

Exploring Push and Pull Factors Influencing Students' Decisions to Study Tourism and Hospitality Management: A Bangladeshi Perspective

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Abstract

Purpose: The tourism and hospitality industry in Bangladesh is experiencing rapid growth and creating a strong demand for skilled professionals. However, little is known about why students choose to study this subject. This study aims to identify the push and pull factors that influence Bangladeshi students' decisions to pursue higher education in Tourism and Hospitality Management.

Methods: Data were collected through a structured questionnaire from undergraduate students studying Tourism and Hospitality Management at several universities in Bangladesh. A total of 312 valid responses were analyzed using multiple regression analysis with SPSS software to determine the factors influencing students' academic choices.

Results: The regression model explains a substantial proportion of variance in students' academic decisions (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.840$). Work opportunities while studying emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.397$, $p < 0.001$), followed by opportunities to go abroad and global career aspirations. In contrast, intrinsic career interest played a statistically insignificant role.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that pragmatic and career-oriented considerations dominate students' decisions to pursue tourism and hospitality education in Bangladesh, highlighting the importance of employment-related factors over intrinsic motivation.

Limitations: The study used a relatively small sample drawn from selected universities, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to all tourism and hospitality students in Bangladesh.

Contribution: This research contributes to the limited empirical literature on tourism and hospitality education in developing countries by providing quantitative evidence based on multiple linear regression analysis. It offers practical insights for educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to better align academic programs with students' motivations and labor market demands.

Keywords: Academic Choice, Bangladesh, Higher Education, Multiple Linear Regression, Push–Pull Factors, Tourism and Hospitality

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1. Introduction

Tourism is considered one of the most lucrative industries in the world and is a significant contributor to the local and global economy. Together with hospitality, it forms a cornerstone of the global economy, projected to generate USD 11.7 trillion in global GDP by 2025, accounting for 10.3% of the world economy and supporting 371 million jobs, or roughly one in ten jobs worldwide (Council, 2025). This impressive footprint highlights the industry's function as an economic powerhouse and significant generator of global employment. The tourism and hospitality sector of Bangladesh is gradually

becoming a player in the development outlook for the next decades (Hassan, 2022). The industry contributed USD 9.5 billion (BDT 1.02 trillion) in 2023, which is a growth of 10.6% from the previous year and 17.9% from pre-covid period, as per the estimates by WTTC (Monitor, 2023). Approximately 2.14 million jobs were also supported, or approximately 3 percent of national employment. Official estimates are not uniform, but it is clear that the sector has grown significantly. With its rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and growing focus on sustainable development, Bangladesh is well-positioned to expand its presence in the global tourism market (Acharjee, Sukrana, & Ahmed, 2025).

To respond to this growth, the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management (THM) opened in 2007 at the University of Dhaka with a view to producing competent professionals in both the national and international job markets. Since then, tourism and hospitality education has proliferated in the country, with at least seven public universities, nine private universities, and several colleges under the national university offering THM programs (Talukder, Hoque, & Das, 2024). This growth rate reflects the increasing significance of the sector and Bangladeshi students' interest in studying this field. In addition to the educational sector, renowned hotels, resorts, and restaurants are growing in Bangladesh, which creates a strong need for highly skilled professionals (Ahmed, 2022). Simultaneously, as more Bangladeshi people spend their disposable income on leisure travel, accommodation, and dining, the domestic tourism and hospitality market is becoming more dynamic (Rahat, Amin, & Ahmed, 2024). These developments have not only strengthened the industry but also encouraged many students to view Tourism and Hospitality Management as a promising career path.

As this academic discipline is growing, it is essential to understand why students choose to study Tourism and Hospitality Management (Sukrana, Hassan, et al., 2025). These motivations can be explained using the push-pull framework (Amaro, Caldeira, & Seabra, 2024). Push factors reflect internal drivers that trigger career interest in service-oriented sectors, love for travel and exploration, and desire for flexible, globally oriented careers (Durão, 2021; Huma & Khurram, 2024). In contrast, pull factors represent external attractions, such as opportunities to go abroad, the availability of part-time or full-time jobs, and the growing demand for skilled professionals within the home country and abroad (Mqwebedu, Roberson, & Kleynhans, 2022; Nikou, Kadel, & Gutema, 2025).

Therefore, identifying students' motivations from such a perspective helps not only to understand the personal, social, and economic circumstances that influence their educational choices but also to gather essential information that universities and policymakers can use. If universities incorporate curriculum design, company partnerships, and career guidance aligned with these motivations, they will be able to equip their graduates with the necessary skills for the tourism industry in Bangladesh. These skills are vital for the development and sustainability of the tourism sector in Bangladesh. At the same time, this strategy ensures that graduates remain competitive in the international job market. Despite the rapid expansion of tourism and hospitality education in Bangladesh, there remains a clear lack of empirical research examining how push and pull factors influence students' decisions to study Tourism. Existing studies are largely descriptive or focused on developed economies, offering limited evidence from Bangladesh. To address this gap, the present study applies the push-pull framework to identify the key motivational factors shaping Bangladeshi students' academic choices and generate evidence-based insights for educators and policymakers.

Guided by this perspective, the current study seeks to uncover the factors influencing Bangladeshi students' decisions to pursue higher education in Tourism and Hospitality Management. Accordingly, the following research objectives are proposed.

RO1: To identify the internal (push) and external (pull) factors that motivate Bangladeshi students to pursue higher education in Tourism and Hospitality Management.

RO2: To examine the role of these push-pull factors in students' motivation for higher education in the tourism and hospitality field.

RO3: To provide recommendations for higher-education institutions and policymakers to design programs and strategies that align with students' motivations and support the sustainable growth of Bangladesh's tourism and hospitality sector.

2. Literature Review

This study uses push-pull motivation theory to determine why students from Bangladesh seek higher education in Tourism and Hospitality Management. Push-pull theory, which was first used in the study of tourism motivation (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977), has been a popular source for explaining decision-making in education and career choices. The theory differentiates between two main groups of motivations: push factors that indicate the internal and psychological drivers that make a person choose a certain option, and pull factors that indicate the external attractions and possibilities that attract a person to a certain choice (Sukrana, Hassan, et al., 2025).

Push factors in higher education refer to the personal wants and needs of students, such as career goals, love of travel, or the desire for flexible and globally mobile careers (Hailat, Alsmadi, Nassar, & Chung, 2022). By contrast, pull factors are situational changes that can lead one to study or work in a foreign country, the availability of jobs while studying, and the ever-increasing need for skilled professionals in the tourism and hospitality sectors (Hailat et al., 2022). These internal and external motivations shape students' decisions and show the interaction between their personal aspirations and the available opportunities.

This framework is particularly relevant for Bangladesh, where the tourism and hospitality industry is expanding in parallel to the growth of academic programs dedicated to this field. The push–pull perspective offers a structured way to explore the motivations that influence students' academic decisions. Based on prior research, the following assumptions were formulated to test how the push and pull factors affect students' decisions to study tourism and hospitality management at the university level.

Hypothesis Formulation

Based on the push–pull theoretical framework, this study categorizes student motivations for higher education in tourism and hospitality management into push factors (internal motivations) and pull factors (external attractions).

2.1 Push Factors Influencing Students to Study Tourism and Hospitality Management

2.1.1 Career Interest in Hospitality & Tourism Services (CIHTS)

Students are often motivated to study Tourism and Hospitality Management because they are fascinated with specific service industries (Liu, He, & Wu, 2022). These include several organizations, such as hotels, motels, resorts, airlines, and travel agencies (Sukrana, Rasal, & Al Naiem, 2021). Individuals passionate about people-oriented careers, possessing strong self-esteem, and having an extroverted nature are particularly drawn to this field, as it aligns closely with their professional aspirations (Dursun & Argan, 2017).

H1: *Career interest in hospitality and tourism services positively influences students' decisions to study Tourism and Hospitality Management.*

2.1.2 Love for Travel and Exploration (LTE)

Many students considering education in tourism and hospitality are intrinsically motivated by travel and exploration (Yang, Ayavoo, & Ab Aziz, 2023). Previous research indicates that the desire to experience new places, cultures and lifestyles is a strong push factor for entry into this field (Cesário, Sabino, Moreira, Portugal, & Correia, 2022). Such motivations usually stem from a desire for personal growth rather than merely financial gain. Shields (2011) indicates that students with a thirst for exploration are more likely to view education in tourism as a means to transform their personal desires into employment opportunities. Such a passion acts as an initial motivator (for entering the field) but also for remaining in the field long-term (i.e., tourism-related careers).

H2: *Love for travel and exploration positively influences students' decisions to study Tourism and Hospitality Management.*

2.1.3 Desire for Flexible and Global Careers (DFGC)

Tourism and hospitality, as globally integrated industries (Rasal, Sukrana, & Al Naiem, 2021), provide mobility and flexibility in careers across countries and cultures (Leung & Woo, 2025). It has been

researched that students are attracted to the industry, as it provides a variety of career options and global opportunities (Leung & Woo, 2025). Young professionals particularly enjoy the global possibilities. It has also been found that learning about the different international standards and systems makes graduates more employable, as they can work in other countries with little retraining (Strickland & Ratten, 2024). The flexible nature of the industry, combined with global trends, allows graduates to achieve long-term career stability (Preko & Anyigba, 2024). It also allows graduates to experience rapid growth and opportunities for advancement in international positions.

H3: *Desire for flexible and global careers positively influences students' decisions to study Tourism and Hospitality Management.*

2.2 Pull Factors Influencing Students to Study Tourism and Hospitality Management

2.2.1 Opportunity to Go Abroad (OGA)

The possibility of exposure to other countries through study programs, internships, or employment opportunities is one of the most significant pull factors for students to study abroad. Research has indicated that the chance to work or travel overseas is a major factor in choosing to pursue a degree in tourism and hospitality (Strickland & Ratten, 2024). Such opportunities are often seen as a means of gaining greater professional and cultural experiences. Furthermore, Jamnia and Pan (2017) reported that one of the reasons students choose to study tourism and hospitality is to have greater contact with people from other countries and increase their employment opportunities abroad.

H4: *Opportunities to go abroad positively influence students' decisions to study Tourism and Hospitality Management.*

2.2.2 Work Opportunities while Studying (WOS)

Another powerful lure for students is the possibility of earning money while studying, either through full-time or part-time employment (Al Azis & Yusanti, 2021). According to research, the possibility of employment while studying lessens financial stress and increases the appeal of studying Tourism and Hospitality Management (McCormick, Moore, & Kuh, 2023). Furthermore, students who work part-time gain essential industry experience that improves their chances of employment after graduation (Sukrana, Jui, & Khan, 2025). Part-time employment is a strong incentive for students studying tourism and hospitality because it offers financial support and professional growth.

H5: *The availability of part-time or full-time jobs while studying positively influences students' decisions to study Tourism and Hospitality Management.*

2.2.3 Awareness of Local Industry Demand (ALID)

Awareness of the growing importance of the tourism and hospitality industry and its contribution to Bangladesh's economy, as well as the thousands of jobs created annually in this sector, serves as a potent external factor for students (Hassan, 2022). Prior studies confirm that the perception of growth in the industry strongly affects students' choice of programs in related areas (Kahraman & Alrawadieh, 2021). In a study titled "National Tourism Human Resource Development Strategy 2021–2030" by the Bangladesh Tourism Board, it is forecast that the demand for the workforce in this field will expand significantly from about 2.9 million in 2022 to approximately 7.29 million by 2030, indicating rapid and continued expansion (Board, 2021). Such expansion offers tremendous prospects for graduates who pursue this educational opportunity, thus making education in tourism and hospitality a promising avenue through which they can reach stable and rewarding careers.

H6: *Awareness of local industry demand for tourism professionals in Bangladesh positively influences students' decisions to study Tourism and Hospitality Management.*

Figure 1 presents the complete research model, which encompasses all the hypotheses.

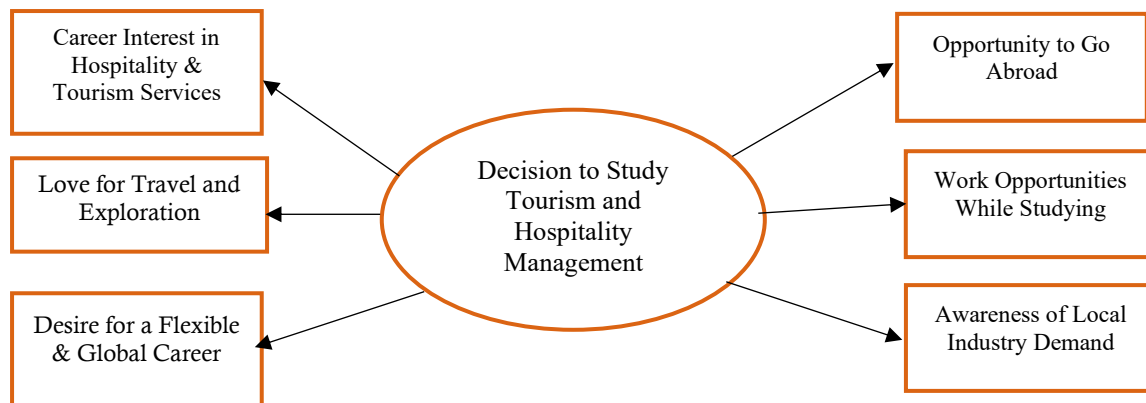


Figure 1. Hypothesized research model
Source: Developed by the author

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Questionnaire and measurement drivers

To gather information on the push and pull factors influencing students' decisions to pursue higher education in Tourism and Hospitality Management, a structured questionnaire was developed. A five-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "Strongly Disagree" and 5 denoting "Strongly Agree," was used to administer the questionnaire online. The instrument consisted of items grouped under six key independent variables identified as determinants of students' Decision to Study Tourism and Hospitality Management (DSTHM). These variables were carefully derived from a comprehensive review of prior research to ensure construct validity. **Table 1** presents the full list of constructs, their corresponding measurement items, and the sources from which each item was adapted.

Table 1. Constructs, items and sources

Construct	Items	Sources
Career Interest in Hospitality & Tourism Services (CIHTS)	I am interested in working in the tourism and hospitality industry like hotels, motels, or resorts.	(Strickland & Ratten, 2024)
	I find jobs in the tourism and hospitality industry exciting and rewarding.	
	I see myself working in travel agencies, airlines, or as a tour operator.	
	I want to build a long-term career in the service-oriented tourism industry.	
	I am extroverted in nature and enjoy helping and interacting with people, which fits hospitality jobs.	
Love for Travel and Exploration (LTE)	I love traveling and exploring new cultures and destinations.	(Alrawadieh & Alrawadieh, 2015)
	Traveling has always been one of my greatest interests.	
	I want a career that allows me to travel frequently.	
	I chose to study tourism and hospitality because I love to travel.	
	I feel more connected to a subject that matches my personal interests in travel.	
Desire for a Flexible & Global Career (DFGC)	I believe a degree in tourism and hospitality opens doors to many career options.	(Leung & Woo, 2025)
	I believe this field offers job flexibility across different countries.	
	I am sure that tourism and hospitality careers are adaptable to changing market demands.	

	The global nature of this industry is appealing to me.	
	I want to work in an industry that offers both diversity and mobility.	
Opportunity to Go Abroad (OGA)	I consider that studying tourism and hospitality will improve my chances of going abroad.	(Strickland & Ratten, 2024; Sukrana, Jui, et al., 2025)
	I chose this field because it provides employment opportunities abroad.	
	The potential for future migration influenced my decision to study this subject.	
	I believe that tourism and hospitality are good platforms for those who want to go abroad.	
Work Opportunities While Studying (WOS)	I believe tourism and hospitality offer part-time or even full-time job opportunities during studies.	(Al Azis & Yusanti, 2021)
	My decision to choose this field is influenced by the ability to earn while studying.	
	I want to support myself financially while pursuing higher education.	
	This subject offers practical work experience along with academic study.	
	I believe that tourism and hospitality studies provide the freedom to balance work alongside education.	
Awareness of Local Industry Demand (ALID)	The tourism industry in Bangladesh is growing rapidly.	(Kahraman & Alrawadieh, 2021; Liu et al., 2022)
	I am aware that local demand for tourism professionals is increasing.	
	The rising popularity of the tourism and recreation industry in Bangladesh influenced my academic choice.	
	More institutions and companies are hiring in this field, which influenced my decision.	
Dependent Variable: Decision to Study Tourism and Hospitality Management (DSTHM)	I am confident that choosing tourism and hospitality was the right decision.	(Lee, Olds, & Lee, 2010)
	I selected this subject after careful consideration of my goals and interests.	
	My choice was influenced by a combination of personal and professional motivations.	
	I am satisfied with my academic path in tourism and hospitality.	
	I would recommend this subject to others interested in similar goals.	

3.2 Pilot testing

A pilot test is a small-scale preliminary version of this larger study. Therefore, before the final data collection, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of respondents to ensure the clarity, coherence, and reliability of the questionnaire items for this study (Bujang, Omar, Foo, & Hon, 2024). The feedback from this pilot study was used to refine the wording and structure of the questions, ensuring that the instrument effectively captured the intended constructs.

3.3 Data collection

For the data collection purpose of this research, an online survey was conducted to obtain information from students of Tourism and Hospitality Management, who were studying in different universities in Bangladesh. The main purpose of the study was to determine the motivation of the students for studying in this area of higher education and to determine the actual push and pull factors influencing them. The link to the questionnaire was sent to 400 students who fulfilled the requirement of studying in a Tourism and Hospitality Management program. For verification purposes, pre-screening criteria and mandatory completion of the selected questions were implemented to ensure reliability. A total of 312 valid

responses were retained for analysis, providing a robust basis for understanding students' motivational drivers.

3.4 Sampling procedure and sample size

This study utilized a non-probability purposive sampling method, specifically targeting students enrolled in Tourism and Hospitality Management programs at universities in Bangladesh (Shamsudin, Hassim, & Abd Manaf, 2024). According to the PEAR method for sample size determination in multiple linear regression (Brooks & Barcikowski, 2012), the adequacy of the sample depends on the number of predictors and the expected effect size. With six independent variables in this study, the sample of 312 responses was sufficient to produce stable and reliable regression estimates, ensuring appropriate statistical power and applicability of the results.

3.5 Data analysis

The data were coded, cleaned, and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25. Descriptive statistics, reliability tests, and inferential analyses were applied to examine the motivational factors influencing students' decisions to pursue higher education in Tourism and Hospitality Management in Bangladesh. **Figure 2** represents the research framework and methodology

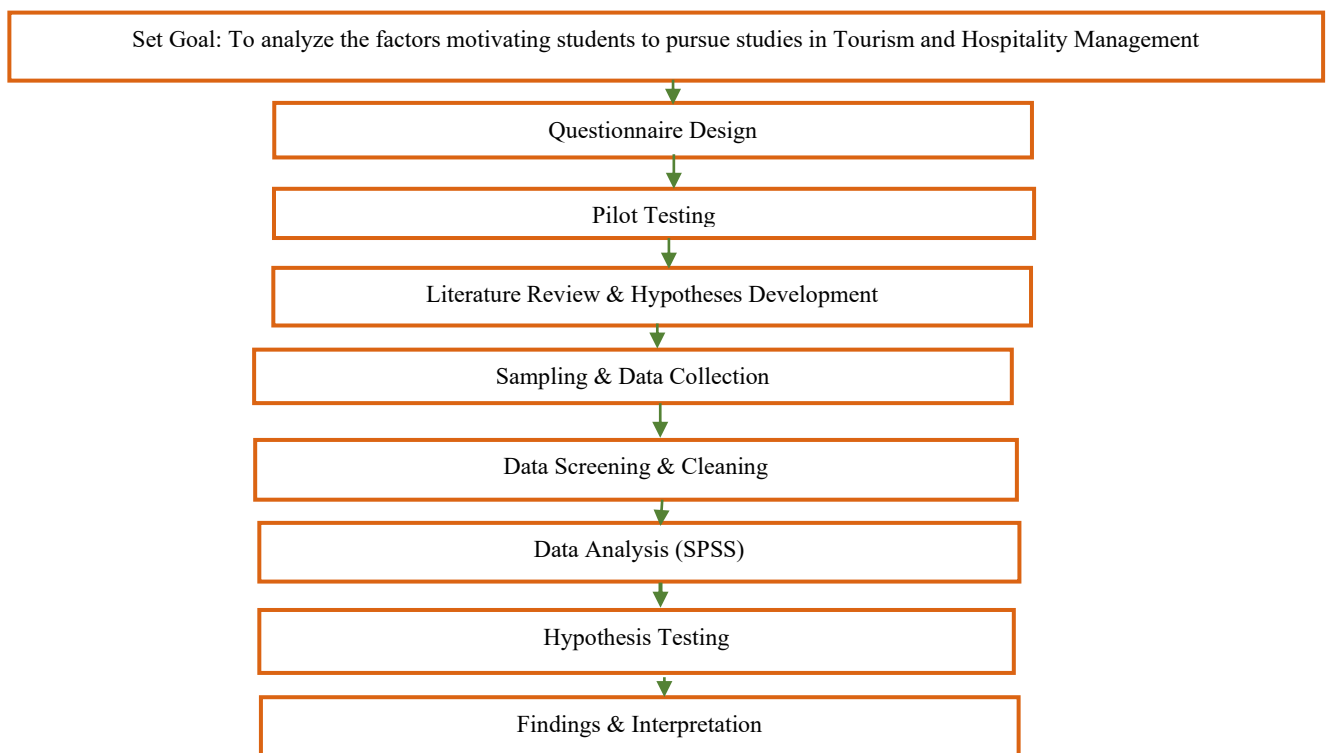


Figure 2. Research framework and methodology
Source: Developed by the author

3.6 Model of the study

This study examined the relationship between students' decisions to study T&H Management (dependent variable) and six independent variables. This relationship was modeled using the following multiple linear regression equation:

$$DSTHM_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1(CIHTS_t) + \beta_2(LTE_t) + \beta_3(DFGC_t) + \beta_4(OGA_t) + \beta_5(WOS_t) + \beta_6(ALID_t) + E_t$$

In the above equation $DSTHM_t$ represents the decision to study tourism at time t , reflecting students' academic decisions in tourism and hospitality education. β_0 is the intercept of the model. $\beta_k (k = 1, 2, \dots, 6)$ are the coefficient of the independent variables to be estimated. E_t is the error term that

captures unobserved factors. Each independent variable (*CIHTS, LTE, DFGC, OGA, WOS, ALID*) is measured at time *t*.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Respondents' demographic analysis

Numerical methods were applied to summarize the respondents' demographic characteristics in an organized manner. Of the 312 participants, there were 206 males and 106 were women. The majority of the respondents (51.4%) belonged to the 18–21 years age group, followed by 46.2% in the 22–25 years group, while only 2.4% were aged 26 years and above. In terms of the current year of study, 30.2% of the students were in their first year, 25.0% in their second year, 22.6% in their third year, and 22.2% in their fourth year. These results provide a clear overview of respondents' demographic distribution. **Table 2** presents a detailed demographic profile.

Table 2. Respondents' Demographic Profile

Variable	Classifications	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	206	66.0
	Female	106	34.0
Age	18-21	160	51.4
	22-25	144	46.2
	26 or above	8	02.4
Current year of Study	First Year	94	30.2
	Second Year	78	25.0
	Third Year	71	22.6
	Fourth Year	69	22.2

4.2 Reliability statistics

To evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire and the accuracy of its items, a reliability test was conducted (Sukrana, Haque, & Jui, 2023). Cronbach's alpha was employed as the reliability metric in this investigation (Amirrudin, Nasution, & Supahar, 2021). As shown in Table 3, with five items, the factor "Career Interest in Hospitality & Tourism Services (CIHTS)" had the highest Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.907, indicating excellent reliability, conversely, the factor "Love for Travel and Exploration (LTE)," which included all five items, had the lowest Cronbach's alpha value (0.755), which is still acceptable. The remaining constructs showed Cronbach's alpha values above the suggested cutoff of 0.70, indicating consistent and reliable measurements. According to the general guideline, where a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 is considered acceptable, 0.80 good, and 0.90 excellent (Izah, Sylva, & Hait, 2023), all factors in this study were deemed reliable. **Table 3** provides detailed reliability statistics for the study variables.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Career Interest in Hospitality & Tourism Services (CIHTS)	.907	5
Love for Travel and Exploration (LTE)	.755	5
Desire for Flexible & Global Career (DFGC)	.850	5
Opportunity to Go Abroad (OGA)	.863	4
Work Opportunities While Studying (WOS)	.833	5
Awareness of Local Industry Demand (ALID)	.850	4
Decision to Study Tourism and Hospitality Management (DSTHM) (Dependent Variable)	.849	5

4.3 Multiple regression analysis

Multiple linear regression is a popular statistical technique for examining the relationship between one dependent variable and two or more independent variables. This helps demonstrate how significantly each predictor influences the result (Hoc, Silhavy, Prokopova, & Silhavy, 2022). This method is also

useful for forecasting and making informed decisions. Researchers use it in many fields, including management, economics, education, and the social sciences (Sun, Wang, Zhang, & Zuo, 2023). In this study, multiple regression analysis was used to examine how several motivational factors, such as career interest in hospitality and tourism services, love for travel and exploration, desire for a flexible and global career, opportunity to go abroad, work opportunities while studying, and awareness of local industry demand, affect students' decision to study Tourism and Hospitality Management. Here, the decision to study Tourism and Hospitality Management served as the dependent variable, while the listed motivational factors acted as independent variables.

The results are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6. As shown in **Table 4**, the model demonstrates strong explanatory power, with an R-squared value of 0.843, indicating that 84.3% of the variance in the decision to study Tourism and Hospitality Management can be explained by the combined effects of the independent variables. Furthermore, the Durbin–Watson statistic of 2.344 suggests that there is no significant autocorrelation in the residuals, thereby fulfilling a key assumption of the regression model. These findings confirm that the selected predictors collectively have a substantial impact on shaping academic decisions in the field of tourism and hospitality education.

Table 4. Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.918 ^a	.843	.840	.39097	2.344

The ANOVA results presented in **Table 5** show that the regression model was statistically significant. The F-statistic value was 273.898, with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, indicating that the overall model fit the data well. This result confirms that the independent variables, when considered together, significantly explain the variations in the dependent variable.

Table 5. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F Statistic	Significance
Regression	251.204	6	41.867	273.898	.000 ^b
Residual	46.622	305	.153		
Total	297.826	311			

Predictors: (Constant), CIHTS, LTE, DFGC, OGA, WOS, ALID; Dependent variable: DSTHM

Table 6. Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	-.040	.106		-.375	.708
	CIHTS	-.005	.047	-.004	-.101	.920
	LTE	.136	.036	.144	3.800	.000
	DFGC	.182	.047	.186	3.825	.000
	OGA	.182	.042	.192	4.299	.000
	WOS	.388	.043	.397	9.033	.000
	ALID	.136	.044	.135	3.059	.002

a. Dependent Variable: DSTHM

Table 6 presents the results of the multiple linear regression analysis examining the influence of motivational factors on students' decision to study Tourism and Hospitality Management (DSTHM). The model tested six independent variables: Career Interest in Hospitality and Tourism Services (CIHTS), Love for Travel and Exploration (LTE), Desire for a Flexible and Global Career (DFGC), Opportunity to Go Abroad (OGA), Work Opportunities While Studying (WOS), and Awareness of

Local Industry Demand (ALID). The findings reveal that Love for Travel and Exploration ($\beta = 0.144$, $p < 0.001$) has a positive and statistically significant influence on students' decisions to study T&H Management. Similarly, Desire for a Flexible and Global Career ($\beta = 0.186$, $p < 0.001$) significantly contributed to students' academic choices. Among the pull factors, Opportunity to Go Abroad ($\beta = 0.192$, $p < 0.001$), Work Opportunities While Studying ($\beta = 0.397$, $p < 0.001$), and Awareness of Local Industry Demand ($\beta = 0.135$, $p < 0.01$) exhibited positive and statistically significant effects on the dependent variable.

In contrast, Career Interest in Hospitality and Tourism Services ($\beta = -0.004$, $p = 0.920$) had no statistically significant impact on students' decision to study Tourism and Hospitality Management.

Table 7. Hypothesis Result

Hypotheses	Relations	B	t	P – values	Result
H1	CIHTS→DSTHM	-0.004	-0.101	.920	Rejected
H2	LTE→DSTHM	0.144	3.800	.000	Accepted
H3	DFGC→DSTHM	0.186	3.825	.000	Accepted
H4	OGA→DSTHM	0.192	4.299	.000	Accepted
H5	WOS→DSTHM	0.397	9.033	.000	Accepted
H6	ALID→DSTHM	0.135	3.059	.002	Accepted

Table 7 summarizes the results of the hypothesis testing. The results indicate that five hypotheses (H2–H6) were supported, as their respective predictors showed significant positive effects on students' decisions to study Tourism. In contrast, H1 (Career Interest in Hospitality and Tourism Services) was not supported because of its non-significant relationship with the dependent variable.

4.4 Discussion

This study explored the motivational factors that influence Bangladeshi students' decisions to study Tourism and Hospitality Management at the higher education level. Using the push–pull framework, the findings show that most of the proposed factors play an important role in shaping students' academic choices. First, hypothesis career interest in hospitality and tourism services (H1) showed a negative and statistically insignificant effect. This means that most students do not choose this subject because of their personal interest or passion for the field. Instead, their decisions are influenced mainly by practical or external reasons. In the Bangladeshi context, this result may be explained by the way tourism and hospitality careers are viewed. These jobs are often seen as having low job security, long working hours, and lower social status than other jobs. Families usually encourage students to choose more traditional careers such as government service, medical service, engineering, or business. Consequently, personal interest plays a smaller role. Additionally, the service nature of this sector may carry some social stigma, which further reduces intrinsic motivation. Similar results have been reported in previous studies (Chen, Shen, & Gosling, 2021; Le, Klieve, & McDonald, 2018), suggesting that many students do not plan to build long-term careers in the hospitality or tourism industry. As the sector is still developing and not yet widely viewed as a well-established profession, students tend to focus on practical opportunities or future benefits rather than on a genuine love for the industry.

In contrast, love for travel and exploration (H2) was supported, showing that the wish to visit new places and experience new cultures strongly motivates students, as found in earlier studies (Yang et al., 2023). Likewise, the desire for flexible and global careers (H3) had a significant positive influence, supporting the findings of (Leung & Woo, 2025). In Bangladesh, many students dream of going abroad and building an international career. A degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management can make it easier for them to find entry-level jobs in hotels, restaurants, and other service industries abroad. Consequently, this field is often regarded as a practical choice that opens doors to overseas opportunities. Among the pull factors, both the opportunity to go abroad (H4) and work opportunities while studying (H5) were significant predictors, with the latter being the strongest predictor.

These results align with Lee, Kim, and Lo (2008), who found that international exposure and practical work experience are key motivators for students in Tourism and Hospitality Management programs. The same is true for Bangladeshi students, many of whom want to go abroad for higher education and do part-time work to cover their tuition fees or support their families. Tourism and hospitality programs are often chosen because they provide better opportunities for part-time or full-time jobs while studying (Sukrana, Jui, et al., 2025).

Finally, awareness of local industry demand (H6) is also supported, meaning that students are aware of the growth of the tourism and hospitality industry and job opportunities within Bangladesh. This finding supports (Quinlan & Renninger, 2022), who noted that students' academic choices often reflect their understanding of the sector's employment potential. Overall, the results show that Bangladeshi students study Tourism and Hospitality Management for practical reasons and future opportunities. Their choices are driven by global career goals, opportunities to study or work abroad, and growing job prospects locally and internationally. Conversely, personal passion or deep interest in tourism or hospitality plays a smaller role.

4.5 Theoretical implications

This study significantly contributes to the existing body of knowledge on higher education decision-making by extending the push–pull framework to the context of Bangladeshi students' motivations for studying Tourism and Hospitality Management. The findings reveal that while intrinsic career interest in hospitality services does not significantly predict academic choice, lifestyle-oriented push factors (love for travel, desire for global careers) and opportunity-driven pull factors (opportunity to go abroad, work while studying, awareness of local demand) strongly influence decision making. This highlights the need to reconsider the relative weight of traditional push factors, such as career interest, when applying the push–pull model in developing or emerging country contexts. Moreover, the results provide solid evidence that students' decisions are shaped by a blend of personal aspirations and perceived structural opportunities, which reinforces the framework's applicability beyond tourism motivation to educational choice theory.

4.6 Managerial implications

From a practical perspective, the findings provide useful insights for universities, policymakers, and industry stakeholders in Bangladesh. They are also helpful for foreign educational institutions and organizations that want to recruit South Asian students, especially those from developing countries like Bangladesh. Higher education institutions should design curricula and career guidance programs that emphasize the global mobility and flexibility of careers in tourism and hospitality for students with strong aspirations for international exposure. In addition, Bangladeshi universities should establish partnerships with foreign universities, global hotel chains, and international tourism organizations, which can create more opportunities for students, such as study abroad programs, internships, and job opportunities. These collaborations would not only enhance students' practical experience but also strengthen their employability in local and global markets.

In addition, universities should actively promote part-time work opportunities and industry linkages during the study period, as this factor was found to be the most influential determinant of students' academic choices. Inviting experienced professionals and industry experts to conduct seminars, workshops, and guest lectures can help students become more familiar with real-world industry practices and better prepare them for the labor market. Building strong collaborations between universities and the tourism industry can ensure that academic programs remain aligned with current industry needs and emerging trends. Furthermore, policymakers and industry bodies should promote the growing local demand for skilled tourism and hospitality professionals through awareness campaigns and career fairs to attract students. This will help students understand the stability and long-term potential of the sector. Thus, they may see tourism and hospitality not only as a way to work abroad but also as a good career option in Bangladesh. Together, these efforts can make the field more appealing to students and support sustainable growth and professionalism. **Figure 3** represents the key points of managerial implications

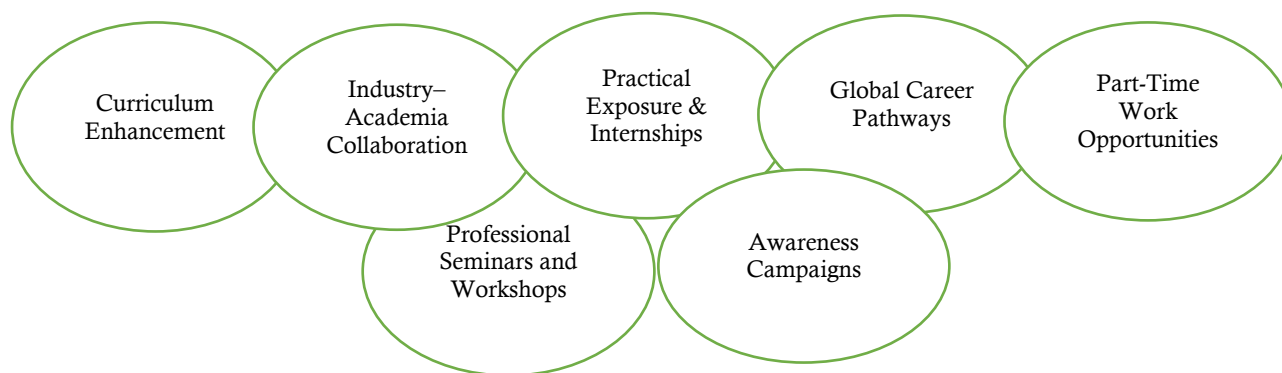


Figure 3. Key points of managerial implications
Source: Developed by the author

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

This study applied a push-pull theoretical framework and a regression-based analysis of 312 student surveys to explore the motivational dynamics that influenced Bangladeshi students' choices of higher education in Tourism and Hospitality Management. These findings revealed that students' academic decisions are largely driven by their desire for international exposure, career flexibility, and real-world opportunities such as studying abroad or part-time work rather than by their intrinsic passion for the field. These findings suggest that tourism and hospitality education in Bangladesh, as a reflection of professional interest, is gradually becoming a way of providing economic opportunities and international mobility to students. By focusing on these aspects, this research has gone a step further in explaining how students from developing countries make deliberate choices about their education in the context of a globalized world. The results highlight the necessity for educational institutions and policymakers to match program offers, career counselling, and marketing tactics with students' aspirations for global success and employability.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this study made valuable contributions, it also had several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample included only 312 students from selected institutions in Bangladesh and did not cover all universities offering tourism and hospitality management programs. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent the diversity of tourism and hospitality students across the country or the world. Future studies should include a larger sample size and participants from diverse regions and types of institutions, both within and outside Bangladesh, to enhance the generalizability of the results. Second, the study relied solely on quantitative data obtained through self-administered questionnaires; therefore, the results may be subject to response bias. The use of qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could also illuminate students' hidden motives and views.

Third, the study only represented students' motivations at a specific point in time because it was sample-based. Future research could track students throughout their academic and professional careers to observe how their motivations change over time. Finally, this study focused primarily on push and pull motivational factors without considering potential mediating or moderating variables such as social influence, perceived employability, or institutional reputation. Future researchers may integrate these constructs or apply comparative models, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) or Expectancy-Value Theory, to broaden the understanding of academic choice behavior. By addressing these limitations, future research can build on the current study to create a more comprehensive and dynamic academic motivation model for tourism and hospitality education, particularly in developing nations such as Bangladesh.

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Ethics Statement

The study did not involve any minors, medical specimens, animals, or medical information. The willing and informed participants provided their opinions/feedback (which contained no medical information) via online survey forms. The collected data from the participants were processed anonymously to ensure an unbiased study. No ethical regulations were violated during this research.

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