
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Role of the Internet in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry: An Empirical Study on Kushtia District, Bangladesh

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| ABSTRACT

The present research intends to explore the role of the internet in the tourism and hospitality industry in Kushtia District, Bangladesh. The mixed-method approach applied in this study collected both qualitative and quantitative data from Google survey methods using secondary sources like research articles, journals, and books. The analysis was done using SPSS 25 and MS Excel 2019 to yield the results for this study. The findings reveal that the reliability result using the Cronbach Alpha technique is .912 and the p-value = .000. The ANOVA test indicates the internet has significantly impacted tourism growth by providing very easy access to information online, making reservations possible on the internet, and improving overall traveling experiences. In addition, the findings suggest that the internet is a cost-effective and efficient tool for promoting tourism in Bangladesh, providing new opportunities for cost savings for tourists and the tourism industry. This research contributes to the growing literature on e-tourism and will offer lessons to policymakers and stakeholders in the tourism industry on the use of the Internet for tourism development.

| KEYWORDS

Internet, Tourism, Hospitality, Kushtia, Bangladesh

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Following Liu (2000), the "Internet" might be conceptualized as "a global network of networks among physically distinct computers operating on a standard protocol for the transfer of information between them." Interactive and universal means of two-way communication make it a good window of access to users all over the world. Placing the user in touch with millions of computer users enables the user to produce or find anything needed, such as numbers, text, sound, and images (Young, 1999). To the end user, it connects societies into a mosaic of companies, people, and people from their time, distance, or connecting platforms (Mathur et al. 1998), and, at the same time, processes, analyzes, presents, stores, and disseminates tourism information with little human interventions and cost-effective (Liu, 2000). Tourists can swiftly book hotel rooms, package tours, air tickets, and various other services (Wen-Hsiang, 2013). Indeed, the Internet has become a dominant platform for tourism advertisements, replacing traditional promotional methods and proving highly effective in attracting a growing number of visitors (Ma et al., 2003; Sardar et al., 2020). Thus, these countries have been able to establish most of their tourism companies on the internet successfully for marketing and promotional purposes. It is quite understandable that once tourists decide to travel, they need to know about somewhere and have an easily accessible and genuine source of information for choosing the right destination, as they need to know it beforehand. The Internet is the most practical means of acquiring such an amount of information. Therefore, they rely on the information available on the Internet before

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selecting their destination and planning their trip (Slevin, 2006). Internet marketing may be the most potent and most reputed marketing method in Bangladesh for selling goods and services, customer promotion, and digital knowledge transfer (Rahman and Rahman, 2020). Despite great potential for tourism, Bangladesh falls as far as online activities are concerned due to a funding crisis. However, in recent times, the Internet has become a magic wand for such problems, and tourism organizations in Bangladesh have made advertisements available to sell their services at absolutely lower costs.

2. Literature Review

Another essential thing that goes hand in hand with the mass promotion of goods and services is the Internet. Their strength in terms of marketing goes the opposite to the tourism industry, where, in the case of small firms or very small companies, the use of mass and selective media to promote their services is negligible. This can be solved, as the Internet assists those small-sized people in promoting their services through minimum cost, yet being available to everyone. Bangladesh tourism is no exception in this regard by any means. The authors came across some global references that relate to Internet-based Tourism Promotion (ITP). No work has been found, however, pertaining to Internet-related tourism in Bangladesh (ALSarayreh et al. 2011). In this way, while reviewing the available papers, the researchers were able to formulate a conceptual background for the present research project. Some important ones are discussed below. As Moutinho (1987) stated, tourists require extensive information before making their final travel decisions. Buhalis (1998) argued that tourism companies effectively utilize the Internet and Extranet to distribute both pre-trip and on-trip information, helping them promote their products. The tourism industry is destined to garner very great synergies in the perceived usage of the Internet. Lai and Vinh (2012) stated that the Internet positively influences tourists' expectations of their destinations. The other major researchers supporting this argument are Poon (1993) and Hannah (1997), who indicated that the Internet is vital in the plight of the survival of companies that belong to this segment of the economy. The Internet is viewed as the best promotional instrument for tourism by Liu (2000) and has notably changed the methods by which the tourism business is carried out. Benckendorff and Black (2000) opined that the Internet, in its multimedia formatting, offers enhanced text stimuli and relies on diverse stimulants to entice people into purchasing travel-related products. Garin-Munoz & Perez-Amaral (2010) state that travel products share all the characteristics that make them an easy fit into an electronic environment; therefore, they are a suitable candidate for selling online. The Internet is an important information source for travel-related decisions, airline bookings, hotel accommodations, and other travel-related supplies, as well as payment by credit card, according to Al-Kassem and Nassuora (2012). Batinic (2013) explored both the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet in relation to modern travel agencies and tour operators. He was nevertheless of the opinion that Internet technology does bring high-quality and efficient operations into disciplines like tourism. Thus, tourism must grasp an edge over the Internet to compete.

Several studies worldwide have examined the role of the Internet in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry. However, there are no studies in Bangladesh in this area. As such, the present study is on the role of the Internet in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Kushtia District, Bangladesh.

2.1 Research Objectives

1. To describe tourism, the hospitality industry, eTourism, eHospitality, etc.
2. To identify the role of the Internet in the tourism and hospitality industry by using "SPSS 25".

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Tourism

Today, tourism is one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing industries that contributes to the economic growth of most countries in the world (Hossain et al., 2025). In the present era, tourism is also regarded as one of the vital sectors of the economy and serves as a leisure-time activity (Hossain et al., 2025). The tourism sector contributed to world GDP in the sum of \$8.9 trillion in the year 2019, about 10.3% of the world economy (WTTC, 2020). This means that one in every ten jobs in the world can be found here. To drive the point home, some pretty big numbers apply to just one market. In terms of foreign exchange income generation, tourism works as a key engine, making this currency into the bloodline flowing from international tourists toward developing countries, which eventually reduces poverty and enhances gross domestic product (GDP) growth. There are other detrimental side effects of

tourism. With the COVID-19 pandemic, this vulnerability has become sharply visible to many economies whose performance is heavily dependent on tourism, as the pandemic curtails their influx of visitors (Gössling et al., 2020). The maximum magnitude of contraction suffered by almost all countries in the last 50 years, measured in various scales of contraction studies from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), indicates an economic slump of travel-enabled countries down to 12% in their GDP. From carbon emissions to pollution and habitat loss, tourism influences the environment to a great extent due to air travel (Lenzen et al., 2018), accommodation, and recreation. According to statistics, on average, tourism contributes 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and this figure is expected to rise (UNWTO, 2018 transportation being on top).

3.2. E-Tourism

e-Tourism is relative to business management, IT, and tourism. It is illustrated in Figure 1 as the concept and regions of e-Tourism. In short, it comprises eCommerce, eMarketing, eTransport, eHrM, eProcurement, eProduction, and last but not least, ePlanning and eManagement: e-Tourism is, as such, every bit of IT, industry and tourism (Buhalis, 2003).

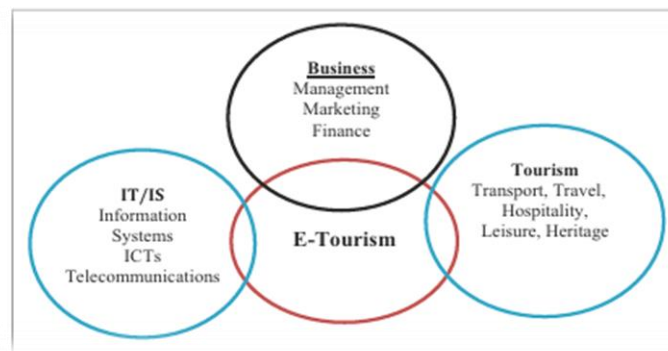


Fig.1. eTourism concept. (Source: Adapted from Buhalis, 2003).

It shows in the picture that E-Tourism is the convergence of business principles, tourism practices, and modern information technology. It shows that knowledge and incorporation of the above three will create successful e-tourism. The summation boils down to this: the picture can visually define e-tourism as an application of information and communication technologies in the tourism sector fueled by business strategies and management practices.

3.3. Forms Of Tourism Product

According to Tureac and Anca in their (2008) paper, it'd be safe to say that the tourism development path is triggered by investment decisions in the tourism sector and with state incentives being offered to individuals for the establishment of private enterprises. This obviously translates to the very possibility that the tourism resources of a country come into the domain of international tourism, paving the way for new investment incentives dependent on the interplay between demand and supply. Therefore, theoretically, every type of tourism can be developed in each country. However, socio-economics and the environment pose significant constraints to the realization of such aspirations, and it is these constraints that put some countries behind others in being able to provide all sorts of tourism for foreign tourists. The classification of forms of tourism in terms of their products, therefore, is incentive-based and aims at understanding their individual characteristics in order to market them correctly and attract the highest possible number of targeted tourists. All kinds of tourism products are nowadays made available to tourists, whether traditional in the form of cultural tourism or pilgrimage or modern with new subdivisions like adventure, conventions, conferences, health, medical, etc. The following diagram adequately illustrates the tourism types and forms of tourism products.

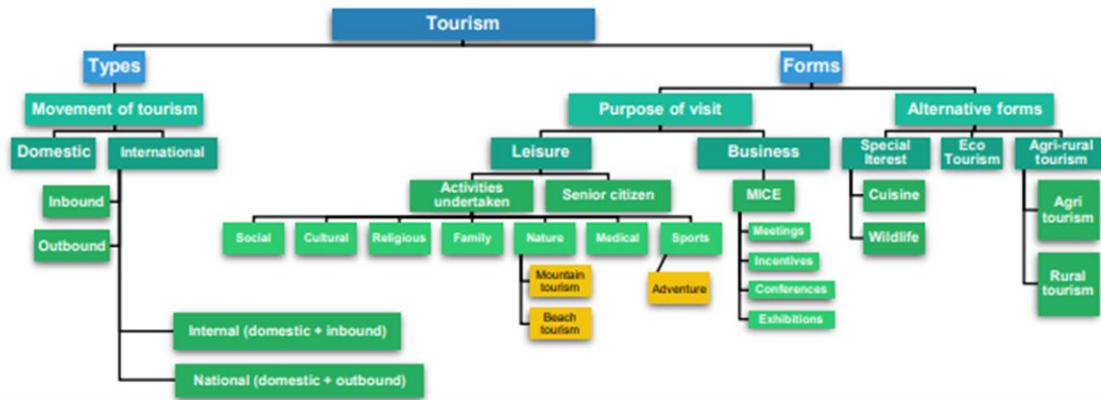


Fig.2. forms of tourism products. (Source: Adapted from Tureac and Anca, 2008).

3.4. Hospitality Industry

In terms of definition, hospitality appears to describe the relationship that organizes the interaction between host and guest. Hospitality is, therefore, an act or practice of being hospitable. It alludes to the link between these two sectors of travel and hospitality. Describes the phenomenal phenomena of newly available markets that have allowed hospitality companies to trade the world over (Smith et al., 2022). Technology, in general, will revolutionize operational efficiency and the way customers interact with brands (for example, online booking systems with AI integrated with customer service) (Jones & Lockwood, 2020). Enabling hyper-personalized customer experiences through AI and machine learning, creating instant customer care systems with chatbots, market segmentation through data analytics, and so on are a few examples (Tussyadiah, 2020). Emerging economy-sharing platforms, such as Airbnb, disrupted the traditional models of hospitality, thus needing innovations in the industry from time to time (Guttentag, 2019). Additionally, hospitality refers to the warm welcome, reception, hosting, or entertainment of guests (Yogitha, 2018). It embodies courtesy and consideration toward visitors and includes local services such as entertainment, lodging, and tourist catering. These services collectively contribute to the business of welcoming guests and fulfilling their accommodation, entertainment, and dining needs. The hospitality industry is a vast sector within the service industry, encompassing lodging, event planning, theme parks, transportation, cruise lines, and various other branches of tourism.

3.5. E-Hospitality

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have rapidly transformed the hospitality industry, integrating into hotel operations, reshaping marketing strategies, improving overall performance, enabling market analysis and relationship-building, enhancing customer service, and creating strategic opportunities. Additionally, guests now expect ICT amenities in their rooms, with internet connectivity via television and data ports becoming standard features in higher-category hotels. This has increased the presence of hotels on the Internet and significantly improved the processes of reservation and representation. Booking online is a convenience that will be appreciated by customers who visit the actual hotels, as it tends to provide relatively easy-as-well-as-reliable communication. The more offices, transactions, arrivals and departures, and bookings, the more demand there will be for technology to help the processes (Sigala, 2014).

4. Methodology

This study is mainly descriptive and aims to provide a thorough understanding of the subject matter. This study collects qualitative and quantitative data, thus allowing for a greater multifaceted analysis of the research topic. Data collection involves utilizing both primary and secondary sources. The collection of primary data was facilitated through Google Forms. In this research, we used Likert scale questions where 1= Strongly Disagree and 5= Strongly Agree. The data analysis tools used SPSS 25 and MS Excel 2019 to provide the findings of this study. It also included secondary studies as the methodological basis for research. The authors reviewed and analyzed various existing

literature, such as research articles, journals, and books, highlighting the role of the Internet in the tourism and hospitality industry.

4.1 Data Collection Methods and Techniques:

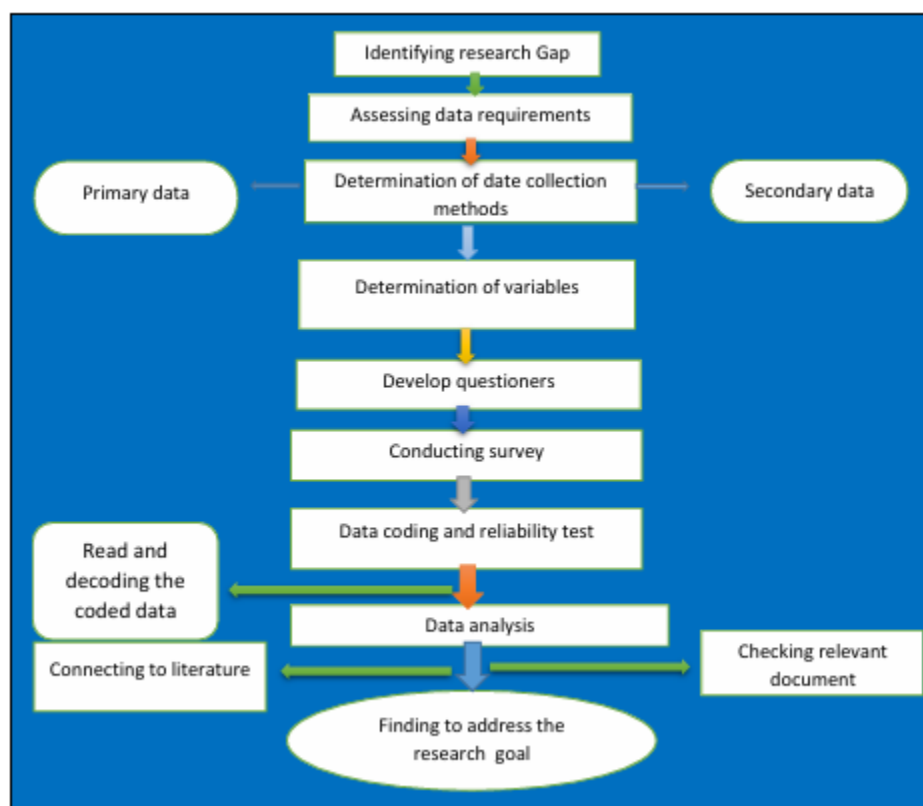


Fig. 3. Data Collection Methods and Techniques (Source: Authors)

A strictly followed process is used to collect and analyze data, and the entire research methodology is depicted in **Figure 3**. In this study, an intensive review of the literature was also conducted on 'The Role of the Internet in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry: An Empirical Study of Kushtia District, Bangladesh.

Dependent variable Y: The internet has positively influenced tourism development in Bangladesh.

Independent variables:

X1: The internet helps to find information about tourist destinations in Bangladesh.

X2: Social media platforms are a dependable source for travel planning.

X3: Online maps and navigation tools enhance the travel experience.

X4: Travel comparison websites save time and money in planning.

X5: Internet search engines provide accurate travel-related information.

X6: Mobile apps for hotel bookings are user-friendly.

X7: The internet helps manage group travel more effectively.

X8: Personalized advertisements improve travel planning experience.

X9: Videos and visuals on websites motivate to travel.

Multiple variables have been used to determine the dependent variable: "The internet has positively influenced tourism growth in Bangladesh" (Y). The independent variables (X1 to X9) are determined to figure out their role in impacting the dependent variable (Y). The study was used as a statistical tool for analysis. A survey questionnaire was developed to gather data from the population. Only 100 respondents took part in the survey. The survey questionnaire was sent to domestic tourists who traveled to different tourist locations and attractions in Bangladesh. The following table summarizes the demographic profiles of respondents:

Table 1: Age of Respondents

Age	Years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Below 18	5	5
	19-25	65	65
	26-35	5	5
	36-45	20	20
	50-up	5	5
		100	100%

Table 1 shows the frequency and proportion of respondents' ages. Analysis of the table indicates that below 18 is 5 (5%), 19-25 is 65 (65%), 26-35 is 20 (20%), 36-45 is 20 (20%) and 50-up is 5(5%). The total number of respondents is 100.

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

Gender		Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Male	44	44
	Female	56	56
		100	100%

Table 2 presents the findings on the frequency and proportion of respondents' genders. Analysis of the table indicates that males are 44 (44%) and females are 56 (56%). The total number of respondents is 100.

Table 3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational Qualification		Frequency	Percentage (%)
	HSC	54	54
	Graduate	12	12
	Post Graduated	9	9
	More	25	25
		100	100%

Table 3 represents the frequency and proportion of respondents' educational qualifications. The analysis of the table indicates that HSC is 54 (54%), graduate is 12, postgraduate is 9, and more is 25 (25%). The total number of respondents is 100.

Table 4: Marital Status of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Marital Status	Single	73	73
	Married	27	27
		100	100%

Table 4 represents the findings of the frequency and proportion of respondents' marital status. The analysis of the table indicates that singles makeup 73 (73%) of the population and married make up 27 (27%). The total number of respondents is 100.

Table 5: Income of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Income	Below 10,000	59	59
	10,000-20,000	10	10
	20,000-30,000	5	5
	30,000-40,000	15	15
	40,000 or More	11	11
		100	100%

Table 5 represents the frequency and proportion of respondents' income. Analysis of the table indicates that below 10,000 is 59 (59%); 10,000-20,000 is 10; 20,000-30,000 is 5; 30,000-40,000 is 15 and 40,000 or more is 11 (11%). The total number of respondents is 100.

Table 6: Occupation of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Occupation	Student	68	68
	Service Provider	3	3
	Govt. Job Holder	4	4
	Privet Job Holder	18	18
	Others	7	7
		100	100%

Table 6 represents the frequency and proportion of respondents' occupations. The analysis of the table indicates that students make up 68 (68%), the service provider is 3, the government Job Holder is 4, the private job Holder is 18, and others are 7 (7%). The total number of respondents is 100.

5. Findings of the Study

5.1 Reliability Test (Using Cronbach's Alpha Technique)

The dependent variable, "The internet has positively influenced tourism growth in Bangladesh," served as the basis of data collection. "SPSS 25" was used to evaluate the collected data from the respondents. The relevance of the data was evaluated by utilizing the Cronbach alpha statistics obtained from processing the data set. The following shows reliability analysis through the technique of Cronbach Alpha:

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.912	.911	10

Table 7: Reliability Analysis, Using Cronbach's Alpha technique (SPSS 25).

The Cronbach's Alpha test was employed to calculate and confirm the consistency of the items (Zikmund and Babin, 2020). A Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable for an exploratory study to ensure the reliability of the data (Malhotra, 2010). As per the results of the study, the reliability score of the 10 items identified stands at .912, indicating that the data is highly reliable.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics is a term that refers to measures that describe and present data meaningfully so that the underlying information is much easier to interpret. Among measures of central tendency, the Mean or average method is more popular for indicating the center of distribution (Malhotra, 2010). Standard deviation is a term used to observe how the data varies from the mean value (Boone, H.N. and Boone, D.A. (2012). They represent the 5-Point Scale mean Classification.

Five (5) Point Scale Mean Classification (Boone, H.N. and Boone, D.A. (2012).

Sl.	Mean Score	Interpretation
1	1.00-1.80	Very Low / Strongly Disagree
2	1.81-2.60	Low / Disagree
3	2.61-3.40	Moderate / Neutral
4	3.41-4.20	High / Agree
5	4.21-5.00	Very High / Strongly Agree

Table 8: five (5) Point Scale Mean Classification (Source: Boone, H.N. and Boone, D.A. (2012).

5.3 Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Mean	Interpretation	Std. Deviation
X1	100	4.42	Very High / Strongly Agree	.794
X2	100	3.86	High / Agree	.682
X3	100	4.38	Very High / Strongly Agree	.896
X4	100	4.38	Very High / Strongly Agree	.776
X5	100	3.97	High / Agree	.688
X6	100	4.39	Very High / Strongly Agree	.777
X7	100	4.43	Very High / Strongly Agree	.728
X8	100	4.24	Very High / Strongly Agree	.996
X9	100	4.36	Very High / Strongly Agree	.823
X10	100	4.36	Very High / Strongly Agree	.916
Valid N	100			

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics (SPSS 25)

Table 9 represents the mean and standard deviation of seven independent variables through a descriptive statistics table. The study found that the mean value of the dependent variable (X10) is 4.36. This value indicates that the Internet has had a very high positive influence on tourism growth in Bangladesh. The mean values of other variables, such as

X1: the internet helps to find information about tourist destinations in Bangladesh, which is 4.42, which indicates Very High / Strongly Agree.; X2: Social media platforms are a reliable source for travel planning, which is 3.86, which indicates High/Agree.; X3: Online maps and navigation tools enhance the travel experience by 4.38, which indicates very high / strongly agree.; X4: Travel comparison websites save time and money in planning, which is 4.38, which indicates very high / strongly agree.; X5: Internet search engines provide accurate travel-related information at 3.97, which indicates High / Agree.; X6: Mobile apps for hotel bookings are user-friendly is 4.39 indicates Very High / Strongly Agree; X7: The internet helps manage group travel more effectively is 4.43 indicates Very High / Strongly Agree; X8: Personalized advertisements improve travel planning experience is 4.24 that indicates Very High / Strongly Agree; X9: Videos and visuals on websites motivate to travel is 4.36 that indicates Very High / Strongly Agree.

ANOVA test

ANOVA ^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	46.774	9	5.197	12.897	.000 ^b
	Residual	36.266	90	.403		
	Total	83.040	99			

a. Dependent Variable: X10
b. Predictors: (Constant), X9, X2, X4, X5, X7, X3, X6, X8, X1

Table 10: ANOVA test (SPSS 25)

a. Dependent Variable: The internet has positively influenced tourism growth in Bangladesh.

b. Predictors: (Constant), X1: The internet helps to find information about tourist destinations in Bangladesh. X2: Social media platforms are a reliable source for travel planning. X3: Online maps and navigation tools enhance the travel experience. X4: Travel comparison websites save time and money when planning. X5: Internet search engines provide accurate travel-related information. X6: Mobile apps for hotel bookings are user-friendly. X7: The internet helps manage group travel more effectively. X8: Personalized advertisements improve the travel planning experience. X9: Videos and visuals on websites motivate to travel.

In Table 10, We shall proceed to determine if there is any relationship between the dependent and independent variables by carrying out a variance test on the variables included in the model. The statistical proof at a 95% confidence level (p-value =.000) vouches for the model's significant nature. Also, because $p < 0.05$, the model is significant, indicating that at least one of the independent variables (X1 to X9) has a significant relationship with X10.

6. Discussion

The study's findings lead to the conclusion that the Internet is necessary for supporting the tourism and hospitality industries in Bangladesh. Most respondents agreed that the Internet has a positive impact on the country's tourism growth. Factors contributing to this are easy information access about tourist destinations, the trustworthiness of social media forums in travel planning, and comfortable online booking systems.

As the main source, tourists access the Internet to find different travel destinations, price comparisons, and consumer reviews before choosing a travel destination. This agrees with previous research on how pre-trip information influences the expectations and decisions of tourists (Buhalis, 1998; Liu, 2000).

Social media were found to be a reliable means of travel planning, with most people assessing what and sharing memories through them. Indeed, the results affirm an increasingly pervasive influence of social media on travel choices.

The research also found that online map navigation tools and travel comparison sites greatly enhance the travel experience. The tools save time and money, but they also improve the overall efficiency of travel planning, which is especially important in countries such as Bangladesh, where traditional travel agencies may not be accessible or reliable.

Personalized advertisements and visual content in the form of videos and images were found to be motivational for tourists to travel. This suggests that tourism firms can attract potential visitors with functional and aesthetically appealing content.

Group Travel Management constitutes the use of the Internet for easy management of group travel. Most of the respondents agreed that such instruments facilitate the planning of travel in a group setting. For instance, for domestic tourists who travel mostly in groups for leisure or cultural activities, this service is particularly relevant.

6.1 Contribution

The present research makes incredible advances in the study of tourism and hospitality, referring to developing countries like Bangladesh. In the first place, it provides empirical proof of Internet usage being the main reason for developing the void that exists in the current literature, especially regarding the under-researched South Asia region. Bangladesh enables one to see how digital tools would resourcefully be utilized in resource-poor environments, in addition to the body of knowledge on e-tourism.

Secondly, the research gives some practical guidance for tourism firms and policymakers. It outlines how important it is for the Internet to be used for tourism promotion and development, providing actionable recommendations to implement within an organization, such as social media websites, improving online booking systems, and creating viewing content to attract the attention of tourists. This advice is especially important for developing countries where traditional advertising methods might suffer from financial restrictions.

The research also presents an excellent theoretical contribution to our understanding of e-tourism by incorporating theories from both management and information technology and tourism. Such an interdisciplinary approach indicates that they are tethered parts of a whole and, therefore, necessitates the need for a comprehensive strategy for tourism development. By bridging these fields, this study has considerably aided in understanding how digital technologies can redefine the tourism industry.

Finally, the findings could have some policy implications. They illustrate how the most critical part of digital infrastructure is in tourism development, thereby recommending that investments in Internet connectivity and digital literacy should be a priority among the initiatives being undertaken by the government. Hence, they would maximize the benefits of e-tourism, especially in developing countries that are experiencing challenges in digital access.

7. Conclusion

Thus, it was ascertained by the research that the Internet is yet another revolution in the process of tourism and hospitality, especially among developing countries like Bangladesh. The whole structure was changed in the way tourists accessed information, planned their trips and associated themselves with tourism firms. The study implies that rather than just being a low-cost means of marketing the tourism sector, the Internet could also be a very strong medium to enrich the total travel experience.

However, the Internet offers the best alternative to traditional activities confined to Bangladesh by financial constraints, such as reaching out to domestic or international tourists. Encouraged by that, the country's tourism industry can work towards creating engaging content on the Internet, great customer care, and an easy booking platform. Digital infrastructure investments must also come into play in policymakers' plans to harness capabilities for tourism in the country further.

7.1 Limitations and Future Direction

This study is not only a welcome avenue into some hitherto unexplored areas on the influence of the Internet on tourism and hospitality, but it is, of course, full of limitations. The sample size and scope of the study are limited.

The study was conducted among a small sample of 100 respondents, who may not represent the larger population. The results are also limited in generalizability since the study concentrated in one district, which is the Kushtia District of Bangladesh. A larger and more diversified sample would have strengthened the findings. The research states numerous important areas subject to future investigation, such as the role of e-hospitality technologies, the effect of the Internet on sustainable tourism, and the long-term influence of digital transformation on tourism.

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