel and tourism industry is vital, exciting, and competitive. All over the world, the tourism industry is filled mostly with college graduates. There is robust competition, and such competition is getting harder and harder every day. On the other hand, the momentum and opportunities are greater than ever before. Tourism comprises two main industries—hospitality and travel. The success of the tourism industry depends on the success of both the hospitality and the travel industry (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2010, 30).

3.6 Tourism marketing

It is a crucial stage for the tourism industry to market the tourism product. Therefore, it requires continuous planning and decision-making in respect of the marketing strategy. A strategy is important to attract targeted tourists. To do this task in practice, a company needs to adapt to the marketing environment and develop according to trends in the macro and microenvironment. When an organization has scenarios to hand regarding the tourism market environment, it will be in a position to deal with all possible threats coming from the market. Also, it can capitalize on all attainable opportunities in the market. There are two kinds of tourist destination marketing environmental factor: external factors, referring to economic, political, social, and technological influences; and internal factors, being capital resources, structures, capabilities, and marketing moderators like competitive forces or low-cost service agents (Camilleri 2019, xx).

3.7 Strategic framework towards the destination

According to Kozak and Andreu (2006, 76–83), there is a fifteen Cs framework in destination marketing, and these fifteen items vary according to the destination. Bangladesh is a developing country, and it needs to adopt an appropriate strategic plan to attract international tourists. The omission of any one of the fifteen Cs will affect the destination marketing strategy or the plan.

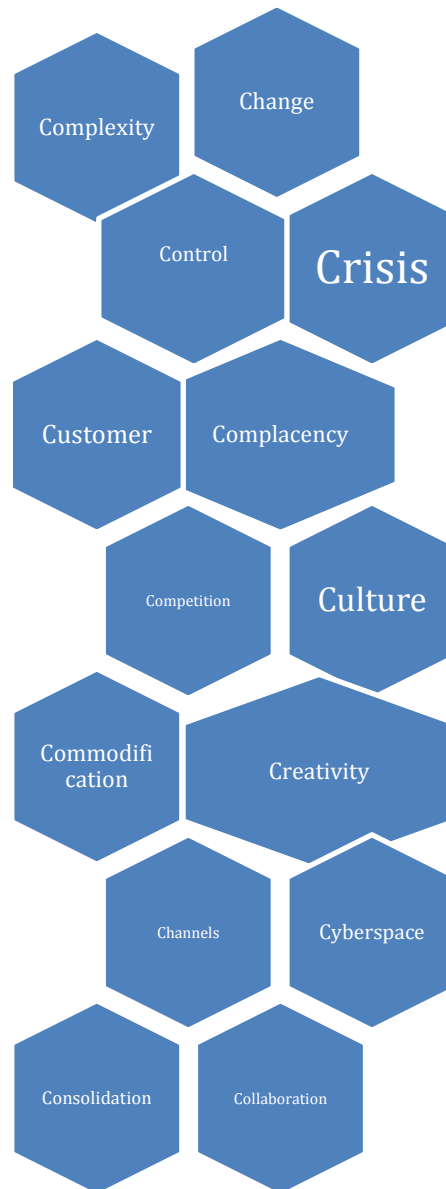


Figure 9. Strategic framework for destination marketing

Complexity in the tourism destination arises from different types of external and internal stakeholder. These include governments, tourism organizations and operators, small and medium enterprises, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), tourists, suppliers, employees, education, utilities and infrastructure, transport, and communities. The complexity in the tourism destination should be taken into consideration for marketing based on the community and consumer in that place. It will create a point of view in every individual consumer regarding the tourist destination is cleanly enclose bundle of suppliers (Buhalis 2000, 26).

Control is closely related to complexity for destination marketers. A major frustration for destination marketers is the inability to control the destination product. The strategic method must be strong to control an unfamiliar situation in coordinating and marketing a destination. Also, it is important to development the tourism destination base with up-to-date information (Kozak & Andreu 2006, 76–83).

Culture is a major issue in any destination marketing. It has great influence on both supply and demand. Due to cultural changes in public and private organizations, there is diversification in tourism destinations. Such things should be run in parallel for the foreseeable future. The demand side is related to the means of destination and is required for the development of tourism (Kozak & Andreu 2006, 76–83).

Change can happen in any business, and in the tourism marketing industry it is very common. Change is growing day by day, and it can be anything—commodities, prices, transport, infrastructure, etc. Crises can be seen across the tourism industry in different destinations. Based on the location, its impact might be negative or positive; it can also be natural or artificial—for example, a terrorist attack; war, which is happening all over the world; or a tsunami (Kozak & Andreu 2006, 76–83).

Complacency is a key fact in the tourism marketing industry. Customers have choices of different destinations with same characteristics, which gives rise to competition in tourism marketing. Competition between organizations is rapidly increasing everywhere in the tourism industry. Nowadays, destinations everywhere are facing severe pressure to make a profit and secure enhancement from tourism. European airlines may reduce prices, and other transport, too, which is beneficial for the tourist who visits that destination. Tourists will not want to visit a destination that is insecure because of a natural or manmade situation. Moreover, competition among different destinations will increase due to having the same elements and advantages (Kozak & Andreu 2006, 76–83).

Commodification is a factor of competition. Due to the increase in competition in tourism marketing over time, many destinations are likely to share same facilities and selling points. Creativity is another key component in destination branding and marketing. All in all, marketing and branding are not easy tasks: they require creativity and the brand should be identified properly. Only after that will the destination be in a good position in the competitive tourism industry (Kozak & Andreu 2006, 76–83).

In many regions, advertisements appear in newspapers. On the other hand, in other parts of the world, communication is emergent and is necessary for highly educated and sophisticated clientele.

Today, the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter), blogs, and the web has increased greatly, but a high percentage of the marketing budget is still spent on print-based media such as leaflets and brochures. Channels and cyberspace are closely related. They are most pivotal for marketers of destinations in tourism marketing to spread creativity or ideas about a certain destination (Kozak & Andreu 2006, 76–83).

In terms of consolidation, we can give the example of Thomas Cook, which has seen significant growth in recent years all over the world. Consolidation affects the tourism industry in terms of airlines or hospitality in the form of large international and local groups. Moreover, it is clear that the marketer or corporation should meet face-to-face for collaboration to be effective and successful now and the future in the destinations. A destination is a product to be marketed when the customer dimension is taken into consideration. Customers can come from same region or across the globe with different religions, languages, and age groups (Kozak & Andreu 2006, 76–83).

Every destination has a slogan; without it, it is a bit more difficult to market in the tourism industry. A slogan is an important public expression of the destination marketing strategy. The destination is far more significant and multidimensional compared to consumer goods and various types of customer service. Attracting the consumer requires a succinct message addressing the brand amalgamation. There should be a meaningful slogan that can cover the image of the country, like 'Slovenia—the grown place of Europe'; 'Ohio, So Much to Discover', or 'Visit Bangladesh before others come'. Brand loyalty is a significant brand equity model according to the purchaser, and it can be measured by Destination Marketing Organization repeat visitor monitoring program (Pike 2005, 3–4).

4 Research approach and methods

Research is at times mistaken for gathering information, documenting facts, and rummaging for information (Leedy & Ormrod 2001). Research is the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data in order to understand a phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod 2001). The research process is systematic in that defining the objective, managing the data, and communicating the findings occur within established frameworks and in accordance with existing guidelines. The three common approaches to conducting research are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The researcher anticipates the type of data needed to respond to the research questions.

4.1 The research approaches

For the present study, mixed methods were used. A mixed methods approach to research involves researchers incorporating methods of collecting data using quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single research study (Creswell 1999). In a mixed methods approach, researchers collect not only numerical data, which is customary for quantitative research, but also narrative data, which is the norm for qualitative research, in order to address the research question(s) defined for a particular research study. A mixed methods approach is used to draw on the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of the individual quantitative and qualitative research approaches (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed methods research employs both approaches iteratively and simultaneously to arrive at research outcomes that are stronger than either method individually. Overall, combined quantitative and qualitative methods enable more complex aspects and relationships in the human and social world to be explored (Creswell 1999; Malina, Nørreklit & Selto 2011). For this study, in order to collect a mixture of data, a survey was conducted that contained closed-ended questions to collect the numerical, or quantitative, data, and interviews were conducted using open-ended questions to collect the narrative, or qualitative, data.

4.2 Data collection process

A combination of primary and secondary data sources was used for this thesis. Data were collected from November 2021 to February 2022. For empirical data, I conducted a survey online via social media (Facebook and LinkedIn). The respondents were from Europe—mainly Finland and neighboring countries—as they were the target group of this research. Tour and travel operators were also included in this data collection process. The questionnaires in the survey covered all necessary

personal information as well as perceptions of Bangladesh as a tourist destination and interest in visiting Bangladesh. The questionnaire was categorized into three parts. The first part asked general demographic questions like gender, age, nationality, and occupation. In the second part, there were questions related to travel experience, preferences, and channels used to make travel decisions. In the last part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to report their previous experience of visiting Bangladesh or their expectations of visiting Bangladesh. Two tables were developed, one focused on experiencing Bangladesh as a destination, the other on perceptions for those who have not yet been to Bangladesh. Question 17 was an open-ended question inviting suggestions or improvement points to develop the image of Bangladesh as a travel destination.

Furthermore, I used a qualitative method in the form of in-depth individual interviews. Individual interviews provide an understanding of details regarding each interviewee's perspective on their lives, experiences, and situation, expressed in their own words (Lambert & Loiseau 2008). Hence, I collected a significant part of the empirical data from in-depth interviews, each of which lasted approximately one hour. Interviewees for the five in-depth interviews represented local and international organizations: the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB), a local stakeholder, a European travel agent, and a representative of a tourism organization. The local commissioning company helped me to contact the participants, and personal contacts were utilized. The purpose of the interviews with different respondents was purely qualitative, specifically to explore the range of opinions and different perspectives on the issue at hand—the image of Bangladesh as a travel destination for European travelers. The interviews were semi-structured but allowed for open-ended conversation. I modified interview questions where necessary, considering the respondents' understanding of the questions. The questions were adapted based on the role and representation of the interviewee. A list of topics and possible questions for each interviewee focused on overarching themes based on the research questions of the study. The interview sample size was determined based on the required information and guided by the principle of data saturation (Francis et al. 2010). I used purposive and snowball sampling strategies to select the interview respondents (Teddlie & Yu 2007). I employed a snowballing sampling method to identify potential interviewees because of the diverse group of people engaged in tourism (Streeton et al. 2004). I used a purposive sampling approach to interview more knowledgeable persons working in the tourism field (Tongco 2007). For the present study, I collected secondary data regarding aspects of situations and events that were not sufficiently addressed in the primary data. These includes related articles, books, blogs, journals, newspapers, magazines, and so on to understand the phenomenon of tourism in Bangladesh.

4.3 Data analysis process

The survey data were stored, evaluated, and then digitized for processing to conduct the quantitative data analysis. Excel and SPSS were used to analyze the data, and the results are presented in tabular format. Qualitative data analysis for in-depth interviews comprised three phases: preparing and arranging the data for analysis, reducing the data to themes, and expressing the data in tables or as part of a conversation (Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljaei 2017). Following transcription of the qualitative data, the content was evaluated, and themes were developed and grouped into several explanatory variables.

4.4 Reliability and validity

The concept of positionality is based on the notion that the researcher's characteristics vis-à-vis the respondents can influence the data produced (Berger 2015). Positionality is a critical factor in framing social and professional relationships in the field; it sets the tone of the research, affecting its course and outcomes (Chacko 2004). Accessing local informants, developing relationships of trust with them, and acquiring quality data that reflect "truths" are prime considerations for field researchers (Shenton & Hayter 2004). Validity refers to the extent to which the information that is collected by the researcher accurately reveals the phenomenon being studied for the research. Validity is divided into several parts, such as content validity, face validity, construct validity, and criterion validity. To analyze the data given by interviewees is often difficult because empirical research is mainly concerned with people's behavior and their attitudes. This instrument is subject to a number of imperfections, which means that the validity of leisure and tourism data may rarely be as certain as in the natural sciences (Veal 2011, 41). Reliability refers to the extent to which assessments are consistent, meaning that the research findings would be the same if the researcher practiced a different approach or used different tools to measure later or with a different sample. Whenever and wherever the research is conducted, if the model is taken from the field of social science, it should produce identical results (Veal 2006, 41). In this study, data were collected from different Bangladeshi people associated with the tourism sector. Conducting the interviews came with severe restrictions and challenges, as it was done during the COVID-19 pandemic. The limitations that I faced while conducting the interviews were many. For example, a respondent might show little interest or reluctance to give enough time for the interview, or even challenge it. Many interviewees were not interested in providing qualitative interviews because these take up valuable time from their working day. As I was from Finland, considered an outsider, some respondents did not want to share their perceptions in interviews. The strategy employed to overcome the above challenges was that I tried to assure them that the present study will be beneficial for Bangladesh and there will be no negative

effects for their job profile. Furthermore, I used the commissioning company's reputation to conduct the interviews. All these efforts enabled me to build trust and conduct the interviews smoothly.

5 Results

This chapter presents the research findings. The findings offer some unique tourism experiences from a European traveler's point of view. The collected data will help the company to promote the image of Bangladesh to European travelers and will assist the company in planning how to operate its tour for European travelers. Moreover, it will help the company to understand precisely what tourism products and services they could provide for the target group to visit Bangladesh. The findings in this research will also assist the Tourism Board of Bangladesh in taking the necessary steps to develop the tourism industry.

The survey involved 35 males (71.4%) and 14 females (28.6%). They were categorized into six age groups.

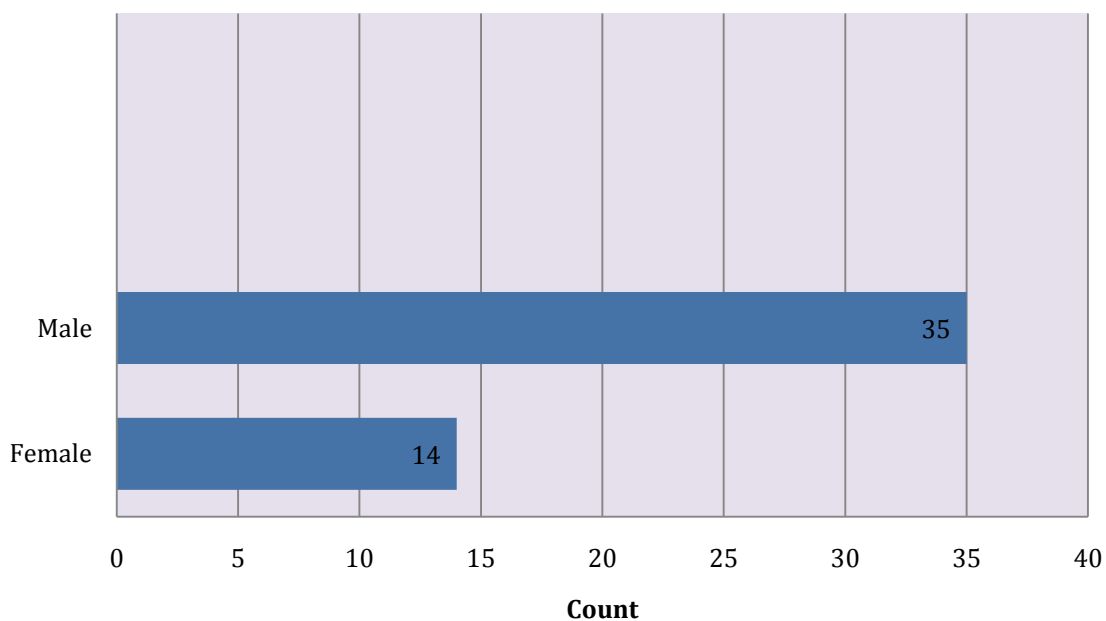


Figure 10. Respondents by gender (n=49)

Figure 11 shows that there were 49 responses overall from ten different nationalities. The largest proportion (55%) comprised 27 people from Finland who were all Finnish. The second largest contributor was Bangladesh with 11 participants. The remaining nationalities all had just one or two contributors.

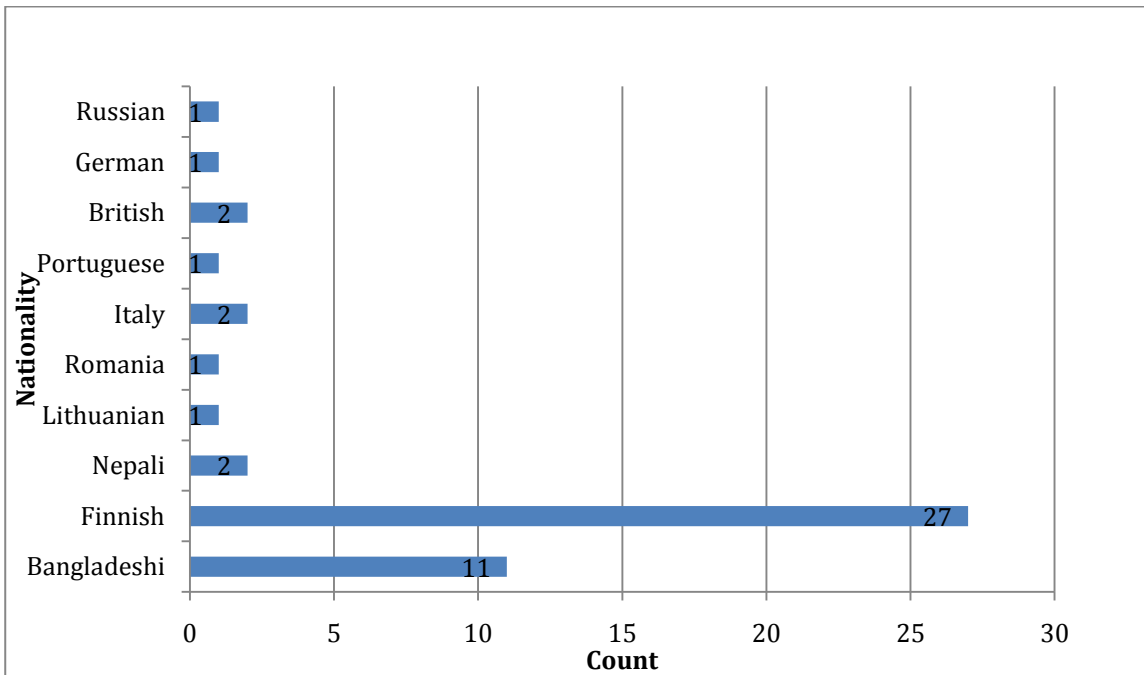


Figure 11. Nationalities of respondents (n=49)

Figure 12 illustrates that almost half of the respondents (42.0%) belonged to the age group 30–39 years. The second biggest group comprised 21–29-year-olds, with 13 respondents (26.0%). Nine respondents were aged between 40 and 49 years, while seven (14.0%) were in the age group 50–59.

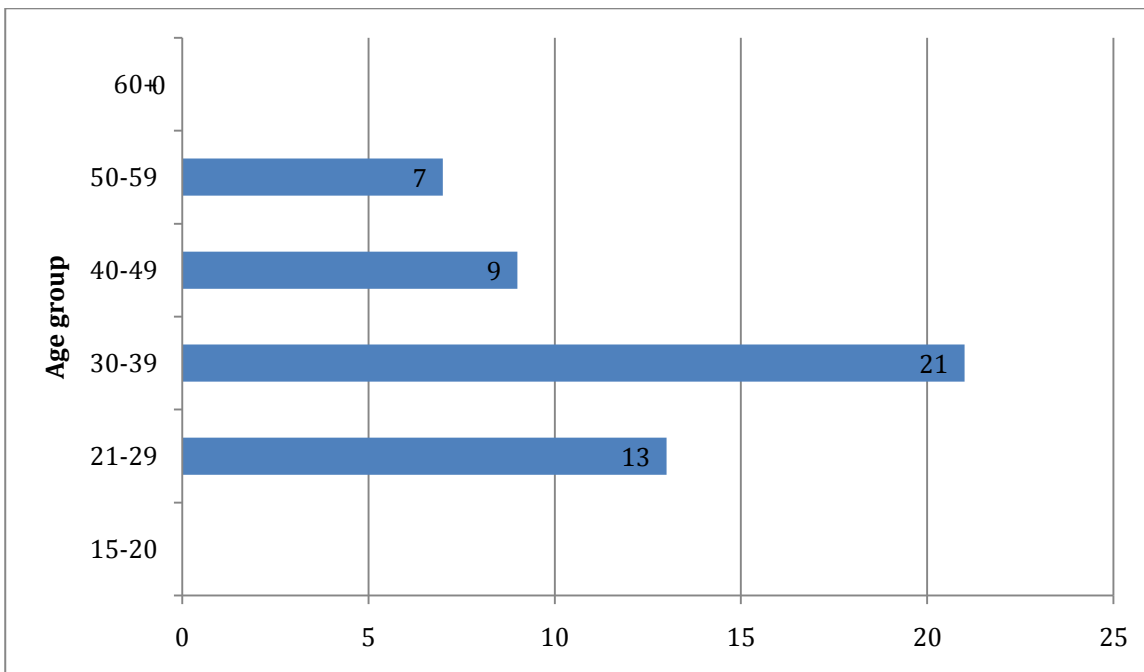


Figure 12. Age of respondents (n=50)

According to the survey, the most significant percentage of respondents was employed. Figure 13 shows that 32 respondents were employed, being 64.0% of the total amount. After that, 30.0% of respondents were students. There was an equal proportion of people from other categories (2.0% each).

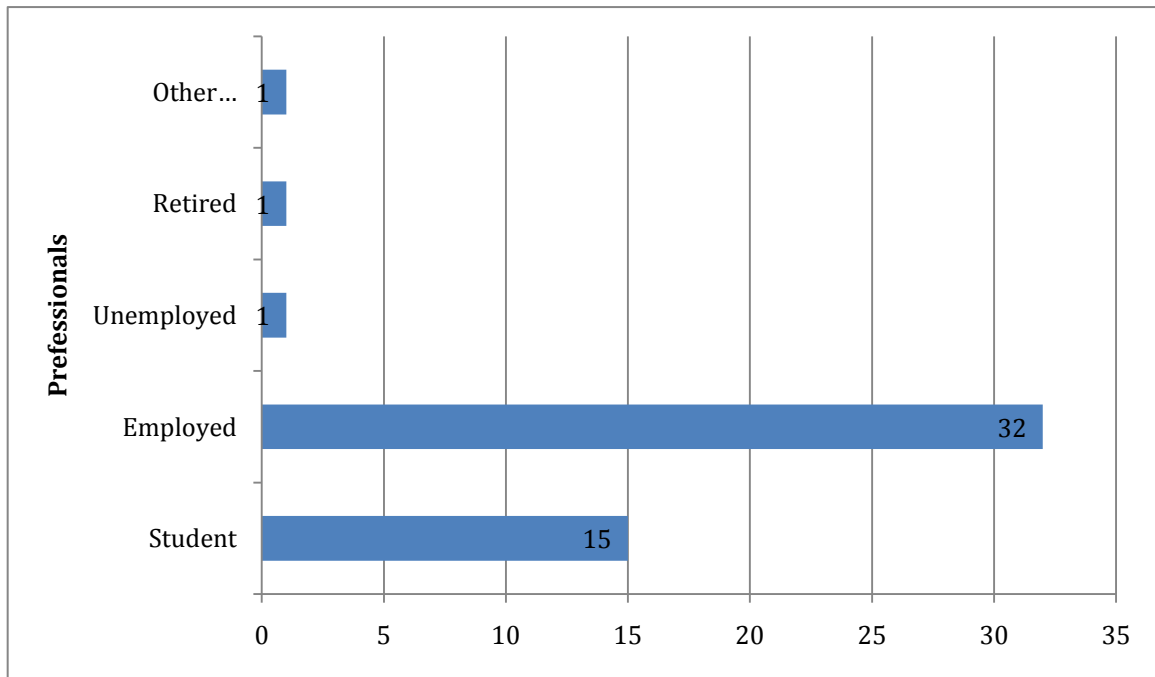


Figure 13. Occupation status of respondents (n=50)

Figure 14 shows that most of the people who responded with their insights (70.0%) love to travel once or twice per year for different reasons, whereas 2% of people did not travel. Moreover, 24.0% of respondents preferred to travel three or four times per year for different purposes.

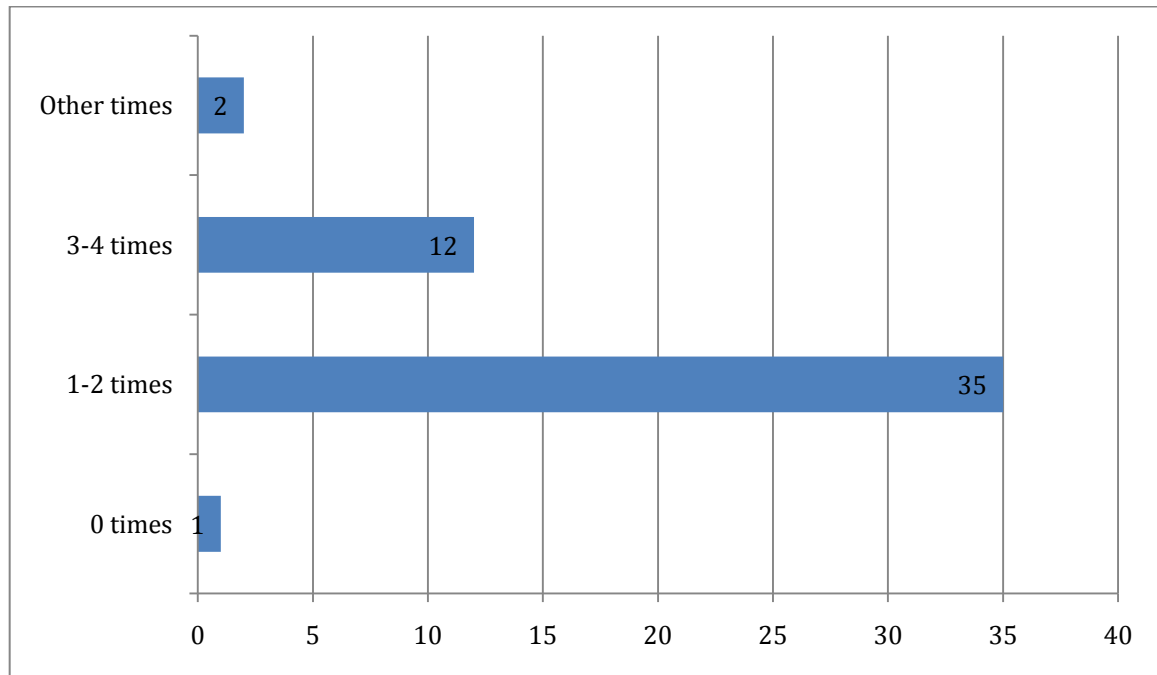


Figure 14. Travel occupancy per year (n=50)

Figure 15 shows that people had different opinions about their preferred kind of travel. While 53% of people (26 respondents) traveled to be in nature and enjoy natural creations, 47% preferred to visit different places to explore history and heritage. Of the 49 respondents, 21 preferred to travel for relaxation on holidays, while 37% people traveled to an exotic new culture for the experience.

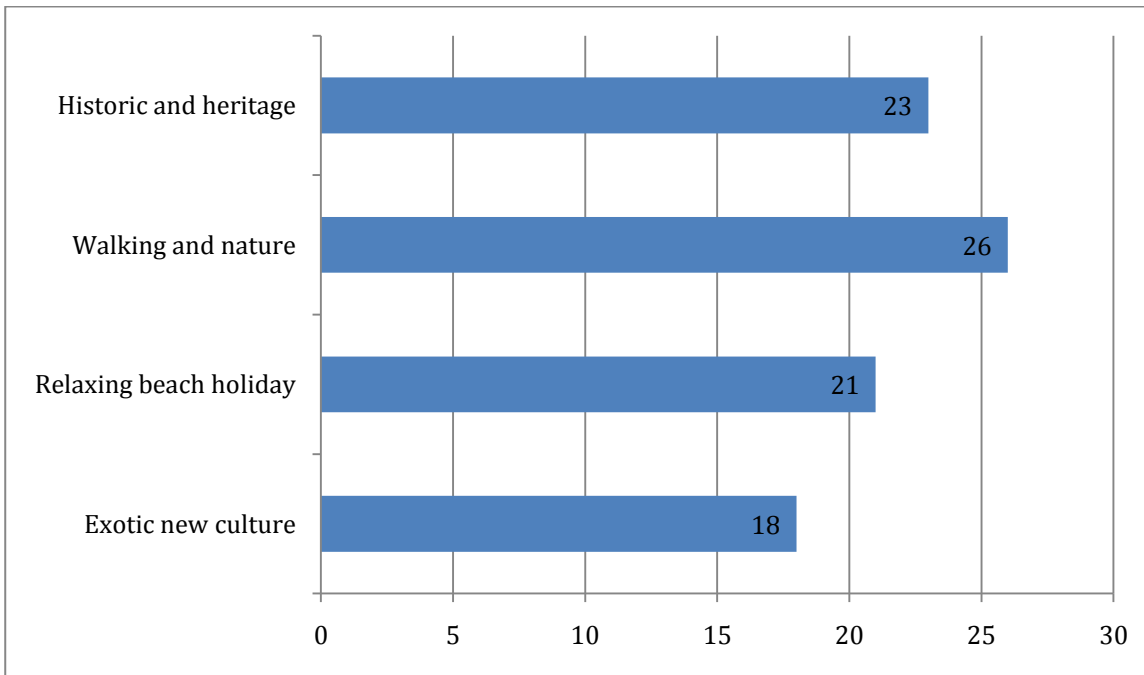


Figure 15. Most popular holiday purposes (n=49, selected answers=88)

Figure 16 shows that outside Europe, Asia was prioritized as a travel destination by the people who gave their opinion with 88% of respondents (44 people) selecting it. America was selected by 20% of people as their tour destination, whereas only 8% selected Australia. Africa and other countries had the almost same percentages.

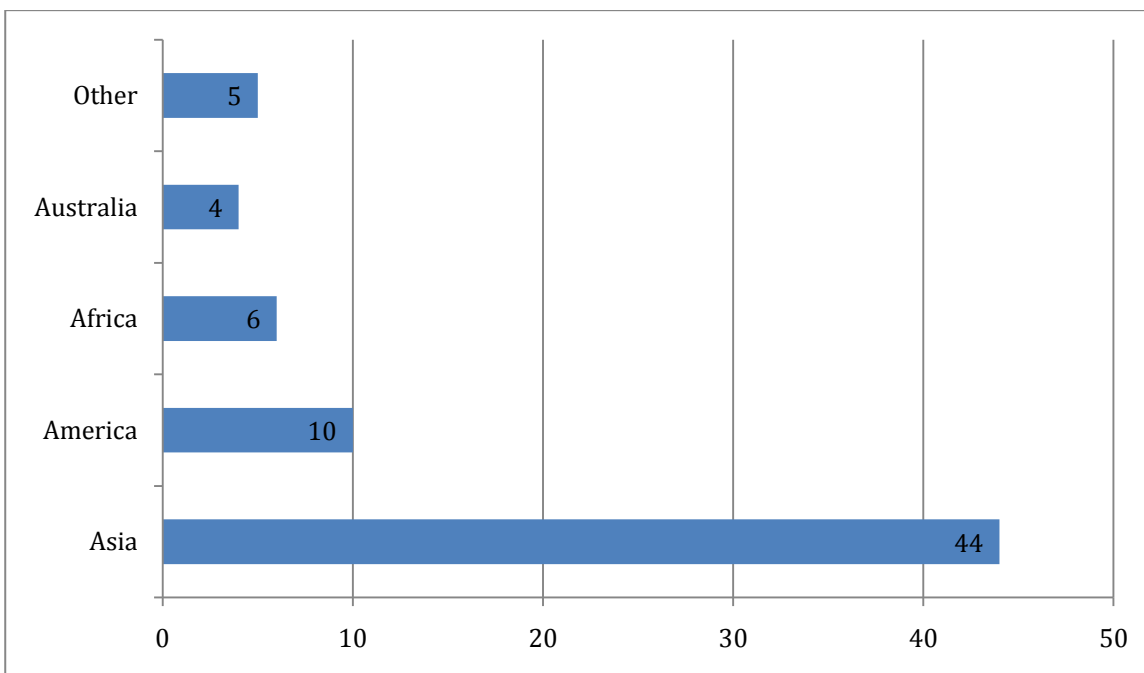


Figure 16. Travel destinations outside Europe (n=50, selected answers=69)

Figure 17 denotes those options that represent the preferred channels to use when planning a tour. As can be seen, 29 out of 50 respondents (56.9%) selected recommendations from friends or family and the internet as their first choice. Previous experience claimed second position, 22 people (43.1%) selecting it, while 37% used social media to help plan a tour. Others used a tour operating agency, travel guidebooks, newspapers, world travel fairs, and other means, but all at a relatively low rate of below 20%.

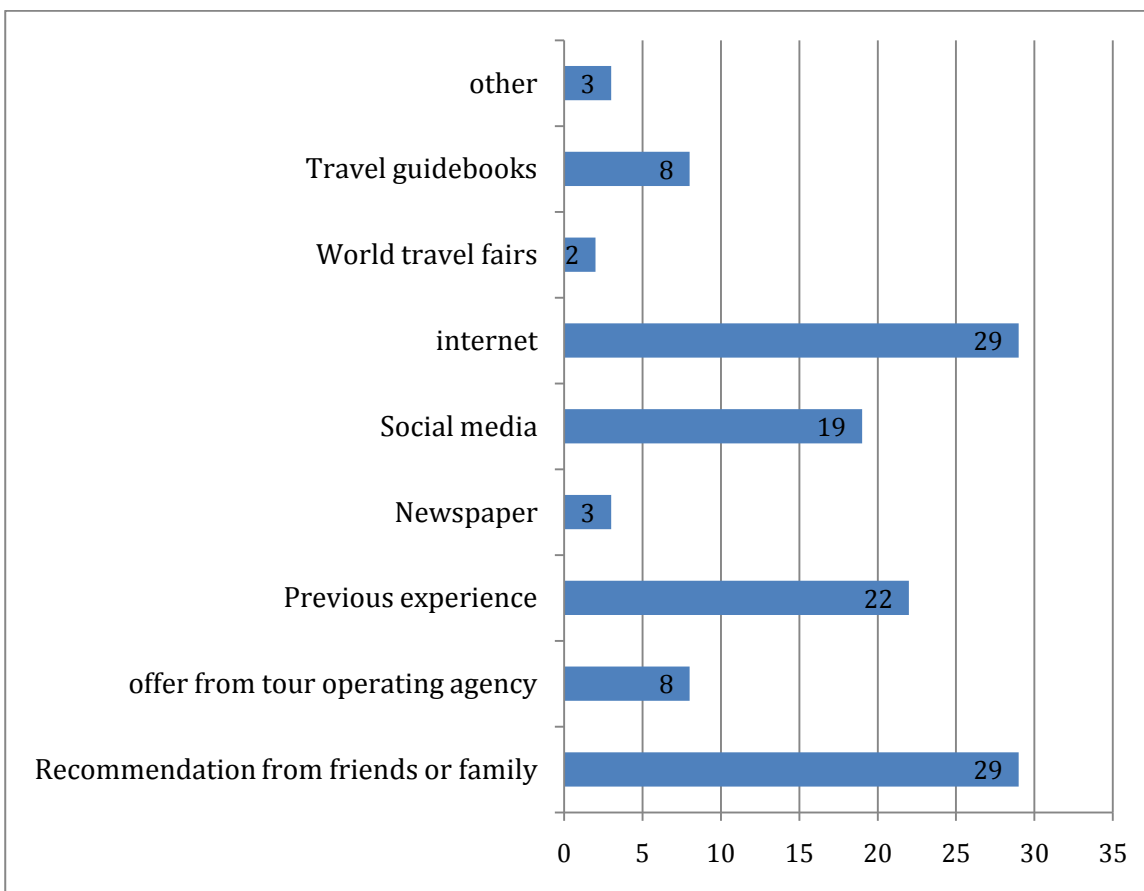


Figure 17. Different channels used when planning to travel (n=51, selected answers=123)

Figure 18 explains whether the people who gave their important insights on different aspects related to tourism activities in Bangladesh know Bangladesh. All respondents had heard of and were familiar with Bangladesh.

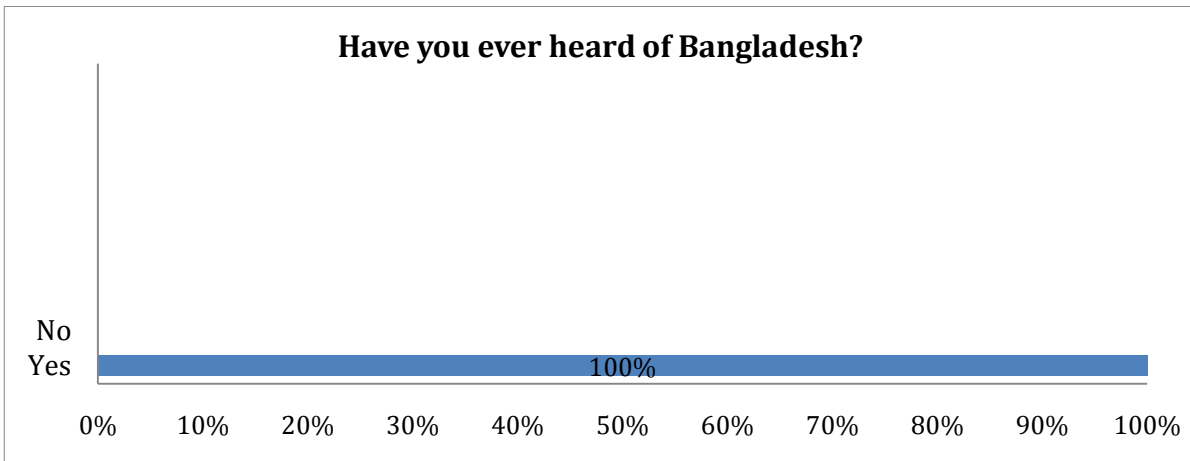


Figure 18. Knowledge about Bangladesh (n=50, selected answers=50)

Figure 19 shows visitors' expectations. The survey revealed that 88% of visitors, 43 in number, had expectations of a unique culture, tradition, religion, and climate, while 41% expected unique food and language. Unique lifestyle and unique geographical terrain were both expected by 27%. Very few people expected Bangladesh to be an unimaginable place full of enjoyment issue when visiting different places across the world.

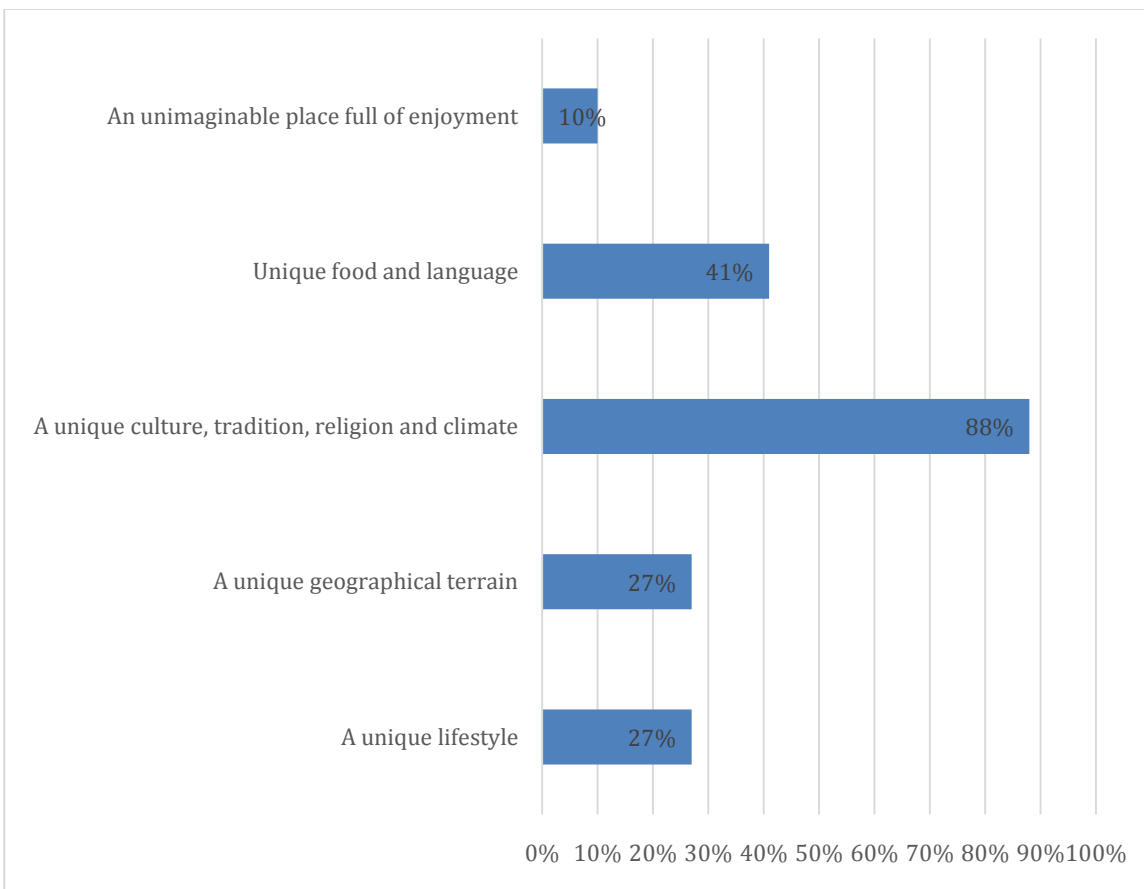


Figure 19. Expectations of visitors when visiting Bangladesh (n=49, selected answers=94)

Figure 20 presents the number of people who had visited Bangladesh. More than half of the people taking this survey (52%) had visited Bangladesh, being 26 in number, while 48% (24) had never travelled to Bangladesh.

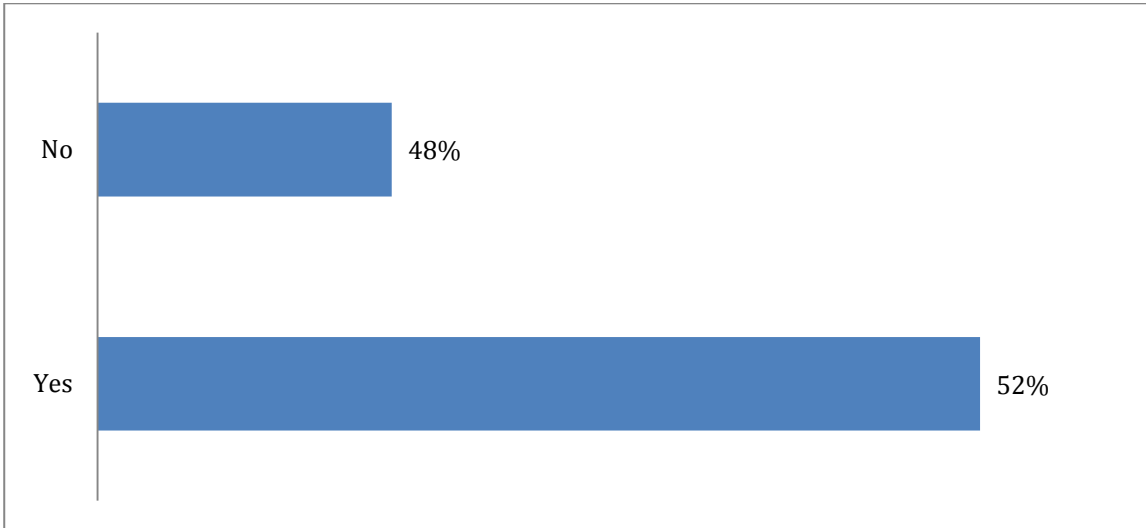


Figure 20. People who had visited Bangladesh (n=50)

Figure 21 shows how often respondents had traveled to Bangladesh. All of the 26 people who had visited Bangladesh had been there more than twice.

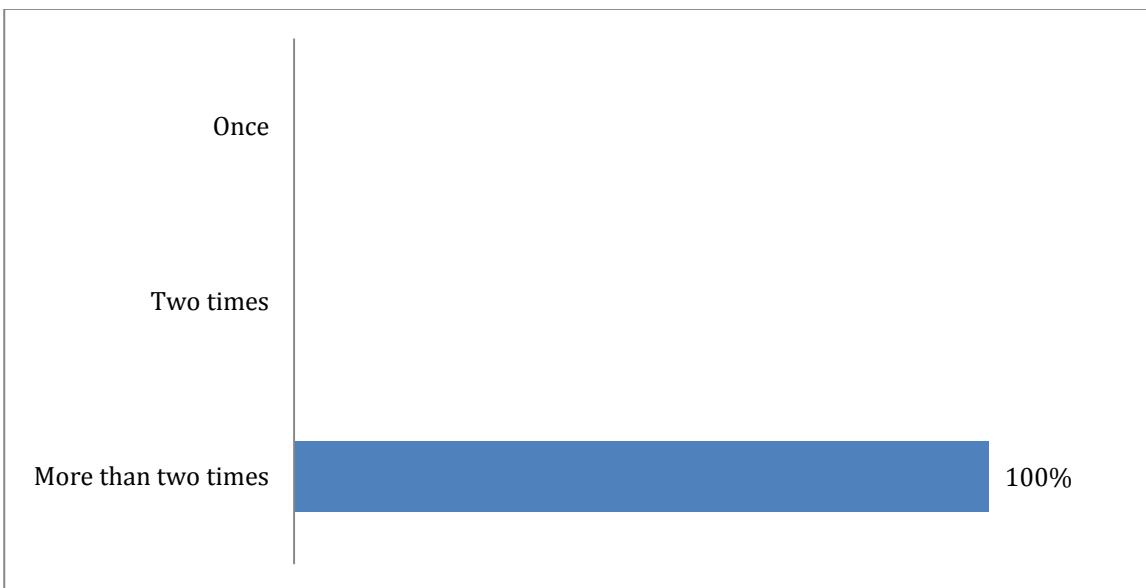


Figure 21. Number of trips to Bangladesh (n=26)

Figure 22 indicates the reasons for traveling to Bangladesh several times. 27 people who had visited Bangladesh, 89% (24) were visiting family and friends. Two people (7.4%) had traveled to Bangladesh for a holiday or vacation with other family members. Only one person (4%) had visited Bangladesh for business.

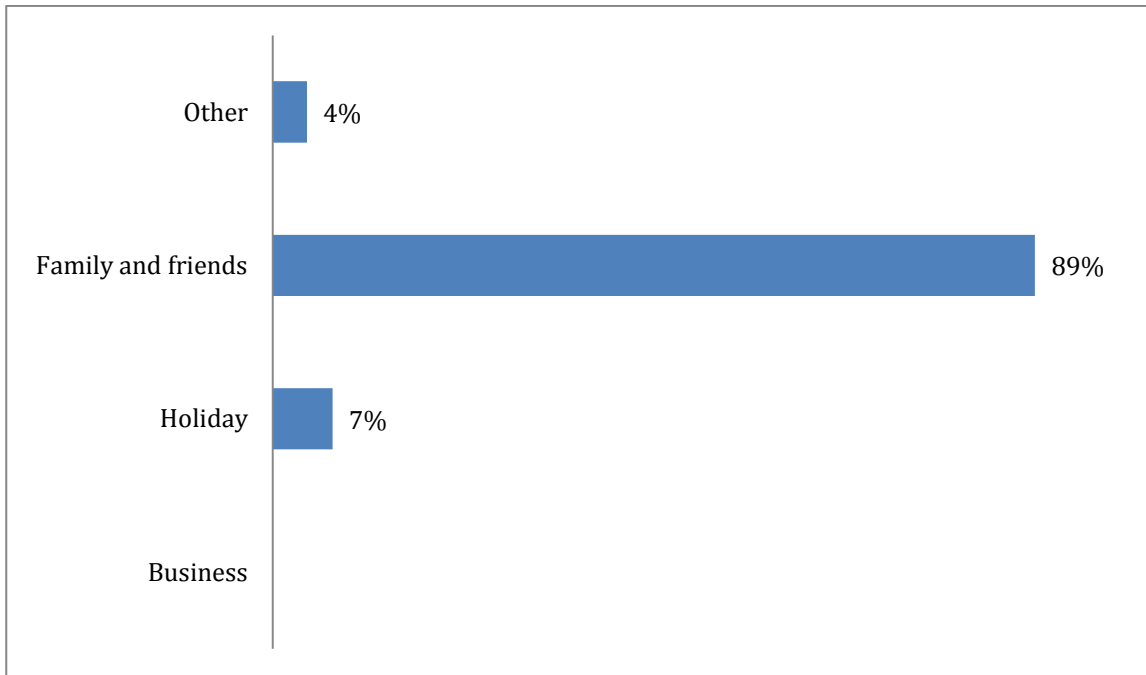


Figure 22. Purpose of visits Bangladesh (n=27)

Table 3 mainly focuses on the experience of visiting Bangladesh. Respondents were asked to evaluate factors of their experience of visiting Bangladesh by using a scale from 1 to 5, where one was the lowest (“totally disagree”) and 5 (“totally agree”) the highest grade.

Overall, visitors to Bangladesh agreed that the Bangladeshi food culture has something special, awarding it an average score of 4.8. They really enjoyed the food and its taste. Bangladesh offers excellent fresh food at a reasonable price. The friendliness of the local community claimed second position, the average score being 4.33. An average score of 4 was awarded to expenditure/price, shopping experience, and different culture. The lowest average score was 2.6: people generally considered the cleanliness and entertainment while visiting Bangladesh to be particularly weak areas.

Table 3. Factors when visiting Bangladesh

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree	Agree	Totally agree	Total no.	Average

			nor agree				
Climate	3	0	9	8	7	27	3.5
Safe tourist destination	3	2	8	11	3	27	3.33
Accommodation and facilities	1	1	8	14	3	27	3.6
Expenditure/price	0	1	8	6	12	27	4
Language and communication	0	1	7	11	8	27	3.9
Different culture	0	1	6	3	16	26	4
Friendliness of the local community	0	0	2	9	15	26	4.33
Food culture	0	0	0	5	22	27	4.8
Shopping experience	0	3	4	10	10	27	4
Transportation	3	4	16	3	1	27	2.8
Accessibility	3	2	13	8	0	26	2.8
Historical sights	1	1	4	13	8	27	3.9
Cleanliness and entertainment	4	8	9	6	0	27	2.6
Infrastructure	2	5	13	6	0	26	2.8
Personal safety and security	2	7	10	6	2	27	2.96

Table 4 shows that some visitors want to visit Bangladesh as a tourist destination in the future for various reasons, whereas others do not want to visit Bangladesh because of perceived negatives. The number of respondents was 32. Their opinions are given below in the Table 4.

Table 4. Would you like to visit Bangladesh as a tourist destination in the future?

Yes, because ...	No, because ...
It is my homeland and friends and family members live there	
It sounds attractive and exotic to me	
I'm interested in different kinds of destination	
It would be a new and unique place to visit	
I would like to experience a completely new culture and lifestyle	
Yes, I like natural diversity	
Yes	
It would be interesting	
The unique religious sites and history	

I want to see all kinds of different places	
It is something different from my own culture	
Family	
Vacation	
Many attractive tourist spots	
Curiosity	
Friends	
Yes, longest sea beach	
The history	
I find it an intriguing place with a unique culture	
Food and nature	
I would love to see its natural landscape and enjoy its unique culture which I have heard about from my friends	
It's a beautiful country	
Historically and culturally rich	
Yes	
It sounds interesting	
It's our neighbors	
Lot of variations	
	I have other destinations I would prefer to visit first
	Not travelling a lot
	Traffic jam, lack of safety, political unrest
	Safety concerns

Table 5 is about the image of Bangladesh. In this research, respondents were asked to evaluate factors pertaining to their image of Bangladesh using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 (“totally disagree”) was the lowest and 5 (“totally agree”) was the highest grade.

Bangladesh is the land of diversity. Our survey revealed that the different culture obtained the highest score for perceived image with an average of 4.3. Food culture claimed second place with an average of 4.0, closely followed by expenditure/price with an average of 3.9. The lowest average score pertaining to perceptions of visiting Bangladesh was 2.3 for personal safety and security.

Table 5. Perceived image of Bangladesh

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Totally agree	Total no.	Average
--	------------------	----------	----------------------------	-------	---------------	-----------	---------

Climate	2	2	10	11	4	29	3.4
Safe tourist destination	1	13	4	9	1	28	2.8
Accommodation and facilities	1	3	11	12	1	28	3.2
Expenditure/price	0	0	8	12	8	28	3.9
Language and communication	0	2	15	9	2	28	3.2
Different culture	0	0	5	5	18	28	4.3
Friendliness of the local community	0	0	6	11	9	26	3.7
Food culture	0	0	6	7	14	27	4
Shopping experience	1	6	11	6	3	27	2.9
Transportation	1	9	14	2	1	27	2.6
Accessibility	1	9	14	3	0	27	2.5
Historical sights	1	0	11	5	10	27	3.6
Cleanliness and entertainment	5	8	9	4	1	27	2.4
Infrastructure	2	10	11	4	0	27	2.4
Personal safety and security	5	9	8	5	0	27	2.3

Table 6 illustrates responses to the invitation to write three things that come to mind when you think about Bangladesh.

Table 6. What comes to mind when you think about Bangladesh?

A lovely place with lots of lovely people ... lots of food and shopping ...
1) Friendly people 2) Rich in culture and history 3) Warm and sunny
A home and comfort for me, the beauty of nature and the delicious food culture
Nice weather and culture, good food and beauty of the nature
I haven't thought about Bangladesh that much but I don't have a positive image of the place. I think that the first thing is that it's a very crowded place. Second would be that it's not that clean and third that the culture is totally different. But I think most of these things are explained by pictures and social media
Fish, vegetables, fruits, corruption
Good food, friends and culture
Hinduism, curry, belly dancing/street dancers
Exploitation of cheap labor by large brands, tropical climate and nature, it's small and between India and Myanmar
Different, exotic, good at IT
Big population, eventful history, clothing industry
Dance, Bollywood, food, henna
Nothing
Personal safety, amazing nature, entertaining people
Statues, cheap labor for designers

Food, relatives, liveliness
Good people, good food, rich culture
Nice, friendly people
Nature, weather, and family
A country surrounded by greenery, Royal Bengal tiger and the sweetest language in the world: Bengali
Unfortunately, pollution, millions of people and interesting culture
Cox's Bazar, unprivileged but happy and smiling people, political unrest and traffic jams
Climate, culture, food
Friendly people, green fields, food culture
Weather, spicy food, and beautiful nature
Friendly people, unique tradition and culture, wildlife, and beauty of landscape
Clothing, different food, affected by climate change as the country will be flooded if the glaciers keep melting
Beautiful country, small place, huge population
Natural beauty, generous and helpful people, food
Love Bangladesh
Densely inhabited, Bengali language, and cuisine
Cox's Bazar tour, Sundarbans tour, delicious food, culture
Underpaid workers, sweatshops, poor people, temples, great sightseeing, interesting culture, cheap destination
Beautiful weather and spectacular nature, uncontrolled density and crowds, corruption and inefficiency

6 Recommendation and Conclusion

The tourism industry is one of Bangladesh's major revenue sources. To be perceived all over the world as a beautiful country for tourists, Bangladesh needs to overcome numerous social, financial, and political challenges. Based on the above research, the image of Bangladesh must be more visible in Europe to attract more European tourists to visit Bangladesh. At present, there are so many problems in the tourism sector in Bangladesh: lack of infrastructure facilities, lack of modern and sufficient recreation facilities, lack of proper training, lack of proper planning from government, lack of marketing, lack of updated information, lack of security and safety, lack of involvement of non-professional people, and political anarchy. To develop the tourism sector, all these problems must be removed. To promote tourism in Bangladesh, the national tourism board can play a pivotal role. They can influence the foreign missions of Bangladesh in Europe to arrange campaigns to visit Bangladesh.

It is necessary to improve tourism security, and traffic in the city area needs to be minimized. There should also be more advertisements on social media to enhance the Bengali tradition. Moreover, the authorities should make the environment for every single tourist feel extra special—for example,

giving them a gift to thank them for visiting Bangladesh, which can be a souvenir or a gesture so that this warm reception will encourage them to return to Bangladesh. In addition, the tourist board can consider sending a delegation to Europe to represent Bangladesh at the different travel fairs that happen every year in Europe, such as the World Tourism Market in London, International Tourism Börse in Berlin, Feria Internacional de Turismo in Spain, Targul de Tourism al Romaniei in Romania, the TTG Travel Experience in Italy, or Matka Expo in Helsinki.

According to the survey, transportation is a major sector that needs to be significantly improved: it has a significant impact on the development of tourism sites and on tourists. Due to inefficient management in the transportation sector, the road conditions are inadequate for traveling from one place to another, and it takes a lot of time. Also, flying to Bangladesh is expensive, and many tourists think it is not a friendly place to visit. To overcome these shortcomings, the government should focus on traffic jams, widening the roads, and maintaining the transportation sector. There should be a monitoring team to check the roads frequently and inform tour operators about roads under construction in good time with an alternative route. This way, they can avoid hassle on the road and smoothly reach their destination.

Social media is a crucial platform to promote tourism in Bangladesh, as people are online using smartphones and other mobile devices to access social media sites. Nowadays, people keep their phones next to them when they sleep: it is the first thing they touch when they wake up in the morning and the last thing they touch at night. This is why the authorities need to use social media platforms to spread information about Bangladesh's culture, climate, nature, travel possibilities, arts and crafts, history, tourism sites, and wildlife. In general, there are some more points to take into consideration in seeking to create a positive image of Bangladesh. These are hygiene and amenities for children and the disabled; minimizing traffic in city areas; professional tour guides and good agencies; cleanliness; accessible infrastructure; reducing corruption; preventing water pollution; a better connection from the airport to the city center; and political stability.

The case company could create new packages and design new tours that are favored by European tourists, highlighting, for example, the beautiful landscape, the relaxing atmosphere, adventure tours to explore unique experiences, and diversity in various activities, such as a cultural event, cuisine, and shopping. Internet and social media platforms are useful tools for promoting a tour package to the potential traveler and should be updated frequently. Bengal Tours Ltd. can give a clear overview of safety and security, as well as the comfort of its customers. In order to bring more tourists to

Bangladesh, the case company can propose and work jointly with the Bangladesh tourist board to take the necessary steps to improve the shortcomings found in this research.

Finally, this research maintains that Bangladesh has high potentiality to attract European tourists by developing useful and effective promotional plans. From this analysis, it is found that many Europeans know little about Bangladesh because of the lack of promotional strategies. The government of Bangladesh can make numerous changes to the rules and regulations so that European tourists develop a positive image of beautiful Bangladesh.

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8 Appendix

Introduction to Survey Questions

Dear Participant,

I am writing my Haaga-Helia Master's thesis about European tourists' image of Bangladesh. This survey is about your perception of Bangladesh as a holiday destination. I am doing this survey because I would like to find out how Bangladesh becomes a travel destination for European tourists, as well as how it can be improved, developed, enjoyable, and secure for travel. All of your valuable answers in this brief questionnaire are right, as they represent your thinking and perceptions concerning Bangladesh. The survey has 18 questions and will take approximately 5–10 minutes to complete. I am confirming that all of your answers will be handled confidentially and anonymously. They will only be used for research and educational purposes.

Best regards,

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General questions

1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

2. What is your nationality?

3. Your age?

- 15–20
- 21–29
- 30–39
- 40–49
- 50–59
- 60+

4. Profession

- Student
- Employed
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Other _____

In this section, you are asked questions about your travel experiences.

5. How often do you travel per year?

- 0
- 1–2 times
- 3–4 times
- Other _____

6. What kind of travel do you like most? Please rank these from 1 to 4.

- Exotic new culture
- Relaxing beach holiday

- Walking and nature
- Historic and heritage

7. If your travel destination is outside of Europe, which region do you prefer?

- Asia
- America
- Africa
- Australia
- Other _____

8. What is your most familiar platform to use when you are planning to travel?

- Recommendation from friends or family
- Offer from tour operating agency
- Previous experience
- Newspapers
- Social media
- Internet
- World travel fairs
- Travel guidebooks
- Other _____

In this section, questions will be related to Bangladesh as a tourist destination.

9. Have you ever heard of or do you know about Bangladesh?

- Yes
- No

10. What would be your expectations during your visit to Bangladesh?

- A unique lifestyle
- A unique geographical terrain
- A unique culture, tradition, religion, and climate
- Unique food and language
- An unimaginable place with full of enjoyment

11. Have you travelled to Bangladesh?

- Yes
- No

If your answer is “ yes”, please answer questions 12, 13, and 14.

If your answer is “ no”, please answer questions 15 and 16.

12. How many times have you travelled to Bangladesh?

- Once
- Twice
- More than two times

13. The purpose of your visit to Bangladesh (You may select more than one answer)

- Business
- Holiday
- Family and friends
- Other _____

14. Kindly rate the following factors of your experience when visiting Bangladesh using the following scale: 1 = totally disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither disagree nor agree; 4 = agree; 5 = totally agree.

	Totally disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither disagree nor agree (3)	Agree (4)	Totally agree (5)
Climate					
Safe tourist destination					
Accommodation and facilities					
Expenditure/price					
Language and communication					
Different culture					
Friendliness of the local community					
Food culture					
Shopping experience					
Transportation					
Accessibility					
Historical sights					
Cleanliness and entertainment					
Infrastructure					
Personal safety and security					

15. Would you like to visit Bangladesh as a tourist destination in the future?

- Yes, because _____
- No, because _____

16. Kindly rate the following factors of your image regarding Bangladesh using the following scale: 1 = totally disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither disagree nor agree; 4 = agree; 5 = totally agree.

	Totally disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither disagree nor agree (3)	Agree (4)	Totally agree (5)
Climate					
Safe tourist destination					
Accommodation and facilities					
Expenditure/price					
Language and communication					
Different culture					
Friendliness of the local community					
Food culture					
Shopping experience					
Transportation					
Accessibility					
Historical sights					
Cleanliness and entertainment					
Infrastructure					
Personal safety and security					

17. Please write any suggestions or improvement points to develop the image of Bangladesh.

18. Please write three things that come to mind when you think about Bangladesh.

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Thank you for completing the survey.