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# Sustainable Tourism Development in the South-West Region of Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** Tourism can play an important role in accelerating the economic growth of Bangladesh. This study tries to address the tourism sector of Bangladesh from sustainability viewpoint. The study selects four tourist spots in the south-west region of Bangladesh to address the study objective and collects primary data from the tourists of the selected spots through using interview schedule. Accordingly, it tries to trace out the prevailing situation of the tourist spots. It also attempts to trace out the factors determining the probability of future trip generation towards the spots. The study findings indicate that travel time, travel cost and travel distance negatively influence the probability of future trip generation. Similarly, married people are less interested to revisit the tourist spots. However, environmental consciousness campaign and existing resource caring initiatives of the spot authority have a positive impact on trip generation possibility. An opinion survey reveals that the tourists value the prevailing resource caring activities and environmental consciousness campaign which attracts them to revisit the spots. However, the tourists poorly rank the ecotourism maintaining effort and pollution protective mechanism in the spots. Therefore, an integrated approach towards maintaining and uplifting the efforts towards sustainable tourism management might contribute towards long run stability of the tourism sector.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Sustainability, Development, Resource, Satisfaction

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## 1. Introduction

Bangladesh has been trying to grab economic development and efficiency through utilizing its recourses and capabilities. Tourism has turned into a very potential and dynamic sector in this respect in the country. According to World Travel and Tourism Council [1], travel and tourism industry is one of the fastest growing sectors, whose direct contribution to GDP of Bangladesh is BDT 184.4 billion (2.3 percent of total GDP) in 2011, which is rising by 6.3 percent per annum. Travel and tourism sector accommodates 3.326 million jobs in 2011, which is about 4.2 percent of total employment in the country.

Sustainable tourism development refers to ensure the sustainability of tourism through environment, economic and socio-cultural factors where these issues should be maintained appropriately by lessening the level of negativity of these factors. It is concerned with environmental,

economic, socio-cultural and management issues. The expansion of tourism activities, tourist visiting and socio-cultural exchanges triggers economic growth, while it causes environmental degradation and socio-cultural problems.

Sustainable tourism management is not meant to augment the tourist number at a large volume. Rather, it is to protect the environment and enhance economic growth simultaneously in a sustainable manner where tourism management bodies and tourists can extract the positive effect from this issue. Sustainable tourism development should focus on the relations of proper environmental asset usage, their process protection, natural biodiversity protection, socio-cultural respect of local communities, building maintenance, cultural heritage, traditional values, inter-cultural understanding and tolerance providing, economic benefits including job creation, earning income and social services to local community and poverty reduction.

Sustainable tourism meets the needs of present tourists and

host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities is called sustainable tourism. Wiwattanakantang and Toim [2] describe the relationship between tourist satisfaction and sustainable development at Thailand.

ICLEI [3] highlights strategies about the sustainable development and tourism in the historical places of the world. Eagles et al. [4] identify strategies to implement sustainable tourism development in developing countries. Khomeriki and Meladze [5] state that ecological tourism can play a certain role in solving the problems of environment protection and sustainable and safe development of a country. Ali [6] state that many economists, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, geography and administration experts are showing increased interest in various service-related activities undertaken in different fields of tourism, and in tourism's relation to sustainable development; issues that have also become the subject of social and economic demand. Nara et al. [7] suggest for solving issues related to the conflict between the need of tourism developmental and services requirements, as well as to preserve environment and resources in coastal tourism. German NGO Forum [8] develops strategies to maintain the relationship between sustainable development and tourism. UNEP [9] highlights some goals and policies to develop the tourism sector with specific focus on sustainability. It illustrates some guidelines and policies for the private bodies and govt. to create a contractual bridge for the development of tourism. Fen [10] also highlights policies to develop sustainable development practices in some specialized zones of the world.

Based on the prevailing literature, sustainability of tourism might be divided under three broader dimensions: environmental, economic and social. Environmental sustainability refers to using natural resources like fuel, energy, land and water at a sustainable rate with perfect and appropriate procedure. No resources will be used desperately, which might lead it to be diminished soon. Proper resource utilization will ensure appropriate slice in the pie for future generation. Economic sustainability refers to sustain an economic agent with making a standard level of margin and generate a long term sustainable plan through making a creative business policy and technique. It also refers to using resources efficiently and responsibly. Social sustainability refers to ensure the social well being of people as well as the country and society through making a long term plan which will benefit the mass people and community.

This study attempts to address the tourism sector of the south-west region of Bangladesh from sustainability viewpoint considering the above discussed issues and dimensions. The study tries to understand the existing scenario of the tourist spots in the study region. It also attempts to identify the factors influencing future trip making plans of the tourists. Moreover, it attempts to check whether

there is any link between sustainable tourism development practices and probability of future trip generation in the tourist spots.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Recreational benefits of tourism constitute a substantial part of total economic value of national and local economy. The applications of the Travel Cost Method (TCM) and Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) are quite common to calculate the recreational values of tourism [11-13]. Some studies follow TCM and CVM to estimate the recreational value of forest [14-18]. TCM is dependent on an idea first put forward by Hotelling [19] and then expressed concisely by Hof and King [20]. It is a widely used tool to calculate the environmental value of tourist spots in different regions of the world. TCM is based on the theory of consumer demand. The fundamental principle of TCM is that the value people attach to a location of environmental significance can be inferred from the cost they incur in travelling to it.

Trip number of a tourist indicates his/her preference towards a tourist spot. It also indicates the satisfaction level of the tourist with the assumption that rational tourists design future tour plan based on the consumed or expected satisfaction level from a spot. Such trip number is considered as the proxy of sustainability in this study with the assumption that an increase in trip number indicates that the tourists are more interested towards the spot and hence the probability of sustenance is higher for the spot. Accordingly, this study attempts to focus on the sustainability issue which is indirectly revealed through customer satisfaction where tourists plan for making future trips if they are satisfied with available facilities and services in a spot.

This study follows TCM to calculate the recreational value of tourist spots. The authors purposively select Shat Gumbuj Mosque, Mozaffar Garden, Niribili Park and Chandramahal Eco-park in the south-west region of Bangladesh as the study sites. Travel cost method in this study considers trip number (*TN*) as the dependent variable. The corresponding explanatory variables are: one-way travel cost (*TC*), two-way travel distance (*TD*), two-way travel time (*TT*) and other socio-demographic features of the tourists including age (*AG*), gender (*GN*), marital status (*MS*), residential status (*RS*), educational qualification (*EDU*), monthly family income (*FI*), number of earning members in the family (*EM*), multiple visit purposes (*MPV*), spot facilities (*SF*), food qualities (*FQ*), safety and security (*SS*), environmental consciousness campaign (*ECC*), existing resource caring (*ERC*), environment friendly products and services (*EFP*), riding facility (*RF*), natural beauty (*NB*) and location dummy variables (Table 1). The authors select three dummies (*SGM*, *MZG* and *NP*) for four locations with Chandramahal Eco-park as the reference in econometric analysis. Three consecutive years (2012-2014) are

considered in collecting field level primary data on trip number and other variables. The main objective of considering the listed variables and econometric analysis (equation 1) is to identify the influential factors of trip generating probabilities.

$$TN = \beta_0 + \beta_1TC + \beta_2TD + \beta_3TT + \beta_4AG + \beta_5GN + \beta_6MS + \beta_7RS + \beta_8EDU + \beta_9FI + \beta_{10}EM + \beta_{11}MPV + \beta_{12}SF + \beta_{13}FQ + \beta_{14}SS + \beta_{15}ECC + \beta_{16}ERC + \beta_{17}EFP + \beta_{18}RF + \beta_{19}NB + \beta_{20}SGM + \beta_{21}MZG + \beta_{22}NP + ui \quad (1)$$

**Table 1.** List of explanatory variables for TCM analysis.

Symbol	Explanation	Measurement unit	Reference
<i>TC</i>	One-way travel cost	BDT	[21]
<i>TD</i>	Two-way travel distance	Km	[21-22]
<i>TT</i>	Two-way travel time	Hour	[23]
<i>AG</i>	Age of the tourist	Year	[21]
<i>GN</i>	Gender	1=Male, 0=Otherwise	[24]
<i>MS</i>	Marital status	1=Married, 0=Otherwise	[22]
<i>RS</i>	Residential status	1=Rural, 0=Otherwise	[23]
<i>EDU</i>	Educational qualification	Years of Schooling	[21]
<i>FI</i>	Monthly family income	BDT per month	[14]
<i>EM</i>	Earning member in the family	Number	[25]
<i>MPV</i>	Multiple purpose visit	1=Yes, 0=Otherwise	[21-22]
<i>SF</i>	Spot facility	Ranking (1-5)	[26]
<i>FQ</i>	Food quality	Ranking (1-5)	Field survey
<i>SS</i>	Safety and security	Ranking (1-5)	[27]
<i>ECC</i>	Environmental consciousness campaign	Ranking (1-5)	Field survey
<i>ERC</i>	Existing resource caring	Ranking (1-5)	Field survey
<i>EFP</i>	Environment friendly products and services	Ranking (1-5)	Field survey
<i>RF</i>	Riding facility in the site	Ranking (1-5)	[27]
<i>NB</i>	Natural beauty	Ranking (1-5)	Field survey
<i>SGM</i>	Shat Gumbuj Mosque	Location Dummy <sup>a</sup>	Field survey
<i>MZG</i>	Mozaffar Garden	Location Dummy <sup>a</sup>	Field survey
<i>NP</i>	Niribili Park	Location Dummy <sup>a</sup>	Field survey

N. B.: Dependent Variable: Trip numbers during 2012-2014;

<sup>a</sup> Chandramahal Eco-park is the reference for location dummies.

In this research the authors try to estimate the impact of explanatory variables on the dependent variables which is trip number. Tourism industry is bearing a lot of potentiality and possibility to improve the local as well as national economy. Sustainable tourism development is a long run phenomenon which ensures the recreation of the future and present generation from the resources and optimal using attitude towards resources. Sustainable tourism development refers to the situation when the tourist zone will be environmentally and ecologically feasible and sustainable where the tourism development will not hamper the animal habitant and ecosystem of the environment. The variables *ECC*, *ERC* and *EFP* of Table 1 proxy the sustainability of tourist spots.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Table 2 lists the TCM estimation results. The results reveal that *TC*, *TD* and *TT* variables are negatively related with trip number, which indicates that for an increase in the value of the said variables (*TC*, *TD* and *TT*), trip number will be decreased because, tourists will not probably make future trip plans bearing higher costs in terms of money, time and distance. More specifically, the study findings denote that for an increase in travel cost, people might be reluctant to generate trip plans to pass free time in tourist spots with family members or friends. Similarly, for an increase in travel distance and travel time, tourists might not be enthusiastic to make trip plan due to long time requirement for traveling a long distance path.

Married people have to remain busy with multi-dimensional household affairs and hence they usually get less time for leisure if compared with unmarried people. Accordingly, this study finds that married people are less interested to revisit tourist spots in comparison to unmarried counterpart. Multiple purpose visits have a negative relation with trip generation probability. Multiple purpose visits refer to visiting a tourist spot in addition to accomplishing some other tasks or visiting some other places simultaneously. Accordingly, such visitors might be less interested to make future tour plan for solely visiting a tourist spot.

This study considers several variables such as *ECC*, *ERC* and *EFP* which act as indicators of sustainable tourism development. A positive sign of the marginal effects of these variables signals that sustainable tourism development attracts tourists to make more tour plans in the future. Among these three issues, the influences of *ECC* and *ERC* are statistically significant at 5 percent level. More specifically, environmental consciousness campaign (*ECC*) through banner, leaflet and signboard setup at the tourist spots influences the tourists to increase the frequency of tours. Similarly, existing resource caring (*ERC*) through taking care of existing resources like animals, birds and trees motivates the tourists to be more passionate for visiting the same site in the coming days.

Riding facility (*RF*) has a positive impact on trip generation by the tourists. If the tourist spots provide better riding facilities, it will create a positive impact on future trip generating plan. Generally, tourists want to pass their leisure through enjoying various kinds of ridings. Accordingly, *RF* has a statistically significant positive influence on the trip making probability.

Some other explanatory variables such as, age of the tourist (*AG*), educational qualification (*EDU*), family income (*FI*), spot facility (*SF*), food quality (*FQ*), safety and security (*SS*) and natural beauty (*NB*) exert positive influences on future trip making probability, though the influences are not statistically significant. Similarly, this study finds that the probability of future trip making is comparatively lower for male tourists (*GN*) and rural people (*RS*) compared to female and urban counterpart, though the influences are not statistically significant.

Table 2. TCM estimation of trip generation probability.

Symbol	Explanation	Measurement unit	Possion Model	Marginal Effect of Possion Model
TC	One-way travel cost	BDT	-0.0025***	-0.0055***
TD	Two-way travel distance	Km	-0.0022**	-0.0048**
TT	Two-way travel time	Hour	-0.0326**	-0.0705**
AG	Age of the tourist	Year	0.0081	0.0176
GN	Gender	1=Male, 0=Otherwise	-0.1463	-0.3156
MS	Marital status	1=Married, 0=Otherwise	-0.3703*	-0.7991*
RS	Residential status	1=Rural, 0=Otherwise	-0.0283	-0.0611
EDU	Educational qualification	Years of Schooling	0.0136	0.0294
FI	Monthly family income	BDT per month	0.0000018	0.0000038
EM	Earning member in the family	Number	-0.0001	-0.0003
MPV	Multiple purpose visit	1=Yes, 0=Otherwise	-0.2984***	-0.6440***
SF	Spot facility	Ranking (1-5)	0.02546	0.0549
FQ	Food quality	Ranking (1-5)	0.0118	0.0255
SS	Safety and security	Ranking (1-5)	0.0034	-0.0074
ECC	Environmental consciousness campaign	Ranking (1-5)	0.2374**	0.5122**
ERC	Existing resource caring	Ranking (1-5)	0.4631**	0.9993**
EFP	Environment friendly products and services	Ranking (1-5)	0.1525	0.3291
RF	Riding facility in the site	Ranking (1-5)	0.1379*	0.2976*
NB	Natural beauty	Ranking (1-5)	0.1535	0.3312
SGM	Shat Gumbuj Mosque	Location Dummy <sup>a</sup>	0.4657	-1.0049
MZG	Mozaffar Garden	Location Dummy <sup>a</sup>	-0.0841	-0.1814
NP	Niribili Park	Location Dummy <sup>a</sup>	0.2709*	-0.5845*

N. B.: Dependent Variable: Trip numbers during 2012-2014; N=200; Log Likelihood Ratio = -468.56; Probability > chi2 = 0.00; LR chi2 = 113.06; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1; <sup>a</sup> refers to Chandramahal Eco-park is the reference for location dummies.

Source: Author’s compilation based on Field Survey (2016).

The location dummies indicate that tourists are more interested to revisit Niribili Park (NP) followed by Shat Gumbuj Mosque (SGM) and they are least interested to revisit Mozaffar Garden (MZG) while comparing among four tourist spots with Chandramahal Eco-park as the reference for forming dummies. Location of the spots, distance from residence and prevailing services are the probable determinants for getting variation in spot preferences by the tourists.

This study attempts to understand the satisfaction level of the tourists on several aspects of tourism sustainability, for example, environmental consciousness campaign (ECC), existing resource caring (ERC), providing environment friendly products and services (EFP), ecotourism maintaining effort (EMF) and pollution protective mechanism (PPM) through using a ranking scale of 1-5. The results (Table 3) indicate that tourists are satisfied about the resource caring activities (ERC). The tourists highly value the effort given by the spot management authority for maintaining the forest and animal resources. Similarly, the tourists are somewhat satisfied towards the environmental consciousness campaign (ECC) of the spot authority as evident through signboard, poster and banners for creating people more conscious about the management and preservation of environment and resources. However, further efforts are needed on environment friendly products and services (EFP), ecotourism maintaining effort (EMF) and

pollution protective mechanism (PPM) as the assigned scores by the tourists are less than 3.00 in a scale of 5.00 (Table 3).

Table 3. Satisfaction level on tourism sustainability.

Indicators of tourism sustainability	Score (in a scale of 5.00)	Remarks
Existing resource caring (ERC)	4.05	Satisfied
Environmental consciousness campaign (ECC)	3.55	Average
Environment friendly products and services (EFP)	2.97	Dissatisfied
Ecotourism maintaining effort (EMF)	2.45	Dissatisfied
Pollution protective mechanism (PPM)	2.85	Dissatisfied

Source: Author’s compilation based on Field Survey (2016).

## 4. Conclusions

Tourism is considered as one of the fastest developing industries in the present era of globalization. It has been regarded as a spine-strength of some countries where a handsome amount of the GDP is formed from attractive tourist spots. The tourism sector has enormous significance from many perspectives including economic, social, cultural and political. It is the fastest growing and single largest industry in the world. About 0.3 million foreign tourists visit Bangladesh per year on average and the country earns more than 50 million US\$ per year from the foreign tourists [28]. The numbers will significantly increase if the local tourists

are counted. The tourism sector can add value in the Bangladesh economy if the industry can be handled properly. Lack of awareness, lack of facilities and adequate marketing practices are constraining the development of the industry.

This study finds that travel cost, travel distance and travel time negatively influences future trip generation of the tourists. Similarly, married people and tourists having multiple purposes are less interested to make future plans towards a spot. However, availability of riding facility attracts the tourists to revisit a spot. Similarly, tourism sustainability related indicators such as environmental consciousness campaign and existing resource caring initiatives motivate the tourists to visit the same site in the coming days. This study finds that the tourists are satisfied about the resource caring activities and environmental consciousness campaign which triggers them to revisit tourist spots. In contrast, the surveyed tourists poorly rank ecotourism maintaining effort and pollution protective mechanism which are essential for sustainable development of tourism. Hence, this study suggests deploying efforts towards sustainable tourism management.

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