Ethical Consumerism as a prerequisite to the development of Eco-tourism:

Evaluating Consumption Pattern of the Bangladeshi Traveler

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Abstract

The tourism industry in Bangladesh is growing at an approximate annual rate of over 7.75% increase in GDP each year with 3.8% contribution to employment in 2013. However, while in recent year the sector gained significant prominence in our country, especially when considering how attention has diversified throughout the nation, it is also true that due to unplanned and haphazard development of the sector, the destinations where tourism most touches also has become adversely affected by environmental and social consequences. As such, a call to attention for eco-tourism is greatly needed where special consideration will be ensured for tourism development to progresses in a sustainable manner with the welfare of society and all elements of the environment as an integral part of this growth. However, prior studies have shown that though the number of eco-tourism offers in various parts of Bangladesh have increased in the last half decade, demand of the same among Bangladeshi travelers have been stunted.

Ethical consumerism itself is a quickly spreading phenomenon where consumer consciousness of corporate social responsibility driving its growth as the helm. However, numerous researches around the world have also indicated that there exists an intention-behavior gap whereby consumers do not always practice their ethical preaching, i.e. even ethical consumers do not always buy ethically. This study has aimed to identify whether the shared history between ethical consumerism and eco-tourism extends to actual purchase decision making among consumers by researching the everyday consumption patterns and travel choices of Bangladeshi travelers. By discovering the similarities and dissimilarities in the ethical consumption patterns between the everyday purchases and travel choices, the study hopes to learn whether conditioned behavior of the everyday may be transferred on to people's travel behavior and also where we may be able to close the gap between ethical intention and ethical behavior.

Keywords: Ethical consumerism, Eco-tourism, FMCG Sector, Goods-services continuum, Consumer Social Responsibility (CSR), Pavlovian Model of Classical Conditioning, FGD Physically Challenged Persons.

1. Introduction

Tourism and hospitality is one of the fastest growing industries in Bangladesh today. In 2013, the total travel and tourism contribution to Bangladesh GDP was BDT 460.3bn (4.4% of GDP), rising 16.6% from BDT 394.8bn (4.3% of GDP) in 2012 and surpassing the original 2012 forecast for a rise of 7.5%. It is now further expected to grow by 6.5% per annum to BDT 935.5bn by 2024 (4.7% of GDP). Thus, out of 184 countries, Bangladesh ranked 20 in 2014 growth forecast and 12 in 2014 long-term growth forecast. Its employment contribution alone, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry, was 3.8% of total employment (2,846,500 jobs) in 2013 with an expected rise to 4.2% of total employment by 2024 (WTTC, 2014). The most developed tourism destination of the country has uncontestably been **Cox's Bazar**. However, as with any industrializing economy, this rampage of tourism expansion in Cox's Bazar, too, threatens a number of detrimental effects to its natural environment, including its local community and culture. Excessive crowding, poor waste management and its resulting pollution, lax security, and especially unplanned hotel constructions that has been burgeoning in the area to support its growing tourist population is not only causing temporal disturbance to its ecosystem but portends to eradicate its most attractive feature - uninterrupted exotic beach (Zahra, 2013).

Sundarban, the largest single block of tidal halophytic mangrove forest in the world, is another attractive prospect for the growth of tourism in the nation. Since 1989, when the first tour operator ventured into the area to open up shop, there have been an increase of 20 tour operators in as many years, earning over BDT 90,000,000 between 2009-2010 alone (Pathak, 2012). Moreover, studies show that more than 55% of locals are directly dependent on the forest at different degrees and can benefit from the incorporation of eco-tourism in the region by another 15% (Iqball et al., 2010). In recent years, **Sylhet** has seen considerable growth in tourism as well. Traditionally a considerable prospect for religious tourism, thanks to the number of burial grounds of 14th century sufi saints, the district has seen an upsurge in the new millennium, attracting tourists to visit natural displays of water bodies and hill tracks such as aflong, Bicanakandi, Ratargool, Lalkhal, and Tamabil. Moreover, a series of eco-tourism resorts have cropped up too, given

that the tourism upsurge has taken place after the new trend of marketing the concept of "eco-friendly measures" took hold of the sector.

However, precisely how eco-friendly these tourism operations turns out remains to be seen. As such, the action calls for a restructuring of tourism development plan to ensure sustainability of the industry by incorporating the positive evolution of its native social and economic touchstones, i.e. a need to inject eco-tourism into the product mix. However, the question is, is the Bangladeshi traveler, the largest contributor to local tourism activities, ready for eco-tourism? **Ethical consumerism is more challenging** to define into an exact industry. Yet, it has grown into a force almost as driven as an industry, prevalent from FMCG sectors to the services sectors throughout **the goods-services continuum**. What had ignited as sparks of activism has today flourished into a policy that sets the most sustainable brands apart from the rest. Globally, organizations are adopting this philosophy into their sustainability practice to warm to the growing population widely known as the "ethical consumer". The fact is ethical consumerism is the new barometer by which sellers today campaign their offers. While in Bangladesh, Consumer Social Responsibility still rallies at a very primitive stage with companies only beginning to take on charitable deeds to sustain positive images for their brands, ethical consumerism may have a significant role to play how we grow as a nation of consumers and businesses.

2. Rationale of the Study

Talk of ethical consumption has been on the rise since the 1980s. It has been perhaps greatly propagated by the Brundtland Report, Our Common Future, which was published by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, and which emphasized on corporate responsibilities towards sustainable utilization of the environment. It brought to the average consumer's attention the need to live wisely in his environment today for a better future tomorrow. More so, it unlocked a new marketing tool for the corporate to reach out to the willing psyche of the more "conscientious" consumer.

Yet, numerous studies have discovered that even after three decades of propagandas and activism, there exists a gap between the intention and the action of the ethical consumer. What the consumer can so righteously preach is not always

so easy to practice. Moreover, the consumer often confuses his personal consumption practices with what is important for the society as a whole. Eco-tourism, a concept founded on similar principles and motivations as ethical consumption, has thus far faced a similar "failure to launch" in Bangladesh. Although a trendy travel solution opted by many yuppie tourists in our country, the available eco-tourism packages that have achieved positive feedback from local tourists barely meets the required criteria of sustainable tourism.

3. Statement of the Problem

This study mainly focuses on discovering where the Bangladeshi consumer's actions turn away from making consumptions based on ethical intentions in an attempt to gain a deeper insight into our local consumption culture. The study has been designed assuming that understanding the consumption behavior of the average Bangladeshi traveler may help us to see whether a pattern exists between everyday purchase decisions and travel choices. Thus, it is hoped that its findings may help tourism development bodies to design their eco-tourism communications in a way as to appeal to the Bangladeshi travelers in the future.

4. Objective of the Study

This study was constructed to primarily ascertain the consumption culture in terms of the ethics among Bangladeshi tourists. From there, the study aimed to diagnose whether a positive correlation exits between the everyday ethical consumption pattern (or the lack thereof) and travel choices of the Bangladeshi tourists.

5. Scope of the Study

This research has been a precursor to exploring ways to motivate Bangladeshi travelers to become more careful about how their tourism choices impact the environment around them, both ecologically (cost-effectively) and economically. It is hoped that from the findings of this study, project developers in the tourism industry will better understand the attitudes of their target consumers and employ that knowledge in designing their eco-tourism programs.

6. Limitation of the Study

Time constraint has been the primary limitation to this study. As expected, it did cast a shadow on both restricting the extent and number of samples selected as well as the amount of attention given to data analysis. We must prepare also for potential self-assigned restraints that respondents may have exercised in revealing their true attitudes and consumptions. Questions were structured using probable real-life scenarios that respondents may have undergone within a time-frame feasible of recollection. The questionnaire survey was also later supplemented with focused group discussion to divide the data collected at greater depth.

7. Methodology and Information Source

Secondary data were gathered mainly through literature review of related journal articles to develop the conceptual framework of this study. International research reports on ethical consumption greatly drove this intent while studies on local tourism activities supported the hypothesis. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods has been utilized for the purpose of this research. The research chiefly employed **online survey** methodology to gather primary data necessary to meet the research objectives. **"Kwiksurvey"**, the online survey tool used, was both useful for building the questionnaire and gathering the data, and was also selected for its user-friendliness, time efficiency and cost effectiveness. At a later stage, upon data gathering, **focused group discussion (FGD)** were carried out among a sample population of hospitality experts to verify the significance and depth of the data gathered. The FGD allowed deeper observation of respondent sensitivities with regards to the subject matter that eventually assisted in developing the qualitative analysis of the data.

Non-probability sampling was used for the online survey on a population of prospective respondents between the ages 18 to 45 years of middle to upper social class standing. Thereon, the respondents constituted of Bangladeshis who are frequent travelers (i.e. having travelled for business or leisure minimum twice within the last twelve months). The sample size for the online survey was ultimately 100 individuals. In case of the FGD, non-probability sampling was again used targeted specifically to frequent travelers (those who have traveled more than three times in the last twelve months) with the intention of acquiring direct opinions on the varying survey data gathered. Eight respondents from the survey sample were selected for the FGD on convenience. Reference period is September to December 2015. **Multi**

disciplinary analytical approach is adopted. Economic tools and relevant management techniques are extensively utilized for analytical purpose. Basic statistical tools (descriptive statistical parameters like average and tables, graphs and charts etc.) are utilized for data analysis, which also incorporated qualitative inferences. Although all fields within the questionnaire were targeted towards exploring the patterns of ethical consumptions among Bangladeshi travelers, the FGD was used post survey data analysis to further understand the statistical significance of data findings, which assisted to incorporating qualitative inferences regarding the possible motivational and attitudinal factors behind their behaviors.

Structured questionnaire were used to gather responses from all the data sources to ensure topical focus and consistency of data variables. The questionnaire pattern was set to ensure both quantitative and qualitative analysis of respondents' attitudinal aspect regarding the topic of study. Surveys were self-administered.

8. Review of Related Literature

8.1 Defining Eco-tourism

While over the years, many have tried to sufficiently define the concept of "eco-tourism", perhaps the most succinct and widely accepted differentiation has been "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of the local people" (TIES, 1990).

Sustainable tourism, for that matter, is declared to be "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005).

The roots of eco-tourism sprouted from the movement to incorporate the preservation of our natural environment as a constructive goal in any organizational domain, popularly known as sustainable development. The idea was also well documented in the Brundtland Report, Our Common Future, which was published by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. In fact, the synergy of eco-tourism, the most popularized of alternative tourisms, with mass tourism is expected to be the main direction for the future of tourism (Hirotsune, 2011).

Without a doubt, well-structured and conscientiously implemented policy frameworks for eco-tourism may lead to numerous positive impacts such as labor emancipation of the indigenous population, promotion of local handicraft industries, opportunity to self-finance protected areas hence enabling better preservation of natural flora and fauna as well as wildlife, etc. Moreover, while eco-tourism may help to educate world travelers about local communities and natural resources of the specific destination, the knowledge that nature conservation can lead to a source of long-term income may also motivate local communities to contribute to the preservation of their natural habitat and safeguard their co-existing species. Also, greater economic growth in eco-destinations may prevent emigration of local people to the cities, hence maintaining the population distribution balance between cities and rural areas (Nash, 2001).

8.2 Defining Ethical Consumerism

The term 'ethical consumption' need not refer to a clearly defined set of practices. Over time, the term evolved to being more of a convenient phrase that acts as a receptacle for all odds and ends in tendencies within contemporary consumer markets. In popular culture, the term covers a wide range of concerns from environmental and animal welfare to labor standards and human rights to questions of health, wellbeing, and community sustainability (Littler, 2011). Very much the buzz word, however, ethical consumerism is more aptly defined by its level of activism: "Ethical consumerism means that more customers are choosing to purchase goods that are ethically sourced, ethically made and ethically distributed" (Thornton, 2012).

The underlying aspect of both these perspectives of ethical consumption, however, is aptly called to attention by Payne:

"...the whole point of the ethical consumerism movement is that you "know" what you are buying and that you buy things that are produced ethically because not "knowing" leads to abuse and exploitation" (2012).

For the purpose of this study, all three definitions are used in conjunction.

8.3 Exploring the Ethical Consumer Further

At the very basic, consumerism maybe viewed as tool for social change, whereby the choice of the consumer to buy or not-buy can affect the choice of the producer or retailer (Adams, 1989). The rise of social and environmental responsibilities awareness in consumption similarly indicates that consumer's attitude towards company's ethical behaviors, or the lack thereof, can be the source of outward behaviors to compel company actions. In many cases, ethical consumerism emerges as a general tendency to boycott certain products or services, i.e. negative purchase behavior (Smith, 1990). In other cases, company actions are compelled by consumer's choice to only purchase goods or services begotten of supply chain ethically managed (Crane and Matten, 2004). A third level of ethical consumers may not even make actual purchase decisions but rather are more involved in dialogue and lobbying to raise awareness for global citizenship (Bendell, 1998).

Yet, another level of ethical consumer refrains from excessive consumption altogether to limit unwitting contribution to unethical consumption. This level of ethical consumers are the voluntary simplifiers who acknowledge that it is impossible to confirm that any product is wholly ethically sourced, made or distributed, and hence downshift their overall consumption and possibly also their income (Etzioni, 1998). However, it is important to distinguish and realize that ethical consumers are first and foremost consumers (Szmigin and Carrigan, 2006). Hence, this study has forgone the voluntary simplifiers who generally consume less.

The remaining three categories of ethical consumers, i.e. those participating in positive or negative ethical consumptions or in other way involved in raising "consumer awareness" can be further identified into the following classes:

Table 8.1 Categories of Green Consumers

Roper/S.C. Johnson Segmentation of Green Consumers (1993)		
True-Blue Greens	11%	most active green consumers, leaders of the green movement
Greenback Greens	11%	willing to pay higher prices for green goods
Sprouts	26%	middling levels of concern about the environment, green tendencies, but not completely translated to bahaviors
Grousers	24%	poor environmental behavior, lots of excuses and blames others
Basic Browns	28%	do not believe actions can make a difference, may be less educated than other groups
UK Green Consumers, National Consumer Council (1996)		
Affluent Greens	19%	committed, buy unleaded petrol and recycled products, (more likely to buy) organic products
Young Greens	17%	similar to above; mainly students and unemployed, mostly with incomes below £10,000
Recyclers and	38%	act in environmentally friendly way, Careful but do not buy green
Sceptics	26%	not convinced

Source: Policy Series for the Social and Economic Development Department, Natural Resources Institute, 2001.

8.4 The Everyday Ethical Consumption and Intention-Behavior Gap

While consumers are increasingly stating their actions can "make a difference", yet their autobiographical accounts of consumption reveal a growing level of cognitive dissonance as to whether their actions add value to company CSR activities. The reality of ethical consumer decision making is rather more complex simply distinguishing "good" products from "bad" (Adams and Raisborough, 2010). This collaborates with the assertion that while 90% of all consumers believe that ethical consideration is important for purchase decisions, only 1% of them actually consume ethically in any form of regularity (Bedford, 1999).

Knowledge of ethical issues, moral norms, expectations of ethical behaviors, attitude towards company CSR may be key indicators of consumer's intentions to patronize socially responsible organizations where actions are often reasoned to confirm external expectations (Diddi, 2014). Even where ethical intentions are authentic, internal and external factors greatly affect actual purchase decisions, translating that buying behavior can depend upon prior planning to implement the ethical intent, control over the buying experience and actual behavioral control, as well as aspects of buying environment. Moreover, consumer's ability to neutralize, i.e. justify an unethical purchase can further facilitate the intention-behavior gap (Carrington, Neville and Whitwell, 2012).

In general, consumer's level of price sensitivity (willingness to pay the ethical premium), awareness of personal experience (whether their decisions add ethical value), sense of ethical obligation (relevance to personal values), availability of

information (both of ethical alternatives and of the level of ethical contribution to such alternatives), perception of quality (willingness to forgo luxury), inertia in purchasing behavior (willingness to change brand), cynicism (general skepticism towards company's ethical claim) and guilt (sense of solidarity towards the exploited) all factor into closing the gap between ethical intent and ethical behavior (Bray, Johns and Kilburn, 2010).

8.5 Possible Link between Ethical Consumption and Eco-tourism

There is a notable shared history between ethical consumerism and sustainable tourism movement. A key milestone in initiating the ethical consumer movement was when Oxfam began purchasing handicrafts from producers in developing countries in 1942 that spread to the USA later in the decade and then was further propelled in the 1960s by an increased awareness of environmental degradation sourced to corporate activities (Nicholls and Opal, 2005). Similarly, tourism underwent shifts in history from the initial faith that tourism was a "clean industry" and mass tourism only contributing to employment and GNP (Honey, 1999) to realization upon closer inspection in the 1960s that it also contributed worldwide pollution (Mowforth and Munt, 2003).

The two, ethical consumerism and eco-tourism, also harbor common elements to their definitions, incorporating aspects such ethical purchase, boycotts, and raising general awareness. While ethical consumption feature principles greatly based on concerns for the environment, social concerns / human rights, animal welfare and economic sustainability (Tallontire, Rentsendorj and Blowfield, 2001), sustainable tourism too adopts social, environmental and economic concerns demonstrated through consumption patterns. In other words, eco-tourism can easily be defined as the ethical consumption of places, spaces, environment and culture (Hanna, 2009).

9. Analysis of the Study

Though the survey had included an extensive number of fields of responses, only those pertaining specifically to the objective of this research have been presented and analyzed here. All responses reflect consumptions made within the last twelve months.

Consumption pattern of light/power among Bangladeshi travelers

Here, Figures 9.1 and 9.2 reveal whether similarity exists in the energy consumption patterns amongst Bangladeshi travelers in their everyday lives and during travel, respectively.
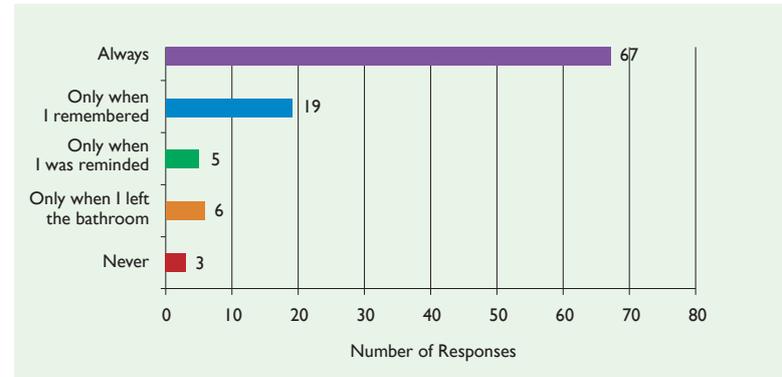

Fig. 9.1: Pattern of everyday light consumption among Bangladeshi travelers

Figure 9.1 determines level of conscientiousness in everyday energy consumptions among Bangladeshi travelers whereby the pattern of switching off lights while exiting a room (an energy conservation measure taught to most people early in life) has been selected. Frequency of switching off lights "only when reminded", "only when leaving the bathroom" (the most common preconditioned act among people) and "never" were given the least values on the scale in descending order, and "only upon self-recall" and "always" were given higher values of conscientiousness in ascending order. The investigative findings reveal that Bangladeshi travelers demonstrate a high level of preconditioning to "always" switching off lights (67% of the respondents) when exiting a room, followed by people's propensity to "self-recall" to switch off lights (19%) when leaving a room generally, making 86% of the respondents. Auto-remembering to switch off lights "only when leaving the bathroom", "needing to be reminded" and "never" turning off the lights were least prevalent among respondents, totaling only 14% of the responses.
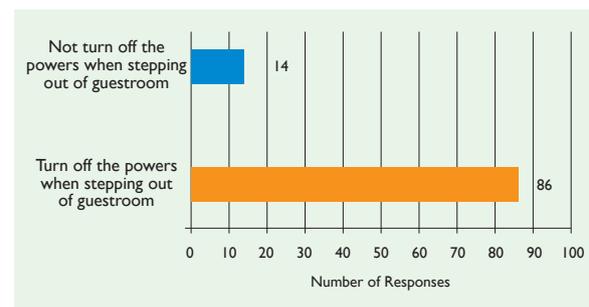

Fig. 9.2: Pattern of energy consumption among Bangladeshi travelers while traveling

Figure 9.2 directly represents the energy consumption level among Bangladeshi travelers while on tour. Taking into consideration that most hotels/resorts today use smart keys that channel all electrical power from a single source in each guestroom, it does not use a projective act such as switching off light as used in Figure 9.1. The results of Figure 9.2 illustrate 86% of Bangladeshi travelers turned off the powers when stepping out of their guest rooms and only 14% did not.

### Recycling pattern among Bangladeshi travelers

Figures 9.3 and 9.4 disclose whether any similarity exists in the recycling pattern among Bangladeshi travelers in their everyday lives and while traveling, respectively.

Fig 9.3 Everyday Recycling Pattern

Fig 9.4 Recycling Pattern during Travel
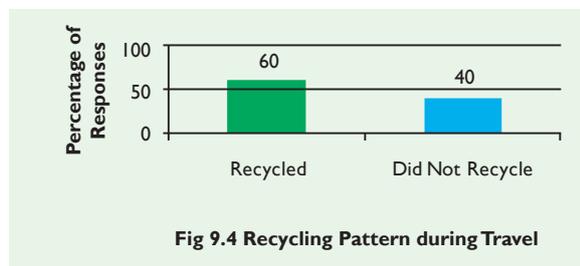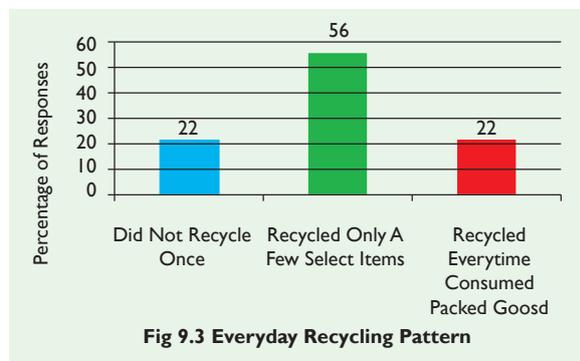
Respondents who either never recycled or always recycled equally stands at 22%, while a majority (56%) of respondents is attentive towards recycling only a few select items (figure 9.3). Figure 9.4 reveal that 60% of Bangladeshi travelers also recycle while traveling, while 40% do not. Bangladeshi travelers show a general consciousness towards recycling. What is interesting here is that all 22% Bangladeshi travelers who highlighted that they recycled all packed goods consumed also invariably selected to have recycled when traveling and all 22% respondents who selected that they never recycled also did not recycle while traveling, demonstrating a clear pattern to carry their ethical consumption tendency of everyday life into travel behaviors.

Pattern of making purchase recommendations based on company's responsible reputation

Figure 9.5 illustrates that Bangladeshi travelers are very prone to making purchase recommendations in their everyday lives (at 82%) based on an organization's responsible reputation.

Fig 9.5 Everyday purchase associated with company's responsible reputation

**Fig 9.6 Travel option associated with company's responsible reputation**
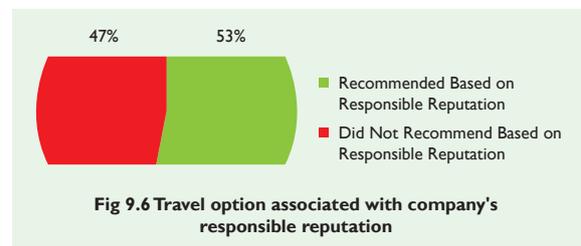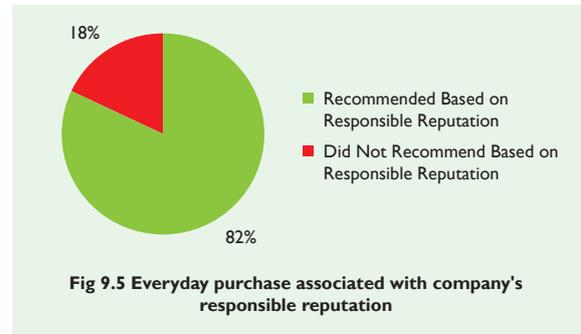
While the level of consciousness in making recommendations based on ethical factors in travel options is still higher than not-recommending, it seems Bangladeshi travelers are significantly more prone (by almost 53%) to making recommendations based on ethical factors in their everyday lives than in making recommendations for eco-tourism opportunities (figure 9.6).

Bangladeshi travelers actively seeking information on company's responsible reputation

Fig 9.7 Search for information on company's responsible reputation before everyday purchase
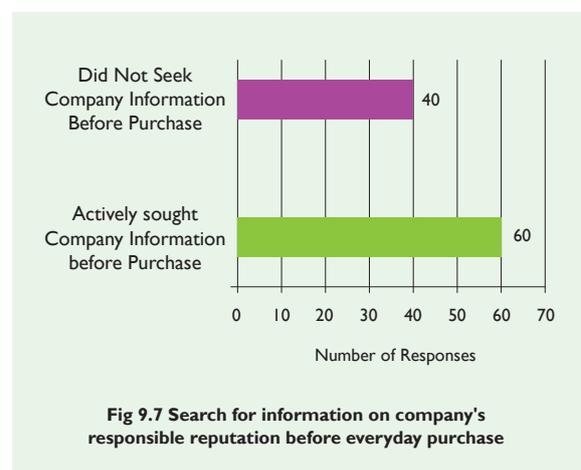
We observed about 60% Bangladeshi travelers do a background check on company responsible reputation before making everyday purchase decisions (figure 9.7).

**Fig 9.8 Search for information on company's responsible reputation while making travel plan**
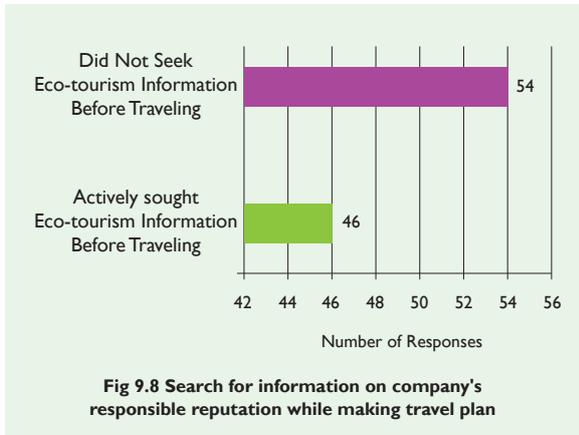
Our investigation suggests that about 46% Bangladeshi travelers sought eco-tourism information while making travel plans. However, notable here is the drop in respondents' seeking ethical information about a company during purchase decision making (figure 9.8).

Consumption practices of Bangladeshi travelers based on company responsible reputation

Figures 9.9 and 9.10 reveal whether there is any similarity in how Bangladeshi travelers respond to organization reputation for responsibility in general purchase decisions and in selecting tourism offers. Figure 9.9 illustrate that nearly three-quarters of Bangladeshi travelers chose products in the last twelve months offered by companies with responsible reputation.

Our survey findings highlight one significant suggestion. Near about 63% of Bangladeshi travelers opted not to stay at an eco-hotel in the last twelve months (figure 9.10).

Fig 9.9 Everyday purchase decisions based on company's responsible reputation

Fig 9.10 Bangladeshi travelers staying in an eco-hotel
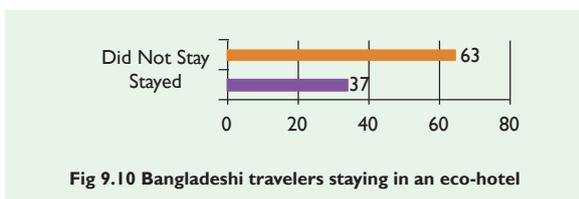
Interestingly enough, while Bangladeshi travelers illustrated a significant inclination towards making purchases in their daily lives where the producer/retailer is known for their responsible reputation, the tendency is quite reversed when it came to participating in any form eco-tourism activity or staying at an eco-hotel while traveling.

**Tendencies among Bangladeshi travelers in avoiding ethical purchases**

About 77% Bangladeshi travelers actively avoided making an ethical purchase in their everyday lives (figure 9.11). Figure 9.12 illustrates that 62% Bangladeshi travelers actively avoided an eco-tour option.

Fig 9.11 Bangladeshi travelers who avoided everyday ethical purchases

**Fig 9.12 Bangladeshi travelers who avoided eco-tour options**
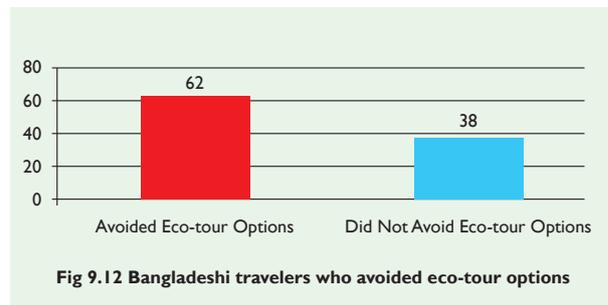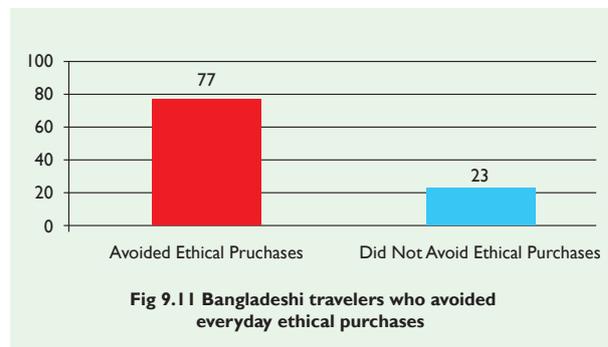
There seems to be a general similarity in the tendency among Bangladeshi travelers when it comes to avoiding ethical consumption in both their everyday lives as well as travel choices. It should be noted that this field represents entirely different conditions than in figures 9.9-10, where the focus was on determining inclination towards consuming ethically positioned products. Avoiding ethical products rather means that respondents had the opportunity to purchase a product with an ethical claim but chose not to, whereas having consumed includes possibilities that respondents may not have had opportunities to consume ethical products.

Reasons why Bangladeshi travelers avoid ethical purchases

Fig 9.13 Reasons to avoid everyday ethical purchases
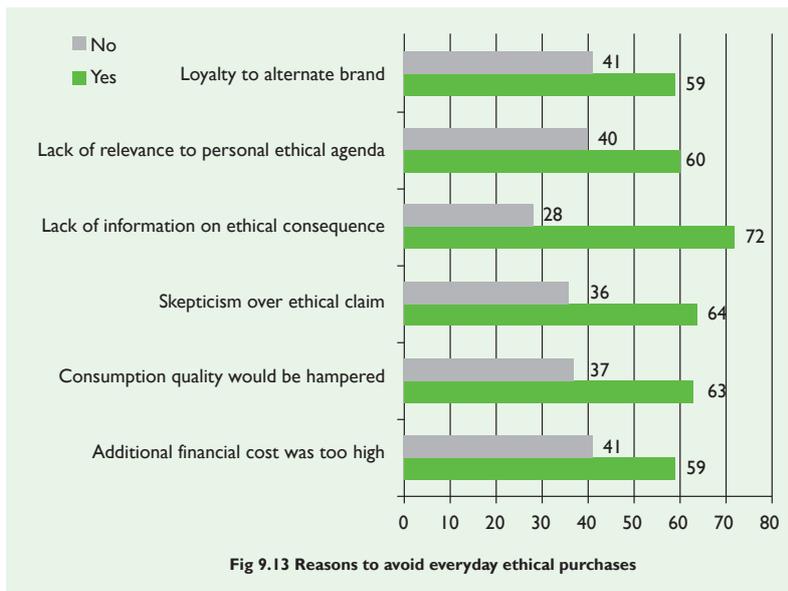
The most significant reason why Bangladeshi travelers avoided making ethical purchases in the last twelve months was lack of information on the ethical consequences of product choices (72%), followed by a general skepticism regarding the claims made by ethically positioned products (64%), belief that consumption quality would be hampered (63%), lack of relevance to individual's personal

Fig 9.14 Reasons to avoid eco-tourism
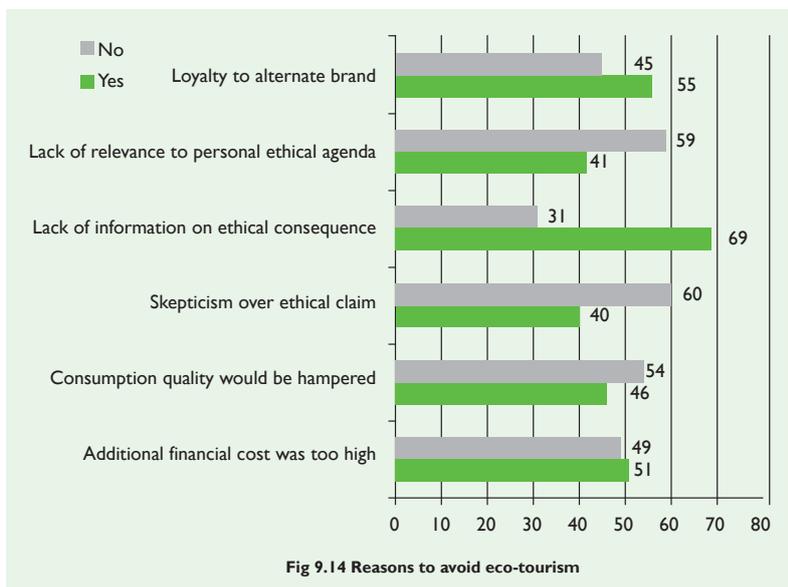
ethical agenda (60%), with finally equal selections for loyalty to alternate brand and additional financial cost deemed as being too high (59% each) (figure 9.13).

Figure 9.14 illustrates that most important reason for avoiding eco-tourism among Bangladeshi travelers is again a lack of information on the ethical consequences of tourism choices (69%), followed by loyalty to alternate brand (55%) and deeming the additional financial cost as being too high (51%). A general skepticism regarding the claims made by ethically positioned products (40%) and lack of

when set against a society where information about ethical alternatives for either everyday consumption or travel choices is lacking, people tend to opt out of making the ethical choice and hence such conditioning does not occur. As per their self-evaluation, most Bangladeshi travelers today believe themselves to be average in their concern for the environment and practice of environment conservation.

relevance to individual's personal ethical agenda (41%)and belief that consumption quality would be hampered (46%) all scored negligible responses.

In both everyday consumption and travel choices, *lack of information on the ethical* consequences appears to be top reasons for avoiding ethical consumptions. The rest of the fields were less of a factor to most respondents, with *loyalty to alternate brand being* the other factor marking the closest resemblance (apart from information lacking) between reasons for avoiding both everyday ethical consumption and eco-tourism.

Resonance and dissonance among Bangladeshi travelers related to ethical consumption

Our investigation suggests that only 48% of Bangladeshi travelers bought primarily for ethical reasons (fig. 9.15). Near about 77% Bangladeshi travelers felt guilty over an unethical purchase (fig. 9.16).
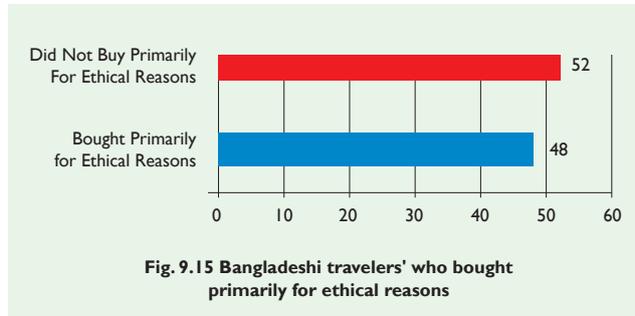

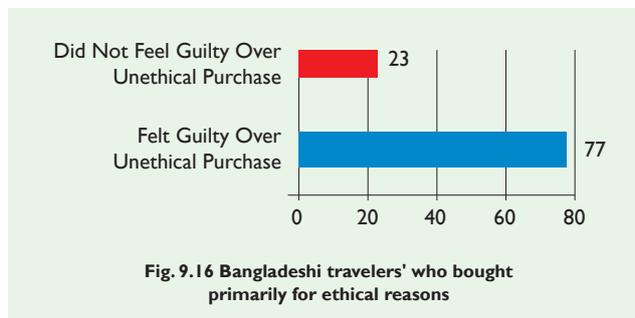**Fig. 9.15 Bangladeshi travelers' who bought primarily for ethical reasons**

Fig. 9.16 Bangladeshi travelers' who bought primarily for ethical reasons

Interestingly, although more respondents admitted that they have not bought any product for primarily ethical reasons, over three-quarters of them also acknowledged guilt over unethical purchases.

Bangladeshi travelers' Perception of Environmental Conservation

It is equally important to allow respondents to evaluate themselves on their level of concern and consciousness towards environmental conservation when it is what we are trying to ultimately surmise. Following three figures measure such elements using a scale of below average < average < above average (figures 9.17, 9.18 and 9.19). Findings here were assessed on three specific points of focus: Bangladeshi traveler's level of concern for climate change, level of environmental consciousness while traveling and level of environmental consciousness when at home.
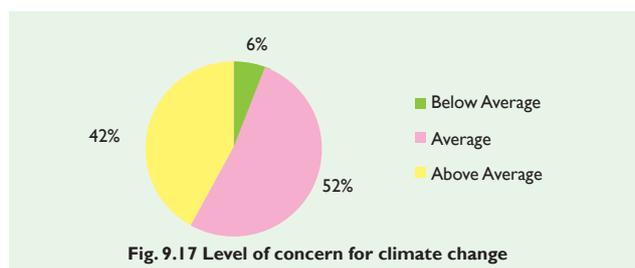

Fig. 9.17 Level of concern for climate change

Only 6% of respondents evaluated themselves as possessing below average level of concern for climate change, as opposed to the 42% of respondents who believed they possess above average level of concern and an even greater percent of respondents at 52% who consider themselves average in their concern. Therefore, the total numbers of respondents who show from average to above average level of concern for climate change is significant - 94% (figure 9.17).
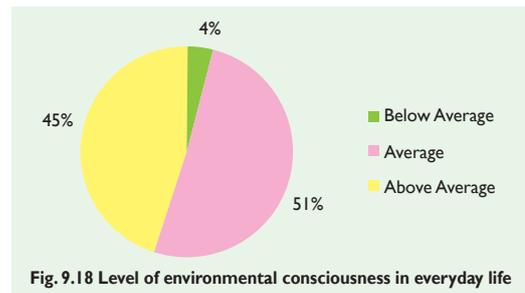

Fig. 9.18 Level of environmental consciousness in everyday life

While only 4% of respondents evaluate themselves as below average in their level of environmental consciousness while at home, a total of 96% respondents show from average to above average level of environmental consciousness, constituting of 45% at above average and 51% at average levels individually (figure 9.18).
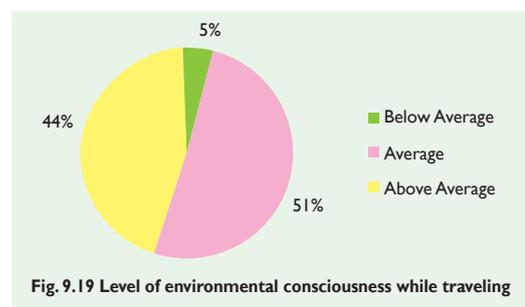

Fig. 9.19 Level of environmental consciousness while traveling

Again only 5% of respondents evaluated themselves as possessing below average level of environmental consciousness when traveling, while 44% of respondents believed they have above average level of environmental consciousness and even a greater percentage of respondents at 51% considered themselves having average level of environmental consciousness, together making up 95% of the respondents (figure 9.19).

We may surmise that, there seems to be a general greater level of overall awareness among Bangladeshi travelers inclined towards environmental issues, as defined through self-evaluation.

10. Findings of the Study

In general, the findings revealed a lot of contradictory data as to how ethics motivates the purchase decisions of Bangladeshi travelers. Whereas in many cases, great similarities existed in how Bangladeshi travelers make purchase choices in their daily lives and in planning for their travels, as per other fields of choices, they also showed great dissimilarities. Thus, the survey needed to be fortified by Focused Group Discussions (FGD) to reason greater understanding what causes such discrepancies in their purchase behavior. The FGD then allowed for more profound inference of the data gathered, as follows:

10.1 Similarities in ethical consumption behaviors between everyday life and travel period

❑ With 86% of the survey respondents selecting that they have turned off the power before stepping out of their guest rooms in the last twelve months corresponding acutely with the fact that 86% of the respondents have also shown high tendency to either always or upon self-recall switch off lights when exiting a room in their everyday consumption indicates that people's everyday ethical consumption tendencies may carry over to their tourism consumptions (figure 9.2). As explained before, turning off the light before exiting a room is one of the most basic environmental conservation learning people espouse at an early age. Therefore, this similarity in energy consumption pattern between respondents' everyday lives and travel period implies that people may be conditioned to adopt ethical practices in general much as the way we have learnt in the Pavlovian Model of Classical Conditioning.

❑ This finding is further provided foothold when we examine the similarities shown among the respondents in their selection of recycling habits in everyday as to travel consumptions. The results did demonstrate that all respondents who opted to have recycled every packed good upon consumption also opted to have recycled during travel, showing that respondents who have been general

recyclers in their everyday lives were also unequivocally recyclers on their tours (figures 9.3 and 9.4).

❑ Similarities also existed in the tendencies among the respondents towards avoiding ethical purchase in their everyday lives and travel choices. Whereas 77% respondents avoided purchase of a product positioned with an ethical claim in their everyday lives, 62% respondents avoided an eco-tour opportunity (figure 9.11 and 9.12 respectively). This generally corresponds closely with similarities in the reasons why respondents have avoided making ethical purchases in both their everyday lives and travel occasions. Topping the avoidance factor is a lack of information regarding the opportunities to contribute to ethical consequences in the fields of purchase, including eco-tourism. In the FGD, this factor was further delved into and agreed that Bangladeshis generally have lesser knowledge of what opportunities there are to contribute to ethical consequences when it comes to purchase decisions, whether on daily basis or with regards to eco-tourism. It appears that Bangladeshis in general are either not aware of the products that are positioned with an ethical claim or are not aware of how their consumption may affect the environment or society.

10.2 Dissimilarities in ethical consumption behaviors between everyday life and travel period

❑ Dissimilarities among purchase decisions between everyday ethical consumption and that in travel are more apparent. In the FGD it was discovered that people are more conscious about how they affect society and environment on a daily basis because they feel their consumptions can pile up and add against the environment / society as there the consumptions are greater. As tours do not take place as often, ethical consciousness during the planning stage is less active. Moreover, usually when planning for a tour people already set aside a greater budget and simply look for a great place to spend it on, so if the travel options can guarantee the

recreation they are looking for, they would pursue it, whether ethical or not. Again, this is indicative of the fact that people may be open to eco-tourism if the value proposition is packaged and communicated rightly to them.

❑ Bangladeshis generally believe that intention behind an ethical claim is as important as the consequences. However, in case of travel, skepticism in eco-tourism options can only arise when people are well-informed about ethical consequences of how tourism can affect environment/society, which in most cases, Bangladeshis are not conscious of. In general, it appeared that information about eco-tourism options are so lacking in Bangladesh that any of the other fields becomes mute. Simply put, what people do not know about or understand, they cannot judge.

❑ There is a general dissimilarities between people's actual pre, during and post purchase behavior when it comes to ethics. Whereas, 60% respondents said they had actively searched for information on company responsible reputation prior to making everyday purchases in the last twelve months, only 46% admitted that they searched for company responsible reputation while planning for their travel. While 74% respondents said that they did make actual purchases based on knowledge of company responsible reputation, only 37% said they participated in eco-tourism. Finally, only 53% Bangladeshi travelers recommended a travel option based on company responsible reputation whereas a significant 82% had recommended on the same criteria for everyday purchase (figure 9.7; 9.8; 9.9 and 9.10 respectively). All these activities denote very personal reflections of Bangladeshi travelers as they require more involvement of decision making whether during information search, actual purchase or post-purchase recommendations to others, as active participation in ethical consumption is most apparent here.

❑ When discussed with the FGD, it was found that as there are more opportunities to vary or play with

purchase options in the everyday than that "once-a-year" vacation, people are more open to seeking new ways of fulfilling their consumption needs. Whereas with travel, first of all general options in Bangladesh are few, either due to funding or destinations, so convenience and the need to make most out of the opportunity plays a greater part in the planning stage. Moreover, as making purchase recommendation is such a critical reflection of one's self, people are more careful about what to recommend other and are more comfortable recommending purchases with which they have personal great experiences. Since most Bangladeshis are so little aware of or experiences in eco-tourism, recommending it becomes a non-option.

10.3 Cognitive resonance and dissonance among Bangladeshi travelers

❑ There appears to be a general cognitive dissonance among Bangladeshi travelers when it came to how they think and act. Even though 52% of the respondents admitted that they never bought primarily for ethical purposes, yet 77% also conceded that they have felt guilty over an unethical purchase. To reiterate a previous interpretation of this data, this also means that 77% respondents have for sure also made unethical purchases in the last twelve months (figure 9.15 and 9.16 respectively). This is indicative of the fact that Bangladeshi travelers are aware of the negative consequences of their consumptions and still make the purchases despite their conscience. When discussed during the FGD, the group revealed that part of the reason behind this phenomenon might be due to external forces that disallow people to behave as they intend, such as lack of alternative opportunity to consume ethically or financial constraints.

11. Conclusions

We have learnt from the various research literatures that eco-tourism is first and foremost a form of consumption that revolves around an awareness of ethics. The two share distinct

resemblance in their history whereby the timelines of adopting certain values and alerts towards negative repercussions coincide. This similarity now extends to the certain behavior patterns. From results found in the most common forms of ethical consumptions, i.e. energy conservation and recycling, we can see that when taught early in life and reinforced with regularity, people may be conditioned to transfer their ethical behaviors of daily life into their travel activities.

However, when set against a society where information about ethical alternatives for either everyday consumption or travel choices is lacking, people tend to opt out of making the ethical choice and hence such conditioning does not occur. As per their self-evaluation, most Bangladeshi travelers today believe themselves to be average in their concern for the environment and practice of environment conservation. However, they are less accepting of ethical choices as they are mostly unaware of these options or feel unconvinced of the true intentions behind organizations offering these options. Hence, while they select non-ethical products to consume, Bangladeshi travelers also harbor a widespread burden of guilt.

In fact, throughout the survey findings, there appeared to be many discrepancies between respondent selections amongst various fields whereby their dissonance between belief in "the right thing to do" and what they actually do were distinct. The fact that Bangladeshi travelers do not actively seek, purchase or recommend eco-tourism opportunities though they are more comfortable in doing so for everyday products indicate that Bangladeshi travelers are ready to participate in ethical purchase behavior if opportunity is presented to them rightly. However, there is an obvious dearth of knowledge and understanding about ethical possibilities in tourism among Bangladeshi travelers.

All these findings are conclusive of the fact that preconditioning Bangladeshi travelers to opt in for eco-tourism is possible if there are enough opportunities available to establish that link between everyday ethical behaviors and travel alternatives and supported by the proper communication strategies.

12. Recommendations

Findings, here, presented and analyzed can be utilized by government policy makers as well as hotel and tourism experts who wish to develop

and implement sustainable eco-tourism programs in Bangladesh. Data represent the mind-set of the target market and is especially relevant as respondents have first-hand experience of local tourism conditions, based upon which we may use the right tools to condition Bangladeshis towards ethical conservation and protection of the environment and society when traveling.

Following recommendations may be considered for better practice of ethical consumerism and also betterment of eco-tourism sector-

- ✓ Tourism and travel companies should offer right combination of travel options highlighting ethical exposure that can guarantee the recreation they are looking for.
- ✓ Tourism companies can play vital role in offering more eco-tourism destinations with secured facilities in order to grab the attention of travelers (that shape greater part in the travel planning stage).
- ✓ Tourism companies can utilize their sales representative to personally motivate their consumers by providing sufficient information in this regard.
- ✓ Apart from using sales representative, by print advertising tourism sector of Bangladesh should inform consumers about how tourism can affect environment/society, which in most cases, Bangladeshis are not conscious of.
- ✓ Companies should make available alternative opportunity for consumers by communicating more on ethical practice with regard to consumption (using different tools of communication).

However, it should be noted that the study was limited to a small group of sample due to time, accessibility and monetary constraints. Though the findings and analysis have met the objective of the study, the survey would need to be exposed to larger number of samples in order to pose any applicable value to the targeted audience. Moreover, looking at certain discrepancies in response patterns of the samples, a question arises whether every field in the questionnaire was filled conscientiously by respondents, and if not, their motivation to do so. Hence, increasing the number of samples may also allow correcting any statistical errors in the collected data.

It is, therefore, recommended that further study

needs to be conducted using a wider pool of respondents who represent a more elaborate population frame of Bangladeshi tourists and to allow room for utilization of more significant data. For this purpose, on field random sampling may be used. Ideally, simulation exercises with sample tourists may be conducted to gauge the effectiveness of the marketing program formulated. Such studies can help us understand more thoroughly what the most efficient course of actions would be in order to ensure environmental preservation as well as economic growth through tourism activities. ✿

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