

An empirical analysis of brand image of Sitakunda as a tourist destination

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Abstract

Purpose: The study aims to establish a powerful brand image and create an emotional bond between tourists and destinations. Based on visitors' opinions of various aspects of tourism, this study seeks to create a powerful brand image of Sitakunda as a travel destination.

Research Methodology: The study gathered 312 samples using a quantitative survey to examine people's opinions about Sitakunda as a tourism destination. Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis techniques were used to discuss the methodology section of this study.

Results: The study found that tourism significantly contributes to establishing Sitakunda's brand image as a tourist destination.

Conclusion: The study concludes that establishing a strong brand image centered on Sitakunda's distinctive quality-price ratio is essential for enhancing its global recognition and tourism appeal.

Limitations: The sample for the research is limited to the people living in Sitakunda and tourists from different areas of Bangladesh.

Contribution: The paper's empirical insights offer information on the actual experiences and results of the brand image of Sitakunda as a tourist destination.

Practical Implications: The research recommends that social media marketing is essential for promoting any destination as a brand. Finally, the study urges stakeholders to work proactively to establish a powerful brand image for any tourist location.

Keywords: *Brand Image, Social Media Marketing, Tourist Destination Branding*

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1. Introduction

The tourism sector is the largest growing industry worldwide. Bangladesh is one of them. It has so much divine beauty. There are too many places that people can visit for recreational purposes. Sitakunda is well known for its natural beauty. Mosque, Temple, Hills, Fountain, Eco-park, and Beach are jointly situated here. Rudro (2022) mentioned Sitakunda as a famous tourist destination for Baro Awlias Mazar, Chandranath Hill and Temple, Sitakunda Eco-park, Guliakhali Sea Beach, Mohamaya Lake, Komoldoho Trail, Kumira Ghat, and other trails and travel attractions. Nath and Alauddin (2006) mentioned in their study that the first eco-park in Bangladesh was the Sitakunda Eco-park. They are home to a diverse range of plants and animals. They expected the park to significantly safeguard the region's biodiversity. Mahamaya Lake is the second-largest artificial lake in our country. Although it has various natural resources, the place cannot attract more tourists due to proper branding and promotional activities and a lack of infrastructure. If destinations are properly promoted, a strong brand image will be created. Powerful brand images are vital in marketing, affect customer behavior, and improve sales. If these places can make an initial impression and provide proper safety and security to

tourists, the tourism infrastructure will be enriched. In the modern era, vast amounts of information can be provided. A destination's brand reputation is important when deciding on a location. Cruz-Milán and Castillo-Ortiz (2023) studied travellers' psychology and level of travel experience on destination brand personality. They concluded that self-congruity and brand personality greatly influence the intention of guests to visit. Creating a perception of a destination brand is the first stage in creating destination branding. Thus, branding undoubtedly comes in the second stage of creating favorable destination recognition.

The effect of brand identity on travellers' destination selection is comprehensive since it is thought that a brand's image is a psychological representation of several factors that have the power to influence and inspire traveller behavior. Chigora, Ndlovu, and Zvavahera (2021) studied the role of media in identifying brand positioning and brand identity for the tourism destination in Zimbabwe using a mixed research method on a sample of 452. The study concluded that media could play a crucial role in any tourism destination's brand positioning and identity. Sarker (2014) studied niche marketing strategies called competitive marketing strategies in light of Vision 2021. Specifically, the Bangladesh Tourism Board created a "Beautiful Bangladesh" campaign during the ICC World Cup 2011 to promote Bangladeshi tourist destinations. Using information from the Bangladesh Economic Review 2013, in 2012-13, the tourism industry earned 48.84% of GDP from the service industry and maintained a steady growth of 6%. This study's conclusions are expected to help those master plans to develop a few tactics for competitiveness in the context of Vision 2021 of Bangladesh as well as long-term economic expansion. Walewangko, Mandagi, and Indrajit (2024) conducted a study on 4S brand gestalt dimensions (Storyscape, Sense cape, Service cape, Stakeholders) and purchase behaviors of buyers and shoppers using quantitative research methods on a sample of 183 respondents. The result of the structural equation modelling method with the help of SmartPLS statistical software indicated that 4S gestalt dimensions positively influence customer interest in buying any products or services.

Brand perception varies periodically from tourist to tourist, since a brand's image can occasionally be manipulated as an emblem. It is imperative for destinations to exercise caution when managing their brand image, as this is a delicate and complex matter that can significantly affect their reputation. Oh, Keller, Neslin, Reibstein, and Lehmann (2020) studied three perspectives of brand research. Brand research considers a brand's past, present, and future conditions. Researchers have used a dominant research methodology to review three historical eras of branding. The study concluded that branding embraced every organization and people to make it a part of everyday vocabulary. Tarigan, Lubis, Rini, and Sembiring (2023) conducted qualitative research on different tourism stakeholders to identify the factors that influence the tourist brand experience in Lake Toba, Indonesia. The findings showed that the quality of destination attraction, infrastructure and support services, destination imagery, and so on, build tourist self-expression at any destination. Ahmed, Azam, and Bose (2010) Studied a specific topic of how factors affect the Selection of tourist destinations in Bangladesh using the exploratory and empirical research approach over an interview of 146 tourists. The study concluded that 24.6% planned to choose Bangladesh as a travel location if they had the nine factors examined. Kamble and Sawant (2019) stated that the destination choices visitors prefer are often significantly influenced by the destination's branding.

Nandan (2005) studied brand recognition and visibility through connection from a communications viewpoint, using different information, perceptions, and concepts to show the importance of brand recognition and brand identity for a company and how it is built. This study proposes a framework for linking brand identity and image through the modern communication environment. Cai (2002) studied cooperative branding for rural destinations using concepts and conceptual models, and found an activation theory, image formation, and formation process framework. From this study, we developed a hypothesis model that was tested by two approaches to multidimensional scaling. According to the report, cooperative branding is an attribute picture that is consistent throughout, built by a strong linkage and image view of the brand through multiple rural communities. Hankinson (2004) studied that the place brand model is introduced by emphasising the idea of brand recognition as interaction with visitors and other stakeholders, prioritising actions over communications, and emphasising actuality rather than

perception. Ekinici and Hosany (2006) studied that there are 3 dimensions of destination personality: sincerity, excitement, and destination personality, positively impacting perceived destination brand image. Sallam (2016) argued that developing client confidence in any brand and brand recognition often leads to successful destination branding.

Sitakunda is a well-known pilgrimage site for tourists in Bangladesh. In addition, it has huge, attractive places with the potential for development as one of the most branded tourist destinations. Though it also has one emotional touch for in-pilgrimage, the idea of brand image naturally arises when promoting this kind of travel location to local and foreign travellers. Contrary to the brand recognition of Sitakunda, travellers have a number of perceptions, history, knowledge, culture, thoughts, and emotional attachments to Sitakunda. For travel marketers, destination image is crucial. A destination's brand is created using various information sources and methods, including components of the destination's tourism, such as age, educational attainment, travel motivation, and visitor personality. Several studies have shown that brand identity has an important effect on consumers' sentimental responses to commodities and how they make purchases. Therefore, it is obvious that one of the most important factors influencing travelers' decisions about where and how often to go on vacation is the destination's brand image. The destination's overall perception provides a bridge between visitors' future actions and brand implications.

1.1 The Rationale of the study

Gartner and Lime (2000) claimed that tourism is a major and vital sector in developed and developing countries. Sitakunda is an auspicious tourist destination in Bangladesh. However, it has many unplanned policies. Besides the lack of promotional tools, everyone does not know about it. Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott (2003) studied destination branding in a specific country named New Zealand and how stakeholders play a role in destination branding. The researcher focuses on destination brand management and how the political process is involved in successful brand management. The study concluded that public and private sector stakeholders are essential to building a strong brand destination.

The current study on Sitakunda will help marketers better understand tourists' likes and intentions to visit a tourist destination. Related parties will receive advantageous information to support the development of Sitakunda's brand. Joachimsthaler and Aaker (1997) Studied Building successful brands without using mass media, which is possible for businesses that adopt a well-thought-out marketing plan that includes brand building as a key component. This allows the creation of successful brands without the need for costly media advertising. Marketing a brand is ineffective if it lacks a distinct identity. Before a product is released, the brand should be well known, and consumer involvement should be highlighted. In the current situation, a few pilgrimages visit Sitakunda, but after marketing and creating a rich environment, it is possible to attract various types of tourists. Hills may attract adventurous tourists through mountain climbing, and Eco Park can influence green travellers. Fountains may attract all types of tourists. All stakeholders may create destination and tourist loyalty by providing hospitality services such as lodging, meals, and transportation. Waste management strategies also have a direct influence on visitors' minds (Masum, Faruq, Mia, & Talukder, 2024).

The nation's economic expansion rate depends on its tourism industry. Bangladesh's tourism industry is expanding at a rate of 3.9%. In comparison, the Maldives have a GDP of 28%. Bangladesh's tourism sector continues to grow despite being in a primitive stage. The major reasons are the lack of branding and promotional activities, infrastructure development, and safety and security issues (Bhuiyan, 2023, 2024). To the best of our knowledge, few studies have been conducted on this topic in Bangladesh. Therefore, researchers were motivated to work in this field. This study will help domestic tourists, international tourists, and stakeholders establish Sitakunda as a branded tourism location, and they may do it easily. A strong brand picture gives the user organized additional information that is retained in their memory and strengthens and forms their brand connections.

2. Literature review

Roy and Hoque (2015) studied building a strong brand image on a specific destination named Cox's Bazar using a quantitative method over a sample of 106 respondents. The study concluded that the findings of it are anticipated that the research would help individuals involved guarantee the availability and calibration of essential tourism components; as a tourist destination, it will support the establishment of powerful brand recognition for Cox's Bazar. Cheung, Pires, and Rosenberger III (2019) provided a conceptual model that shows how brand recognition and perception are impacted by social media marketing. This model illustrates how brand familiarity is improved through brand awareness. This study brings to a close its enhanced comprehension of marketing and promotion through social media platforms and different involvement levels in brand communications. Bappy (2019) studied the relationship between destination perception and visitor retention in Bangladesh's amusement park industry using a quantitative method with over 300 visitors from different parks. The study concluded that ensuring the improved destination image, satisfaction, and loyalty level of visitors helps build a destination image.

Hossain, Quaddus, and Shanka (2013) studied some of the factors and variables regarding tour destination loyalty in a specific destination named Cox's Bazar using a deductive methodological approach over field interviews with 10 experienced visitors. The main objective of this study is to ascertain how destination loyalty influences its adoption and application in Cox's Bazar. The significance of this study is that it identifies three new factors that significantly influence loyalty judgment of a destination: income level, seasonal fluctuation, and religious faith. Nedelea, Ali, and Alamgir (2017) conducted a study on the factors behind destination loyalty with the help of a bivariate analysis of data on Bandarban, a renowned tourist destination in Bangladesh. They found that tourist loyalty is often influenced by transportation, accommodation, food, and safety issues in any area.

Siddique (2019) defined a destination's well-defined brand identity as the process of establishing a reputation for a place by taking advantage of its chances and resources that remain unique and motivating to outsiders, as noted in their study on Bangladesh as a tourist destination. Islam and Pamela (2015) studied destination image, which identifies some attributes and obstacles in specific countries and places named Bangladesh. The study found that its outcomes will help us comprehend how domestic tourists travel. Kobra, Bhuiyan, and Zayed (2018) studied the benefits and drawbacks of the tourist industry in Bangladesh from an investment standpoint using a qualitative method with a sample of 120 respondents. The study concludes that tourism investment is more important in Bangladesh than in its surrounding countries. The study will find a new way to emphasize tourism investment and budget allocation. Akhter (2017) Studied opportunities for integrating supply chain management and destination branding in a specific destination named Bandarban, Bangladesh. The study concluded that destination branding is the idea of showcasing a location in a way that sets it apart from other places.

Hassan, Bhuiyan, and Kamruzzaman (2013) studied making the most of the travel industry with country branding in Bangladesh, emphasising the country branding concept for leveraging Bangladesh's tourism sector. The study concluded that Bangladesh's tourism sector has to target the creation of exclusive tourist zones for MICE tourism, develop a fair image, use an extensive marketing plan, attract foreign investment, hire country branding experts, and maintain regional alliances. Kuri, Islam, and Ananya (2020) studied a specific issue of how tourism diplomacy builds a nation's image through tourism resources. The study concluded that stakeholders boost destinations to promote the country's image to others. It also provides multiple concepts and shows certain diplomatic elements that create peace across various countries around the globe. Wu and Chen (2019) studied constructing brand value: brand identity, personality, and image to examine the connections between the three research variables: personality, identification, and brand image.

According to the study's findings, businesses should develop premium quality products and product reputation personalities to boost the value of goods. Applying this approach may also improve consumers' product identification and strengthen their overall product image, which will support their ability to manage their businesses sustainably and compete. Mulyani and Hermina (2023) studied the

impact of online marketing and brand recognition on the enhancement of reputation and how it impacts opinions about purchasing using a quantitative method over a sample of 154 respondents. This study shows how marketing through online platforms and brand recognition significantly impact a brand's reputation. The study concluded that if publicity and digital marketing are performed perfectly, the product's customers will see a beneficial impact. Furthermore, it maintains a positive brand image to maximize sales. T. Park, Shenoy, and Salvendy (2008) Studied a compilation of 53 case studies categorised by classes of product, target market, business purpose, and kind of advertisement; this article discusses effective mobile advertising. This study offers a framework for comprehending the features of mobile phone promotion. Compares and contrasts online ads with other forms of advertising. S. H. Park (2009) studied causes of the gaps of perceptual bridge space between brand image, market behavior research, and empirical measurement by creating a model and assessment system for a brand image that works well. In the context of a restaurant, the study created a brand image scale and suggested an integrated model of brand reputation within a consumer-centric model for building brand value (Bhuiyan, Uddin, & Milon, 2023).

Stressing the significance of reputation within the hospitality sector in improving marketers' understanding of the elements that may enhance brand image and thereby provide acknowledgement to brand equity management, this study also offers several managerial implications for chain restaurant managers and marketers. Maria, Pusriadi, Hakim, and Darma (2019) studied the niche segment called the impact of marketing through social networking sites and concluded that advertising works well to raise brand recognition using a quantitative method over a sample of 50 respondents. Brand awareness comes from satisfaction with any product or service. Kim and Lee (2018) studied the fact that brand awareness is developed by recognising brand popularity through strong interactions and constructive promotion. The study concluded that advertising efficiency and social networking marketing positively affect buying intention through brand awareness. Kumar, Townsend, and Vorhies (2015) studied brands using product design and how to enhance consumers' affection for it using a quantitative method over a sample of 712 consumers. This study examined the effects of social media marketing and concluded that advertising works well in raising brand recognition. Compared to merely transactional values, such as functional or economic value, the social and emotional value that design offers customers has a bigger influence on brand attachment. Hysa, Karasek, and Zdonek (2021) studied how various generations used social networks to promote sustainable community tourism, using a quantitative method with a sample of 397 respondents. The outcome demonstrates that the use of social media decreases with age, and disparities among generations are apparent in how they use online social networks. The study concluded that social networking sites are used to gather opinions about travel destinations, positive feedback from social media, and to cancel trips due to negative reviews.

Keller (2003) studied Brand Synthesis in a specific Multidimensionality of Brand Knowledge, using the leveraging process to understand customers' behaviour and how it changes in competitive markets where the market provides high-quality products and services. This study proposes a framework for adapting the border and holistic marketing concept that helps improve multidimensional brand knowledge and understanding of brand theory and practices. Gehrels and de Looij (2011) studied employer branding to promote a new approach to the hospitality industry, using information collected from 23 senior hospitality decision-makers who comment on current problems in the hospitality industry. This study suggests the formulation and implementation of employee branding.

Huang and Sarigöllü (2012) studied the relationships among the equity of the brand, brand reputation, and the marketing strategy, using real market survey data and three perspectives. This study developed a framework for understanding consumer experience, brand awareness, brand equity, marketing mix strategy (product, price, place, and promotion), and outcomes. Eley (2011) studied the idea of social networks, which has been explained using several different methods. Lin, Lin, and Wang (2021) studied how a social objective affects the quality of service and brand perception over a sample of 316 customers using a structural equation model. The findings indicate that a social objective enhances brand perception and service excellence and creates important issues in terms of motivating customers to experience concern. The study concludes with a better understanding of the connections between

brand reputation, service excellence, and social objectives. Amron (2018) studied the four categories of consumer buying decision-making behaviour: price, product quality, trustworthiness, and brand image. This study shows the independent and dependent variables that positively and significantly influence buying decision-making. The study suggests that management should provide quality products, not focus on brand image. Mansur, Saragih, Susilawati, Yusiati, and Endri (2021) using a quantitative method and a positivist paradigm, they researched consumer brand engagement and brand messaging in Indonesia's particular maritime tourism sector among 96 respondents. The outcomes specify that the destination brand equity variable's loyalty component is significantly affected by the entertainment and engagement dimensions. The study concludes that new contributions have been made to the promotion of sites for maritime tourism using the presumption of brand involvement, trust in the brand, and communication between brands.

Danlami and Gajere (2023) conducted a study of the tourism sites in Nigeria to see the impact of motivation and employee ambidexterity on tourist minds. The results indicated that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play a crucial role in the behavior of employees. Employees who are happy with their motivation issues provide wholehearted services, and the guests become satisfied. Dirsehan and Kurtuluş (2018) measured brand image in a specific destination named the Turkish airline industry using a cognitive approach over a sample of 1000 passengers. The study concluded that a sustaining brand image should be created to provide proper service to passengers on time. The study also shows how to create a powerful brand image in consumers' minds. Absah, Yuliaty, and Anuar (2024) demonstrated the effective relationship between the economic development of halal tourism. The study concludes by describing how it assists policymakers in the development of policies that promote economic growth in the halal tourism industry. The behavior of sellers in tourist areas is important for destination branding. In this regard, a seller's entrepreneurial mindset is crucial. Yuliastuti et al. (2024) carried out a qualitative study on the factors that drive the entrepreneurial mindset of any entrepreneur targeting any tourist destination. The study found that skills including experience, risk-taking, technological knowledge, ability to convince clients, and communication skills are very important to sustain business.

Malik, Naeem, and Munawar (2012) studied three types of brand images. Brand image is considered from Past, Present, and Future perspectives. The researcher used an associative network model to measure brand image. The study concluded that numerous qualitative techniques failed to measure consumers' thoughts; currently, qualitative research is needed to measure brand image (Khanom, Islam, Hasan, Sumon, & Bhuiyan, 2022). Amara (2017) studied building a tourism designation branding in specific tourism sectors, such as the cultural events of Egypt, using qualitative data collected from key tourism stakeholders. This study promotes two specific cultural events in Egypt, (Abu Simbel Sun Fest and El-Moez Carnival) for branding, encouraging, and regenerating Egypt's tourism. Hsu, Wolfe, and Kang (2004) studied the evaluation of an image for a destination that has restricted comparable advantages, using a quantitative method with over 417 participants from 12 different US States through telephone interviews. The study concludes that the research findings are expected to assist in gaining competitive advantages through visitors' and non-visitors' image views and different perceptions. Dedeoğlu, Van Niekerk, Küçükergin, De Martino, and Okumuş (2020) studied the influence of social media share on destination quality and product recognition, which should be improved using the equation modelling over a sample of 568 visitors, both domestic and foreign. The study also finds that destination recognition favorably influences visitors' views of the natural and service excellence of a destination.

Rimadias, Alvionita, and Amelia (2021) studied the outcomes of their findings, showing that customer brand engagement is positively impacted by interaction, entertainment, and electronic word-of-mouth. and formulating strategies to improve the tourism sector. Liang and Lai (2022) studied tea tourism using four variables to determine their identification with the destination's image, the goal to travel, and the origin brand reputation to affect the perception of the destination image held by non-visitors over a sample of 311 respondents. They learn how a destination's brand image encourages those who are not tourists. This study suggests tea culture tourism methods and concludes that brand image promotes a

tourist destination, which has consequences for tea culture tourism. Pranata and Sinaga (2023) studied the use of an associative and quantitative way analysis to analyze both brand recognition and brand perception strategies on particular destinations in North Tapanuli among a quota sample of 93 respondents. This study demonstrates how visitors' interests have a specific impact. Their interest rates and how digital marketing affects them vary from brand awareness to image. Mvondo, Jing, Hussain, Jin, and Raza (2022) studied the effect of foreign tourists on their recreational engagement and how brand reliability, enthusiasm, and publicity affected them over a sample of 453 international tourists using a quantitative research design model.

Florek, Insch, and Gnoth (2006) studied the position of brand identity communications through the websites of city councils in specific places in New Zealand using three conceptual framework tools for future researchers to directly maintain a close watch on the brand identity communication tools in place. Bernarto, Berlianto, Meilani, Masman, and Suryawan (2020) studied the influence of brand consciousness, perception, and reliability on brand loyalty over a sample of 436 using a quantitative method. This study concluded that they expected to offer insights into the management of coffee houses to boost brand reliability, which may be achieved by enhancing their brand's recognition, perception, and confidence. Wisker, Kadirov, and Nizar (2023) demonstrated how brand perception and availability to cultural demands impact consumer satisfaction and how both operate as moderating factors and impacts. The study's conclusion addresses the implications of providing Muslim travellers with the greatest possible experience. Li (2021) studied how brand loyalty impacts tourists' perceived value in a specific destination, Xixi National Wetland Park, over a sample of 2015 and 2017 visitor data from the park, using a structural equation model. The conclusion of this study indicates that tourists' perceived worth has a notable beneficial influence on satisfaction levels for tourist brands and trust in the brand. Additionally, tourist perceiver value had a crucial and effective impact on both expressional reliability and behavioral reliability. Moreover, brand satisfaction and belief serve as mediators between tourist-perceived value and brand loyalty. Martin and Nasib (2021) studied the use of satisfaction, brand image, and brand trust as intervening variables to boost loyalty using a quantitative method with over 125 questionnaire responses. This study focuses on enhancing student loyalty through the influence of brand reputation and trust, with student satisfaction serving as a mediating factor.

Gebreel and Shuayb (2022) studied how social media platforms contribute to tourism promotion using a quantitative method with a sample of 120 respondents. The study concludes that social networking channels have a crucial influence on the efficacy of tourism branding and promotion for all users. Furthermore, these platforms can furnish users with reliable and trustworthy data about their travel location, supporting them in making good knowledge choices about where to travel or visit. Zia, Younus, and Mirza (2021) investigated the impact of brand reputation and reliability on brand value and the balancing role of brand consciousness using a quantitative method with a sample of 390 respondents. The main goal of this study is to assist marketers in achieving customer satisfaction and focusing on customer needs to gain a stronger competitive edge. Mangold and Faulds (2009) studied how establishments that use social networking sites for marketing gain a significant competitive advantage over others.

Social networking site users are growing daily; this high number allows entries to be quickly and widely disseminated to a large number of consumers in a short amount of time (Molla, Mani, Bhuiyan, & Hossain, 2023). As a result, it makes it possible for rumors and good news about businesses on the social network to spread quickly. Armutcu, Tan, Amponsah, Parida, and Ramkissoo (2023) studied how tourist behavior plays a role in online marketing and social networking using a quantitative method with a sample of 264 respondents. The study concludes that designing ways to motivate visitors to express their opinions, involvement, and level of satisfaction through online marketing modes will help improve the excellence of goods and services. Ispas and Saragea (2011) analyzed a tourist destination's credibility in a specific destination named the Canary Islands. The study concludes that a tourist destination must identify, strengthen, and maintain accurate marketing policies to achieve a competitive advantage. To understand the needs of the consumer, tourist planners and marketers must undertake a comprehensive analysis of data on the travel and hospitality industry as part of the branding process

(Almeida-García, Domínguez-Azcue, Mercadé-Melé, & Pérez-Tapia, 2020). Through this research, we can conclude that effective steps may be taken to establish Sitakunda as a tourist destination. Studying Sitakunda could provide insight into how it affects the socioeconomic conditions of local communities and broader regions. Sitakunda's strategic geographical position and involvement in regional development efforts might be strong influencing factors. A positive perception of a destination provides an advantage over competitors. Three important factors help establish an image of the destination. First, feedback from travellers spreads positive word-of-mouth, making it easy to establish an accurate perception of a place. Second, creating an image of mass media, and finally, laws and interests taken by the destination authority.

2.1 Research Gap

Sitakunda is rich in natural resources. Many places might attract a large number of visitors. There are fountains, hills, an eco-park, a beach, a lake, etc. The main aim of this study is to properly utilize these natural resources to boost Bangladesh's tourism economy. Through proper branding, it is possible to spread a variety of destinations worldwide in Sitakunda. Analyzing numerous documents, it is evident that numerous studies have been conducted on the potentialities, development, issues, and prospects of tourism, as well as the effects of tourism on society and the economy in Sitakunda. There is no research on creating a strong brand image for Sitakunda as a travel destination. This is the gap on which the current study focuses.

2.2 Objectives of the Study

The driving force for this study is determined to be tourism development and branding of Sitakunda. This research strives to define the current scenario of the destination and how to improve infrastructural development and brand a destination. To obtain a valuable result for the research question of “Establishing a powerful perception of a Sitakunda brand as a place for visitors, the following points will be investigated:

1. To amplify the present condition of Sitakunda as a tourist destination in Bangladesh.
2. To explore the current conditions of perceptions of brands in the role of Sitakunda as a tourist destination.
3. To identify problems and challenges of promotional tools and provide suggestions to overcome the challenges of building the credibility of the brand Sitakunda as a place of travel.

3. Research methodology

This study's research is mostly descriptive and offers an extensive overview of this topic. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered for this study, enabling a more comprehensive examination of the subject matter. Both primary and secondary information were used in the data collection process (Uddin, Bhuiyan, & Hamid, 2024). Based on a literature review using secondary data, the study identified specific dependent variables and several independent variables. The overall study plan is shown in Figure 1.

1. Dependent variable (DV): Tourism development helps establish a powerful brand image for a destination.

2. Independent variables:

- IV1: Frequency of Travel.
- IV2: Media for choosing a travel destination.
- IV3: The budget influences visits to tourist destinations.
- IV4: Promotional tools.
- IV5: Safety and security.
- IV6: Accommodation facilities.
- IV7: Quality Food and Beverage service facilities.
- IV8: Transportation facilities.
- IV9: Entertainment facilities.
- IV10: Favorable climate.
- IV11: Infrastructural development.

- IV12: Adventurous tourists.
- IV13: Government's role in policy formation.
- IV14: Behavior of local people.

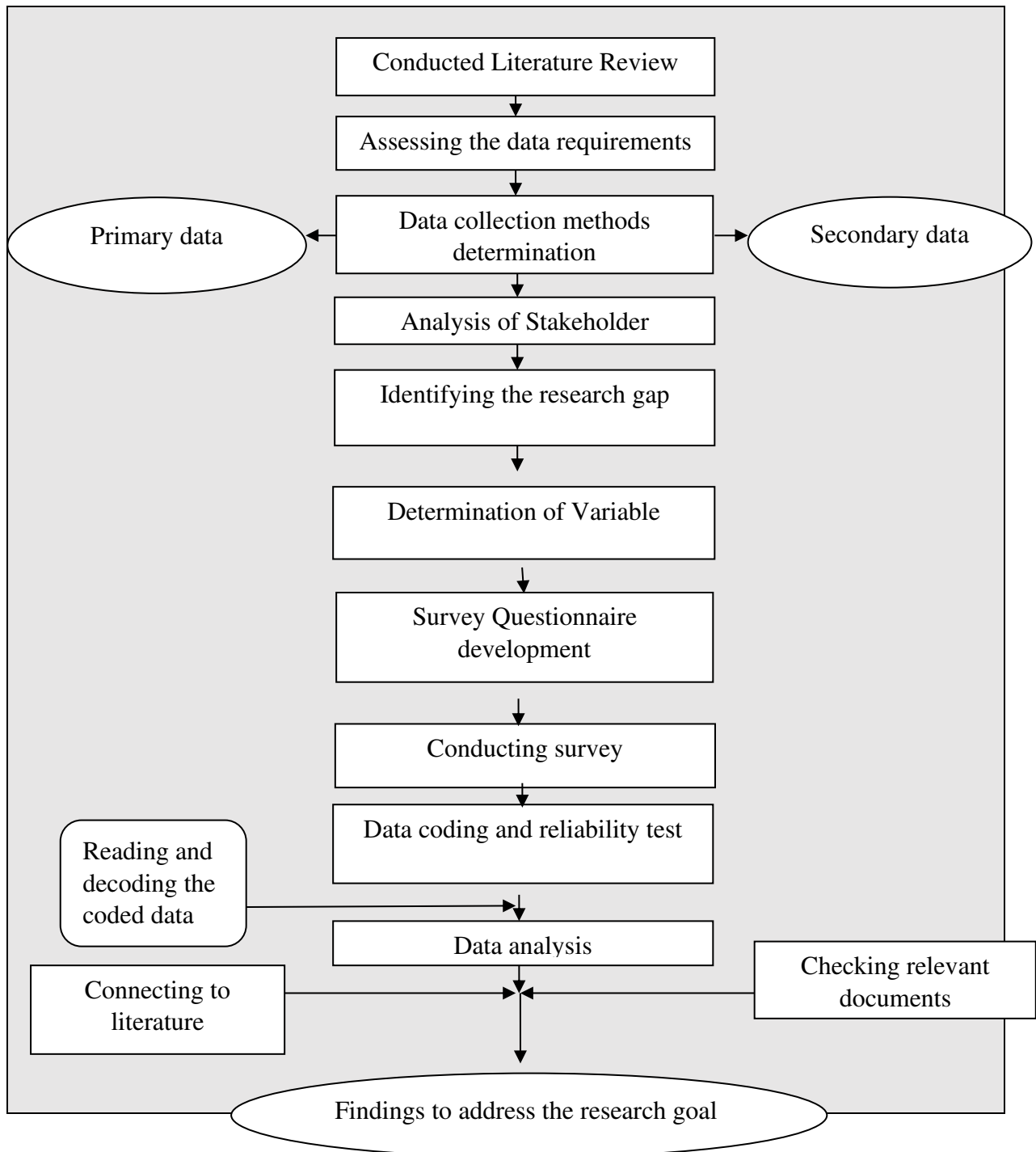


Figure 1. Research Methodology (Authors own creation)

The dependent variable has been highlighted by several variables, such as “Tourism development helps in establishing a powerful brand image of a destination’ (DV). The role of the independent variables (IV1 to IV14) in influencing the dependent variable (DV) was ascertained. Regression analysis was implemented as a statistical tool. A survey instrument was created to collect information from the public. Only 312 participants were included in this survey. Domestic tourists who visited various tourist

destinations and attractions in Bangladesh were handed a survey questionnaire. The demographic profiles of the respondents are presented in pie charts below:

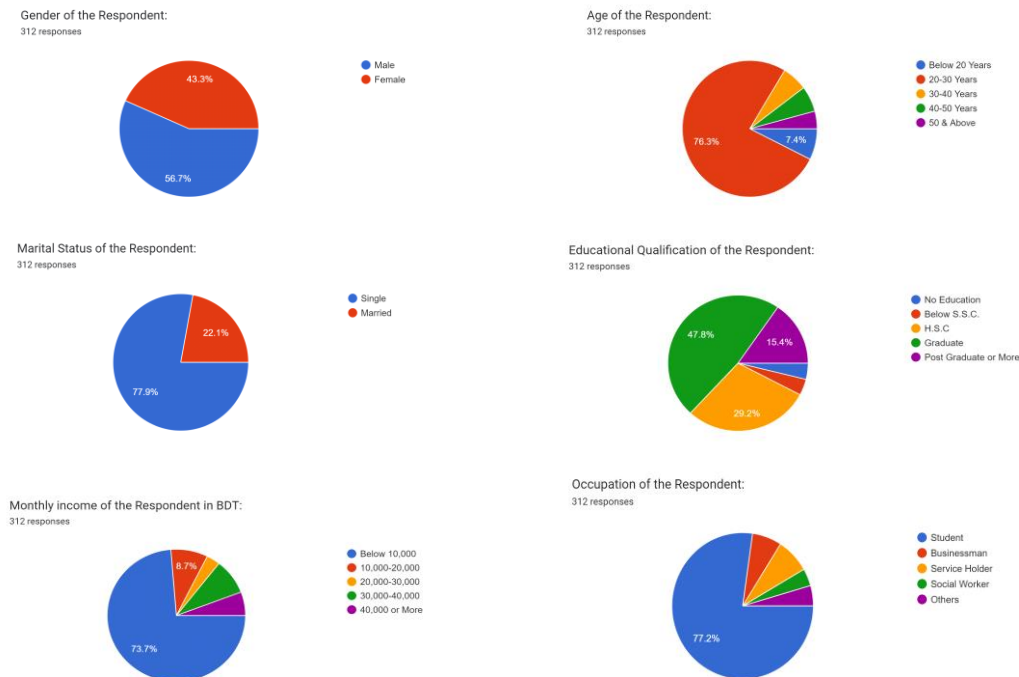


Figure 2. Chart (Generated from Google Survey Result)

Figure 02 depicts the respondents' demographic profile, most of whom were single visitors who randomly visited v tourist destinations in Bangladesh. Among the population, 72.2% were students, 6.7% were businessmen, 7.7% were service holders, 3.8% were Social Workers, and 4.5% were other professionals. The percentages of male and female respondents were 56.7% and 43.3%, respectively. The frequency of age of the respondents was 7.4% (Below 20 Years), 76.3% (20-30), 6.1% (30-40), 6.1% (40-50) and 4.2% (50 & above). The educational levels of the respondents were 3.8% (No Education), 3.8% (Below S.S.C), 29.2% (H.S.C), 47.8% (Graduate), and 15.4% (Post Graduate and More). The marital status of the respondents was 77.9%; they were single, and 22.1% married. The level of income varies among 73.7% (Below 10,000), 8.7% (10,000-20,000), 3.2% (20,000-30,000), 8.7% (30,000-40,000), and 5.8% (40,000 or more).

4. Results and discussions

4.1 Reliability test (Using Cronbach Alpha technique)

The dependent variable (DV), “tourism development helps in establishing a powerful brand image of a destination”, is considered the basis of data collection. "SPSS 26" was utilized to assess the information gathered from the participants. Cronbach’s alpha and split methods were used to evaluate the data's dependability. The result of the Reliability Analysis using Cronbach’s alpha techniques is presented below:

Table 1. Reliability Analysis Using Cronbach’s Alpha technique (SPSS 26).

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.840	.858	14

Cronbach’s alpha test was used to determine and validate the items' consistency. Although its value ranges from 0 to 1, the scale cannot be considered credible unless the satisfying value is greater than 0.6 (Cronbach, 1951). In exploratory research, composite reliability values between 0.60 and 0.70 are acceptable; in more advanced stages of research, values between 0.70 and 0.90 might be considered

satisfactory (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The score of the 14 identified items, as per the current findings, was 0.840, indicating a high degree of data reliability.

4.2 Mean value

To make information easily understandable, summary statistics condense and meaningfully present facts. The mean, or average, approach is a popular way of determining the distribution center among indicators of central tendency. However, the Range of Maximum and Minimum and the Variance are used to see how the data deviated from the mean value. The overall summary of the research is displayed as the mean value. The purpose of this study was to comprehend Sitakunda's strong brand image. The study included certain questions to determine how people respond to the issues. It has determined the item's mean value, which is 3.606, indicating that the value of 4 is nearly agreed upon

Table 2. Mean value (SPSS 26).

Summary Item Statistics							
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	N of Items
Item Means	3.606	1.579	4.151	2.572	2.629	.569	14
Item Variances	.824	.553	1.635	1.083	2.960	.083	14

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics make the underlying information easily understandable by summarizing and presenting data in a meaningful way. The mean, or average, approach is a popular way of determining the distribution center among indicators of central tendency. The current study offers a few strategies for using SPSS to summarize different types of data.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables (SPSS 26).

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Frequency of Travel	1.63	.819	312
Media for choosing a travel destination	2.17	1.142	199
Budget influences the visit to tourist destinations	3.98	.969	312
Promotional tools	4.12	1.290	188
Safety and security.	4.12	.867	312
Accommodation facilities	3.99	.925	312
Quality Food and Beverage service facilities	3.49	1.061	312
Transportation facilities	3.99	.818	312
Entertainment Facilities	3.93	.768	312
Favorable climate	3.93	.795	312
Infrastructural developments.	3.96	.801	312
Adventurous tourist.	3.80	1.026	312
Government role in policy formation.	4.27	.797	312
The behavior of the local community.	4.03	.837	312

The study asked respondents two more specific questions. The motive is to determine revisit intentions and know whether a satisfied guest shares his feelings with others about their trip. The mean is 1.15 and 1.03, respectively, whereas the Std. deviation is 1.15 and 1.03, which is very acceptable.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Dichotomous Questions (SPSS 26).

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Do you have plans to revisit Sitakunda?	312	1.15	.361
Would you recommend Sitakunda as a tourist destination to others?	312	1.03	.176

Valid N (List wise)	312		
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4.4. Discussions

The research findings should help relevant authorities, planners, and marketers guarantee that essential tourism components are available and of adequate quality to support advancing a destination's strong brand image. The findings will help to understand infrastructural and security problems when they visit a destination. Websites for online media networks are among those where individuals spend time in a virtual setting. These are the locations where auditory and visual bands are displayed. These websites enable the sharing of content with other users, including images, music, and videos. Millions of people have access to shared visual elements within hours. Undoubtedly, establishing an institutional user name as a marketing strategy would help.

Additionally, disseminating the most reliable and accurate data from this source to all pertinent parties would help promote the institution and, by forming an extensive database of information, influence opinions regarding prospective guests. Consumers can now evaluate tourism destinations or establishments more quickly, cheaply, and easily because of the rise in consumer consciousness, ease of information sharing, and capacity to review numerous comments in a virtual environment in the age of globalization. The number of users of social networking sites is growing daily as their use spreads. Here, when taking into account the high percentage of Internet users who book trips, comments on websites and online social media networks are significant for preferences. Social media comments, in particular, have an important effect on users who are looking for information on travel sites they plan to visit or stay on for the first time. Successful brand awareness ultimately transforms into a well-known and immediately identifiable brand. To set your product apart from your rivals and other similar products, you must have a strong brand. It is important to maintain consistency in the impressions you want to leave on current as well as prospective consumers throughout various channels, events, and advertising initiatives. To create brand images, they need to present the current scenario of the destination, and they should be consistent in increasing brand awareness.

4.5 Contributions of the research

The research was conducted to determine the quantity of information already available on Establishing a Powerful Brand Image of Sitakunda as a Tourist Destination. According to the data analysis, establishing a powerful brand image is essential for making tourist destinations when tourists think about visiting destinations. The paper's empirical insights offer information on the actual experiences and results of the brand image of Sitakunda as a tourist destination. Through documentation of the effects of creating a brand image, this study will offer recommendations for tourist stakeholders. This research paper highlights some important policy recommendations for creating Sitakunda's brand image. By emphasizing the value of community involvement, the study offers stakeholders practical suggestions for promoting the brand image that promotes inclusion in Sitakunda. The findings section clarifies topics for additional investigation, such as destination loyalty, the assessment of online social media marketing, and the integration of brand perception of a situation. This study provides a foundation for future researchers by outlining the research gaps in the current literature review for further investigation. This research offers an extensive understanding of the establishment of brand image in Sitakunda and provides insightful information to researchers and policymakers.

5. Conclusion

No single innovative research study has established a powerful brand image of Sitakunda as a tourist destination. There is no other way to increase a destination's popularity and global recognition than to establish brand image. The study demonstrates the various features of the Sitakunda tourism location, contributing to the development of the destination's favorable brand recognition. Other statistical methods were also employed to determine the significance of the attributes and the nature of the connection between the overall perception and distinctive features of tourism. This study provides an in-depth understanding of the establishment of brand image in Sitakunda and provides insightful information to researchers and policymakers. From this research, it was found that establishing a powerful brand image with the most noticeable quality-price ratio can be observed in Sitakunda.

However, several solutions have been made for various tourism stakeholders to take a constructive part in the industry in establishing a favorable brand perception for their territory.

5.1 Future research directions

The sample respondents for this survey included visitors and Sitakunda locals. Researchers can gather vast volumes of data from all around Bangladesh in future studies. The topic of the study does not receive much attention in the Sitakunda setting, and it was discovered through a survey of the literature that no previous effort had been made to examine the Sitakunda tourist destination's brand image. Consequently, this study's findings generate new literature, and there are opportunities for future studies to add to this collection of information. The creation of an authoritative brand image for Sitakunda as a travel destination and other potential challenges for the growth of tourism in Sitakunda should be researched in the future.

5.2 Limitations

Despite extensive planning, there were some unavoidable limitations to this study. First, the research sample was limited to people living in Sitakunda and tourists from different areas of Bangladesh. Second, the research was conducted within a short period, and lastly, the study budget was limited.

5.3 Suggestions

1. The survey showed that 84.6% of the respondents had plans to revisit Sitakunda and 96.6% recommended Sitakunda as a tourist destination to others.
2. Every tourist destination has unavoidable problems, and Sitakunda is no exception. These challenges include lodging, transportation, network systems, and security. The government and stakeholders must improve the conditions to address these issues.
3. Most respondents complained about the transportation facilities and what they got from them. Improving the overall condition of roads will help solve this issue.
4. In addition to these enhancements, several fresh and different modes of transportation could be implemented. Therefore, new businesses have the opportunity to expand Sitakunda's tourism offerings and build various modes of transportation.
5. Again, the respondents requested that accommodation systems be improved shortly after they wanted to see them in Sitakunda. Being a naturally diverse and pilgrimage site area, there are not as many expensive, regular, or comfortable hotels and motels in Sitakunda.
6. Marketers should constantly provide a positive explanation regarding the quality of the products and competitive prices to generate a strong perception and build brand image and trust that Sitakunda is suitable for tourists. Building up a strategic partnership among tourism stakeholders.
7. Host various events and promote them through digital channels, which may attract tourists. Taking feedback or reviews from customers and analyzing them to improve the service benchmark. Monitoring and measuring the improvement of tourism activity.
8. Several participants indicated that the safety of Sitakunda should be improved. Political unrest has existed briefly in Bangladesh. To avoid this situation, travelers should regularly check their status and consult a travel advisor. Additionally, many tourists are the target of pickpocketing, armed vandalism, and occasionally kidnapping. Local security organizations and tourism police should be more efficient in handling and checking this type of incident.

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