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New Immigrants' Domestic Tourism Destination Choice Behavior: A Study of Bangladeshi-Origin Canadians

Introduction

Research has been done in the area of international tourist attractions but less around domestic tourists' destination choice behavior, especially among new immigrants. This paper explores the domestic destination choice behavior of relatively new immigrants of Bangladeshi-origin, i.e. those who have lived in Canada with permanent residency or citizenship status. Little is known about how this community chooses their destinations or what attracts them to particular locations within the new country of residence. Knowledge of their attitudes will assist Canadian policy makers and tourist businesses in tailoring their offerings to the preferences of this community.

Literature Review

Domestic tourists are those who travel within their country of residence. Domestic tourism contributes to the tourism sector's growth (Bonham, Edmonds, & Mak, 2006). In addition to the new immigrant's own domestic travel, because they are living in Canada, their family and friends may become interested in visiting the immigrant's new country (Feng & Page, 2000). There are more than 100,000 of Bangladeshi-origin people living in Canada (Bangladesh Diaspora in Canada, 2015). Their history in Canada is short but the community is growing rapidly. They were only 34,205 in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2011) but by 2015, they numbered 100,000, a 65.8% growth rate over one decade. Along with the regulatory constraints on leaving and entering the country, Canada is a new country to them and so these immigrants are interested in travelling within the country (Lee & Sparks, 2007).

As a domestic tourist there are typically three key matters to be dealt with after choosing the travel destination: the mode of travel; activities in which the tourist will participate and the people they will travel with. If the trip includes an overnight stay, the tourist must also choose accommodation.

In order to gather information before and during their trip, people turn to both promoted and un-promoted sources (e.g. advertising, printed material, travel review sites and friends and family). Factors such as the distance of the destination from place of residence, the costs associated with travelling, accommodation and other facilities, and knowledge about the destination influence their decision. Blumenberg (2013) identified six factors which influence the travel behavior of immigrants: individual and household characteristics; spatial assimilation; access to ethnic resources; employment patterns; government regulations; and cultural differences. Modes of transportation have been shown to affect the way to immigrants' travel as tourists (Chatman & Klein, 2009). Blumenberg (2013) found that immigrants generally use public transportation, bicycles and walking.

Word of mouth communication between friends and family, and personal preferences has been shown to govern the destination choice (Govers & Go, 2004). A favorable image of the destination is also an important factor in attracting tourists (O'Leary & Deegan, 2005; Pike, 2002). Communication about the tourist attractions and events is typically focused on expanding the knowledge of non-resident international tourists and to persuade them to go that location (Sigala and Leslie, 2005).

Advertising generates awareness of the places to visit, creates positive images and motivates tourists to travel to those destinations (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Effective communication is necessary to help them avoid wasting time and physical effort in searching out the information once they arrive at their chosen destination (Ritchie & Ritchie, 2002). What is less known is what attracts new immigrant domestic tourists to a particular location (e.g. historical significance, outdoor attractions, family and friends living there).

This study will explore; 1) how new immigrants of Bangladeshi-origin choose their domestic tourism destinations; 2) what new immigrants and permanent residents are interested in learning about their new home; 3) the factors that affect their travel decisions; 4) how they acquire information; 5) the frequency of travel as domestic tourists.

Method

Before launching the online questionnaire, it will be pre-tested with an email survey with a group of six to eight people made of Canadian Bangladeshi and student community to ensure that the wording is without bias and accurately captures the behavior and attitudes of this group.

An online survey questionnaire will be used to gather information from new immigrants of Bangladeshi-origin living in Toronto. A request for participation will be made on the Facebook page of Bangladeshi Canadians-Canadian Bangladeshi (BCCB). This page has more than 6,000 members. The expected sample size is 60, a response rate of 1%. Data will be analyzed using SPSS software. The questionnaire was adapted from previously tested questionnaire ("Global Tourism Watch, 2013; Travel Activities and Motivation Survey, 2006; Hsu, Cai, & Li, 2009; Wong, Cheung, & Wan, 2013). The questionnaire is available upon request. This study has been submitted for ethics review. It is anticipated that preliminary results will be available in time to present in a poster at the conference.

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