

# Challenges and Opportunities of Cultural Tourism Development: Bangladesh Perspective

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***Abstract:** Many tourists have changed their tastes and they now avoid mass visited attractions and destinations. They now like to travel to natural attractions and destinations. Human beings are one of the natural attractions. Tourists basically want to know the unknown people and their customs and traditions, explore different cultures of different areas or nations, and experience those firsthand. They want to experience other people's lives and behaviour, and enjoy their ways of interaction with others. Thus both tourists and local people come to know each other's cultures. Cultural tourism has occupied an important position among many tourists and in the tourism system of many destination countries. Many destination countries are successfully presenting their cultures to attract cultural tourists to their destinations to observe their cultures. Bangladesh, geographically and historically, takes the pride of its rich, unique and lively culture. Development of cultural tourism in Bangladesh will add a new dimension to our existing tourism system. This will ultimately help attract more visitors in Bangladesh and spread a better image of the country's tourism in the global tourist market. As such, to develop tourism, particularly cultural tourism, Bangladesh should pay due emphasis to present the cultural factors in its tourism activities and attract more tourists in the country.*

## 1. Introduction

It is evident from different statistics of both the UNWTO and the WTTC that tourism industry and its market have grown phenomenally worldwide during the last two decades. Though there are potentials and as the country has something substantially different to offer to the tourists in the form of natural scenic beauty and cultural heritage but there is no remarkable development of the tourism industry of Bangladesh (Alam, 2002). Today, culture based tourism has occupied an important position in the total tourism system of many touristic destination countries. As such, these destination countries are now giving proper emphasis on cultural tourism and a large number of tourists are also taking cultural tours to explore, observe and experience different cultures of those regions or countries. Though the intentions in choosing destinations vary significantly among different tourists, culture has

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become the central reason for many tourists to visit destinations (McKercher and Du Cros, 2003). It can thus be said that culture and tourism are associated with one another and complementary components to each other. Thus cultural tourism has emerged largely or at least partially due to the curiosity of human being to explore, observe and experience other people's cultures. Today's tourists in many cases avoid or do not want to visit the traditional mass visited and crowded destinations. They rather want to see other people; their activities, ways of lives, rituals, and experience their conventionalized customs, traditions and behaviors. Though Bangladesh is a new state, it is no doubt that the country is a home of an ancient, diversified, and rich history and civilization. Geography, history, natural beauty along with diversified cultures have marked Bangladesh as a distinct, diversified and unique region, and the Bengali-speaking people of this land as a distinct and unique community of the world (Ahmed, 2000). The country people can take pride in her rich, diversified, glorious, unique, vibrant and colourful cultures. Bangladesh has a target to attract five million foreign tourists by the year 2025. For this, the country needs and should project her glorious cultures to the overseas potential tourist markets through its promotional activities to attract more general and especially cultural tourists. Focusing cultures will add a new dimension to the existing tourism system in Bangladesh and this attempt will again help attract more visitors and thereby increase economic wellbeing of the country in general and of the local community people in particular. This will also help Bangladesh to develop and spread a different and an attractive image of our tourism in the global tourist market.

This paper has been arranged in six major sections. The first section has accommodated an introductory statement on the prospects of cultural tourism Development in Bangladesh. This section has included the research problem, literature review, research gap, objectives of the study, and rationale of the study and bridging the gap. The second section describes the research methods followed in the study. The third section presents the findings and analysis. This section deals with the conceptual aspects of cultural tourism, significance of cultural tourism, brief history of cultural heritage in Bangladesh, culture and heritage resources in Bangladesh. The fourth section has identified and explicated the challenges of cultural tourism development in Bangladesh. The fifth section has provided some suggestions and their policy implications. The sixth section has drawn the conclusion under the titles 'last thoughts'.

**The Research Problem:** Culture has occupied an important position in the total tourism arrangements of many destination countries. Cultural tourism is now popular among many of the tourists. Bangladesh tourism industry has not grown up to the expected level as yet. For the overall development of our tourism industry, Bangladesh must put proper emphasis on the cultural factors and attract more cultural tourists here. The study will highlight how to develop cultural tourism, emphasize cultural components in the tourism activities to present to the visitors, develop the cultural components of the country for tourism purposes, and

attract many tourists especially cultural tourists in the country, and thus ensure the development of our tourism industry.

**Literature Review:** Some studies have been conducted in a skin-deep manner on the cultural tourism in Bangladesh. These are not comprehensive and do not cover all the relevant issues of cultural tourism. Especially, cultural issues of tourism have been addressed less in the past researches on tourism. However, some key findings of the past studies have been presented here, Cameron (1997) claimed that places and things of the past period have important values to tourists. Every tourist wants to learn about past places, practices and things to define his/her life and to teach the new generation about the glories of those past issues. Afrose and Alam (2011) mentioned that Bangladesh has a long and an ancient history of composite cultures and every local community of the country has its own colourful cultures and diversified traditions. They also commented that cultural tourism could be an attractive and important part of our total tourism system. Rahman (2012) projected that cultural tourism throughout the world is moving towards continuous growth and diversification during recent time. Finding and evaluating the available facilities of cultural tourism in Bangladesh, he commented that the country is enriched with diversified cultural resources. Cultural value of heritage resources is more significant than their economic contribution (Porananond and Saengphueng, 2013). Bhuiyan (2015) in a newspaper article cited that culture based tourism is a potential sector for the world tourism industry of today. To him, Bangladesh has many attractive cultural resources that can satisfy tourists. But this type of tourism has not yet developed in Bangladesh due to some limitations and barriers. He recommended that Bangladesh should remove those limitations and barriers, and take necessary further pragmatic steps to develop its cultural tourism. Howlader (2016) in his online small article opined that the present tourism trend across the world is to experience and enjoy the culture, customs, traditions and rituals of a country. He also opined that Bangladesh is full of various cultural and traditional attractions. Childs' found (<https://www.mytravelresearch.com/>) that culture related tourism plays a critical role in the economy of destination countries. His survey found that 50% of the respondents conformed that their destination selection largely depends on culture. Wikipedia (Edited on August 02, 2021) mentions that cultural tourism has become popular tourism activities among the tourists worldwide. It provides local people with the opportunity to get financial benefits, strengthen their identities, improve the infrastructural facilities of destination, and preserve its heritage. It further provides tourists with the broader horizons of experience and boundaries of enjoyment. Of course cultural tourism is not out of negative impacts which should be taken carefully to control properly.

**Research Gap:** Bangladesh has failed to present its culture to the potential tourist market-segments. Though cultural tourism has grown throughout the world, little effort has been given on the research of the potentials of cultural tourism in Bangladesh. As such, the country has failed to exploit its cultural tourism resources and attractions to attract a reasonable

number of tourists here. More notably, no comprehensive research is conducted in connection with the problems and potentials of cultural tourism development in Bangladesh. As such, Bangladesh has failed, at least partially, to attract reasonable number of overseas tourists, especially cultural tourists, to visit this country and earn the desired amount of foreign currencies from this sector in Bangladesh. The present research is an attempt to highlight the potentials of, find out the ways to develop cultural tourism in Bangladesh, and thus close the research gap.

**Objectives of the Study:** The major objective of the study is to explore the potentials of cultural tourism development in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of this study are given as under:

- i) To introduce the concept ‘cultural tourism’ and evaluate the significance of cultural tourism in tourism development of destination countries in general;
- ii) to present a brief history of culture and heritage as well as cultural and heritage resources in Bangladesh;
- iii) to identify the challenges and opportunities of developing cultural tourism in Bangladesh; and
- iv) to prescribe policy guidelines that will help develop tourism in Bangladesh in general and cultural tourism in particular.

**Rationale of the Study and Bridging the Gap:** To develop tourism, Bangladesh can emphasize its cultural resources and attractions to present them to the potential tourist markets and attract them to this land of cultural treasures. For this, a comprehensive study on the present topic is the demand of the time and situation. “Gilbert (Undated: 164) mentioned that research helps provide feedback that again aids decision making. Its significance is related to knowing the necessary facts that help formulate relevant policies based on those facts, and operating the activities accordingly to bring about success in the industry concerned”. As such, this situation calls for the identification of and preparation for how to develop cultural tourism in Bangladesh, formulate appropriate policies and strategies in this connection, and thus attract more cultural tourists in this land of cultural treasures. As there has been no comprehensive study pertaining to the present area, a study on this topic is initiated to provide sufficient information to focus on how to develop cultural tourism in Bangladesh, enrich our culture, reduce the risks of cultural degradation, maintain and conserve cultural resources in Bangladesh, and formulate and implement effective policies and strategies in proper line. The study is expected to identify the reasons for not developing cultural type of tourism in our country. It will also highlight some guidelines and policy implications for the tourism operators, stakeholders, policy formulators and other concerned agencies that will help take necessary steps for the development of culture-based tourism in

Bangladesh. Besides, this study will generate sufficient interests among the future researchers for undertaking more comprehensive and conclusive research on this and other relevant issues of cultural tourism development in Bangladesh.

## **2. Research Methods and Materials**

This paper is an outcome of qualitative study. Qualitative research is an unstructured and exploratory type of study providing insights into the research problem and understanding of the solution (Malhotra and Dash, 2010). The nature of the study is exploratory one, since there has been few earlier research with no worthy, detail and comprehensive outcomes. “An exploratory research follows a research design having primary objective of providing insights into the research problem undertaken by the researcher. In this type of research, flexible and versatile research methods can be adopted, because there is no hard and fast rule or formal research protocol or procedure that must be adopted. Here, of course, researcher’s creativity plays an important role in this type of research. (Malhotra, 2010)”. The study was conducted mainly on the basis of secondary data which were accumulated from reports, text books, journal articles, online articles, and different other sources published in newspapers and magazines. Theoretical and conceptual analyses were made in light of the context and objectives of the paper. In the analytical part of the paper the researchers utilized intuitions and value judgments extensively, as and where they felt necessary.

## **3. Findings and Analysis**

**A. The Conceptual Aspects of Cultural Tourism:** The concept of culture presents the different ideas or themes or beliefs and conventionalized behaviour of the people in the society. Culture based tourism is a part of tourism activities relevant with exploring, observing and enjoying the culture of the destination areas by the tourists. Stebbins stated that cultural tourism is a special type of tourism in which tourists participate to experiences new cultures related to their aesthetic, emotional, intellectual, or psychological affairs (Islam, 2011). “For many of the tourists, travelling to explore and experience different cultures equals to cultural tourism. They will experience there different sights, spirits, sounds, tastes, and smells of an unknown culture. (McKercher and Cros, 2003)”. Academicians and tourism operators define culture-based tourism as a different type of product that is not similar to other tourism products in terms of their consumption of destination’s visible and invisible cultural heritage (Richards, 1996; hall and MacArthur, 1998; Shackley, 1998; leask and Yeoman, 1999; Mckercher and Cros, 2002). “Accordingly, culture is a broader concept including both visible and invisible components. Visible elements of culture consist of physical assets and material culture and include productive forces to support human life. Intangible elements of culture consist of intangible assets and non-material culture (Singer, 1968; McKercher and Cros, 2003; and Schiffman, 2004)”. Again, visible heritage elements

encompass museums, historical buildings, monuments, religious sites, etc., whereas invisible heritage elements include dances, dramas, music and festivals (McKercher and Cros, 2003). According to Wikipedia (2021), cultural tourism is a special type of tourism in which tourists want to learn, experience and consume the visible and invisible cultural issues of the destination. These issues are related with something which is unique and distinctive. These may be material types, intellectual resources or something creative, spiritual and emotional aspects featuring a society that encompass arts, architecture, history or culture related heritage, culinary, literature, music, creative industries, and the living cultures with lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions.’ Lastly, according to the definition given by the UNWTO (2017), “cultural tourism is related to the movement of people to satisfying their diversified needs; attempting to increasing individuals’ cultural level; and raising their knowledge and experience”.

**B. Significance of Cultural Tourism:** Different statistics published in the reports of the WTO and the WTTC show that the tourism industry is now documented as the only leading and single highest income generating industry of the world. It is also recognized as the largest trade sector of the world and is treated as the major driving force for economic and business activities in most of the destination countries (Hossain and Nazmin, 2006). Along with the development of many infrastructure, superstructure, facilities, air connectivity and ground level accessibilities, the improvement of cultural elements in a country is a way of improving cultural wealth to attract visitors. (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006). “The WTTC’s Travel & Tourism Economic Report (2021) says that ‘before the pandemic, travel and tourism (direct, indirect and induced) contributed to 10.6% of entire jobs (334 million), and 10.4% of world GDP (US\$ 9.2 trillion). In the meantime, the expenditure of all international visitors totaled to US\$ 1.7 trillion in 2019 (6.8% of entire exports, 27.4% of worldwide services exports)’.

Culture alone as a single factor can make the overall attractiveness of a tourism destination (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006). As such, tourists’ demand for cultural activities has experienced a considerable and momentum growth trend (Ritchie and InKari, 2006). “A survey conducted by the Travel Industry Association of America (TIAA) stated that 46 percent of the almost 200 million total US travelers for couple of years before 2001 included at least one culture, arts, heritage or history related activity while travelers were on a trip. The tendency to include cultural activities in the tourists’ travel package exposed the wide appeal of cultural tourism to them. (Islam, 2001)”. “Another study conducted by the TIAA and Smithsonian Magazine showed a continuous increasing attention in tourists’ choice to enjoy arts, culture, history and heritage related attractions. The research book on ‘Historic/Cultural Traveler, 2003 edition’ showed that a notable 81% of the US adult people or 118 million travelers consider themselves as historic/cultural tourists. (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006)”. Again, the average expenditure of cultural tourists is comparatively more on their travel and tours. “Cultural and heritage tourists of the USA spend \$623 on an average in comparison to

other tourists spending \$457 on an average. They also stay 5.2 nights on an average which is longer than other tourists staying 3.4 nights on an average. (TIAA and Smithsonian Magazine, 2003)". "The direct global value of this type of tourism is well over US\$ 1 billion. Out of this value the Asia Pacific region is contributing approximately US\$ 327 million. It is also estimated that the indirect value of this type of tourism is almost similar to the amount of direct value. The cultural and heritage tourism again creates 75 million jobs worldwide. (Childs, [https://www. mytravelresearch.com/](https://www.mytravelresearch.com/))".

Tourism impact is broad based and multifaceted, and it often influences many related sectors beyond the usual and directly associated sectors with tourism (Ritchie and InKari, 2006). One of those areas included is obviously culture of the people in destination regions. Other areas of impact must include the improvement of public utilities and infrastructures like road networks, connectivity, street lighting, parking areas, litter management, landscape development, water pipeline and even sewage systems development (Williams and Lawson, 2001). "Tourism also helps improve the smoothness of public transports which benefit both tourists and local people. In many of the cases tourism also develops new opportunities, amenities, facilities, and services that could not be made possible otherwise in a community. (Ritchie and InKari, 2006)". Thus, the cultural tourism development in a destination country can provide local residents with greater range of tastes and choices on social, cultural and economic benefits. As such, Mathieson and Wall (1982) commented that cultural tourism contributes to changing in tastes, choices, value structure, behavior, family interactions, life styles, security levels and many other aspects. Socio-cultural impacts are treated as impacts made on people. These impacts are basically the impacts made on the host people due to their direct and indirect interactions with tourists (Mathieson and Wall, 1982).

"The famous Great statesman Solon uttered in 550 B.C.E that 'people travel to see people'. They thus understand and appreciate other people, other countries, other lands and other culture. (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006)". Tourists find opportunities to interact with local people, learn others' culture, and project the culture and way of life to each other (Hossain and Firozzaman, 2003). The International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) is a dedicated organization that fosters tourism efforts contributing to global cooperation among countries, improving their environment quality, preserving heritage, and thus helping to build a peaceful world (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006). Tourism helps movement of millions of different people from various cultures and come together to interact among them and present their cultures, thus creating huge prospects to progress lenience, admiration and mutual appreciation (Mondal, 2011). This further promotes and strengthens cross cultural understanding and helps build relationship between people of different nations. Tourism thus directly, indirectly, silently and positively contributes to the growth of peace, harmony, solidarity and brotherhood among the people of different nations, religions and races. (Hossain and Firozzaman, 2003)."

Another significance of cultural tourism is that it helps renovate cultural heritage like buildings and grounds to cultural assets, and preserve those assets which otherwise would deteriorate slowly (Allen et al., 1988). These past cultural places, buildings, grounds and things are important to the cultural continuity of all nations and for all humanity (Cameron, 1997). As such, the most significant role of cultural tourism is perhaps to commemorating the past.

**C. Brief History of Cultural Heritage in Bangladesh:** Bangladesh is rich in cultural heritage which is acquired from the heir of long cultural legacy. Many invaders coming from different countries, races and tribes of the world had come, settled and thus injected their culture among the people on this land. Thus the local inhabitants of Bengal had acquired cultures from various background settlers like proto-Australoid, Mongoloid, Dravidian, Turku-Afghan, Aryan, and Arabian. “Another group was there who came from East African countries. For quite a long time Bengal was thus ruled by five of six Abyssinian sultans. Again, Portugese-Arkanese pirates known as Mughhs came and settled in the coastal areas of Bengal in the sixteenth and seventeenth century (Ahmed, 2000)”. At later part of eighteenth century, the British East India Company occupied Bengal and ruled for nearly about 200 years. As such, Bengal came in touch with modern Western British civilization. They again injected their culture among us. Political, economic and social changes took place in this land with far-reaching cultural impacts (Ibid). “Thus, three distinct cultural rudiments have made the culture of the Bengali people namely, (a) pre-Aryan and Hindu-Buddhist; (b) the Islamic and (c) European elements. All these elements have mixed up with the local cultural fabrics of this region contributing to its many-sided magnificence (Ibid)”. Thus, within the span of more than two thousand years of our history, many famous dynasties of rulers have ruled the country, parting their symbols in the form of splendid cities, palaces, ruins and monuments throughout the country (Noor, 2012). Their cultural elements were blended with those of indigenous origin and through this process the culture of Bengal had acquired richness and undergone transformation through the ages (Ahmed, 2000). This study revealed that tourists should be provoked, at least partly, to visit Bangladesh and experience the mix culture of this country. Tourists may also have other motives like to rest, to relax, to sightseeing, and to be with family and friends.

**D. Cultural and Heritage Resources in Bangladesh:** Cultural components in Bangladesh include music, dance, drama; paintings, art works, and crafted items; sports, fairs and festivals; lifestyle, dress and behavior; observance of national days; and distinct cuisine and culinary traditions. Bangladesh has more than 350 listed national heritage sites. The heritage objects include architecture, monuments, historic buildings, historic grounds and archaeological sites. The archaeological remains at Mahasthangarh in Bogra, Paharpur in Noagaon, and Mainamati in Comilla are the witnesses of our thousand years old civilization



flourished in this area constituting Bangladesh (Mondal, 2011). We have also innumerable historic sites, monuments, museums, galleries, art works, and artistic performances. The UNESCO is promised to protecting, developing and upholding the dignity and pride of civilization and culture (BizBD Report, 2005). The UNESCO has included two archaeological sites – Paharpur Vihara in Naogaon and Shaitgambuz Mosque in Bagerhat in its list of World Heritage Sites (Uddin, 2002). It has also listed one natural site – Sundarbans – in that list. Mainamati, Sonargaon, Lalbagh Fort, Knataji Temple and other antiquities are also waiting for the recognition from this UN body and to be included as World Heritage Sites. A group of the UNESCO representatives and French experts came and visited to some of our archaeological sites and became surprised seeing the antiquities, but also became shocked on the quality of management (Ibid). Pahela Baishakh and 21<sup>st</sup> February are secular merriment commonly participated by the people of all groups and religions (Mondal, 2011). Pahela Baishakh is the beginning day of our Bangla New year, which is observed in a colourful, glorious and festive mood in Bangladesh. It brings all ethnic Bengalis together irrespective of spiritual and geographical differences (Rahman, 2012).

A procession named ‘Mangal Shobhajatra’ is organized by the teachers and students of the Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University (bdnews24.com). The festival is considered an expression of the secular identity of the Bangladeshi people and as a way to promote unity (La bière belge inscrite au, 2016). It was declared an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2016 (The Daily Star, 2016), categorized on the representative list as a heritage of humanity (The Prothom Alo, 2016). The 21<sup>st</sup> day of February is observed with great solemnity in commemoration of the holy souls of the martyrs of the language movement in 1952 to institute the right of Bangla as one of the state language (Mondal, 2011). The day has been recognized by the UNESCO as the International Mother Language Day (Rahman, 2012). “Two important religious festivals of the Muslim people in Bangladesh include Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha. On the other hand, the largest and most important religious festival of the Hindu community in the country is Durga Puza (Mondal, 2011)”. The hilly tribes, isolated from modern society, present their primitive ways of life, traditions, customs, costumes which have also made Bangladesh a unique attraction for tourists. The musical and dance performance of the tribal people in the hilly districts of Chittagong (Chakma, Marmas, Tripuras and Murangs) and Sylhet areas (Tripuras, Manipuris, Khasis and Mandis/Garos) also present the valuable cultures of Bangladesh (Ibid).

**4. Challenges of Cultural Tourism Development in Bangladesh:** Though our culture is unique and diverse, this type of tourism has not grown in Bangladesh due to lack of policy supports along with basic facilities like accommodation, transport, restaurant, toilet facilities and inadequate marketing and promotional initiatives. Besides, tourism industry could not exploit our rich cultural heritage and present the same to the potential tourists and thus make

the country a cultural destination. The industry has also not succeeded to bridge Bangladeshi culture with the world cultures, and thereby attract a reasonable number of foreign cultural tourists here from abroad (Mondal, 2011).

Cultural components and issues are vulnerable resources. They can be degraded and easily lost in terms of their core content. As such, the development of cultural tourism involves significant risk as well. The challenge for the tourism industry is to conserve and maintain the existing living cultural value in agreement with the growth of tourism (Hong-gang and Wei, 2001). Unfortunately, most of the potentially rich historic remains and antiquities in Bangladesh are lying neglected and losing their core contents due to negligence and absence of proper care in their preservation, maintenance and management.

Tourism affects social conditions and creates serious problems among the people of host society, like change in peoples' norms and values, behavior, family interactions, lifestyles and community relations (Milman and Pizam, 1988). Some research findings have shown many of such negative social impacts on the community people arising out of tourism creating excessive dependence on tourism (Smith and Krannich, 1998). Those studies have found negative issues like an increase in prices of day-to-day common goods, services and properties (Ritchie and InKari, 2006); crowding and congestion; and undesirable practices like prostitution, gambling, wine drinking, drugs abuses and crimes (Ap, 1992 and Upchurch and Teivane, 2000).

“Offensive attitude of local people may develop toward the tourists due to apparent gap of economic conditions, behavioural differences, and appearance. Negative attitude against tourists is common in areas where there is clash of interests between hosts and visitors. Another form of anger may arise due to a feeling of poor standard of local people and unfavourable contrasts between foreign tourists and hosts. (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006)”.

Many national cultural and heritage sites are not properly documented and do not have accessibility. The nearby community is also unaware of their existence. As such, visitors feel uncomfortable to go and visit those sites (BizBD Report, 2005).

**5. Opportunities of Cultural Tourism Development in Bangladesh:** Bangladesh is rich in diversified and glorious culture. Its culture has developed through the ages. The behaviour, food, beliefs, traditions, rituals, religions, lifestyle, customs, costumes, music, dance, drama, arts, architecture, monuments and other historical resources are attractive tourism resources to both local and foreign tourists. As tourism basically serves recreational and educational purposes of tourists, the above components of Bangladesh are much interesting to serve the purposes of the tourists. The Western and other Asian countries are utilizing their cultures successfully to attract tourists. Bangladesh can also utilize its culture to attract tourist as her culture is deeply rooted to the long history, antiquities, and lifestyle of the common people.

Many invaders and outside rulers from different countries, races and tribes of the world including British rulers have injected their cultures among the indigenous people and thus a mix culture has emerged through the ages. Thus, Bangladesh has acquired richness and undergone transformation through the ages (Ahmed, 2000). This could be good reason to attract and satisfy the tourists. A group of the UNESCO representatives and French experts came and visited to some of our archaeological sites and became surprised seeing the antiquities (Uddin, 2002). What Bangladesh needs now? She needs to properly arrange our culture in the destination areas, present the same properly among the tourists, and promote tourists to visit and enjoy our authentic culture in an authentic setting.

**6. Suggestions and Policy Implications:** Many of the negative issue can be mitigated or eliminated by generating ideas through creative thoughts, formulating smart plan and adopting progressive methods (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006). Adequate measures must be taken to create connectivity, provide smooth transport, clean and comfortable accommodation, healthy restaurant, and toilet facilities around the cultural and heritage sites.

Tourists want to enjoy a wide array of tourism related activities, including cultural activities, to meet their goals. It will be a big mistake if we assume that all cultural tourists' needs are alike (McKercher and du Cros, 2003). Therefore, our tourism marketers need to assess the varying needs of the cultural tourists. This assessment of need will offer insights into which market segment(s) to target rightly. An assessment of the inventory of cultural resources should be made first. Thereafter, a planned arrangement of cultural tourism products should be made accordingly and decide which products are most suited to different target market segments.

“Culture is always vulnerable and may lose their inherent content easily. As such, in the formulation of cultural tourism policies, the vulnerability issue should be assessed properly to ensure that cultural tourism activities do not undermine or degrade those cultural resources (Hong-gang and Tao, 2001)”. We should undertake cultural tourism initiatives in such a way that helps maintain, preserve and enrich the dignity of cultural wealth of the country in future. Proper training must be initiated to train and educate the employees involved in the process of maintaining, managing and presenting the cultural resources to the tourists. Initiative should also be taken to involve those employees in the renovation, beautification and enrichment of cultural resources and heritage sites of the country.

As Bangladesh cannot afford enough resources to promote its tourism, it should pursue alternative, cheap and effective media campaigns to boost up our cultural tourism. In its promotion, Bangladesh must present its cultural tourism in a manner that will be attractive, enjoyable, entertaining, and contain an aspect of learning. The country can use cost-effective

social media. “Social media is cost-efficient having outreach to the target market as well. Each of the social outlets allows projection, description, portrayal, image and video depiction. (Noor, 2012)”. A carefully chosen social media planning and smart campaign-strategy can effectively promote our cultural tourism to the potential market around the globe. “Our cultural issues must be presented wisely, carefully and creatively. Improved techniques of architectural design and artistic presentation can help express the originality of our culture to the outside world. (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006)”.

Policy makers must understand the value of cultural tourism and take initiatives accordingly that will be appreciated by the local community people. For developing cultural tourism in Bangladesh, community must be made willing partners and be associated in the total process. Their attitude on cultural tourism and perceptions to its effects on their lives should be carefully and continuously evaluated and monitored (Ritchie and InKari, 2006).

Tourism, no doubt, has negative impacts on the destination’s economy, society and environment. The main goal of developing and promoting cultural tourism of Bangladesh should be to get the most out of its positive effects while minimize the negative effects. Both public and private authorities concerned should initiate effective planning and strategies to exploiting the positive impacts in full. They should also follow proper approaches to control the risks caused by cultural tourism operation and keep the negative impact at minimum so that cultural glory value and traditional lifestyle of the community are not threatened, contaminated or undermined. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs has taken initiatives to manage, preserve and protect the neglected archaeological sites and notable antiquities for the development and promotion of tourism in the long-run (Uddin, 2002). The Ministry makes plans for exploration and excavation, maintains proper security measures in the archaeological sites, takes protective measures of ancient monuments, establishes museums and ensures their proper management, controls antiquities as per Antiquities Act of 1968, presents our ancient cultural relics in national and international forums, and makes liaison between the UNESCO and UNDP for the preservation of the national heritage. The process of preservation, protection and maintenance should be strengthened for better legibility of those cultural resources.

“Criminal activities in destination areas and especially against visitors may result in bad will and may also create bad publicity or negative destination image among potential tourists. Hijacking, robbery, abduction, teasing and insulation of tourists create dissatisfaction among them and bad image of Bangladesh as a tourism destination country. Thus, tour operating firms should avoid destinations having such bad reputation of criminal activities against local people and foreign visitors as well (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006)”.

Since cultural tourists are the most dominant market for many destinations, it now deserves careful attention on the part of the marketers, stakeholders and other concerned authorities in Bangladesh to exploit its potentials. It will be effective for Bangladesh to combine cultural arrangements with recreational activities to attract handful number of tourists initially.

**7. Last Thoughts:** Experts view that Bangladesh has got enough potentials to develop its tourism, especially cultural tourism. For this, proper plans and strategies need to be formulated to renovate, sharpen, beautify and promote our cultural resources and heritage sites. Proper facilities, amenities and services should be provided at different cultural destinations and sites in Bangladesh. Through the years, the Bangladesh government, especially H.E. Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government took several initiatives for the overall development of our tourism industry, but some of those initial initiatives were rather modest in nature. Of course, the present government has done a lot for the country's tourism development. It has established the much needed 'Bangladesh Tourism Board', revised the tourism policy in 2010, and enacted different tourism laws. These laws include Bangladesh Environment Protect Act of 1995, Eco Tourism Development and Management Plan of 2004, amendment of Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act in 2010, commencement of Bangladesh Tourism Board Law in 2010, enactment of Bangladesh Tourism Protected Area and Exclusive Tourism Law in 2010, passing of Wildlife Conservation and Security Act in 2012, taking of Bangladesh Biodiversity Act in 2017, and enactment of Law for Tour Operators and Tourism Industry in 2021. Many infrastructural development projects have also been undertaken by the present government. These need to start functioning meaningfully without any delay. Cultural tourism development policy should be formulated without any delay and that should be implemented phase by phase, but at the earliest convenience. Much has to be done both by the private and public sectors with utmost care and sincerity to give the industry a real sense of direction. These may include the building of right kind of infrastructure and superstructure, training human resources for tourism sector, offering hygienic and quality tourism products and services, arrangement of improved facilities (theme park, casino, gaming, dance, drama, musical performance, and rescue team) at the destinations, building better connectivity for easy movement, providing smooth transport vehicles, and ensuring strong safety and security measures through out the country. The earliest we can address the constraints and limitations mentioned above, the best it will be likely for Bangladesh tourism industry. As a result, our tourism industry would be able to put itself on the world map of 'cultural tourism'.

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