



## The Effect of Marketing Mix on Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty in Bodoland Territorial Region of Assam

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### ABSTRACT:

The set of 7 tools of marketing known as the 7 Ps of the marketing mix is crucial to tourism marketing. The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between marketing mix, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty in tourism of the BTR. The paper depended on primary data collected by distributing a questionnaire to secure the perception of the marketing mix elements of BTR tourism. The respondents were asked to rate the 7 marketing mix elements of Bodoland tourism on a 5-point scale. A regression analysis was performed using SPSS on the data collected. The result of the analysis indicates that product, place, process, and people were significant contributors to tourist satisfaction, and place and product were significant contributors to destination loyalty. The result also proves a significant relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty indicating maximizing tourist satisfaction ensures repeated visits to the destination by tourists.

**JEL Codes:** M31, Z39, L83, C12, Z32, M39.

### 1. Introduction:

Tourism can be defined as travel or short-term stay in a destination for recreational, leisure, or business purposes. When people spend time away from their homes staying in places outside their usual surroundings that involve recreation by experiencing the natural beauty, culture, historical monuments, hospitality services, adventure, and amusements is known as tourism (Jorgensen, 2019). This sector other than providing recreational activities and hospitality, adds value to the economy. The realization of the importance of this sector to elevate the economy has led to developed tourist sectors all over the world. This is a testament to the fact that the tourism sector faces a high rate of competition in the market. Thus, proper marketing of tourism products is a prerequisite for the tourism industry to survive. Marketing is an important tool in notifying potential tourists all over the world. It also helps to set up a successful business with profits by

modifying the tourist practices of existing tourists in bringing more tourists (Pallathadka et.al, 2022). Marketing refers to identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customers' needs and desires. It is an attempt to actualize potential exchanges to satisfy human needs and wants. According to the Committee of the American Association, "Marketing is the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer or user". The American Marketing Association defines marketing as that part of economics that deals with the creation of time, place, and possession utilities. It implies that marketing of goods and services available to the consumer at the place where such goods are needed creates place utility, the making of goods available at the time they are needed creates time utility and the transferring of goods to those who need them creates possession utility (Rownd and Heath, 2008). In the present era, recent inventions and innovations in the field of communication have bridged the gap in global



markets. This has led to an information boom which has influenced all sectors, specifically the service sector. Customer orientation is the new face of marketing because customers are becoming more and more quality-conscious and novelty-seeking. The marketing mix, one of the most famous phrases of marketing can be used to achieve the marketing objectives in the target market. The combination of marketing activities that an organization takes part in best meets the needs of its targeted market is known as the marketing mix.

Tourism in Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) is one such service sector if marketed in the right fashion can contribute substantially to the economy of BTR. To promote tourism marketing mix should be viewed as a package of offerings designed to serve and attract visitors or tourists. Marketing and marketing mix elements is very important in the economic activities of tourism organizations. (Cirikovic, 2014). Firms engaged in tourism activities should develop proper marketing strategies (Alisher, 2017). Marketing mix is important for differentiating tourism brands on a key performance quality. It is a crucial gauge for the sustainability of a tourism organization (Pampering, 2011). The marketing mix comprises the 7 Ps these include- product, price, promotion, place, people, process, and physical evidence. Tourism can also be considered one of the factors to elevate the economy of the Bodoland Territorial Region (B.T.R.) of Assam. In the past it has been seen, the BTR region is lacking behind its peer states of the country in the sector like Industry, Commerce, Tourism, and Business. Though, the region lacks Industrialization but has a lot of potential in the Tourism Industry. The potential of tourism growth has not reached its capabilities to attract tourists due to various constraints such as its long dealing with an insurgency, lack of infrastructure, lack of skilled human resources, etc. The area has potential tourist destination which isn't explored much. Meghalaya state of the northeast region of India is the only state which is successful in attracting tourists from all over India and internationally. The other states in the northeast region of India are not as successful as Meghalaya in the tourism sector, unlike their potential. The BTR region has also a lot of potential to draw tourists but isn't as successful as Meghalaya. The Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) is an autonomous region of Assam, located on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra

below the foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. The total area of BTR is 8,970 sq. km and sustains a population of 3,155,359 people. It is an autonomous administrative region with 5 districts including Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri, and Tamulpur (created in 2021).

The Statistical Handbook of Bodoland Territorial Council 2021 reports that in the year 2018-19, the total number of tourists in BTR was 10,144, out of which 9808 were Indian tourists and 336 were foreign tourists. The following year saw an increase in tourist inflow of 35.12 percent i.e.; in the year 2019-20 total tourists in BTR were 13,707; out of which 13,335 were Indian tourists and 372 were foreign tourists. The year 2020-21 witnessed a slight increase in Indian tourists (14,189) but the number of foreign tourists declined considerably (03); given the lockdown situation due to the splurge in coronavirus among masses all over the world. The coronavirus pandemic continues to hit hard the tourism sector. The tourism sector of BTR requires development to build a more supple tourism economy for the future and here is the role of marketing mix strategies to promote the tourism industry of BTR.

The relationship between the 4Ps of the marketing mix in tourism development in the mountain areas of Gilgit Baltistan has been studied in Pakistan (Karim R. et.al., 2021) and another study show that marketing mix and tourist satisfaction have a positive and close relationship (Tielung and Untu, 2021). A Study also suggests that it is a necessity to measure customer satisfaction for the success of tourism industry (Atabeb, 2019). The present study mainly aimed to answer how the seven components (7Ps) of the marketing mix of Bodoland tourism are rated according to the perceived quality of products (ambiance, accommodation, etc.), the perceived price of tourism services, the perceived promotion of tourism services, individual experience of visiting tourist destination i.e., place, perception of service people (politeness, customer friendliness, openness, etc.), perception of management i.e., process and the perception of physical evidence (trust in buying the service) to measure tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in BTR.

## 2. Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of the study are as follows:



- To examine the effect of marketing mix on tourist satisfaction in BTR.
- To examine the effect of marketing mix on destination loyalty in BTR.
- To examine the effect of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty of BTR.

### 3. Methodology:

The present study has been carried out based on primary data as well as secondary data. A questionnaire is used to collect primary data. Using a non-probability judgment sampling, 81 respondents were selected who were tourists in the Bodoland Territorial Region of Assam. The sample of tourists was chosen from 4 different tourist sites: 21 tourists from Manas National Park, 20 tourists from Chowki, 20 from Diplai Beel, and 20 tourists from Bogamati. The respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale their satisfaction and dissatisfaction relating to their perceptions and attributes of the elements of the marketing mix of the tourism sector of Bodoland. A 5-point scale that ranges from

“Highly dissatisfied” (1) to “Highly satisfied” (5) is used. A regression analysis was performed on the data collected using IBM Statistics SPSS 21. In addition to primary data, relevant secondary data was also collected from the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, BTC; Statistical Handbook of BTC 2021 and various journals and books.

Table 1 presents the demographic details of the respondents of the study. The respondents identified in the study are from different age groups, ranging from 18 to 58 and above. Looking at the age variable the maximum number of respondents were from the age group 29-38 years, followed by 39-48 years and 49-58 years. The male and female respondents are 60% and 40% respectively. Regarding the qualification of the respondents, a majority of 45.71% are graduates, 31.42% postgraduate, 20% below graduate and 2.85% are professionals. Most of the respondents were service holders i.e., 50% followed by 27.14% business or self-employed people and the rest were agriculturists and students.

**Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents**

Variables	Particulars	Percentage (%)
Age	18-28	10.05
	29-38	25.85
	39-48	23.65
	49-58	22.50
	Above 58	17.95
Gender	Male	60
	Female	40
	Others	0
Qualification	Below Graduate	20
	Graduate	45.71
	Post Graduate	31.42
	Professional	2.85
Occupation	Student	8.57
	Agriculture	14.28
	Service	50
	Business/Self employed	27.14



#### 4. Hypothesis of the study:

In order to test the variables associated with the elements of the marketing mix of BTR, the following hypothesis will be tested in the paper:

*H1: There is a significant effect of marketing mix on tourist satisfaction in BTR.*

*H2: There is a significant effect of marketing mix on the destination loyalty of tourists in BTR*

*H3: There is a significant effect of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty of tourists in BTR*

#### 5. Results and discussion of the study:

To examine if the components of the marketing mix have a significant impact on tourist satisfaction the above hypothesis was tested as follows:

##### 5.1 The effect of marketing mix on tourist satisfaction in BTR

To test the effect of the marketing mix of BTR on tourist satisfaction in the BTR region, a regression analysis has been performed. In Table 2.1 the result of the regression

analysis of tourist satisfaction with the components of the marketing mix is presented. It is clear from Table 2.1, that product has the largest beta coefficient (.698). The product component of the marketing mix positively impacts the dependent variable (tourist satisfaction) by .538 ( $t = 8.652$ ) and it is significant ( $\text{sig.} = .000$ ). Product has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction. The place has the second-largest beta coefficient (.404). Place impacts the dependent variable by .389 ( $t = 4.834$ ) and it is significant ( $\text{sig.} = .000$ ). The place has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction. The process has a beta coefficient of .198 and it positively impacts the dependent variable by .192 ( $t = 2.864$ ) and it is significant ( $\text{sig.} = .005$ ). People have a beta coefficient of .162 and it has a positive effect on the dependent variable by .145 ( $t = 2.202$ ) and it is significant ( $\text{sig.} = .031$ ). The product has the largest beta coefficient and makes a stronger contribution to tourist satisfaction. The values of the Variance Inflation Factor indicate no multicollinearity.

**Table 2.1:** Regression result of marketing mix with tourist satisfaction

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Constant	2.308	.287				
Product	.538	.062	.698	8.652	.000	1.000
Place	.389	.081	.404	4.834	.000	1.377
Process	.192	.067	.198	2.864	.005	1.035
People	.145	.066	.162	2.202	.031	1.228
R	.815 <sup>d</sup>					
R Square	.664					
Adjusted R Square	.647					
Durbin-Watson	1.707					

Dependent variable: Tourist satisfaction

The level of significance for product, place, process, and people is less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ) validates the link between these components of the marketing mix and tourist satisfaction. Thus, the product, place, process, and people play a role in satisfying the tourists in BTR of Assam. The result can be interpreted as an improvement in the quality, features, and attributes (product component); distribution system, and access (place component); managing, and handling orders

(process component); staff, and employees (people component) leading to an increase in tourist satisfaction. However, the result of the analysis showed that price, promotion, and physical evidence (the environment) elements of the marketing mix of BTR were insignificant contributors to tourist satisfaction levels. This means that the tourist in the BTR region was not satisfied with the price, promotion, and physical evidence of the tourism sector of BTR.



In Table 2.1 above, the adjusted R square values indicate the variation in the dependent variable due to variation in the independent variable. The variation in independent variables (product, place, process, and people) can explain 64.7 percent variation in the dependent variable, i.e., tourist satisfaction. The value of the Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.707, indicating no autocorrelation.

Thus, from the above analysis, hypothesis H1 that there is a significant effect of marketing mix on tourist satisfaction of BTR is proved.

### 5.2 The Effect of Marketing Mix on Destination Loyalty of Tourists in BTR

To analyze the influence of the marketing mix of BTR on destination loyalty in the area, a regression analysis has been made. Table 2.2 represents the result of the regression analysis of destination loyalty and components of the marketing mix. It can be observed

from the table that place has the largest beta coefficient .624. The place component of the marketing mix (independent variable) has a positive effect on destination loyalty (dependent variable) by .802 ( $t = 7.090$ ) and it is significant ( $\text{sig.} = .000$ ). The product component of the marketing mix (independent variable) has a beta coefficient of .360 and this component positively impacts the destination loyalty (dependent variable) by .370 ( $t = 3.764$ ) and it is significant ( $\text{sig.} = .000$ ). Comparing the beta coefficients of place and product components of the marketing mix, it is evident that place has a larger beta value. This means that the place component makes a stronger contribution to destination loyalty. The values of the Variance Inflation Factor indicate no multicollinearity.

**Table 2.2:** Regression result of components of marketing mix with destination loyalty

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Constant	.893	.540				
Place	.802	.113	.624	7.090	.000	1.000
Product	.370	.098	.360	3.764	.000	1.377
R	.695 <sup>b</sup>					
R Square	.483					
Adjusted R Square	.470					
Std. Error of the Estimate	.406					
Durbin-Watson	1.899					

Dependent variable: destination loyalty

In this analysis, place, and product components of the marketing mix were found to be significant in influencing the destination loyalty of tourists in BTR ( $p < 0.05$ ). Here destination loyalty means the willingness of the tourist to revisit the destination and recommend it to others to visit the destination. The result of the analysis can be translated as an improvement in the distribution system, access (place component), and quality, features, and attributes (product component) of the marketing mix increasing destination loyalty of tourists in BTR. The other elements of the marketing mix of BTR including price, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence were found to be insignificant

contributors to destination loyalty. In other words, the elements of price, promotion, people, and physical evidence of BTR does not induce tourist to visit the BTR area again.

The adjusted R square value in Table 2.2 above is .470. Thus, the change in independent variables (place and product) explains a 47.0 percent change in the dependent variable. In other words, the changes in the place and product components of the marketing mix of BTR can explain a 47 percent change in destination loyalty of BTR. The value of the Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.899. This means there is an absence of auto-correlation.



Thus, from the above analysis, we accept hypothesis H2 that there is a significant effect of marketing mix on the destination loyalty of tourists in BTR.

### 5.3 The Effect of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty of Tourists in BTR:

In order to determine if tourist satisfaction leads to destination loyalty, a regression analysis has been structured. Table 2.3 below displays the correlation result of tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Tourist satisfaction (independent variable) has a beta coefficient of .893. This means that tourist satisfaction

strongly contributes to destination loyalty (dependent variable) by 89.3 percent. Tourist satisfaction has a positive impact on destination loyalty by 98.4 percent ( $t = 3.038$ ) and it is significant ( $\text{sig.} = .000$ ). The significance value ( $p < 0.05$ ) confirms that tourist satisfaction has a significant effect on destination loyalty of tourists in BTR. One unit increase in tourist satisfaction level increases destination loyalty by .984 units.

**Table 2.3:** Regression result of tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.190	.324			
Tourist Satisfaction	.984	.068	.893	3.038	.000
R	.893 <sup>a</sup>				
R Square	.797				
Adjusted R Square	.795				
Std. Error of the Estimate	.253				

Dependent variable: Destination loyalty

The value of the adjusted R square is .795. In other words, the variation in the independent variable, i.e., tourist satisfaction explains 79.5 percent variation in the dependent variable, i.e., destination loyalty.

The result of the analysis proves that increased tourist satisfaction leads to increased destination loyalty. The elevation in tourist satisfaction inspires the tourist to visit the destination again. This leads to a positive effect on the tourism sector of the region.

Thus, from the above analysis, we can infer that hypothesis H3 is true and there is a significant effect of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty of tourists in BTR.

### 6. Analysis of the study:

The present study focuses on the effect of marketing mix on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty of tourists in BTR and the effect of tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty of tourists in BTR. The marketing

mix comprises 7 elements popularly known as the 7Ps. The opinion of the tourist regarding the 7Ps of the marketing mix in BTR was collected and tested if they influence the satisfaction level and destination loyalty of tourists visiting the BTR of Assam. The result of the analysis confirms that the product element, place element, process element, and people element have a significant impact on tourist satisfaction. The tourist in BTR was satisfied with the quality (product), service distribution (place), management (process), and staff (people) of tourism of BTR. The product component of BTR tourism made a unique and stronger contribution in satisfying the tourists primarily because the tourists were impressed by the pristine forests, lush green valleys, rugged mountains, water bodies, and rich biodiversity. The other elements including pricing of tourism products, promotional activity, and physical evidence of tourism of BTR failed to satisfy the tourists. This validates the fact that price, promotion, and physical evidence are inefficient and require attention. The





pricing system of tourism products in the region is not ideal. One of the main reasons for unsatisfactory pricing is that the uneducated vendors at distant tourist destinations charge higher prices for the items they sell because they are driven by short-term profit motives and are unaware of the ideal pricing system. Price is one of the most important components because it has a major role to play in the demand for the product and the volume of sales of the product. The customers relate the price to the product and rate them accordingly. The price indicates the value of the product. The promotional activity of BTR tourism is almost negligible. Proper promotional activity to publicize BTR tourism globally is yet to be undertaken. There is a need to promote Bodoland tourism globally, given the present scenario of the global world. The physical evidence component which includes the layout of the Bodoland tourism website, and the design of the premises is also unsatisfactory mainly because of lagging human capital. The formidable architecture of premises and web pages requires highly abled personnel to design the same. The human capital of the region is yet to be developed. Other major reasons for unimpressive physical evidence include sub-standard waste management systems, poor maintenance of the tourist sites, and bumpy roads.

The place element and product elements are successful in retaining the tourist, i.e., destination loyalty in the region. The visitors would like to revisit BTR because they were impressed by the service distribution and quality of Bodoland tourism. The other elements stall the loyalty of the visitors to revisit the region. The outcome of the investigation also verifies the affinity between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in BTR. Increased tourist satisfaction can have a multiplier effect on the number of visitors in the area by withholding the existing visitors and bringing in new visitors. The recommendations made by satisfied tourists bring in new tourists, which is beneficial to the industry by generating revenues. Higher revenues mean higher growth and development for the tourism industry of the region.

## 7. Policy implication:

The BTR of Assam has unique scenic beauty and the potential to attract tourists from all over the world. The area has a considerable number of rivers, mountain ranges, and forests but the tourism sector of the region is yet to be developed. Intense promotion and marketing

strategies are the key factors to get the desired growth and impetus in the tourism industry (Sharma, 2017). Studies show that promotional and marketing programs like regional songs, folk dance, and art forms attract tourists to the culture (Turturreanu, 2005) and the tourism industry should view social media as an important part of their marketing strategies (Chatterjee and Dsilva, 2021; Sahoo and Mukunda, 2017; Yadav and Arora, 2012). The tourism industry of BTR can aim for gold if improvement in the following areas are considered as a necessity to initiate development in the tourism sector of the region.

- I. To increase the satisfaction level of the customers, the pricing structure should be improved. The aim of the price structure should target the larger middle-income groups. More than 70 percent of the tourists belong to middle-income groups. The price set should not be too low or too high.
- II. To increase the popularity of Bodoland tourism, massive global promotional activity should be taken up. Extensive promotion on social media by partnering with social media influencers can draw an ample amount of attention to Bodoland tourism.
- III. The number of accommodations available at tourist sites serves as a major bottleneck in retaining foreign tourists and tourists from other regions. Accommodation facilities at tourist sites should be improved.
- IV. Most of the tourist destinations in BTR are located in areas that are far from national highways. The roads connecting the tourist destinations are in poor condition. The roads should be amended to improve the transport facilities.
- V. Cultural elements are also crucial in drawing tourists. The embracement of ethnic culture through various festivals and cultural complexes should be encouraged and promoted.
- VI. The local villagers should be trained to be tourist-friendly and provide homestay facilities. This can help generate income for the local villagers.
- VII. A master plan in coordination with international programs, institutions, and agencies can help promote the infrastructure of Bodoland tourism.
- VIII. Active participation of the private sector and local host communities through tax concessions and exemptions can help develop the tourism sector of BTR.



## 8. Conclusion:

The advancement in transport and communication has induced the importance of the tourism sector. The results of the analysis show that the marketing mix has a significant effect on tourist satisfaction and loyalty. Increased tourist satisfaction leads to increased destination loyalty. The components of the marketing mix have a major role to play in increasing tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. The increase in tourist satisfaction can bring an increased inflow of tourists and revenue to the BTR region. Proper marketing and tourism promotion of Bodoland tourism can act as powerful instruments in bringing economic and social change. The increased tourist satisfaction and loyalty will ensure the development of the tourism sector in BTR. One of the favorable features of tourism is that it is labor-intensive in character. A developed tourism sector contributes towards the betterment of the economy by avenues for employment and ensuring the all-round development of the region. With increased advancement, the world has become a global village today. The magnitude of travel from one place to another is large. Given the state of affairs of today's world, the role of tourism sector can play in contributing to the growth and development economy is large. This can be achievable if and only if proper emphasis is given to the elements of marketing mix strategies.

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