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Abstract

Cultural Tourism is experiencing continuous expansion and diversification in recent years. It has become a popular and attractive sector to impart mental recreation and as an instrument for education. Bangladesh is a country of diversified culture enriched with cultural resources. This paper attempts to review the available facilities of cultural tourism, the history, role of tourism on the economy and society in general in Bangladesh. Also, the paper identifies the opportunities and challenges the country may face to flourish this industry. Finally, recommendations are made for the actions to be undertaken to compete with global tourism market.

Key words: Archeological Resources, Cultural Tourism, Festivals, Heritage, Religious Resources.

Introduction

The term cultural tourism emerges from the terms culture and tourism. The term culture relates to people's interactions with one another, that these interactions result in learning and further that learning can be accumulated and passed on. Throughout the evolutionary process people are observing different distinct society and culture. Human being gets attracted on founding differences by nature. This mortal nature is the main motive for travelling from one place to places throughout the world which emerges the term tourism in general. For many tourists, travelling to experience different cultures equates to cultural tourism. For these travelers, encountering different cultures is synonymous with a cultural tourism experience. They consume the different sights, sounds, tastes and smells of an unfamiliar culture. On the other hand, academics and tourism marketers define cultural tourism as a discrete product category that is differentiated from other tourism activities or attractions by consumption of a destination's tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Richards, 1996; Hall and MacArthur, 1998; Leask and Yeoman, 1999). A growing body of literature indicates that some people are more highly motivated to participate in cultural tourism than others.

Cultural tourism has a long history in the era of human being. By nature people have interest in the pursuits of others. Ancient people sought for souvenirs from different places which didn't evolve in a day. Pearce (1982) noted that during Roman Empire people had the tendency of collecting souvenirs. This tendency somewhat declined in the later part of the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, the attitude toward travelling had not changed. In the 1300s people started traveling for specific purpose (Dickman, 1989). At that time the travelling was mainly for religious purpose, which brings spiritual significance to the people (Pearce, 1982). But now people also go on travelling in the quest of learning and self-development. In the late 1600s the wealthy young men started

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travelling European continent to visit the museums, learn languages, and acquire some of the finer skills, such as the painting and music. (Dickman, 1989). Later the hunger for acquiring knowledge is bounded by the wealthy people.

Objectives and Methodology

Over time, an ever increasing number of destinations have opened up and invested in tourism development, turning modern tourism into a key driver of socio-economic progress through the creation of jobs and enterprises, infrastructure development and the export revenues earned. Taking this into consideration this paper attempts to meet the following objectives:

- To define the term cultural tourism from different perspectives,
- To identify the sources of impacts of cultural tourism both in economy and society,
- To find out the major cultural tourism resources available in Bangladesh.
- To evaluate the opportunities, challenges of this industry in Bangladesh and its prospects.

In order to fulfill the objectives this paper mainly relies on secondary data available in different forms. Mainly books, articles from different journals, websites, reports, publications of different associations, etc., are the sources of data.

Literature Review

The research studies conducted on cultural tourism throughout the world suggest that a good number of tourists seek for cultural experiences, observe the differences between cultures, the distinctness of the culture, etc., These are basically not based on natural beauty. World Tourism Organization suggests that more than 40% of all international tourists are 'cultural tourists' (Richards, 1996)

Defining cultural tourism becomes more complex by the fact that cultural tourism is generally held to comprise various forms of tourism, such as heritage tourism, historical tourism and ethnic tourism. Heritage tourism can be described as an encounter with or an experience of being part of the history of a place through visiting historic sites, monuments, and landscapes. Historical tourism is a form of heritage tourism: its main focus is to stress the experiences of the past. Ethnic tourism entails some form of first-hand, face-to-face experience with local people, either by visiting their land or observing or participating in local customs, rituals and other traditional activities (Harron and Weiler 1992).

It is clear that defining cultural tourism and cultural tourists is complex because it can mean different things to different people (McKercher and Du Cros, 2003). The definition of cultural tourism is proposed by different researchers based on their respective area of interest. Some researchers define cultural tourism focusing on visitor's point of view, i.e., their experience, activities, etc. World Tourism Organization defines cultural tourism as movement of persons to satisfy the human need for diversity, tending to raise the cultural level of the individual and giving rise to new knowledge, experience and encounters" (WTO, 1985). Again The United Nations and the World Tourism Organization define cultural tourism as comprising: "the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes". (WTO, 1994).

Another perspective of defining cultural tourism is the supplier point of view. Here cultural tourism is defined based on tourists' destination and its distinct characteristics. Hughes (1996) truly suggested that a typology of cultural tourism

could be built on a matrix of cultural intent—primary, incidental, or accidental; and the nature of cultural interest—specific or non-specific. According to Australian office of National Tourism, cultural tourism focuses on the culture of a destination - the lifestyle, heritage, arts, industries and leisure pursuits of the local population (Office of National Tourism 'Fact Sheet No 10 Cultural Tourism', 1997). After the analysis of both the perspective of defining cultural tourism it can be stated that cultural tourism includes all the market offerings truly and reliably reflect the culture of the destination (e.g. lifestyle, heritage and art) and visitors who have the thirst of having knowledge of that culture.

Impact of Cultural Tourism

For being competent in tourism industry, it is important to make the destination unique and distinctive. The role of international tourism in generating economic benefits has long been recognized in many developing countries (Jenkins, 1991; WTO, 1994). Nowadays Government also widened their focus on economic benefits to encompass environmental and societal concerns (Erbes, 1973: p-1).

The impact of cultural tourism has twofold aspects. Firstly, it brings impacts on the economy and secondly, on the social life of a country. In the 20th century's competitive global tourism market, culture and tourism were two of the major growth industries. The recent OECD report on The Impact of Culture on Tourism (2009) noted, cultural tourism accounted for almost 360 million international tourism trips in 2007, or 40% of global tourism. In value terms, the contribution of cultural tourism is even greater, since cultural tourists are estimated to spend as much as one third more on average than other tourists (Richards 2007).

Foreign Exchange: The overall export income generated by inbound tourism, including passenger transport over the world exceeded US\$ 1 trillion in 2010, or close to US\$ 3 billion a day. Tourism exports account for as much as 30% of the world's exports of commercial services and 6% of overall exports of goods and services. Different cultural attraction can retain the visitors overnight and can accelerate the growth of earning foreign currency. An important indicator of the role of international tourism is its generation of foreign exchange earnings. It is also estimated that in 2010, international tourism generated US\$ 919 billion (€ 693 billion) in export earnings¹.

GDP: Based on the data available, tourism's contribution to worldwide gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated at some 5%. For advanced, diversified economies, the contribution of tourism to GDP ranges from approximately 2% for countries where tourism is a comparatively small sector, to over 10% for countries where tourism is an important pillar of the economy (WTO, 2011). In Australia cultural tourism accounted for \$8.4 billion of total GDP in 2000/01. This represented 1.3 per cent of Australia's total GDP and 27.7 per cent of tourism's contribution to GDP when averaged over the four years². According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP is expected to be US\$1,850.0 billion (2.8 percent of total GDP) in 2011. After growth of just 0.5 percent in 2010, travel and tourism economy GDP is likely to grow by 3.2 percent in 2011³.

Employment: Tourism is a labor intensive industry and this feature has the potential to create enormous employment opportunities for the population of developing countries (Ahmed and Josiam, 1996). It is estimated that tourism's contribution to

1. <http://unwto.org/en/content/why-tourism>

2. <http://www.ret.gov.au/tourism/Documents/tra/Snapshots%20and%20Factsheets/Economic%20Impact%20of%20Cultural%20Tourists%20in%20Australia.pdf> Bureau of Tourism Research estimates, based on data provided in the ABS Cat No 5249.0.2002 and unpublished ATSA data received from the ABS.

3. World Travel and Tourism Council

employment tends to be slightly higher relatively and is estimated in the order of 6-7% of the overall number of jobs worldwide (direct and indirect) (<http://unwto.org/en/content/why-tourism>). In Australia about 6.0 per cent of total persons in the economy in 2000/01 were employed in cultural tourism sector. There were an estimated 142 200 persons in cultural tourism generated employment in 2000/01.

Contribution to Government Revenue: The government can receive revenues from the tourism sector in the form of direct and indirect contribution. Direct contributions are generated by taxes on incomes from tourism employment and tourism businesses, and by direct levies on tourists such as departure taxes. Indirect contributions are those originated from taxes and duties levied on goods and services supplied to tourists. The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates that travel and tourism's direct, indirect, and personal tax contribution worldwide was over US\$ 800 billion in 1998 - a figure it expects to double by 2010. (Source: WTTC/Michigan State University Tax Policy Center). ATA also reports that every US\$1 spent in business travel results in US\$12.50 in incremental revenue throughout the economy.^{ATA}

Social Impact: Cultural tourism gives the destination an identity; it helps foster a sense of community pride. This pride is very much related to economic prosperity and it is also an element in preserving and enhancing national and local pride and spirit. Host country can use this interaction as a tool for raising awareness about local issues and needs. Since cultural tourism creates identity for a country successful branding of local product, heritage, achievement can enhance this identity positively to the visitor of both local and international. Different cultural celebration, heritage and other characteristics helps to build positive image for a country. This positive image helps to preserve cultural and historical heritage; encourage the revival of traditions and restorations of sites and monuments; indigenous cultures, cultural arts, crafts. Etc.

Increase Price Level: An important negative impact of tourism is the increase in the price level. Due to tourism destination the land price of that region is very high, increase in the land price increase the rent of housing. Several tourism impact research studies reflect similar scenario (Diagne, 2004; Archer, Cooper and Ruhanen, 2005; Akama and Kieti, 2007). Tourism demands for basic services and goods from tourists which may cause price hikes that negatively affect the natives as their income do not increase proportionately.

Increased Income Disparity: Harrison (1992) argues that benefits of tourism development in the LDCs are mostly enjoyed by the local elites and the majority of the population only receives the minimal benefits. Because increase in the price level, high land price, high rent reflects in the income of local people.

Leakages: Leakages in tourism occur when revenues arising from tourism-related economic activities in destination countries are not available for (re-)investment or consumption of goods and services in the same countries. A study of tourism 'leakage' in Thailand estimated that 70% of all money spent by tourists ended up leaving Thailand Estimates for other Third World countries range from 80% in the Caribbean to 40% in India.

Cultural Tourism and Bangladesh

Cultural tourism is a tool of bringing people together from different cultures. This interaction and ways of life can signify gigantic opportunity to advance tolerance, respect and mutual understanding. Cultural Tourism brings peace and cooperation among nations, and builds bridges among the people of different cultural from different countries. While speaking to more than 60 tourism ministers from Muslim countries in Baku, Azerbaijan in September 2006, Francesco Frangialli, the then UNWTO secretary-general, called on world leaders for strengthening tourism links to promote cross-cultural understanding, and to use the power of tourism to build new global gesture of understanding between states.

Bangladesh is a country of multi rulers including the Sultans, Nababs, Kings and British. Rulers from different regions, religions, cultures have ruled Bangladesh for years. These diversifications exist in the culture of this country. The culture of this country is enriched by its ancient animist, and roots of different religion. Weaving, pottery and terracotta sculpture are some of the earliest forms of artistic expression. Folk theatre is common at the village level and usually takes place during harvest time or at melas (village fairs).

Archeological Attractions: Bangladesh is a country of ancient terrain full of historical and heritage attractions. During its more than two thousand years of eventful history, many illustrious kings and sultans have ruled and disappeared and have left their marks in the shape of magnificent cities as well as monuments throughout the country (Haque, 2003). Different historical places, archaeological sites, monuments, and other analogous objects pictographs the tradition and civilization of this area. The distinguished historical places include Sonargaon, Bahadur Shah Park, Lalbagh Fort, National Memorial, Central Shahid Minar, World War II Cemetery (graveyard of 700 soldiers of World war II), Gandhi Monastery at Joyag in Chatkhil (build in memory of the historical visit of Mahatma Gandhi, 1946-47), Suhrawardy Uddyan (Oath speech for liberation was given from here), and Mulib Nagar at Meherpur.

During the ruling period of Pala and Deva Kings several monasteries sprang up all over the country (Haque, 2003). The important ones include Buddhist relics of Paharpur, Mahasthangarh and Mainamati. Somapura Mahavihara, built by Pala king Dharmapala in the eighth century at Paharpur, is among the best known Buddhist viharas in the Indian subcontinent and is one of the most important archaeological sites in Bangladesh. It was an important intellectual centre for Buddhists, Jains and Hindus alike.

The capital city Dhaka predominantly was a city of the Mughals. In hundred years of their vigorous rule, successive Governors and Princely Viceroys who ruled the province, adorned it with many noble monuments in the shape of magnificent palaces, mosques, tombs, fortifications and 'katras' often surrounded with beautifully laid out gardens and pavilions (Haque, 2003). The finest specimen of the Mughal period is the Aurangabad Fort, commonly known as Lalbagh Fort which indeed represents the unfulfilled dream of a Mughal Prince. Ahsan Manzil was the official residential palace and seat of the Dhaka Nawab Family. It is constructed in the Indo-Saracenic Revival architecture. To preserve the cultural and history of the area, the palace became the Bangladesh National Museum on 20 September 1992.

Also Seven-domed Mosque at Dhaka. Star Mosque and Husaini Dalan at Dhaka, Dhakeshwari Temple at Dhaka, American Church at Dhaka, Shrine of Bayezid Bostami (R) at Chittagong, Shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (R) at Sylhet, Shrine of Hazrat Sha Paran (R) at Sylhet, Buddhist Temple at Ramu, Adinath temple at Moheshkhali are archaeological sites and monuments with religious significance.

Khan Jahan Ali, the earliest torch bearer of Islam in the south who laid the nucleus of an affluent city during the reign of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah (1442-59) adorned with numerous mosques, tanks, roads and other public buildings, the spectacular ruins of which are focused around the most imposing and largest multi-domed mosque in Bangladesh, known as the Shait-Gumbad Mosque. Kantanagar temple near Dinajpur town is a late medieval temple of Bangladesh and metaphorical of that time.

Sonargaon, the seat of Deva Dynasty until the 13th century is considered as the oldest capital of Bangladesh. From then onward till the advent of the Mughals, Sonargaon was the subsidiary capital of the Sultanate of Bengal. Among the ancient monuments still intact is the Tomb of Sultan Ghiasuddin (1399-1409 AD) the shrines of Panjpirs and Shah Abdul Alla and a beautiful mosque in Goidal village.

Cultural Attractions: Bangladesh is heir to a rich cultural legacy (Haque, 2003) and traditions. History and legends are in timely interwoven with the landmass together with its distinct traditions and cultural traits (Rahman, 2004). The primeval culture of Bangladesh, the customs of its people, the traditions, religious values, etc. embodied the means for cultural tourism. For this reason travelling to Bangladesh is a journey through ancient cultures, magnificent traditions, and modern civilization. Along with the traditions Bangladesh is rich in dances, arts and music featuring both traditional Bengali artists and various hill tribes. A variety of music (classical, folk & modern), dances (classical, tribal and Middle Eastern traits), films (short/long) and dramas (open air and indoor stage) have got a deep foundation in Bangladesh and are considered as parts of the people's life. The traditional program in the culture of Bangladesh includes jatra, pala gan, kobigan, jarigan, gambhira gan, gazir gan and alkap gan. This culture is rich with variety of folk songs like baul, marfati, murshidi and bhatiali songs. Narrative plays like Laila-Majnu, Yusuf-Zulekha and Radha-Krishna etc. The music and dances of the ethnic minority groups like Chakma, Marmas, Tripuras and Murangs in three hill districts of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari and of Tripuras, Manipuris, Khasis and Mandis (Garos) in Sylhet region are also important part Bangladeshi cultures.

Religious Attractions: Today, Bangladesh has got the status of containing the second highest number of Muslim people (after Indonesia) in the world. Out of the population in Bangladesh, about 86.6% are Muslims, 12.1% are Hindus, 0.6% are Buddhists, 0.4% are Christians and the rest 0.3% are other tribes. People of all religions live here with full freedom and perfect harmony. The easy relationships that appear to prevail among the different religious groups and the participation in each other's religious festivals are pleasant aspects of life in Bangladesh (Pannell Kerr Forster Associates, 1988). Religious Tourism can attract lot of Muslim tourists from around the world. People from different religions live in relative harmony in Bangladesh. They have different cultures and different festival throughout the years including Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Azha, Eid-e-Miladunabi, Shab-e-Barat, Shab-e-Kadre, Muharram etc. In Bangladesh Hinduism culture have various festivals like, Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Sarashati Puja etc.

Tribal Tourism: The colourful lifestyles of tribal can be an exceptional source of cultural tourism offerings for the tourists. The tribal of Bangladesh have their own unique lifestyle and distinctive nature of culture in their way of life. They are encapsulated from modern civilization of the plain land. Tribal people live in bamboo huts raised on platform or on tree-tops, cultivate on the slopes of high hills, rear pigs, chickens and cattle; smoke with queer looking like bamboo-made hukkah, and follow their own age-old religion, culture, customs and traditions (Hossain, 1992). Self reliance, primitiveness, and simplicity are the common features in the way of life of the tribal people. With their distinctive cultural entities the tribal people, who account for less than one percent of the total population have ornamented the nation adding color, shade, and variety (Joy, 1987). The unique custom and costumes of tribal families indicate the ancient traditions and culture of heritage. Their traditions, customs, costumes and cultural heritages are important fascinating objects of pleasure for tourists. The mixture of diverse races of the pre Aryan racial including primitive tribes (like the Kols, the Sabaras, the Pulindars, the Hadi, the Dom, the Chandala and others), the ProtoAustroloid, the Dravidians, the Mongoloids (like the Chakmas and others), the Aryans and the aborigines of Bengal had left their identity marks on the cultural identity of the people and now represents distinctive racial features for the country.

Fair and Festival Attractions: The culture of Bangladesh is full of fair and festivals which become an essential part in the life of people in Bangladesh. These are the principal means of enjoying pleasure, getting companion of others, and exchanging greetings with each other. These attractions include Bashanto Boron, Pahela Baishakh, International Mother Language and Martyrs' Day, Independence Day, Victory Day, Shab-e-Barat, Shab-e-Kadre, Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Azha, Eid-e-Miladunnabi, Biswa Istim, Durga Puza, Sharashwati Puza, Christmas Day, Buddha Purnima, etc. Festival tourism could be Bangladesh's Unique Selling Propositions (USP) particularly to the inbound tourists.

Pahela Falgun, The first day of spring is celebrated as the Bashanto Baron in Bangladesh. On this day the country is decorated with bashonti color. Both male and female specially students used to wear marigold and tuberose, and clad in yellow, orange and red sarees, and punjabis to greet the spring.

Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year, is celebrated in a festive manner. It connects all ethnic Bengalis irrespective of religious and regional differences. On this very special day of Bangali, they enjoy this festival in a very special manner. Business closes all dues and open new 'Halkhata'. People of different ages are colored with the summer. Boishakhi fairs are arranged in many parts of the country.

Shaheed Dibash: The 21st day of February (EKUSHEY FEBRUARY) is being officially observed as the Shaheed Dibash (Martyrs' Day). This event was the first significant victory of the Bangalis against attempts of cultural subversion by the Pakistani ruling clique. The day has also been accorded recognition by the UNESCO as the INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY. The Shaheed Day is observed with great solemnity, starting from midnight when streams of people arrive and climb the steps of the Central SHAHEED MINAR (it has replicas all over the country) to lay floral wreaths and chant the song of immortal Ekushey "*Amar bhaiyer raktey rangano Ekushey February, Ami ki bhulitey pari*" (How can I forget the 21st February which is daubed with my brothers' blood). A month-long book fair is also held on the occasion at the premises of BANGLA ACADEMY.

Independence Day: The independence of Bangladesh was declared on 26 March 1971 following the crackdown by the Pakistani army on the night of 25 March 1971. Since then, the day has been observed as the Independence Day. On the occasion the NATIONAL FLAG is hoisted atop all public buildings, and the streets and houses are draped in banners and festoons. In the morning, the school children take part in parade, games and sports, and in the evening, cultural and film shows are presented and the streets are illuminated. Special diet is served in hospitals, orphanages and prisons.

Bijoy Dibash: Commemorates the day in 1971 (16 December) when ninety thousand troops of the Pakistan occupation army surrendered to the allied forces of Bangladesh and India at Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka. The day is observed with due solemnity and nationalistic fervor. The first ray of the morning is heralded with a 31 gun-salute. In capital Dhaka, there is usually a ceremonial military parade in which all uniformed services are represented. Hundreds of thousands of people gather at the National Parade Square to watch this parade. Floral wreaths are laid at the Jatiya Smriti Saudha (National Memorial Monument) at Savar near Dhaka in memory of those who sacrificed their lives for the liberation of the country.

Bengali wedding typically arranged by Ghotoks (matchmakers) and are traditionally in five parts including the bride and groom's Mehendi Shondha, the bride's Gaye Holud, the groom's Gaye Holud, the Beeya, and the Bou Bhaat.

Opportunities and Challenges

Globalization has already expanded the total tourism market which creates an opportunity for Bangladesh to improve its economy through the development of the tourism sector. Bangladesh is a tourist destination with full of natural, cultural, religious, tribal and festival and many other resources. In different times researchers have observed that Bangladesh has plenty of opportunity for developing cultural tourism. It has glowing history from the ancient times till to date which enrich the content of this culture. Tourists can observe harmony, prevailing among the different religious people in Bangladesh including Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jains and others. Festivals of both different religion and its own cultures make this country colorful throughout the year. The people of Bangladesh are famous for their hospitality, cordial behavior and cooperation. The tribal of this country grew special attention to the tourists for their unique and distinctive way of living, customs, costumes, festivals etc.

Along with the potentials of cultural tourism, Bangladesh is also experiencing some common challenges related to this sector. At the very outset different studies observed that the sites which could be an attraction for the tourists are not properly explored and managed. The country is facing poor level of investment required to overall infrastructural development. Poor service quality received from different government agencies, the poor transportation system prevails throughout the country, inadequate private initiatives for undertaking attractive tourist packages for both domestic and international tourists, political instability, language barrier, image crisis, absence of proper tourism policy, collision between tribal and bangalis, meager role of media in favor of cultural tourism all hinders the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Bangladesh.

Recommendations

In taking the above analyses and discussions into consideration, the current study would like make some recommendations for the improvement and

development of cultural tourism sector in Bangladesh. Both the government agencies and private initiatives are expected to explore and encourage reducing the existing barriers. It is expected to increase the number of international airport, good transportation system in air, rail, and road and river ways. Since Bangladesh is facing image crisis, initiatives should be taken to create positive image of Bangladesh. The people of Bangladesh, who are residing within the national boundary as well as outside the border, should act as the ambassadors of this country. Anything that create negative image like poor security system, embarrassing legal formalities to enter this country, harassment of tourists should be eradicated. Again anything that help foster and flourish the cultural tourism should be appreciated and encouraged to continue which may include full-fledged tourism training institutes to produce skilled professionals, tourism facilities and services including accommodation, food and beverage, supermarkets should be established and that should maintain the international standards. Tourist fair can be arranged in an adequate number in home and abroad to attract the tourist of both domestic and international. Government should take proper initiative to concentrate on cultural tourism resources and formulate plan for development by growing interest to the private initiatives.

Conclusion

In the present time tourism come into the light as a competitive and promising sector. This sector is contributing a great deal to the economy of different country. The concept of cultural tourism becomes popular in different countries especially in Australia. In this sector Bangladesh is very much promising and it can contribute to the local economy. In this service oriented industry the concentrated and coordinated efforts from different agencies of both government and private on the development of cultural tourism market offers, improving the service quality of tourism related services, development of professionally skilled human resources, create a positive brand image of the country are required. If all these measures, marketing strategies along with policy measures are coordinated, tourism sector in Bangladesh would yield a positive result and contribute in GDP along with readymade garments and others.

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