

Analysing the Scope for Accessible Tourism in Bangladesh: The Role of Bangladesh Tourism Board and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

Accessible tourism is a comparatively new concept that is gaining popularity worldwide. In a developing country like Bangladesh, tourism industry can play a significant role in the economic development. This report examines the scope for accessible tourism in Bangladesh and the pivotal role of the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) in fostering its development. Accessible tourism, aimed at ensuring inclusive travel experiences for individuals with disabilities and other diverse needs, holds significant potential for enhancing the country's tourism sector. Through a comprehensive literature review and analysis of current practices, the study highlights the existing landscape of accessible tourism in world as well as in Bangladesh, identifying key challenges, opportunities, and best practices. It underscores the importance of government agencies, particularly the BTB, in spearheading initiatives to promote accessibility across tourism destinations, accommodations, transportation, and services. Furthermore, the report explores the feedback from the disabled people to draw upon insights from their community perspectives. In order to perform the assigned study, 30 people with certain disabilities are chosen and being interviewed through a set of questionnaires to find out their aspects regarding accessible tourism in Bangladesh. Their answers are then analyzed to find out important insights that need attention from the government agencies for the inclusive development of the tourism industry. By prioritizing accessible tourism and fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, Bangladesh can unlock new avenues for inclusive growth, economic development, and social inclusion within its tourism sector. Based on the study and results, conclusions and policy implications have been recommended. While preparing the paper all the reasonable care has been taken to ensure the accuracy and quality of the paper

1. Introduction

The tourism industry plays a crucial role in the development of countries like Bangladesh. It contributes significantly to the economy by generating foreign exchange earnings, creating employment opportunities, and stimulating investment in infrastructure development. It can reduce the dependency on traditional sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing by diversifying the sources of revenue. The

tourism industry provides employment opportunities for people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including those in rural and marginalized communities. A thriving tourism sector attracts foreign investors interested in hotel development, infrastructure projects, and tourism-related ventures. FDI inflows contribute to job creation, technology transfer, and the overall competitiveness of the tourism industry in Bangladesh. While Bangladesh has made significant strides in developing its tourism sector, accessibility for people with disabilities and elderly travelers remains as a completely new aspect to explore. This research proposal aims to analyze the current scope for accessible tourism in Bangladesh, focusing on the role of the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) and exploring opportunities for improvement. By harnessing its potential and implementing sustainable tourism strategies, Bangladesh can leverage tourism as a driver of inclusive and sustainable growth.

2. Literature Review

Tourism industry is one of the important sectors of Bangladesh. In a developing country like Bangladesh, tourism industry can play a significant role in the economic development. Accessible tourism, aimed at ensuring inclusivity and equal access to travel experiences for individuals with disabilities and diverse needs, has gained increasing attention globally. This literature review examines the scope for accessible tourism in Bangladesh, focusing on the role of the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) and other stakeholders in fostering its development.

Studies worldwide have highlighted the growing demand for accessible tourism and its potential economic and social benefits. Research by Rhodda (2012) emphasizes the importance of accessibility in tourism for enhancing destination competitiveness and meeting the needs of diverse travelers. Similarly, Darcy and Schweinsberg (2012) emphasize the economic contributions of accessible tourism, including job creation and revenue generation.

Scholars such as Saleem & Shahul Hameedu (2013) have identified significant challenges to accessible tourism in developing countries, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of awareness, and limited government support. These challenges are exacerbated in countries like Bangladesh, where socio-economic disparities and institutional barriers pose additional obstacles to accessibility.

Research by Michopoulou and Buhalis (2010) underscores the importance of supportive policy and regulatory frameworks in promoting accessible tourism. While Bangladesh has made progress in enacting laws and policies to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, there is a need for stronger enforcement mechanisms and targeted initiatives to mainstream accessibility in the tourism sector.

The Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) plays a critical role in promoting accessible tourism through policy advocacy, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. Studies have explored the perspectives of various stakeholders on accessible tourism in Bangladesh. Research by Neumann (2012) highlights the views of persons with

disabilities, emphasizing the importance of inclusive practices and the need for greater awareness and accessibility in tourist destinations.

While limited, there are examples of successful initiatives in Bangladesh. Case studies such as the Accessible Bangladesh Foundation's work on promoting inclusivity demonstrate the potential for collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector in advancing accessibility agendas.

In conclusion, while there is growing recognition of the importance of accessible tourism in world, significant challenges remain in countries like Bangladesh in realizing its full potential. By leveraging the role of the Bangladesh Tourism Board and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, Bangladesh can take meaningful steps towards creating a more inclusive and accessible tourism environment for all travellers.

3. Methodology

This research will employ a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to gather comprehensive data. The secondary data has been collected from different published research works, websites, newspapers etc. The primary data includes taking responses from different stakeholders of Accessible tourism i.e. disabled people, authorities of BTB etc. through questionnaires & interviews. Overall, the methodology will include conducting interviews and surveys with people with disabilities through questionnaire to gather insights into accessibility issues and challenges they face while travelling in Bangladesh and reviewing existing policies, regulations, and reports related to tourism and accessibility in Bangladesh and reflecting the insights into the study.

4. Overview of Accessible Tourism

4.1 Brief Review of Accessible Tourism

Accessible tourism, also known as disability tourism or inclusive tourism, refers to the practice of making travel experiences accessible to individuals with disabilities or special needs. This includes physical disabilities, sensory impairments, cognitive disabilities, and any other condition that may require special accommodations. Accessible tourism aims to ensure that everyone, regardless of their abilities, can fully participate in travel activities and enjoy the same opportunities and experiences as others.

Here are some key aspects and considerations of accessible tourism:

Physical Accessibility: This involves ensuring that tourist destinations, accommodations, transportation facilities, and attractions are physically accessible to people with mobility impairments. This may include features such as ramps, elevators, wide doorways, accessible bathrooms, and designated parking spaces.

Sensory Accessibility: People with sensory impairments, such as blindness or deafness, also require accommodation to fully enjoy their travel experiences. This may involve providing sign language interpreters, Braille signage, audio guides, captioning, and other resources to make information and attractions accessible.

Cognitive Accessibility: Individuals with cognitive disabilities, such as autism or intellectual disabilities, may require additional support and accommodation during travel. This could include clear signage, simple instructions, quiet spaces, and trained staff who are familiar with supporting individuals with cognitive challenges.

Inclusive Activities and Experiences: Accessible tourism promotes the development of inclusive activities and experiences that cater to a diverse range of abilities. This may involve offering adaptive sports, accessible tours, cultural experiences, and recreational activities that can be enjoyed by everyone.

Training and Awareness: Training staff in the tourism industry to be aware of and responsive to the needs of travelers with disabilities is essential for ensuring a positive experience for all. This includes training in disability awareness, communication techniques, and assistance protocols.

Legislation and Standards: Many countries have legislation and regulations in place to promote accessibility in the tourism industry. These may include accessibility standards for buildings and transportation, as well as requirements for businesses to provide accommodation and services for people with disabilities.

Overall, accessible tourism aims to promote inclusivity, equality, and diversity within the tourism industry, allowing people of all abilities to participate fully in travel experiences and explore the world with independence and dignity.

4.2 Types of Accessible Tourism

Accessible tourism encompasses various types of travel experiences and accommodations tailored to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities or special needs. Here are some types of accessible tourism:

1. **Accessible Destinations:** These are destinations that have been designed or adapted to be accessible to individuals with disabilities. This may include cities, parks, beaches, cultural sites, and tourist attractions that have features such as ramps, accessible pathways, tactile maps, and other accommodations to facilitate mobility and navigation.
2. **Accessible Accommodations:** Accessible accommodations refer to hotels, resorts, guesthouses, and other lodging options that have facilities and services catering to guests with disabilities. These accommodations may offer wheelchair-accessible rooms, accessible bathrooms with grab bars and roll-in showers, visual and auditory alert systems, and other amenities to ensure comfort and safety.
3. **Accessible Transportation:** Accessible transportation options are essential for enabling people with disabilities to travel to and within their chosen

destinations. This includes wheelchair-accessible vehicles, accessible public transit systems, airport assistance services, and specialized transportation services that accommodate individuals with mobility impairments, sensory impairments, and other disabilities.

4. **Accessible Activities and Experiences:** Accessible tourism promotes the development of activities and experiences that can be enjoyed by individuals with disabilities. This may include adaptive sports, guided tours with accessible routes and interpretation services, cultural experiences with sensory accommodations, and recreational activities designed for people of all abilities.
5. **Accessible Cruises:** Cruise lines have made significant strides in offering accessible cruises to individuals with disabilities. These cruises may feature wheelchair-accessible cabins, accessible facilities, and amenities onboard, shore excursions with accessibility considerations, and trained staff to assist passengers with disabilities.
6. **Medical Tourism:** Medical tourism involves traveling to another country to receive medical treatment or procedures. Accessible medical tourism focuses on providing accessible healthcare facilities and services to individuals with disabilities, ensuring that they can access necessary medical care and treatments while traveling abroad.
7. **Ecotourism and Nature-based Tourism:** Accessible ecotourism and nature-based tourism initiatives aim to make natural environments and outdoor recreational activities accessible to people with disabilities. This may involve providing accessible trails, wildlife viewing areas, adaptive equipment for outdoor activities, and educational programs that are inclusive and accessible to all.
8. **Senior Tourism:** As the population ages, there is a growing demand for senior-friendly travel experiences that cater to the needs and preferences of older adults. Senior tourism may include accessible accommodations, transportation options, leisure activities, and wellness programs tailored to the specific requirements of seniors, including those with mobility issues or age-related disabilities.

These are just a few examples of the types of accessible tourism that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of individuals with disabilities or special needs. The overarching goal of accessible tourism is to ensure that everyone, regardless of their abilities, can fully participate in and enjoy travel experiences.

4.3 Accessible Tourism in different countries

Accessible tourism varies in its implementation and availability from one country to another due to differences in regulations, infrastructure, cultural attitudes, and levels of awareness. day by day it is getting more adapted by different countries. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 15% of the world's population have physical, mental, or sensory disability. Here are examples of how accessible tourism is approached in different countries:

1. **United States:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates accessibility requirements for public accommodations, including hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions. Many popular tourist destinations in the U.S., such as national parks, museums, and theme parks, have made efforts to ensure accessibility, including wheelchair ramps, accessible restrooms, and audio guides for the visually impaired.
2. **United Kingdom:** The UK has legislation similar to the ADA, such as the Equality Act 2010, which prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in various areas, including access to goods and services. Many tourist attractions, hotels, and transportation services in the UK offer accessibility features, and organizations like VisitEngland provide information and resources on accessible tourism.
3. **Australia:** Australia has made significant strides in promoting accessible tourism, with initiatives like the "Easy Access Australia" website providing information on accessible accommodations, attractions, and transportation options across the country. Many popular tourist destinations, including Sydney, Melbourne, and the Great Barrier Reef, offer accessible facilities and services (Darcy, Cameron et.al, 2012)
4. **Canada:** Canada has accessibility standards and legislation at both the federal and provincial levels, such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) in Ontario. Major cities like Toronto and Vancouver have accessible public transportation systems, and tourist attractions like Niagara Falls and Banff National Park offer accessibility features for visitors with disabilities.
5. **Japan:** Japan has been working to improve accessibility for tourists with disabilities, especially leading up to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. Efforts include improving accessibility in public transportation, providing accessibility information for tourist attractions, and training staff in the hospitality industry to assist visitors with disabilities.
6. **European Union:** The European Union has regulations in place to promote accessibility, such as the European Accessibility Act, which covers areas like transportation, public services, and tourism. Many European countries have accessible tourist attractions and accommodations, and initiatives like the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) work to promote accessibility across the region.
7. **New Zealand:** New Zealand has made efforts to promote accessible tourism, with organizations like Be Accessible working to improve accessibility in various sectors, including tourism. Many tourist destinations in New Zealand, such as Rotorua and Queenstown, offer accessible accommodations, activities, and transportation options.
8. **Spain:** Spain has been working to improve accessibility in its tourist destinations, with initiatives like the "Tourism for All" program promoting accessible accommodations, attractions, and services. Cities like Barcelona have made efforts to improve accessibility in public transportation and tourist sites, including the famous Sagrada Familia.

These examples illustrate that while progress has been made in promoting accessible tourism worldwide, there are still variations in accessibility standards and implementation across different countries. Efforts to improve accessibility and promote inclusive tourism continue to be important in ensuring that people with disabilities can fully enjoy travel experiences around the world.

5: Accessible Tourism in Bangladesh

5.1 Accessible tourism in the context of Bangladesh

Accessible tourism in Bangladesh is an emerging concept that focuses on ensuring that individuals with disabilities can fully participate in travel experiences and enjoy the country's rich cultural and natural heritage. While Bangladesh faces various challenges in promoting accessible tourism, efforts are being made to address the needs of travelers with disabilities. Here's an overview of the current status and initiatives related to accessible tourism in Bangladesh:

1. **Infrastructure and Facilities:** Accessibility infrastructure in Bangladesh is still limited but improving gradually. Some hotels, guesthouses, and tourist sites in major cities like Dhaka, Chittagong, and Cox's Bazar have begun to provide facilities for individuals with disabilities, such as ramps, accessible bathrooms, and elevators. However, these facilities are not yet widespread, and many tourist attractions still lack proper accessibility features.
2. **Awareness and Advocacy:** Organizations like the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) and the National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) are actively working to raise awareness about the rights and needs of people with disabilities in the tourism sector. They advocate for the implementation of accessibility standards and policies to ensure that tourist destinations, accommodations, and transportation services are accessible to all.
3. **Government Initiatives:** The government of Bangladesh has shown some commitment to promoting accessible tourism. The National Policy on Disability 2013 includes provisions for accessibility in various sectors, including tourism. However, there is a need for better implementation and enforcement of these policies to ensure tangible improvements in accessibility.
4. **Training and Capacity Building:** Efforts are underway to train tourism industry professionals, including hotel staff, tour guides, and transportation providers, on how to cater to the needs of travelers with disabilities. Training programs focus on raising awareness about disability issues, improving communication skills, and providing practical guidance on accommodating diverse needs.
5. **Accessible Transportation:** Accessible transportation options, such as wheelchair-accessible vehicles and designated seating on public buses and trains, are limited in Bangladesh. However, some initiatives have been taken to improve accessibility in transportation services, including the introduction of low-floor buses in Dhaka.

6. **Accessible Infrastructure:** While accessibility infrastructure is still limited in Bangladesh, there have been some initiatives to improve facilities for travelers with disabilities. For example, some hotels and guesthouses in major cities like Dhaka and Chittagong have started offering accessible rooms with features such as wider doorways, grab bars, and accessible bathrooms.
7. **Challenges:** Bangladesh faces various challenges in promoting accessible tourism, including inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and cultural attitudes towards disability. Additionally, natural disasters and environmental factors can further hinder accessibility efforts, particularly in rural and remote areas.
8. **Potential for Growth:** Despite the challenges, Bangladesh has significant potential for accessible tourism development. The country's diverse cultural heritage, natural beauty, and unique attractions offer opportunities for inclusive tourism experiences. With continued advocacy, investment, and collaboration between stakeholders, Bangladesh can become a more welcoming and accessible destination for travelers of all abilities.

In conclusion, while accessible tourism in Bangladesh is still in its early stages, there is growing recognition of the importance of inclusivity and efforts to improve accessibility in the tourism sector. Continued investment, awareness-raising, and collaboration are essential to overcoming existing barriers and ensuring that individuals with disabilities can fully enjoy the country's tourism offerings.

5.2 Economic Aspect of Accessible Tourism in context of Bangladesh

In the context of Bangladesh, accessible tourism has the potential to generate economic benefits by tapping into a largely untapped market segment and promoting sustainable development in the tourism industry. Here's an overview of the economic aspects of accessible tourism in Bangladesh:

1. **Market Expansion:** Accessible tourism opens new market opportunities by catering to individuals with disabilities who may have previously been unable to participate in travel activities. By making tourism destinations, accommodations, and services accessible, Bangladesh can attract a larger pool of tourists, thereby expanding the tourism market and increasing revenue.
2. **Diversification of Tourism Products:** Developing accessible tourism infrastructure and services encourages the diversification of tourism products in Bangladesh. This includes the development of accessible accommodations, transportation options, and tourist attractions that cater to the needs of individuals with disabilities. Diversifying tourism products can attract a wider range of visitors and contribute to the overall growth of the tourism industry.
3. **Increased Revenue:** Accessible tourism has the potential to increase revenue for businesses operating in the tourism sector. By investing in accessibility measures, such as retrofitting existing infrastructure or building new accessible facilities, businesses can attract more customers and improve their competitiveness in the market. Additionally, accessible tourism tends to foster longer stays and higher

expenditures, as travelers with disabilities often require additional services and amenities.

4. **Job Creation:** The development of accessible tourism infrastructure and services creates employment opportunities across various sectors of the economy. This includes jobs in construction, hospitality, transportation, tour guiding, and customer service. By generating employment, accessible tourism contributes to poverty reduction and socioeconomic development in Bangladesh.
5. **Promotion of Inclusive Growth:** Accessible tourism promotes inclusive growth by ensuring that people with disabilities have equal access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the tourism industry. By breaking down barriers and fostering inclusivity, accessible tourism contributes to the empowerment of marginalized communities and promotes social cohesion and diversity.
6. **Enhanced Reputation:** Investing in accessible tourism initiatives can enhance Bangladesh's reputation as a socially responsible and inclusive destination. This can attract positive attention from international travelers, organizations, and investors who value sustainability and social equity. A positive reputation can lead to increased tourist arrivals, investments, and partnerships, further driving economic growth in the country.
7. **Sustainable Development:** Accessible tourism promotes sustainable development by encouraging responsible tourism practices that minimize negative impacts on the environment and local communities. By prioritizing accessibility, Bangladesh can develop tourism infrastructure and services that are resilient, environmentally friendly, and culturally sensitive, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry.

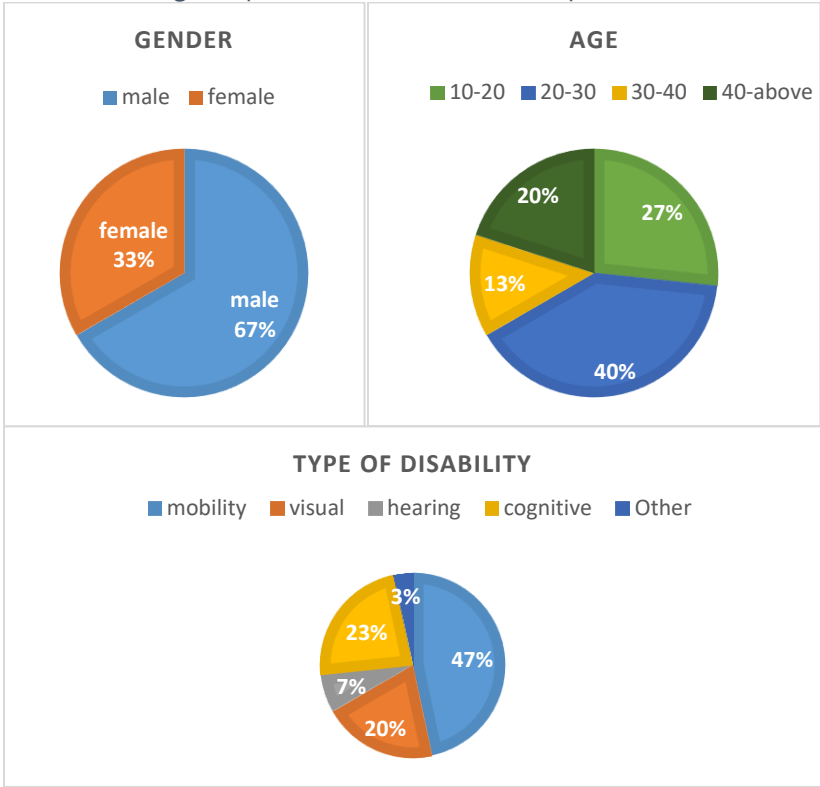
In summary, accessible tourism presents significant economic opportunities for Bangladesh by expanding the tourism market, diversifying tourism products, generating revenue, creating jobs, promoting inclusive growth, enhancing reputation, and fostering sustainable development. By investing in accessibility measures and promoting inclusivity, Bangladesh can unlock the full economic potential of its tourism industry while improving the lives of people with disabilities and contributing to overall socioeconomic development.

6. Findings & Analysis

In this chapter the feedback has been taken from disabled group to get their insights on Accessibility in tourism as well as the challenges faced by them. A set of questionnaires is formulated (Appendix-A) for the people with disabilities. The sample size for the research is 30 people and the answers have been taken both electronically (google forms) and over phone calls. The findings are described below:

1. **Personal Information:** out of the 30 respondents, 20 are male and 10 are female person with diverse age. 12 of them or 40% are between the ages of 20-30. 08 of them or 27% are between 10-20, 04 of them are between 30-40 and 06 of them are above 40 of age.

Figure 1: personal Information of the Respondents.



47% or 14 of the respondents said to have mobility impairment or physical disability, 20% have visual disability, 23% have cognitive disability, 7% have hearing impairment and 3% have other forms of disability. While doing the study we have intentionally omitted the elderly people for certain reasons although they are a part accessible tourism.

2. **Travel Experience:** Out of the 30 respondents, only 33% or 10 people said that they had travelled for leisure or tourism purposes in past year and majority (67%) or 20 of them responded that they had not travelled in past year.

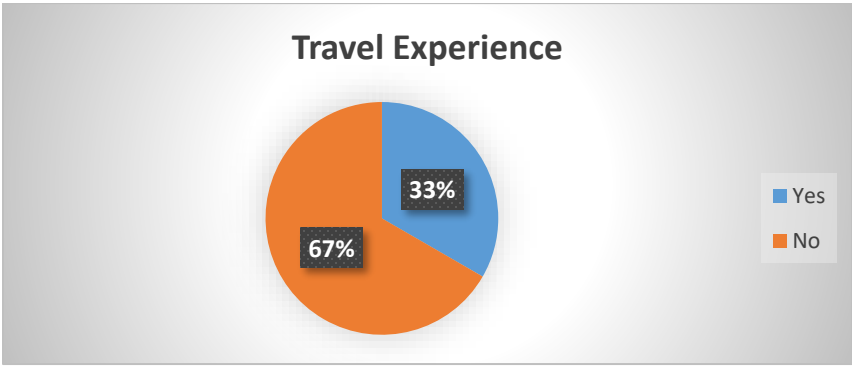


Figure 2 Travel Experience in past year.

Out of the 10 person who have travelled, 40% went to cox’s Bazar, 20% in Sylhet, 20% in Chittagong, 10% in sunderbans and rest 10% went to bandarban.

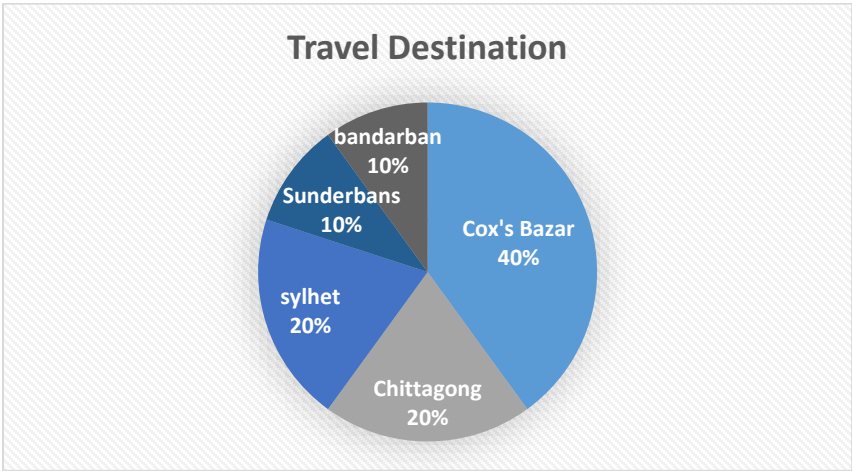


Figure 3: Travel Destinations in past year.

The 20 respondents who said that they had not travelled in a part year stated that due to various barriers they abstained from travelling. The major barriers as told by them were lack of suitable transport for long journeys, lack of accessibility infrastructure & features in the destination, lack of travel assistance etc.

3. **Accessibility Assessment:** when asked for doing the accessibility assessment of the travel destination in terms of accommodating their disability in scale (Scale: 1- 5, with 1 being very poor and 5 being excellent), 50% rated very poor, 40% rated poor, only 10% rated somewhat satisfactory. No one rated the excellent or good in their assessment.

Figure 4: Accessibility Assessment on a Scale 1-5

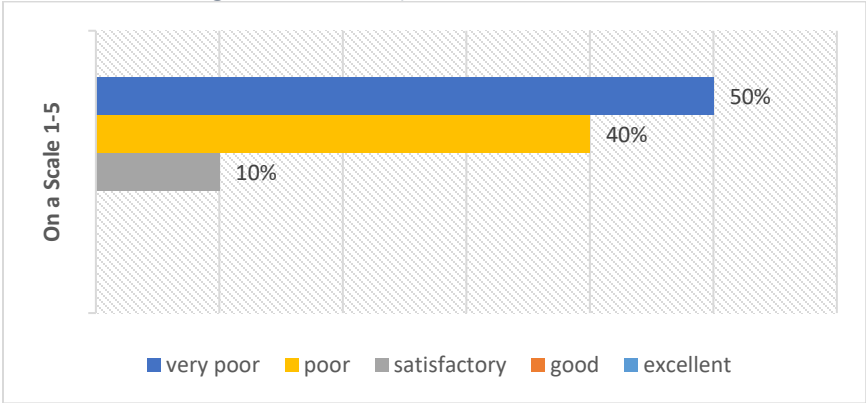
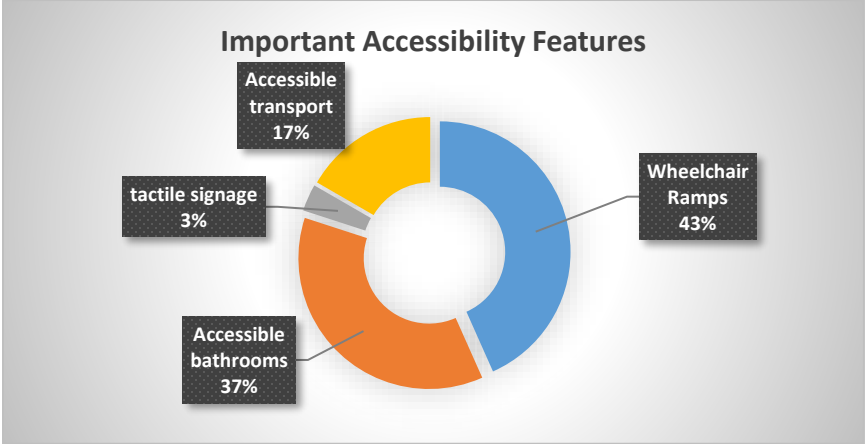


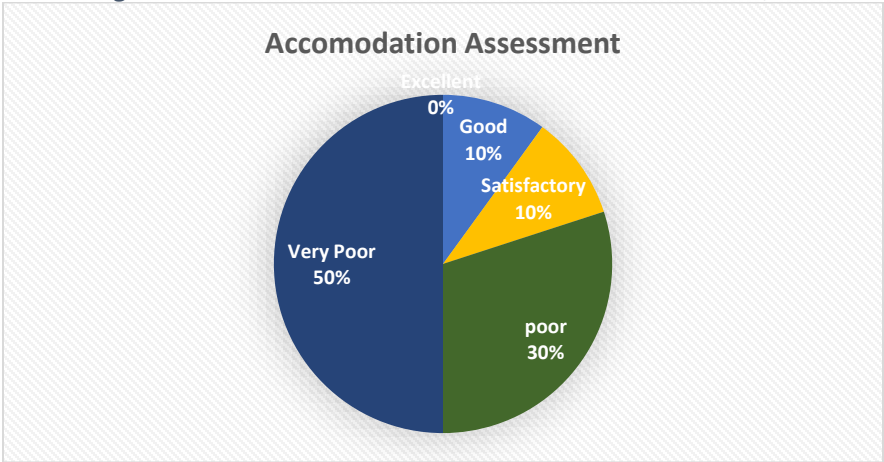
Figure 5 Important Accessibility Features at Tourist Destination



43% of the response state that they feel Wheelchair ramp is the most important feature in travel destinations. While it is an important feature for physically disabled people, but others thought different. 37% thinks accessible bathrooms are an important feature. 17% thinks accessible transport is the most important feature for them and lastly 3% think that tactile signage are most important for them.

4. **Accommodation:** when asked to rate the accessibility of accommodation (hotels, guesthouses, etc.) they stayed in during their travels, most of them (around 50%) rated the accommodation very poor while 30% rated it poor. Only 10% thought the accommodation is good and 10% think somewhat satisfactory.

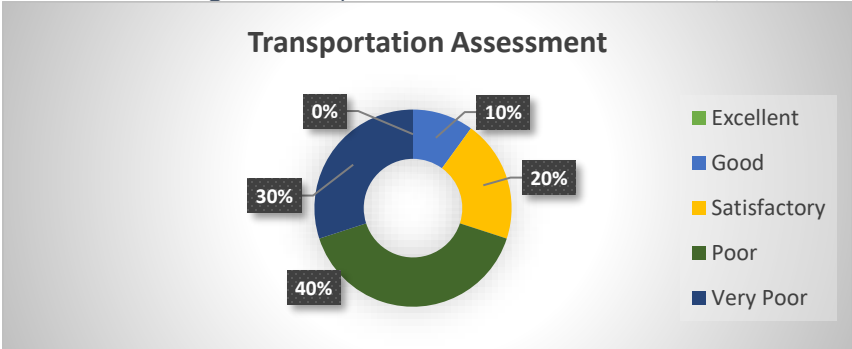
Figure 6 Accommodation Assessment of Destination on Scale of 1-5



Besides, almost all of them stated that they faced difficulty in finding suitable accommodation during their travel. Most of the cases for physically disabled people, there is no ramp facility. Accessible bathrooms are another issue they mentioned.

5. **Transportation:** When asked to rate the accessibility of transportation services (e.g., buses, trains, taxis, etc.) they have used during their travels (Scale: 1-5, with 1 being very poor and 5 being excellent), 10% stated good and 20% stated somewhat satisfactory while 40% stated poor and 30% rated very poor in terms of their experience.

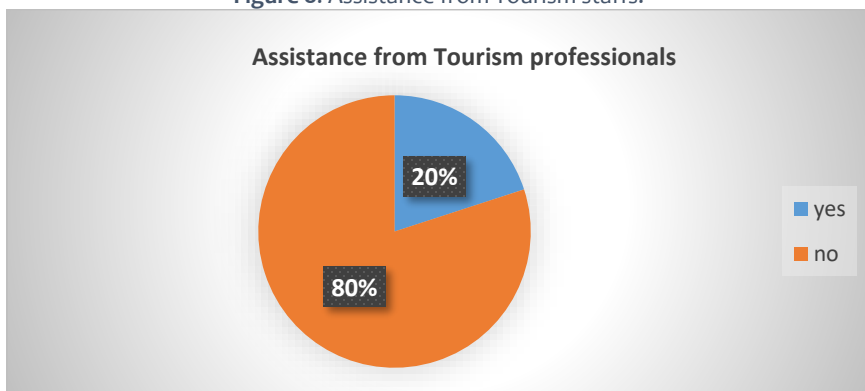
Figure 7: Transportation Assessment on a Scale of 1-5



Especially those who are physically challenged felt the need for ramp facility and staff assistance in transportation.

6. **Support and Assistance:** when asked whether they received any support or assistance from tourism professionals or staff members during your travels, 80% stated that they have not received any kind of assistance while 20% stated that they received little assistance.

Figure 8: Assistance from Tourism staffs.



When asked about the type of assistance they felt needed, some mentioned assistance in travel in case there is no ramp available. Besides, some mentioned direction assistance, since there is no accessible signage available at tourist destinations.

7. **Suggestions for Improvement:** When asked about the improvements they would like to see in terms of accessibility in tourism destinations and services, most of them mentioned the infrastructural development in accommodation, some emphasized enhancing transport accessibility, few marked the role of government agencies to enhance accessibility features at popular tourist destinations. Side by side, they marked the importance of tourism providers and organizations to consider the disabled travelers in their itinerary and offers.

7: Role Of Stakeholders to Promote Accessible Tourism in Bangladesh

7.1 Role of Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB)

Government agencies like the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) play a crucial role in promoting accessible tourism in Bangladesh through various initiatives and actions:

1. **Policy Development:** BTB can work on developing and implementing policies and regulations that mandate accessibility standards for tourist attractions, accommodations, transportation, and other tourism-related services.
2. **Awareness Campaigns:** BTB can launch awareness campaigns to educate tourism stakeholders, including businesses and local communities, about the importance of accessibility and the benefits of catering to travelers with disabilities.
3. **Capacity Building:** The BTB can organize training programs and workshops for tourism industry professionals on how to provide accessible services and accommodate the needs of travelers with disabilities.
4. **Accessibility Audits:** Conducting accessibility audits of tourist destinations, accommodations, and transportation services to identify barriers and areas for improvement and providing guidance on making them more accessible.

5. **Incentives and Support:** Providing incentives, subsidies, or financial support to tourism businesses to invest in accessibility upgrades and improvements.
6. **Information and Resources:** BTB can create and disseminate accessible tourism guides, maps, and information materials to assist travelers with disabilities in planning their trips to Bangladesh.
7. **Collaboration and Advocacy:** Collaborating with disability rights organizations, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders to advocate for the rights of travelers with disabilities and promote accessible tourism initiatives.
8. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly monitoring and evaluating the implementation of accessible tourism initiatives to assess their effectiveness and identify areas for further improvement.

By actively engaging in these activities, the Bangladesh Tourism Board can play a leading role in making Bangladesh a more inclusive and accessible destination for all travelers, thereby contributing to the growth and development of the tourism industry while promoting social inclusion and equality.

7.2 Role of Other stakeholders

Promoting accessible tourism in Bangladesh requires collaboration and concerted efforts from various stakeholders. Each stakeholder group plays a critical role in advancing accessibility initiatives. Here's how different stakeholders can contribute:

1. Government Agencies:

- ❖ **Ministries and Departments:** government ministries and departments, such as the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, can coordinate efforts to mainstream accessibility across different sectors and ensure compliance with accessibility regulations.
- ❖ **Local Government Authorities:** Municipalities and local government bodies can implement accessibility improvements in public spaces, transportation systems, and tourist attractions at the grassroots level.

2. Private Sector:

- ❖ **Tourism Operators and Businesses:** Hotels, tour operators, restaurants, and transportation providers can invest in accessibility upgrades and training for staff to cater to the needs of travelers with disabilities.
- ❖ **Hospitality Industry Associations:** Industry associations can facilitate knowledge sharing, provide guidance on best practices, and encourage member businesses to prioritize accessibility.
- ❖ **Technology Companies:** Technology firms can develop innovative solutions, such as accessible booking platforms, navigation apps, and communication tools, to enhance the travel experience for persons with disabilities.

3. Civil Society Organizations:

- ❖ **Disability Rights Groups:** Organizations advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities can raise awareness about accessibility

issues, mobilize support for policy reforms, and provide input on inclusive tourism strategies.

- ❖ **Community-based Organizations:** Local NGOs and community groups can collaborate with government agencies and businesses to identify accessibility barriers and implement solutions tailored to the needs of specific communities.

4. **Academic and Research Institutions:**

- ❖ **Universities and Research Centers:** Academic institutions can conduct research on accessible tourism, develop training programs for tourism professionals, and provide technical expertise to support accessibility initiatives.
- ❖ **Think Tanks and Policy Institutes:** These organizations can analyze policy frameworks, evaluate the effectiveness of accessibility interventions, and recommend evidence-based strategies for promoting accessible tourism.

5. **International Organizations and Development Partners:**

- ❖ **United Nations Agencies:** UN bodies such as the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) can provide technical assistance, capacity-building support, and funding for accessible tourism projects in Bangladesh.
- ❖ **Bilateral and Multilateral Donors:** Development partners can offer financial resources and expertise to support the implementation of accessibility initiatives, particularly in infrastructure development and capacity building.

By working together, these stakeholders can create an enabling environment for accessible tourism in Bangladesh, ensuring that travelers with disabilities and diverse needs can enjoy equal access to the country's tourism offerings.

8. Conclusions & Policy Recommendations

While going through the study, the challenges of introducing accessible tourism in a developing country like Bangladesh has been tried to find out through the feedback of disabled people. But the overcoming of the challenges for accessible tourism in Bangladesh requires a multi-faceted approach involving various stakeholders. Several ways to address the challenges are recommended below:

1. **Policy and Regulation:** Strengthen and enforce existing laws and regulations related to accessibility in the tourism sector. Develop comprehensive accessibility standards and guidelines for tourist destinations, accommodations, transportation, and facilities.
2. **Government Support:** Allocate adequate resources and funding to support accessible tourism initiatives. Establish dedicated departments or units within government agencies, such as the Bangladesh Tourism Board, to oversee and coordinate accessibility efforts.
3. **Infrastructure Development:** Infrastructure development is currently the key aspect that needs importance for accessibility tourism in countries like

Bangladesh. The existing infrastructure we have is very limited at its capacity to accommodate the disabled people. Invest in infrastructure upgrades to improve accessibility, including the construction of wheelchair ramps, accessible bathrooms, tactile pathways, and signage. Ensure that new developments and renovations comply with accessibility standards.

4. **Awareness and Training:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate tourism industry stakeholders, including businesses, employees, and local communities, about the importance of accessibility and inclusive practices. Provide training programs on disability awareness and customer service for tourism professionals.
5. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster collaboration between government agencies, the private sector, civil society organizations, and disability rights groups to promote accessible tourism. Encourage partnerships for funding, resource-sharing, and implementation of accessibility initiatives.
6. **Incentives and Recognition:** Offer incentives, such as tax breaks or certification programs, to businesses that invest in accessibility upgrades and demonstrate commitment to inclusive tourism practices. Recognize and promote accessible tourism destinations and businesses to encourage best practices.
7. **Research and Data Collection:** Conduct research to assess the needs and preferences of travelers with disabilities and other diverse needs. Collect data on accessibility barriers and gaps to inform policymaking and investment decisions.
8. **International Collaboration:** Learn from best practices and experiences of other countries in promoting accessible tourism. Collaborate with international organizations, such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Bank, to access expertise, funding, and technical assistance.
9. **Accessible Information and Communication:** Provide accessible information and communication materials for travelers with disabilities, including websites, brochures, maps, and booking platforms. Ensure that information is available in multiple formats and languages to accommodate diverse needs.
10. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of accessible tourism initiatives. Collect feedback from travelers with disabilities and stakeholders to assess effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

By implementing these strategies in a coordinated manner, Bangladesh can overcome the challenges of accessible tourism and create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all travelers.

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