

An Empirical Study on the Factors Affecting Destination Loyalty in Beach Tourism: Evidence from Bangladesh

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Abstract

This research explores the main factors shaping destination loyalty in Bangladesh's beach tourism sector, focusing particularly on Cox's Bazar, the longest natural sea beach in the world. In light of growing competition in the global tourism market, the study aims to identify the drivers of tourist loyalty and repeat visitation, which are crucial for safeguarding the sustainable growth of tourism destinations. Drawing on the destination brand image and brand loyalty theory, five potential determinants are examined- destination brand image, service quality, destination familiarity, environment management, and overall tourist satisfaction- and five hypotheses are developed. Data for the study were collected from 250 tourists in Cox's Bazar through a structured questionnaire and convenience sampling, and the hypothesized relationships were examined using multiple regression in SPSS. The study findings unfold that four factors—destination brand image, service quality, environment management, and overall tourist satisfaction—have significant positive effects on destination loyalty, while destination familiarity showed no notable impact. This study suggests maintaining a strong brand image, enhancing service quality, ensuring environmental sustainability, and improving tourist satisfaction as key strategies for destination managers and marketers. The study fills notable research gaps linked to conscious tourist behavior at ecologically critical destinations, providing insights for future academic inquiry and strategic tourism planning in Bangladesh's beach tourism sector. Limitations and avenues for future research are also discussed.

Keywords: *Destination brand image, Service quality, Environment management, Overall tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty, beach tourism, Bangladesh.*

JEL Classification: *L83, M31, O53, Q56, Z3*

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Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing industries and a key driver of regional development across several destinations (World Bank, 2025; World Tourism Organization, 2024; World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2024). As competition increases, destinations need strong branding that, much like product marketing, underlines their distinctive features to build loyalty and long-term relationships with tourists (Whalen et al., 2024; Li & Zhang, 2023; Chao, 2024; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Roodurmun & Juwaheer, 2010).

Bangladesh, rich in natural and cultural assets, embraces strong tourism potential, particularly in Cox's Bazar—the world's longest unbroken sea beach (Pk & Rakib, 2022). Its development is vital for the local economy, supporting the livelihoods of communities, investors, and tourism stakeholders (Al Jamil et al., 2013; Inspira Advisory, 2020). Understanding what drives destination loyalty is critical, especially in beach tourism, to fully exploit this potential.

Beach tourism, known for offering sea, sun, and sand experiences, is one of the oldest and fastest-growing tourism types (Sivadasan, 2018; Picken, 2017). Cox's Bazar, with its scenic beauty and favorable climate, stands out as a leading destination (Rakib et al., 2021). However, strategic efforts are required to attract and retain more visitors (Al Jamil & Siddique, 2013).

Tourist loyalty is vital for destination sustainability (Rastogi et al., 2024). It includes revisit intentions and willingness to recommend (Oppermann, 2000) and remains underexplored in destination marketing literature (Whalen et al., 2024; Bigne et al., 2001; Rather, 2020). Thus, further research is needed, especially in the context of beach tourism (Darnell & Johnson, 2001; Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Key drivers of destination loyalty include brand image, service quality, familiarity, environmental management and overall satisfaction (Hasan et al., 2019; Králiková et al., 2020; Ridolloh et al., 2024). A favorable destination image—particularly its cognitive component—has been proven to strengthen loyalty (Bigne et al., 2001; Li & Zhang, 2023). In addition, familiarity through prior visits and emotional ties helps form destination image and encourages intentions to return (Lee & Tussyadiah, 2012; Luvsandavaajav et al., 2022; Stylidis et al., 2020). Service quality is another key driver of satisfaction and loyalty (Bigne et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2011; Parasuraman et al., 1985). Hasan et al. (2020) found that perceived quality augments positive attitudes toward beach destinations. Similarly, environmental quality has become a critical competitive factor, urging destinations to adopt sustainable practices (Bhuiyan & Bhuiyan, 2023; Yu et al., 2025). Tourist satisfaction directly influences destination choice, repeat visits, and future behavior (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Chi & Qu, 2008; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Studies consistently link satisfaction with loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (PJ et al., 2023; Rather, 2020).

Although destination image, satisfaction and loyalty have been extensively researched, most empirical work still concentrates on urban, cultural or well-established destinations in developed countries, with comparatively little attention on beach tourism in developing contexts (Hasan et

al., 2019; Králiková et al., 2020; Li & Zhang, 2023; Ridolloh et al., 2024). Prior studies also frequently isolate specific links—such as image–satisfaction–loyalty or service quality–satisfaction–loyalty—rather than examining destination brand image, service quality, familiarity, environmental management and overall satisfaction together in one model, particularly for environmentally sensitive coastal areas (Stylidis et al., 2020; Luvsandavaajav et al., 2022). This study, therefore, targets three main gaps: the limited empirical evidence on brand loyalty in destination settings, the underrepresentation of beach tourists in the literature, and the need to understand how on-site experiences form tourist attitudes in fragile coastal destinations such as Cox’s Bazar.

In Bangladesh, tourism development is further constrained by weak initiatives, inadequate management planning and slow policy responses (Hasan et al., 2019; Talukder, 2020). By focusing on factors that foster destination loyalty, this study seeks to support stakeholders in making destinations more tourist-friendly and to guide service providers in providing better visitor experiences. The results are expected to provide empirical input for designing more effective marketing and management strategies for beach tourism in Bangladesh.

Objectives of the Study

Based on the above discussion, the objectives of the study are:

- ✓ To identify the key factors influencing destination loyalty in beach tourism at Cox’s Bazar.
- ✓ To offer insights for improving tourism management and enhancing visitor satisfaction at ecologically sensitive destinations in Bangladesh.
- ✓ To provide empirical evidence for developing effective marketing strategies to promote beach tourism and strengthen destination loyalty.

Literature Review and Development of Hypothesis

Theoretical Background: Destination image theory suggests that tourists’ cognitive and affective impressions of a place merge into an overall image that influences their satisfaction, intention to return and word-of-mouth behavior (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Chi & Qu, 2008). From this view, a positive destination brand image and good service quality should improve evaluations of the destination and foster loyalty. Brand loyalty theory further sees loyalty as a staged process in which favorable beliefs and emotions turn into a stable intention to repurchase and prevent switching (Oliver, 1999). Applied to tourism, destinations can therefore be treated as brands whose equity lies in awareness, image, perceived quality and loyalty (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). In the context of Cox’s Bazar, this study proposes that destination brand image, service quality, destination familiarity and environmental management form overall tourist satisfaction, which then becomes a key determinant of destination loyalty.

Cox’s Bazar as a Beach Tourist Destination: Beach tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors globally, offering sea, sun, and sand experiences (Sivadasan, 2018). Its development often relies on local community participation, bringing both economic benefits and socio-environmental

challenges (Timothy & Said, 2023). Coastal resorts thrive on the natural allure of beaches, making beach tourism central to modern travel (Picken, 2017).

In Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar—home to the world's longest unbroken sea beach—holds vast tourism potential. Known for its scenic beauty, including sunsets and a mild climate, it attracts millions of visitors annually, particularly in winter (Al Jamil & Siddique, 2013). This destination offers diverse accommodations, transport access, and local goods like Burmese pickles, crafts, and seafood. Its 120 km stretch along the Bay of Bengal, backed by hills and golden sands, creates a unique setting for both domestic and international tourists (Ahmed et al., 2010).

During peak season, visitor numbers can exceed 30,000 daily, making Cox's Bazar a tourism hub in Bangladesh. Tourism here significantly boosts the local economy, providing around 10,000 direct jobs and supporting 60,000 more indirectly (Inspira Advisory, 2020). It also fosters cultural preservation and social development as communities recognize the value of sustainable tourism growth (Sivadasan, 2018).

Destination Loyalty (DL): Customer loyalty is vital for long-term business success, as it reflects repeat purchases, brand preference, and willingness to recommend (Rastogi et al., 2024). In tourism, destination loyalty is similarly measured by repeat visits and recommendations, with the latter seen as a strong indicator of satisfaction and word-of-mouth influence (Rather, 2020).

Destination loyalty plays a key role in tourism management (Darnell & Johnson, 2001). Oppermann (2000) emphasized repeat visitation and referrals, while Rajesh (2013) linked loyalty to satisfaction, revisit intention, and word-of-mouth. Destination image significantly influences perceived value and satisfaction, shaping loyalty (Bigne et al., 2001; Jeong & Kim, 2020). Chi & Qu (2008) showed that image influences attribute and overall satisfaction, which both affect loyalty.

Studies on Chinese tourists found familiarity, image, perceived value, and satisfaction contribute to loyalty (Sun et al., 2013). Repeat tourists show stronger revisit intentions, while satisfaction influences first-time visitors more (Heuken et al., 2021; Le et al., 2020). Environmental quality has also become a loyalty factor, inducing destination competitiveness (Yu et al., 2025). In Bangladesh, Hossain et al. (2017) identified perceived quality and satisfaction as key drivers of loyalty in Cox's Bazar.

Destination Brand Image (DBI): Destination image refers to the beliefs, perceptions, and impressions people hold about a place (Wang et al., 2023). Boulding (1961) saw image as perception shaped by awareness, while Baud-Bovy & Lawson (1977) viewed it as a mix of knowledge, emotions, imagination, and biases.

Studies consistently link destination image with tourist loyalty. A positive image shapes expectations, enhances satisfaction, and encourages repeat visits (Bigne et al., 2001; Chi & Qu, 2008). Jeong & Kim (2020) found that image influences perceived service quality and value, reinforcing satisfaction and loyalty. Chi & Qu (2008) showed that both attribute and overall

satisfaction—driven by image—contribute to loyalty. Kotler (2022) emphasized that perceived quality based on image reinforces satisfaction and loyalty.

Recent work links destination image to behavioral loyalty and sustainable tourism, emphasizing the power of emotional impressions in driving loyal behavior (Lee & Xue, 2020). Overall, studies consistently show that a favorable destination image boosts satisfaction and revisit intentions, thereby reinforcing destination loyalty (Bigne et al., 2001; Chi & Qu, 2008; Králiková et al., 2020; Li & Zhang, 2023; Hasan et al., 2019). Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: Destination brand image has a positive impact on tourist destination loyalty.

Service Quality (SQ): Service quality is commonly defined as a customer's overall assessment of a service's excellence (Zeithaml, 1988). It is a multidimensional concept (Vandamme & Leunis, 1993), and Parasuraman et al. (1985) developed the SERVQUAL model to measure it through five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, tangibles, assurance, and empathy.

In tourism, service quality strongly influences satisfaction and loyalty (Bigne et al., 2001; Sasongko et al., 2025). Numerous studies confirm this relationship (Hussain et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2011). For example, Hasan et al. (2020) found that higher perceived service quality improves tourists' attitudes and loyalty toward beach destinations. In medical tourism, service quality impacts loyalty through satisfaction, value, and brand trust (Lertwannawit & Gulid, 2011).

Context-specific evidence echoes this pattern. In Malaysia, India, South Korea and Jordan, satisfaction consistently mediates the relationship between service quality and loyalty in tourism and hospitality settings (Osman & Sentosa, 2013; Lee et al., 2011; Alrousan & Abuamoud, 2013; Al-Rousan & Mohamed, 2010). More broadly, service quality is strongly and repeatedly associated with higher satisfaction, revisit intentions and recommendations in both coastal and urban destinations (Hasan et al., 2019; Lahay & Bachri, 2021; Manyangara et al., 2023; Ridolloh et al., 2024). Based on this evidence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₂: Service quality positively affects tourist destination loyalty.

Destination Familiarity (DF): Destination familiarity plays a key role in shaping image and influencing tourist decisions (Casali et al., 2020). While it can have mixed effects, it remains a strong predictor of future visits (Lee & Tussyadiah, 2012). Both novelty and familiarity drive satisfaction and loyalty—novelty sparks interest, while familiarity builds trust and repeat behavior (Stylidis et al., 2020).

Familiarity goes beyond recognition, including prior visits, knowledge, and emotional or cultural connections (Lu et al., 2022). It brings comfort, boosts satisfaction (Crompton, 1979), and reflects accumulated experience (Whalen et al., 2024). Like loyalty, it's measured through behavior (past visits) and attitudes (perceptions).

Familiarity plays a key role in how tourists search for information, form preferences and choose destinations, as linguistic, cultural and experiential familiarity often steer them toward well-known

places (Lee & Tussyadiah, 2012; Styliadis et al., 2020). By enhancing destination image and reducing perceived risk, prior visits and knowledge can increase the likelihood of repeat travel and loyalty (Chen & Phou, 2013; Casali et al., 2020; Luvsandavaajav et al., 2022). Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: Destination familiarity positively affects tourist destination loyalty.

Environment Management (EM): The tourism industry, a major global sector, increasingly emphasizes environmental sustainability due to its impact on destination appeal (Holden, 2000). Effective environmental management reduces costs and supports long-term profitability (Stabler & Goodall, 1997). Tourism depends on the quality of natural and cultural environments, which benefit all of humanity. Huybers et al. (2003) noted that environmental practices—both public and private—enhance competitiveness but also incur costs. Nature-based tourism is growing rapidly, but it can strain ecosystems (Allcock et al., 1994).

Environmental quality is now a key driver of travel choice and destination competitiveness (Yu et al., 2025), pushing hotels and destinations toward sustainable practices, certifications, and self-regulation (Olsen et al., 1998; Tambovceva, 2010). Managing environmental impacts and quality strengthens competitiveness and guest outcomes—clean, well-managed settings raise perceived service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty, while pollution and mismanagement relegate experiences (Mihalič, 2013; Abdou et al., 2022; du Plessis et al., 2011). Because tourism both depends on and pressures the environment, robust environmental management—especially in coastal and beach areas—is indispensable for positive experiences and loyalty (European Parliament, 2017; Hasan et al., 2019). Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₄: Environment management initiatives positively affect tourist destination loyalty.

Tourist Overall Satisfaction (OTS): Customer satisfaction, extensively studied in marketing and tourism, is defined as a customer's evaluation of how well a product or service meets expectations (Oliver, 2014). In tourism, it reflects a visitor's emotional response after a trip (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Sanchez et al., 2006).

Satisfaction plays a central role in destination choice, repeat visits and loyalty (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Studies consistently show that satisfied tourists are more likely to return and engage in positive word-of-mouth, as their future behavior is shaped by prior experiences and perceived quality (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Oppermann, 2000; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Overall, tourist satisfaction is widely viewed as a key antecedent of destination loyalty, mediating the influence of image, perceived quality and on-site experiences on revisit and recommendation intentions (Bigne et al., 2001; Chi & Qu, 2008; Hasan et al., 2019; Králiková et al., 2020). Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₅: Tourist overall satisfaction positively affects destination loyalty.

Based on the above discussions, the theoretical framework of the present study stands as:

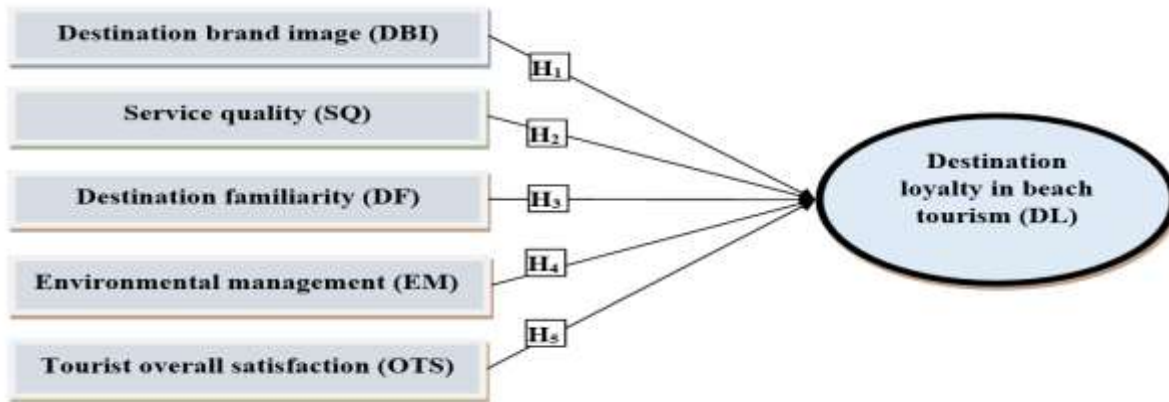


Figure: Theoretical Framework (Author’s own compilation)

Methodology

This study was carried out in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, the country’s leading tourist destination and the world’s longest sea beach. To examine the factors affecting tourist destination loyalty, a mixed-method approach was used, combining qualitative and quantitative research (Bryman, 2016), with the quantitative survey following the qualitative phase (Dana & Dumez, 2015).

The qualitative component examines existing tourism literature to identify factors affecting tourist loyalty and evaluates tourists’ responses to these factors. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with experienced university professors, representatives of DMOs, tourism service providers, and tourists to finalize the variables. Additionally, the quantitative approach tests objective theories by analyzing relationships among measured variables through statistical procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This method is advantageous for handling large sample sizes efficiently while ensuring reliability, causality, and generalizability (Bryman, 2016; Islam et al., 2017). The study focuses on factors relevant to beach tourism in Bangladesh.

A **convenience sampling** method was used for data collection, as it is cost-effective, time-efficient, and flexible, despite the potential for selection bias (Hossain et al., 2015). A pilot survey of 30 respondents was conducted to test the research instruments (In, 2017). The study targeted leisure visitors to Cox’s Bazar. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to tourists in Cox’s Bazar using convenience sampling; 270 were returned, and 250 were retained for analysis. This sample size is considered adequate for multiple regression, as samples above roughly 200 cases generally provide acceptable power and stable estimates when several predictors are included (Hair et al., 2019; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). The case-to-predictor ratio also meets commonly cited minimum guidelines (Green, 1991). While PLS-SEM could be used for more advanced model testing, multiple regression is suitable for the aims and characteristics of the present study (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2017). The survey was conducted over four months, from December 2023 to March 2024, by using **self-administered structured questionnaires** distributed by a team of trained data collectors.

Structured questionnaires are widely used in tourism studies on destination image, satisfaction, and loyalty, with Likert scales being the most common measurement tool (Ritchie & Crouch, 2010). Respondents assessed key attributes using a five-point Likert scale. Secondary data were collected from research articles, reports, books, newspapers, websites, and official sources, including the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB), and Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism (MOCAT).

For data analysis, **descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, and ANOVA (analysis of variance)** were conducted to examine factors influencing tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Dey et al., 2013). ANOVA was used to test the significance of factors affecting the dataset, helping to determine which variables impact tourist loyalty (Kaufmann & Schering, 2014). Additionally, **multiple regression analysis** was performed based on a linear regression model to assess the relationship between destination brand image, destination familiarity, service quality, environment management, overall tourist satisfaction, and tourist destination loyalty (Allen, 2017). All statistical analyses were conducted using **SPSS version 21.0**.

Results and Discussion

Respondents' Demographic Profile

Table-1: Demographic attributes distribution of the respondents

	Demographics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	135	54.0
	Female	115	46.0
Age	Less than 18 Years	9	3.6
	18-25 Years	82	32.8
	26-35 Years	105	42.0
	36-45 Years	43	17.2
	46-55 Years	11	4.4
Profession	Private	44	17.6
	Government	65	26.0
	Business	69	27.6
	Housekeeping	43	17.2
	Student	29	11.6
Education	Secondary Level	19	7.6
	Higher Secondary Level	35	14.0
	Under-Graduation Level	104	41.6
	Post- Graduation Level	85	34.0
	More	7	2.8
Monthly Income	Less than Tk.10, 000	40	16.0
	Tk. 10,001 – Tk.20,000	69	27.6
	Tk. 20,001 - Tk.30,000	75	30.0
	Tk. 30,001 - Tk.40,000	44	17.6
	Tk. 40,001 - Tk.50,000	11	4.4
	More than Tk.50,000	11	4.4
Marital Status	Unmarried	73	29.2
	Married	160	64.0
	Widowed/Separated	17	6.8

The demographic analysis of 250 respondents shows that 54.0% were male (135 respondents), and the largest age group was 26–35 years (42.0%, 105 respondents). Most respondents were businesspersons (27.6%, 69 respondents), held a post-graduate degree (41.6%, 104 respondents), and had a monthly income of Tk. 20,001–30,000 (30%, 75 respondents). Additionally, 64.0% (160 respondents) of the respondents were married.

Coefficient Analysis and Hypothesis Testing:

Regression Model: A multiple linear regression analysis was performed to assess the impact of destination brand image, destination familiarity, service quality, environmental management, and overall tourist satisfaction on tourist destination loyalty in beach tourism. This approach was chosen for its ability to measure the effects of independent variables and determine their standardized coefficients (beta values). The regression model included only significant factors, ranked by their beta coefficients.

The five independent variables were represented in the following regression model:

$$Y = \beta_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + B_5X_5 + \epsilon_i$$

Where,

Y = Destination Loyalty (dependent variable)

B_0 = Constant (coefficient of intercept)

X_1 = Destination Brand Image (DBI)

X_2 = Service Quality (SQ)

X_3 = Destination Familiarity (DF)

X_4 = Environmental Management (EM)

X_5 = Overall Tourist Satisfaction (OTS)

ϵ_i = Disturbance term/error term

$B_1 \dots B_5$ = Regression coefficient of factor 1 to factor 5.

Model Summary:

Table-2: Model Summary of the regression model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.721 ^a	.519	.509	.71152	2.054

a. Predictors: (Constant), OTS, SQ, DBI, EM, DF

b. Dependent Variable: DL

Where, DL = Destination Loyalty, OTS = Overall Tourist Satisfaction, SQ = Service Quality, DBI = Destination Brand Image, EM = Environmental Management, DF = Destination Familiarity.

The regression model’s goodness-of-fit was assessed using the multiple correlation coefficient (R), coefficient of determination (R^2), and F ratio. The R value of 0.721 indicates a strong positive correlation between tourists’ destination loyalty and the five factors (X_1 to X_5). The R^2 of 0.519

shows that 51.9% of the variation in destination loyalty is explained by the model, including OTS, SQ, DBI, EM, and DF. The Durbin-Watson value of 2.054, is also very close to 2, which is considered ideal, suggesting there is no significant autocorrelation in the residuals, as such, the errors are independent (Durbin & Watson, 1950; Field, 2013).

Results of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA):

Table-3: Results of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA ^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	133.435	5	26.687	52.713	.000 ^b
	Residual	123.529	244	.506		
	Total	256.964	249			
a. Dependent Variable: DL						
b. Predictors: (Constant), OTS, SQ, DBI, EM, DF						

The ANOVA results confirm that the regression model is statistically significant. The high F-value (52.713) and p-value (.000 < 0.05) indicate a significant relationship between the combined predictors (OTS, SQ, DBI, EM, DF) and destination loyalty. This suggests that tourists’ overall satisfaction, perceptions of service quality and brand image, environmental management, and destination familiarity collectively influence their loyalty to Cox’s Bazar sea beach.

Hypothesis Testing:

Table-4: Results of multiple regression analysis

Coefficients ^a							Results/ Comments
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error	Beta				
1	(Constant)	.246	.245		1.002	.317	
	DBI	.258	.051	.266	5.101	.000	H1: Accepted
	SQ	.118	.057	.115	2.076	.039	H2: Accepted
	DF	.024	.057	.024	.414	.680	H3: Rejected
	EM	.165	.063	.148	2.623	.009	H4: Accepted
	OTS	.387	.056	.385	6.874	.000	H5: Accepted
a. Dependent Variable: DL							

In the regression analysis, beta coefficients indicate the relative contribution of each independent variable to tourists' destination loyalty. At a 95% confidence level and 0.05 significance level, hypothesis *H1* is accepted ($p = .000$), showing that destination brand image positively influences loyalty. Hypothesis *H2* is also supported ($p = .039$), indicating a positive relationship between service quality and loyalty. Hypothesis *H3* is rejected ($p = .680$), suggesting that destination familiarity does not significantly affect loyalty. Hypothesis *H4* is accepted ($p = .009$), showing that environment management positively impacts tourist loyalty. Finally, hypothesis *H5* is supported ($p = .000$), indicating that overall tourist satisfaction significantly enhances destination loyalty.

So, the estimated regression equation finally stands as:

$$Y = .246 + .258X_1 + .118X_2 + .024X_3 + .165X_4 + .387X_5$$

Discussion of Findings

This study adds to the literature by exploring the factors shaping destination loyalty among Bangladeshi domestic tourists in beach tourism. It aimed to identify the key determinants of loyalty at Cox's Bazar sea beach, testing five hypotheses on the effects of destination brand image, service quality, destination familiarity, environment management, and overall tourist satisfaction.

The first hypothesis, *H1*, which posits that destination brand image positively influences destination loyalty, was accepted, as the significance level met the required threshold. The study found that a more positive image of a destination correlates with higher levels of destination loyalty among Bangladeshi tourists. This result aligns with previous studies by Bigne et al. (2001), Chi & Qu (2008) and others, reinforcing the importance of brand image in fostering loyalty.

The second hypothesis, *H2*, examining the impact of service quality on destination loyalty, was also accepted. The study showed that service quality plays a significant role in a tourist's decision to revisit a destination, highlighting its importance for fostering destination loyalty. This finding is consistent with previous research by Al-Rousan and Mohamed (2010), Hussain et al., (2023), and others, who have emphasized the role of service quality in both customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Hypothesis *H3*, which suggested that destination familiarity positively affects destination loyalty, was rejected. Contrary to previous studies (e.g., Styliadis et al., 2020; Lee and Tussyadiah, 2012), this study found no significant relationship between destination familiarity and destination loyalty for beach tourism in Bangladesh. This suggests that, for the specific context of beach tourism in Bangladesh, familiarity with a destination does not necessarily influence loyalty as much as other factors do.

The fourth hypothesis, *H4*, which proposed that environment management has a significant impact on destination loyalty, was accepted. The findings of this study align with earlier research (e.g., Holden, 2000; Stabler and Goodall, 1997) that highlights the importance of environmental management in tourist destination. Specifically, environmental management emerged as a critical

factor in increasing destination loyalty, particularly in beach tourism as beaches are always prone to erosion and environmental degradation. This is a novel finding, as previous studies often considered environment management in broader tourism contexts, not focusing specifically on its role in beach tourism destination loyalty.

Finally, hypothesis H_5 posited that overall tourist satisfaction positively influences destination loyalty, and this hypothesis was also accepted. The study found that higher levels of tourist satisfaction correspond to greater destination loyalty, which is consistent with a bunch of previous studies (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Tourist satisfaction, therefore, continues to be a fundamental aspect for destination marketing success, as confirmed in both past and current research.

Theoretically, this study contributes to destination image and brand loyalty literature by showing that destination brand image, service quality, environmental management, and overall tourist satisfaction jointly explain destination loyalty in a developing-country beach context. Using Cox's Bazar as an ecologically fragile and understudied case, it contributes context-specific proof beyond the mainly Western, non-beach literature. The non-significant effect of destination familiarity further suggests that prior knowledge or visits alone do not produce loyalty when service quality and environmental conditions are lacking.

Implications and Recommendations

This study aimed to explore the theoretical relationship between destination loyalty and factors such as destination brand image, service quality, destination familiarity, environmental management, and overall tourist satisfaction, and empirically test their influence on destination loyalty. The regression analysis confirmed statistically significant relationships between destination brand image and destination loyalty (Hypothesis 1), service quality and destination loyalty (Hypothesis 2), environment management and destination loyalty (Hypothesis 4), and overall tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty (Hypothesis 5). However, destination familiarity (Hypothesis 3) showed no significant relationship with destination loyalty.

Practical Implications: The tourism industry is increasingly competitive, with challenges growing year by year. Thus, a clear understanding the drivers of tourist loyalty towards specific destination is important for tourism managers and marketers. The key findings of this study offer valuable practical insights.

- ✓ This study emphasizes the critical role of destination brand image in nurturing tourist loyalty. Once a destination's image is formed, it is difficult to alter, making it obligatory for destinations to craft and maintain a positive image. A favorable or positive image influences tourists' loyalty, their post-trip word-of-mouth communication, and their revisit intention also. Therefore, destination marketers should increasingly devote their effort to prioritize managing and enhancing the destination's image through effective advertising, promoting tourist attractions, and organizing events that appeal to visitors, leading to positive word-of-mouth and higher tourist loyalty.

- ✓ Service quality shows an influential role in fostering destination loyalty. This study, consistent with many previous studies, found that higher service quality encourages tourists to revisit a destination. Therefore, destination managers should invest increasing amount of their resources in improving service quality such as improvements in hygiene and sanitation facilities and better emergency and customer care services to enhance tourists' overall experience.
- ✓ This study found environmental management as a significant determinant of tourist behavior and destination loyalty. Tourism and environmental management are interdependent, and effective environmental stewardship can positively influence tourists' decision to revisit a destination. Destination managers should focus initiatives targeting to improve the cleanliness of beaches, pollution control, erosion control, and sustainable environmental practices that can foster long-term loyalty.
- ✓ The study also found that overall tourist satisfaction directly influences destination loyalty—higher satisfaction increases the likelihood of revisits and positive word-of-mouth. This highlights the need for destination managers and marketers to enhance services and facilities, as improving tourist satisfaction fosters long-term loyalty and strengthens competitiveness.

Policy and Social Implications: From a policy viewpoint, the findings suggest that tourism authorities, destination managers and local government should give priority to environmental management and service quality in beach tourism planning. Enhancing beach cleanliness, waste management, erosion control and safety facilities can boost visitor satisfaction and loyalty, while branding efforts for Cox's Bazar should stress its unique coastal assets alongside reliable and environmentally responsible services. Socially, a loyal tourist base can support more stable incomes for local communities involved in hospitality, transport and informal tourism, provided that development is managed sustainably and does not degrade the coastal environment.

Conclusion

Tourists typically rely on various factors when choosing a destination to visit. In the context of beach tourism, Cox's Bazar stands out as the most attractive beach and holds the title of the world's largest undivided sea beach. This destination significantly contributes to the socio-economic development of both the local community and the country at large. For destination decision-makers, understanding the key factors influencing destination loyalty in beach tourism is crucial. Research in this area is essential for tourism destinations to improve their appeal.

Destination loyalty has become an increasingly important yet relatively new area of research. This study aimed to identify the factors affecting destination loyalty in Bangladesh's beach tourism, focusing on destination brand image, service quality, destination familiarity, environmental management, and overall tourist satisfaction. A model was developed around these five factors: H1—destination brand image, H2—service quality, H3—destination familiarity, H4—environmental management, and H5—overall tourist satisfaction.

The findings confirm that destination brand image, service quality, environmental management, and overall tourist satisfaction significantly and positively influence tourist loyalty. These insights can guide government and private policymakers in designing tourism strategies to sustain and enhance competitiveness in Bangladesh's beach tourism sector.

Limitations and Scope of Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, data were collected during the peak tourist season over a relatively short period, which may not capture seasonal variations in tourist behavior. Future research should consider year-round data collection to account for such fluctuations. Second, while this study examined destination brand image, service quality, destination familiarity, environmental management, and overall tourist satisfaction as key determinants of destination loyalty, other factors—such as destination attachment, safety, and recreational facilities—may also play a significant role. Future studies could incorporate these variables to refine the conceptual model and deepen the understanding of tourist loyalty. Third, convenience sampling was used, which, while practical, may limit the representativeness of the findings. Employing more robust sampling techniques with larger and more diverse samples would enhance generalizability. Despite these limitations, the findings offer meaningful insights and provide a foundation for further research in the context of beach tourism and destination loyalty.

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