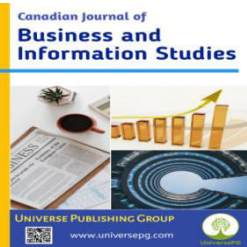




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Adapting to the Global Tourism Market: The Impact of International Tourism Trends on Bangladesh's Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

The tourism sector in Bangladesh is evolving fast because of sustainability, breakthroughs in digital tech, and what tourists want. It investigates how the national tourism industry in Bangladesh responds to worldwide tourist trends in hospitality operations, practices, and strategies. To gather information, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and documents were used with hospitality workers and managers, along with policymakers in Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, and Sylhet. Research found that most companies are noticing customers' value of cultural, green, and digital services; digital growth is rising quickly globally; staff must learn both cultural and digital skills; and there are several hurdles in achieving sustainability and progress. It is obvious from our research that effective teamwork, eco-friendly tourism, improved systems, and improved training for tourism workers are all needed. The insights from these studies guide decision makers, educators, and tourism firms in Bangladesh and similar emerging countries as they deal with challenges in tourism.

Keywords: Global tourism, Hospitality industry, Bangladesh, Qualitative research, and International trends.

1. Introduction

The trends seen in other nations are now affecting travel in Bangladesh and strongly influencing its businesses. In order to compete and survive, hotels and restaurants need to keep up with ongoing changes in tourism. In Bangladesh, the hospitality industry follows worldwide developments in tourism to prepare for coming changes.

Problem Formulation

Rising influence of international tourism trends

Owing to the rise in international tourism, Bangladesh's hospitality industry now encounters various problems and can use new opportunities. Various countries give priority to tourism projects because tourism is important for the world economy. Ratha (2023) pointed out that tourism helps economies regardless of a country's wealth, but to use those benefits wisely, careful control is needed, as occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, the tourism industry is dealing with problems given how much travel affects both tourism and local economic activities (Škare *et al.*, 2021).

Because of its culture, beautiful nature and growing economy, Bangladesh really benefits by having more tourists visit. Tourists also expect better infrastructure and the industry has to become more sustainable to

interest eco-friendly visitors (Gavrilović & Maksimović, 2018). The industry will prosper if it uses new ICT technology because tourism is so dependent on information. New technologies help change and improve the guest experience, allowing the nation's tourism industry to match those of other countries.

Bangladesh's Emerging Position in Global Tourism

A growing number of travelers from all over the world choose Bangladesh for its unique culture, diverse nature and increased effort in hospitality. Careful planning has allowed Thailand's tourism industry to recover following the slowdown by the pandemic and it looks set for further growth. It demonstrates Bangladesh's role in worldwide tourism, points out what the country excels at, discusses what is holding it back and describes how it responds to changing trends.

Bangladesh's tourism grew before the pandemic because there were more tourists, both local and from abroad and the economy in that sector was better. Between 2013 and 2018, travel and tourism contributed 4.4% to India's economy per year (Hossain & Wadood, 2020). With the country's expansion, it chose to invest in its tourism, building up its ancient sites, urban areas and the region where the Bengal tiger makes its home, the Sundarbans.

The Significance for Local Hospitality Industry Adaptation in Bangladesh

When new trends in tourism develop and when crises like the recent COVID-19 outbreak occur, Bangladesh's hospitality sector is being affected in major ways. It's necessary to be flexible since the local hospitality industry helps Bangladesh's economy and introduces the country's culture to people worldwide. It shows why adaptability matters for Bangladesh's hospitality industry and explains how changes from economic, social and technical fields affect the industry. Among other factors, consumers' demands and new advancements in technology are what are making the hospitality industry change quickly. Many hotel companies are making changes to their strategies and how they support guests because of COVID-19 (Khan *et al.*, 2024). Tourism was greatly helping the Bangladesh economy until the pandemic appeared. Even though tourism activities had to be put on hold, this showed the area's weaknesses, so businesses should now be rethought and redeveloped (Shchokin *et al.*, 2023). We should make sure we are ready for surprises by planning in advance.

Theoretical or Conceptual Background

To show this, Tourist Gaze by Urry and the Tourism Area Life Cycle outlined by Butler. Thanks to globalization, its global tourism and "top travel destinations" that are celebrated and often chosen by travelers. I will look at tourism using Urry's idea of the tourist gaze and the TALC model developed by Butler. The patterns study the reactions of nations on the rise as tourist destinations in Asia, including Bangladesh, to international changes. He explains how the ways we travel relate to the societies we visit in Tourist Gaze. According to Borysova *et al.* the way tourists understand their journey depends on the influence of media and the wider society (2022). Because of the growing interest in local experiences and Bangladesh's culture and sights abroad, this is more important at this time. He thinks that how we look at things changes depending on the social rules and things that happened before (Borysova *et al.*, 2022). For this reason, Bangladesh needs to highlight its impressive past, colorful traditions and beautiful surroundings to interest travelers around the world.

Market Adaptation and Innovation in Hospitality

Bangladesh's hospitality industry is being affected by globalization, new trends in what consumers like and the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of this, the industry's staff can work more smoothly and update their services for tourists from many cultures. It will show how Bangladeshi hospitality companies found solutions to problems by using new strategies. Being successful in hospitality often requires companies to adjust fast to anything that appears on the market. The authors Anning-Dorson and Nyamekye discovered in their study that adjusting to uncertainty in the marketplace is important for businesses to perform well in the hospitality industry. Therefore, hotels and restaurants are fast to add useful new ideas to meet

customers' changing tastes. Because eating at restaurants was a risk during the pandemic, more people began ordering meals online and selecting delivery. Therefore, many operators began using online orders and started sharing plans about them. As a result of these steps, customers stood by the company and helped prepare the way for even larger growth. A unique list of services can put a hospitality business ahead of its competitors. Referring to Chivandi *et al.* (2019) the authors point out that using new ways of delivering services can make them more effective for everyone in tourism. By meeting the needs of their guests, refining their workflows and including something special from the local culture, they can improve the experience guests have. Experiencing local culture becomes easier when you find traditional food in a nice restaurant (Mia and Hassan, 2021).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore how international tourism trends shape the operational, cultural, and strategic responses of hospitality businesses in Bangladesh. This research aims to identify the adaptive strategies employed by the hospitality sector in response to evolving global tourism dynamics, such as sustainability expectations, digital innovation, crisis management imperatives, and shifting tourist demographics. The study also seeks to assess how these responses influence Bangladesh's positioning within the global tourism market and contribute to the resilience and competitiveness of its hospitality industry.

Research Questions

To fulfill this purpose, the study addresses the following research questions:

- How do hospitality professionals in Bangladesh perceive and respond to global tourism trends?
- What adaptations are made in service delivery, marketing, or operations?
- What challenges and opportunities emerge in aligning with international expectations?

2. Methodology

Approach and Research Paradigm

Interpretivist Paradigm

The work will be guided by placing more emphasis on how individuals interpret their social environments than on abstract social theories. Positivists try to discover common patterns everywhere, while interpretivists like to study situations in greater detail. Using an interpretivist approach in Bangladesh's hospitality industry helps the researcher recognize how professionals respond to and manage new trends introduced by the global world.

Qualitative Case Study or Phenomenological Approach

How researchers gather data often determines if they do a case study or a phenomenological study.

Thanks to the case study, it is possible to explore different themes in several hospitality enterprises throughout Bangladesh. It shows us how specific groups adapt their strategies and decisions to movements in global tourism trends. A different approach is to understand how hospitality professionals experience their job. Referring to this design can reveal how traveling shapes a person's job and general attitude. Because the study is qualitative and interpretive, both methods play a role in understanding the ways in which Bangladesh's hospitality sector adjusts to changing trends in tourism worldwide.

Researcher Reflexivity

Researcher's Background and Relationship to the Tourism Industry

Besides having degrees in economics, human resource management and public policy, the researcher is passionate about development areas such as tourism. The researcher looked at different economic sectors and among them, tourism and services, that are affected by global trends. Because of this method, I can understand and measure how professionals in Bangladesh's hospitality sector react to new trends in tourism worldwide.

Positionality and Potential Influence on Data Interpretation

It is accepted by the researcher that their standing in fields outside hospitality can shape the way they analyze the participants' experiences. Being objective in this way is useful, but we must still monitor ourselves. During research, strategies for avoiding biases are member checking, peer debriefing and triangulation. By using this method, researchers cannot push their opinions onto what participants have to share. When we recognize what traits work against validity, the research results become more reliable and understandable.

Sampling Strategy and Context

• Purposeful Sampling of Hospitality Managers, Staff, and Policymakers

Participants in the operational, strategic or regulatory roles of Bangladeshi hospitality are selected using a deliberate method for the investigation. I studied frontline staff, those managing hotels and leaders in the tourism policy sector, obtaining information on efforts to manage tourism trends at every level. Because they are familiar with tourism, stakeholders can clarify the impact of global tourism on service delivery, advertising efforts, business sustainability and the creation of policies.

• Urban Tourism Hubs as Research Sites

Data will be collected from key urban tourism hubs, specifically Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, and Sylhet. These cities have been selected due to their prominence in Bangladesh's domestic and international tourism circuits.

- Dhaka, the capital, hosts numerous international hotel chains and serves as a central administrative and commercial node.

- Cox's Bazar, renowned for having the world's longest natural sea beach, is a major destination for both domestic and foreign tourists.
- Sylhet, with its tea estates and growing eco-tourism appeal, represents a blend of cultural and nature-based tourism. These locations provide diverse operational contexts, enabling the study to explore how geographic, economic, and cultural factors mediate the adoption of international tourism practices.

• Rationale for Site and Participant Selection

The rationale for selecting these specific sites lies in their strategic importance to Bangladesh's tourism economy and their varied levels of exposure to global tourism trends. The inclusion of both policy-level actors and frontline hospitality staff allows for triangulation across institutional and operational domains. This enhances the credibility and depth of the findings by capturing a multidimensional understanding of how Bangladesh's hospitality sector interprets, adapts to, and implements global tourism practices across diverse regional contexts.

Ethical Considerations

• Informed Consent

It is extremely important to follow the rules of ethics in this study. The data will only be collected after all participants have been given and understood the informed consent form. Information given will introduce the purpose of the study, what taking part means, the possible positive and negative effects and that joining is entirely optional. Participants are allowed to drop out whenever they want, with no charges involved. They are expected to sign a written statement and learn about each stage verbally if it is necessary for them to understand.

• Confidentiality Procedures

At every part of the study, the team will ensure confidentiality and anonymity is maintained. Every report includes pseudonyms for privacy and no names will appear in the transcripts or analysis. In addition, results will be kept securely on digital gadgets that are password-protected and encrypted, making it easy for the main researcher to use them. As soon as a content-creator checks and records, all copies of the interview are deleted. All these processes exist to protect both participants' identities and their privacy at all times.

• Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Committee Approval

Before any research takes place, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or its substitute at the researcher's institution reviews the research proposal. Therefore, the research obeys significant ethical rules from many countries. If the design or procedures are revised, the ethical board will review the changes a second time.

Data Collection and Instruments

• Semi-Structured Interviews

Information will mainly be collected through semi-structured interviews with managers, staff and policy-

makers in Bangladesh's hospitality industry. With this type of research, the researcher is able to investigate main points and the participants have the flexibility to express their points of view, their experiences and their opinions. Since it is semi structured, the conversational way research is conducted allows interpretivist research to find meanings in the conversations with participants.

- **Supplementary Methods: Focus Groups and Document Review**

Conversations with groups of workers in tourism and with community members can provide a wide range of insights. Thanks to this, guests become more involved and consider their views in greater depth. Included in the research are national tourism strategies, guidance from the hospitality sector and recovery plans put forward after the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings from interviews will be easier to confirm and compare, helped by your knowledge of the organization.

- **Interview Guide Development**

An interview guide will guide the discussion, yet it will not block the appearance of new subjects. The survey will ask participants about their ideas on tourism everywhere, its impact, ways to handle these, the troubles they face and their opinions on new and environmentally friendly tourism ideas. The guide's content will be based on Urry's Tourist Gaze, Butler's TALC and comments from pilot interviews that aid in editing both the content and the layout. The teacher's guide includes questions and explanations so students can share their main points.

Data Processing and Analysis

- **Transcription and Thematic Coding**

Every interview and focus group chat will be recorded with the participants' permission so we can record what happens as accurately as we can. We plan to analyze the transcripts as the most important part of our data. The transcripts are then coded according to themes, so it is easy to spot, research and explain similarities in what the participants said. First, codes will emerge from a review of the data itself and the theories stated in the study.

- **Use of NVivo or Manual Coding**

When technology allows and the project demands, NVivo will support the analysis of qualitative data. Otherwise, analysis will take place manually. With NVivo, researchers can organize many qualitative data, find and list key themes, build codebooks and reference direct quotes inside their analysis. If flexing software isn't an option, the coding will be done manually with colored sweets, clear notes in page margins and spreadsheets to ensure no detail is lost.

- **Thematic Analysis Guided by Braun and Clarke (2006)**

The core analytic technique will be thematic analysis, following the six-phase model proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). These phases include:

- a. Reading through each transcript to learn about the data.
- b. Finding special items in your data and making the very first codes.

- c. Trying to find similar points in the different codes and data,
- d. Comparing themes to the rest of your speech or message, to see if they match up.
- e. Adding titles to themes so they can show what is significant about them and why analysis matters.
- f. Joining the themes in the report with the appropriate theory and outcomes.

Using this strategy, analysts are able to structure their results and discover faint differences in what others share.

Trustworthiness Techniques

In order for this study to be credible, dependable and worthwhile for others, several widely applied methods from qualitative research will be used. You can check a member's profile to see their information. When your transcripts are ready and you've done the first analysis, you can present your early findings to the invited participants by member checking. With such a technique, participants can clarify or prove the researcher's ideas, increasing the reliability of the findings. What the members say is used to enhance how we organize the thematic fields so that the study expresses their words and experiences properly.

It is also possible to use different kinds of documents or visible evidence for triangulation. Data triangulation will improve the strength of the research. In addition, existing policies, tourism plans and hospitality processes will be studied to obtain relevant data. When possible, it's useful to watch how employees act to check the accounts they gave us during interviews.

By checking an audit trail and recording my thoughts: In an organized audit trail, the different moves made in sampling, collecting data, assigning codes and identifying themes are recorded. Because the analysis is open, it increases everyone's trust in the findings. What's more, the researcher will record and message back to themselves about their own reflections and ideas in a diary throughout the study. By choosing this, the researcher steps back from their results and acts in line with the requirements of the interpretivist approach.

3. Results

Thematic Presentation

Theme 1: Shifting Service Expectations from International Guests

One of the most prominent themes emerging from the data is the evolving expectations of international guests, particularly in the wake of global tourism trends such as sustainability, digital convenience, health awareness, and cultural immersion. Participants consistently noted a perceptible shift in the nature of services demanded by foreign visitors, reflecting broader changes in the international tourism landscape.

Participants reported that international tourists increasingly prioritize authentic experiences, health-

conscious environments, and digitally streamlined services. As one hotel manager explained:

"The biggest trends include sustainable tourism, digital nomadism, health and safety consciousness post-COVID, and the demand for authentic cultural experiences" (Participant 1).

This expectation has led to a strategic rethinking of service offerings. Another manager described the response in terms of rebranding and realigning hotel operations:

"We've implemented a green certification program, integrated QR-code menus, and expanded wellness services. Our branding now emphasizes eco-conscious and culture-rich stays" (Participant 1).

The adaptation to these new expectations is not limited to sustainability alone. Service innovation also takes the form of cultural immersion packages that allow guests to experience local traditions first-hand:

"We introduced 'local immersion packages' that include village tours, cooking classes, and craft workshops. These are popular with European guests seeking authenticity" (Participant 1).

From a technological standpoint, there has been a marked shift toward digital integration in order to meet the expectations of tech-savvy global travelers:

"We use cloud-based PMS, mobile check-ins, contactless payments, and manage bookings via OTAs. We also use AI chatbots for 24/7 guest support on our website" (Participant 1).

Because of COVID-19, new technological developments and a focus on climate change; people's expectations have also shifted. Global changes have, according to the data, changed what tourists need from hotels and reversed the usual hotel service strategies in Bangladesh.

In summary, shifting service expectations among international tourists have led to a reconfiguration of how hospitality businesses design, deliver, and promote their services. This theme highlights the importance of adaptive capacity within the sector to remain relevant and competitive in the global tourism market.

Theme 2: Digital Transformation and Global Marketing

A second major theme emerging from the data is the increasing role of digital transformation and global marketing strategies in reshaping Bangladesh's hospitality industry in response to international tourism trends. Participants consistently emphasized how digital platforms are no longer optional but central to service delivery, guest engagement, and global visibility.

Digital innovation has become essential for meeting guest expectations, ensuring competitiveness, and enhancing operational efficiency. One manager stated that fundamental parts such as communicating with

customers and deciding on actions happen more and more online.

Guests book their room on travel agency websites, get their room set up using their phone, and pay without touching anything and we handle it all using software in the cloud. Through our website, chatbots provide customer support to our users all the time, all day long (Participant 1).

Such transformations are not limited to convenience features but also support strategic branding and international reach. The use of online travel agencies (OTAs), dynamic content management, and social media marketing enables hospitality organizations to promote themselves to global audiences. As one participant described:

"We subscribe to global hospitality journals, participate in regional tourism forums, and follow updates from UNWTO and WTTC. We also receive regular feedback from OTA partners" (Participant 1).

Participants also acknowledged the benefits and challenges of adopting digital tools. While there are clear advantages in guest satisfaction and data management, the transition has not been without obstacles - particularly related to staff training and system integration:

"Benefits include smoother guest experience and better data tracking. The challenge is digital literacy among some staff, which we address through continuous training" (Participant 1).

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the digital shift, with touchless and remote services becoming a new norm. This transformation has led to a blending of operational innovation with global marketing imperatives, where technology becomes both the medium and the message.

Overall, this theme illustrates that digital transformation is no longer reactive but a proactive strategy. For Bangladeshi hospitality businesses, investing in digital tools and global marketing capabilities is not just a response to guest preferences but a key factor in maintaining international competitiveness.

Theme 3: Workforce Training and Cultural Competency

A recurring theme across the interviews was the importance of workforce training and cultural competency in adapting to the evolving demands of international tourists. As global tourism trends bring a more diverse, culturally aware, and expectation-driven visitor base to Bangladesh, hospitality staff are increasingly expected to demonstrate not only technical proficiency but also sensitivity to cross-cultural communication, guest preferences, and service expectations.

Participants acknowledged that front-line workers serve as the primary interface between international guests and local experiences, and therefore must be

equipped to deliver services that are both professional and culturally appropriate. One hotel manager explained:

"Guests often ask for real, unscripted experiences. So we co-design some experiences with locals, ensuring they are respectful and immersive" (Participant 1).

This response highlights how cultural competency is embedded into both guest engagement and broader service design. Ensuring that staff can authentically and respectfully represent Bangladeshi culture to foreign guests requires continuous training, especially as preferences evolve:

"The challenge is digital literacy among some staff, which we address through continuous training" (Participant 1).

This quote, while focused on digital skills, reflects a broader organizational awareness of the training gap. Digital literacy and cultural competency are increasingly intertwined, as many interactions - bookings, feedback, and concierge services - are now mediated through technology. Therefore, workforce development initiatives must address both technical and interpersonal dimensions.

Another aspect discussed was the alignment of staff behavior with international standards of hospitality, including customer service etiquette, language proficiency, and responsiveness to feedback. The challenge, however, lies in institutional inconsistency, as expressed by one respondent:

"Inconsistent policy enforcement, outdated tourism regulations, and infrastructure issues like power or traffic management impact guest experiences" (Participant 1).

When there are no countrywide certifications or related support, staff training might not be provided as well. Nonetheless, a number of participants explained that they are partnering with nearby startups to enhance their offerings and determine achievements by looking at sustainability and innovation.

Singapore's hospitality industry is successful because it educates its workers to stay ahead of changes in the global tourism industry. If staff are trained well, respect everyone and stick to the same standard, the business can satisfy visitors from other countries.

Theme 4: Regulatory and Infrastructure Challenges

A final recurring topic is the problems concerning regulations and infrastructure which prevent the same standards in hospitality tourism services across different countries from being available in Bangladesh. Those I interviewed were pleased about being part of international tourism trends, but their accounts pointed to challenges that hold them back from growing sustainably.

A primary concern raised was the lack of coherent and up-to-date tourism policies. Participants pointed out that existing regulation often fail to reflect the realities

of the current global tourism landscape, leading to disconnects between policy intent and industry practice:

"Inconsistent policy enforcement, outdated tourism regulations, and infrastructure issues like power or traffic management impact guest experiences" (Participant 1).

This quote illustrates how institutional stagnation not only complicates service delivery but also affects the overall visitor experience-particularly for international guests who may be accustomed to smoother travel logistics and regulated standards.

Participants also highlighted how infrastructural deficits, especially in transport and utilities, undermine hospitality efforts. Even when hotels and resorts adopt modern, guest-centered approaches internally, external bottlenecks - such as poor road access, unreliable electricity, or inadequate urban planning - diminish the effectiveness of those initiatives.

Furthermore, the regulatory environment is perceived as fragmented, often lacking in coordination across tourism, urban development, and business facilitation agencies. This makes it difficult for hospitality businesses to secure the necessary permissions, incentives, or support to innovate or expand. One participant shared

"We've partnered with local startups on eco-certifications and tourism tech. The gaps have pushed us to be creative and proactive" (Participant 1).

While this response indicates a resilient and entrepreneurial spirit, it also reflects a broader trend of private actors compensating for institutional voids. The need to rely on informal networks or external partnerships highlights a policy environment that is reactive rather than strategically aligned with global tourism priorities.

In sum, this theme emphasizes that without robust and responsive regulatory and infrastructural support, the hospitality industry's efforts to align with international trends will remain fragmented and suboptimal. For Bangladesh to advance its position in the global tourism market, systemic reforms in tourism governance, urban infrastructure, and public-private coordination are essential.

Linking Empirical Data

Findings are explained here using what participants relayed and grouping their accounts by the significant themes uncovered. The research here applies the interpretivist paradigm to look at how various hospitality professionals interpret current trends in tourism. All the quotes prove the connection between changes in operations, strategies and the business setting.

Theme 1: Shifting Service Expectations from International Guests

International guest expectations have evolved significantly, reflecting growing emphasis on sustainability,

authenticity, and digital convenience. Participant accounts illustrate these shifts vividly:

“The biggest trends include sustainable tourism, digital nomadism, health and safety consciousness post-COVID, and the demand for authentic cultural experiences” (Participant 1).

Such sentiments confirm Urry’s, (1990) Tourist Gaze theory, which posits that tourists engage with destinations through culturally and socially constructed expectations. These demands have prompted local adaptations:

“We introduced ‘local immersion packages’ that include village tours, cooking classes, and craft workshops” (Participant 1).

Here, adaptation is not merely reactive but strategically embedded in branding and service design.

Theme 2: Digital Transformation and Global Marketing

Digital transformation emerged as both an operational necessity and a strategic response to global visibility demands:

“We use cloud-based PMS, mobile check-ins, contactless payments, and manage bookings via OTAs” (Participant 1).

The implementation of digital technologies aligns with literature on ICT-enabled service innovation (Martin-Rios & Ciobanu, 2019). The integration of AI-driven support systems and dynamic content curation showcases the industry’s forward-looking orientation. However, the benefits are tempered by internal challenges:

“The challenge is digital literacy among some staff, which we address through continuous training” (Participant 1).

This quote reflects the dual pressures of innovation and human capital readiness.

Theme 3: Workforce Training and Cultural Competency

Participants emphasized the necessity of equipping staff with cross-cultural skills and hospitality standards:

“Guests often ask for real, unscripted experiences. So we co-design some experiences with locals” (Participant 1).

This cultural sensitivity is vital to tourism’s experiential economy. Training programs increasingly intertwine with digital innovation to bridge skill gaps:

“The challenge is digital literacy among some staff, which we address through continuous training” (Participant 1).

These findings resonate with Butler’s Tourism Area Life Cycle model, (1980) particularly in the development and consolidation phases, where destination quality hinges on workforce preparedness and authenticity.

Theme 4: Regulatory and Infrastructure Challenges

Despite internal innovations, external systemic issues often constrain service delivery:

“Inconsistent policy enforcement, outdated tourism regulations, and infrastructure issues like power or traffic management impact guest experiences” (Participant 1).

These institutional barriers challenge the scalability and sustainability of innovations. Participants described how gaps in governance catalyzed creative partnerships:

“We’ve partnered with local startups on eco-certifications and tourism tech. The gaps have pushed us to be creative and proactive” (Participant 1).

This reflects a broader adaptive capacity where private initiative compensates for public sector shortcomings, reinforcing the need for integrated tourism governance.

Visual Representation of Thematic Interplay

To clarify how these themes interact, the following conceptual model has been developed:

Explanation

- Shifting Expectations serve as the initial driver, prompting adaptation in both Digital Transformation and Workforce Training.
- These adaptive responses are moderated or constrained by Regulatory and Infrastructure Challenges.
- The circular flow emphasizes feedback loops, where unresolved infrastructural issues influence guest perceptions, further shaping future expectations.

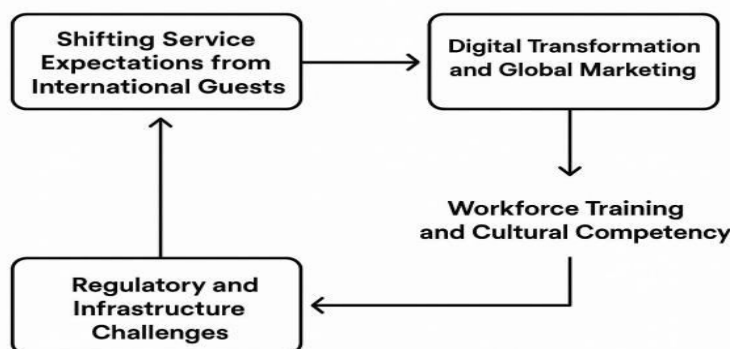


Fig. 1: Visual Representation of Thematic Interplay.

4. Discussion

Synthesis of Findings with Existing Literature

The findings of this study align with and extend current academic discourse on the intersection of global tourism trends and hospitality adaptation, particularly within emerging market contexts. Each of the four identified themes shifting service expectations, digital transformation and global marketing, workforce training and cultural competency, and regulatory/infrastructure challenges resonates with extant literature, while offering context-specific nuances that enrich our understanding of Bangladesh's adaptive landscape. Shifting Service Expectations were prominently noted by participants as a reflection of postpandemic shifts in tourist behavior. These align with Urry's, (1990) Tourist Gaze theory, which emphasizes how tourists seek authentic, curated experiences. The move toward cultural immersion packages and eco-conscious branding observed among Bangladeshi hoteliers mirrors findings from Pocock & Phua, (2011) who argue that experience-centric tourism is gaining prominence globally.

During the conference, Digital Transformation was a main subject of discussion. Currently, digital tools that let customers organize, adapt and handle payments are deemed important by Martin-Rios and Ciobanu, (2019). Using cloud technology, chatbots and OTAs is becoming common everywhere in the hospitality industry. Even so, a significant issue in Bangladesh is that teachers aren't confident in using technology. Generally, literature looks at innovation in wealthy countries, but this work explains that improving key skills for all in emerging economies must be a priority (Gorochnaya *et al.*, 2021; Vallar, 2025).

Both staff training and a focus on cultural competency were required. The findings confirm that Butler's, (1980) TALC model is correct: new tourist areas should try to increase their service quality and support their staff in interacting with people from other cultures. Respondents suggested that front-line workers in Bangladesh needed to be trained professionally and understand different cultures something not commonly mentioned in standard hospitality books (Chivandi *et al.*, 2019).

Some think that regular problems with regulation and infrastructure get in the way of progress toward sustainable growth. Whereas some studies assume strong policy backing (Fan *et al.*, 2018), our study shows that the regulation varies among the cases we studied. Experts are concerned about old regulations and issues between agencies, something Yeh, (2020) underlines: To help with pandemic recovery, tourism crisis and disaster management should be improved. In addition, the research shows that effective management and creativity help the hospitality industry in emerging markets manage important difficulties and compete with others. The reason for this is that a business must keep evolving its order and its internal meanings to handle changing influences all around the world.

Contributions to Understanding Hospitality Adaptation in Emerging Markets

This study contributes to the literature on tourism and hospitality in several critical ways

1. Applying the Principles behind Global Trends to a Developing Economy

According to the findings, sustainability, digitization and authenticity are not applied the same way in developing markets. In many places, they are accomplished in one way, but Bangladesh does it differently because of its economic, infrastructure and regulations.

2. Applying More of the Method of Interpretivism to Understand Adaptation

What hospitality managers in Bangladesh really face every day is at the heart of this study by interpreting their experiences. Unlike many other approaches which look at overall results and numbers, this research studies how staff in the field apply adaptive techniques in real life.

3. Limits and creative solutions are important at several different levels

The evidence suggests that Bangladeshi hospitality firms respond to new challenges by coming up with pioneering solutions caused by shortages. Due to loose rules, poor roads and insufficient training, both main and alternative ways, along with local solutions, are now used.

4. Creating policies and helping nations with human resource and technology needs

Strong business environments often rely on strong policies, learning for staff and digital growth. What was learned can strengthen the tourism sector in Southeast Asia and also guide donor initiatives to help the region improve and build better infrastructure.

5. Making the Approach Applicable in Other Countries

Comparing what is happening today in South and Southeast Asian hospitality with the four themes new expectations, digital technologies, a skilled workforce and structural issues-shows how things have transformed.

Visual Synthesis

These elements and their connections are explained by the conceptual diagram in Section 3.2 which includes the fact that strategies can be executed only when both workforce policies and skills support meeting international objectives.

This discussion synthesizes empirical narratives with theoretical frameworks to provide a nuanced understanding of how Bangladesh's hospitality sector is evolving in response to global tourism trends. While much of the existing literature captures the 'what' of tourism evolution, this study emphasizes the 'how' shedding light on localized adaptation mechanisms that are improvisational, collaborative, and deeply contextual. In doing so, it underscores the strategic agency of hospitality actors in emerging markets, thereby enriching the global discourse on tourism resilience and transformation.

Implications for Tourism Policy and Hospitality Education

Implications for Tourism Policy

The study reveals significant policy-related challenges that constrain the hospitality sector's alignment with international tourism standards. Outdated regulatory frameworks, fragmented governance, and inadequate infrastructure were recurrent barriers cited by participants. These findings call for a comprehensive modernization of Bangladesh's national tourism policy, with the following strategic directions:

- **Institutional Coherence and Regulatory Reform:** The current policy environment is fragmented across tourism, urban development, and transport sectors. A unified national tourism authority or inter-ministerial coordination body could bridge these gaps and streamline tourism planning, licensing, and quality assurance (Yeh, 2020).
- **Sustainable Tourism Standards:** Given global trends in eco-tourism and responsible travel, policymakers should mandate or incentivize green certifications, ethical labor practices, and community-based tourism models. This is especially relevant for regions like Cox's Bazar and Sylhet, which are at risk of over-tourism without conservation focused regulation (Islam & Akteruzzaman, 2021).
- **Digital Infrastructure Investment:** A targeted digital transformation strategy should be rolled out for hospitality enterprises, especially SMEs. This includes broadband access in tourism zones, digital literacy training subsidies, and integration with global tourism platforms.
- **Post-COVID Crisis Management Frameworks:** The absence of robust Tourism Crisis and Disaster Management (TCDM) plans left many businesses unprepared during the pandemic. Future policies must institutionalize crisis response protocols, including financial relief schemes and pandemic preparedness guidelines (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021).

Implications for Hospitality Education

The research identifies substantial workforce capacity gaps-particularly in digital literacy, cultural competency, and sustainability knowledge. These insights highlight the need for curriculum reform in hospitality and tourism education:

- **Integrated Curriculum Design:** Programs should embed interdisciplinary modules covering digital hospitality systems (e.g., PMS, AI chatbots), cultural sensitivity training, and sustainable tourism certification frameworks.
- **Industry-Academia Collaboration:** Higher education institutions should form partnerships with hospitality firms for co-designed apprenticeships and live-case projects. This will align academic training with practical skill demands.
- **Soft Skills and Language Training:** As Bangladesh increasingly targets international tourists; hospitality curricula must emphasize

communication skills, foreign languages, and service etiquette that meet international expectations.

- **Micro credentialing and Lifelong Learning:** Short courses, certifications, and continuous professional development (CPD) programs can help current employee's upskill in digital tools and guest experience management.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Limitations

While the study offers rich, context-specific insights, several limitations must be acknowledged:

1. **Geographic Focus:** Data were primarily collected from urban tourism hubs (Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet). This excludes rural or less developed destinations, which may face distinct adaptation challenges.
2. **Participant Composition:** The sample was composed mostly of senior managers, potentially omitting front-line perspectives or those of policy implementers. Future research should include a broader range of stakeholders.
3. **Temporal Scope:** The study captures adaptation efforts in a post-COVID recovery period. As global tourism stabilizes, new patterns may emerge that could alter strategic priorities.
4. **Interpretivist Lens:** While appropriate for capturing rich narratives, the qualitative design limits generalizability. Findings are deeply embedded in the Bangladeshi context and may not be universally transferable.

Directions for Future Research

Building on these findings, future studies should:

- **Conduct Longitudinal Research:** Tracking hospitality adaptation over time can reveal how strategies evolve as global conditions change (e.g., climate crises, new travel technologies).
- **Explore Community-Based Tourism:** Future work could investigate how grassroots tourism enterprises adapt and contribute to cultural preservation, especially in ecologically sensitive zones.
- **Compare Regional Adaptation Models:** Comparative studies with other South Asian or ASEAN nations could identify best practices and regional policy benchmarks for hospitality resilience.
- **Quantitative Validation:** Mixed-methods or large-scale surveys could statistically test relationships between adaptation strategies and performance outcomes (e.g., guest satisfaction, occupancy rates, and brand visibility).

By uncovering how global tourism trends are interpreted and acted upon within Bangladesh's hospitality sector, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of adaptation in emerging markets. It offers practical implications for policy innovation and workforce development while laying a foundation for continued scholarly inquiry into sustainable, inclusive, and technologically integrated tourism futures.

Transferability to Similar Contexts

Although this study is contextually rooted in Bangladesh, the findings offer substantial transfer-ability to other emerging economies facing parallel challenges in aligning with global tourism trends. Transferability, a key criterion in qualitative research trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), refers to the extent to which the results can inform practice or research in similar settings.

Characteristics Supporting Transferability

The conditions identified in the Bangladeshi hospitality sector—such as regulatory fragmentation, infrastructure constraints, workforce capacity gaps, and the pressure to digitize—are not unique to Bangladesh. Countries across South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America often exhibit:

- Underdeveloped tourism policies that lag behind global standards
- Dependency on low-skilled labor in hospitality with limited upskilling mechanisms
- Slow technology adoption in small- and medium-sized hospitality enterprises
- Environmental vulnerabilities requiring sustainable tourism strategies
- Over-reliance on foreign tourists, which creates economic exposure to global shocks

Given these shared structural traits, the themes and adaptive strategies presented in this study can inform practice and policymaking in countries such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Kenya, or Peru, where tourism plays a key economic role but where capacity-building, institutional coherence, and sustainability remain developmental priorities.

Transferable Strategic Insights

1. **Digital Leapfrogging through Partnerships** – The collaborative use of startups and third-party platforms to bridge technological gaps, as observed in Bangladesh, can be replicated in contexts where formal ICT infrastructure is limited but entrepreneurial ecosystems are growing.
2. **Cultural Immersion as Competitive Advantage** – The emphasis on “unscripted experiences” co-created with local communities provides a model for cultural tourism differentiation that can be implemented in similarly culturally rich but underrepresented destinations.
3. **Human Capital as a Pivot Point** – The study highlights that investment in cultural competency and service quality is more critical than luxury infrastructure. This offers a roadmap for labor-intensive economies where improving service delivery is more feasible than capital-intensive transformation.
4. **Private Sector Agility amid Policy Gaps** – The documented entrepreneurial response to policy voids—such as partnering with NGOs or digital innovators—can inspire similarly constrained markets to pursue hybrid governance and private-public innovation ecosystems.

5. **Framework for Policy Reforms** – The call for coherent, sustainability-aligned, and crisis-ready tourism policies is broadly applicable. Governments in similar contexts can use the findings to benchmark their Tourism Crisis and Disaster Management (TCDM) readiness and integrate digital and ecological concerns into national tourism strategies.

Caveats in Transferability

While thematic resonance is strong, local adaptation remains essential. Socio-political structures, resource endowments, and institutional maturity differ across contexts. Therefore, the strategies identified in this study should be treated as guiding principles rather than prescriptive solutions.

Moreover, transferability assumes a degree of cultural and institutional similarity. Countries with radically different tourism models (e.g., high-end island resorts, political instability, or religious tourism monopolies) may require modified frameworks.

The conceptual and empirical insights of this study are transferable to other developing and transition economies where hospitality sectors are navigating the convergence of global tourism demands and local development limitations. These findings serve as a scalable reference framework for tourism strategists, education planners, and policymakers aiming to foster adaptive, resilient, and globally competitive hospitality systems.

5. Conclusion

This present study seeks to understand how global tourism changes impact the strategic and operational adaptations of the Bangladesh hotel industry. Through a critical interpretive lens and using qualitative data, it found four themes as interrelated; Altered service expectations regarding cultural authenticity, sustainability, and digitally enabled convenience; The rising duality of digital transformation and global marketing; Workforce training and cultural competence are pivotal to these interactions; Regulatory-framed infrastructural impediments versus sectoral platforms. Altogether, this evidence provides a glimpse of how global tourism intermediation practices interpose themselves and get reshaped in response to the existing socio-economic situation of a Third World economy such as Bangladesh. Further, they extend Urry’s Tourist Gaze and Butler’s Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) to explain how these are practiced in asset-scarce site-specificity environments. The findings reiterate the need for reform in regulation and partnerships with private industry, investment in sustainable infrastructure, and a more skilled workforce as mechanisms for resilience and growth for policymakers. For content providers, the findings suggest a cross-disciplinary curriculum that integrates service management with IT and digital technologies, cultural awareness, and environmental sustainability. Educator NUITKAs comprise CPD and industry-academic connections. The report looks to provide

hospitality operators with pragmatic guidance to create authentic cultural experiences, enter mutually beneficial digital partnerships, and enhance staff training, as well as highlight the need for structural change in regulation and infrastructure. For researchers, it demonstrates the value of interpretivist research and opens doors to multiple studies in different contexts, over time, and across institutions.

Lastly, the study highlights a complex interconnection of global travel trends and local policy interventions. In the hospitality industry in Bangladesh, however, globalization is not so much a one-way street but a negotiation in which global standards are modulated for local resources and culture and need. Emergent trends such as digital nomadism, sustainability consciousness, and elevated health-and-safety expectations indicate which global demands are translated into the local tongue. Despite continued constraints, the hotel industry in Bangladesh has continued to grow, driven by cultural diversity, entrepreneurial spirit, and innovation. The results are a reminder that good tourism planning is to strike the balance between competitiveness in the world and local economies so the two can economically grow and be environmentally and culturally compatible. In so doing, Bangladesh becomes part of the global nudge in tourism toward that which is inclusive and sustainable of people and place.

6. Author Contributions

M.S.B.: conceptualized the study, collected qualitative data, and drafted the initial manuscript. A.R.G.: contributed to data interpretation, literature integration, and manuscript refinement. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the article.

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8. Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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