

BUILDING A HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BLUEPRINT FOR BANGLADESH: AN EXPLORATIVE INVESTIGATION

Ariful Islam^{1*}, Sazali Abd Wahab²

¹Ph.D. Candidate at Putra Business School (AACSB), Malaysia; ²Professor at Putra Business School (AACSB), Malaysia.

Email: ¹farhan_ctg2012@yahoo.com, ²sazali@putrabs.edu.my

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: Bangladesh is blessed with all the possibility to be an imperative heritage destination on global premises, whereas there are a number of obstacles that can obstruct the effective development of the heritage tourism segment in the country. As a result, the present study targets to explore major issues that are critical in the development process of heritage tourism.

Methodology: The study has organised 25 semi-structured interview procedures for data collection. The respondents are judgementally selected on the basis of their frequent tourism activities.

Findings: The analysis has revealed some critical issues related to governance, institutional requirements, integration, and resource allocation.

Application: The findings of the study can possibly help the authority to formulate a suitable strategy regarding the development of heritage tourism in Bangladesh. The outcomes of the study also serve a direction on how better tourist experience can be configured in the country's heritage destinations.

Novelty/Originality of the study: The explorative nature of the investigation has the benefit of accumulating useful and insightful info about heritage tourism issues in Bangladesh comparing to what can obtain through quantitative testings. It is also one of the few attempts to identify and categorise the valuable heritage tourism products inside Bangladesh.

Keywords: Government Policies, Heritage Product, Religious Products, Strategic Planning.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of Heritage tourism can be reflected as visiting historical and archaeological destinations with the intention of acquiring enjoyable experiences. Here, heritage separates a visiting location or area and guarantees a remarkable experience exuding from the present exceptional features of a destination. The heritage tourism actually developed as both vital economic and marketing instruments when looking forward to competitive gain in the tourism business industry (Tham, 2012). In fact, heritage advanced in the tourism industry offers an enjoyable involvement to the visitors and, consequently, improves the value of the target destination. However, history unwinds that Bangladesh has been the support of civilisation, a focal point of social dispersion, since the beginning of the history of humankind. This small South Asian country with important heritage destinations holds a great probability to emerge as an important heritage destination in global premises (Hasan and Jobaid, 2014) whereas there are very few studies actually look into the issue deeply and guide through a strategic development outline for this segment (Bhuiyan and Darda, 2019; Jahan, 2019).

In reality, there are some concerns that can hinder successful heritage tourism development initiatives in Bangladesh. So it is important to identify the present status and barriers of the country's heritage tourism sector in order to formulate a suitable promotion or development strategy for attracting domestic and international tourists. **To address the aforesaid necessity, the target of this explorative study is set to efficiently develop and promote heritage tourism in Bangladesh by investigating underlying concerns so that a greater quality visitor experience can be ensured.**

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is generally a communal, cultural, and economic phenomenon that involves the movement of individuals to different locations or countries outside their usual premises for personal or professional requirements. Tourism does not only reflect traveling to a specific target area but also embraces all activities undertaken during the stay (Assaf and Dwyer, 2013). It also includes the option of day visit and excursion (Alemneh, 2016). In fact, the concept of tourism is a relaxation action which includes a discretionary utilisation of time and cash, and entertainment is regularly the principal reason for participation in this industry. As per Malaysian tourism promotion board (2004) the concept of tourism can be divided into several categories, such as traveling in holidays, VFR (visiting friends and relatives), traveling for business, traveling for medical purposes, conference, shopping, official travel, traveling for academic purposes, sports and so on. In fact, due to the rapid expansion of the globalisation concept, tourism has been playing a contributing role in the global economic outline and become a basic source of foreign revenues for many regions (Giap et al., 2016). There are a number of studies that also describes the association between tourism and economic growth in South Asian regions (Kadir and Karim, 2012).

The latest statistics of World Travel and Tourism Council (2018) about Bangladesh forecasts that the direct contribution of tourism towards the country's GDP is expected to grow by 6.2% per year to BDT824.0 billion (2.1% of GDP) by

2028. The same report shows that this sector is also responsible for creating 1,178,500 occupational options directly in the year 2017 (1.8% total employment of the country). This scenario holds the potential to grow further by 3% in 2018 to 1,214,000. At present, the authority of Bangladesh understood their significance of the tourism industry in its financial and public activity. The improvement of this area considering diverse measurements as it is just through sorted out and organised arrangement and the executives that the business can meet the desires for the sightseers under more all-encompassing and innovative approach ([Chandra Roy and Roy, 2015](#)). In this regard, tourism planning or development is a part of national advancement planning and strategy. Additionally, it incorporates a basic decision-making process between the travel industry and different segments of the economy, between different sub-national zones and between kinds of the tourism industry. It requires the joining of the tourism industry into different parts.

As a matter of fact, the concept of tourism is broadly identified for its tangible dimensions (Ex-job opportunity, taxation) as well as its less tangible dimensions (Ex-quality of life). It may be formulated based upon a diverse range of attractions, including culture and heritage. At present, heritage tourism has emerged as a popular global leisure option ([Mkono, 2012](#)). As per [Ahmed \(2006\)](#), heritage tourism destinations are those which help comprehension of the past; enhance the present and which will be an incentive to the who and what is to come. In reality, for the destinations with archeological and architectural values or attractions, it is the individuals and activities that construct the cultural heritage. It embraces travel to widen one's knowledge, understand and appreciate art, architecture, and heritage. The concept of heritage tourism is more explained by the [NTHP \(2008\)](#) as:

"traveling to experience the places, artefacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historical, and natural resources."

Heritage related to the travel sector mostly reflects historical, cultural, and environmental assets that, as of now, exist. Instead of making or constructing new destination attractions, it aims to look to the past for a reasonable future ([Aykan, 2013](#)). To be sure, these advantages require conservation and frequently rebuilding or understanding, yet the establishment for making a dynamic travel encounter lives on in the accounts and structures of the past time-spans. The study of [Meskell \(2014\)](#) describes that heritage tourism may possibly become one of the business sectors that shall impact on economic development; foreign exchange flow, occupational options, and result in communal improvement. The government or authority needs to encourage local community and private sectors to promote heritage tourism in important locations ([Laing, 2011](#)). In order to develop the dimensions of heritage tourism in such areas, there is a need to comprehend the encompassing condition, demography, socio-culture, the monetary, and political foundation of those tourist destinations to make an appealing place of interest ([Su, 2012](#)).

The major critical priority to develop a heritage destination is strategic marketing schemes. The target heritage destinations need to be accessible to be an efficient and representative presence, and promotional activities are required to adopt with appropriate distribution channels. Matter of fact tactical marketing or promotional plan for the heritage tourism travel sector is obligatory with a comprehension of target clients, their necessities and needs, and how to coordinate it by giving a framework to heritage destinations of interest ([Hausmann and Weuster, 2017](#)). Another critical element in this context is support from local authorities and people ([Prohaska, 2015](#)). As tourism destinations are based on complex co-producing networks, and their development requires the focus on the challenges of tactical planning involving a large number of organisations and other contributors. Here the support additionally implies speculations like interest in new transport framework. On the other hand, another critical dimension regarding this issue includes external elements as the influence of other competing destinations, alterations in the domestic and international economic outlines, capacity to adapt to recent climate change, and to potential obstacles.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The resource-based view has basically considered the firm as their unit of examination, and abilities reflecting the dimension of the individual firm and portrays a firm's property ([Haugland, Grønseth and Aarstad, 2010](#)). The RBV enables the detection of firm resources capable of generating sustained competitive gain for the respective firm. The initial obligation is that the resources are heterogeneous and immobile, and then they are considered relevant as tactical resources ([Barney, 1991](#)). However, a major challenge in applying the idea at the destination level is that resources and competencies are distributed across a number of influential dimensions. In view of this elaboration of destination capabilities, the following step is considered towards some precise capacities of significance for the tourism industry destinations. A noteworthy errand for any tourism industry destination is to consistently integrate assets and capabilities circulated over a number of different contributing elements and change this configuration into product items and services that are requested by tourists ([Duarte Alonso, 2016](#)).

The destination development derives from a specific destination's capability to produce items and services with demand across individual contributors, and whether the destination can efficiently communicate these offerings to the market through proper strategic marketing activities considering the issue of branding ([Hasan and Jobaid, 2014](#)). This is an issue of finding and using the value creation potential towards the target destination and coordinating at the destination stage with a tendency to the subject of reconciliation in the local network outline.

According to the above discussions, the model that has attracted the most focus and argument, and incorporates the most factors is the 6 stage model developed by famous scholar [Butler \(1980\)](#). In the development stage of this model, more

investments are attracted to the heritage destination as a well-defined tourism market emerges. As a result, accessibility will be improved, publicising turns out to be more concentrated and broad, and local services are altered or replaced by more intricate and forward ones. This outcome may possibly decrease participation and support from the local community (Kokkranikal, Cronje, and Butler, 2011). The auxiliary administrations and facilities are important to help the quickly developing the travel industry. However, the last stage of this model indicates a dramatic shift in the baseline of resources. It also proposes the significance of a new set of artificial attractions in heritage destination is or a utilisation of previously unexploited cultural or archeological resources (Stumpf, Sandstrom and Swanger, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The study has consumed a qualitative approach considering both primary and secondary data information. There is a clear scarcity of related kinds of literature and for that reason, semi-structured interviews have been conducted with 25 respondents as the main source of primary data. The respondents are tourists who frequently visit different heritage destinations and individuals associated with the country's tourism industry. The purposive judgemental sampling tactics have been applied here considering the depth of the study. The whole procedure has been executed within 4 to 6 weeks' timeline. 20 out of 25 interviews conducted with face to face approach on the basis of fixed appointments and the remaining five executed on the source of Whatsapp/Viber video call option as per respondent's convenient timeline. Before conducting an interview, participants are served information about research details as well as a given declaration about ethical ideologies. Some primary data also obtained from field observations by the researcher. NGO reports, statistics, books, websites, thesis, and documentary videos have also been utilised for the study as a source of secondary data. In the end, the context analysis procedure with inductive coding has been used to interpret obtained information.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A total number of 25 semi-structured interview procedures are conducted among tourists or tourism segment related individuals. Four out of twenty-five respondents are females. The maximum numbers of respondents are between the age group of 24-29 and hold at least degree certification. Most of the respondents visited 4-6 domestic heritage tourism destinations, whereas the study findings also detect that some of the respondents contain international tourism exposure related to the focused topic of research.

The heritage tourism products with services make a trip memorable and enjoyable for tourists. There are numerous heritage destinations in this country that can possibly attract both local and international tourists. However, the absence of a compelling promotional program has made these heritage tourist products less alluring comparing to other destinations of the world. The outcomes of the study help to categorise these products into three segments, such as archeological, religious, and historic tourism products.

The main strength of these products is their involvement with the unique history and culture of the country. The labor cost is also very cheap in those destinations. The study findings also detect some key weaknesses related to these destinations, such as lack of infrastructural development, limited contributing role of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) as well as inadequate fundings. However, there are opportunities related to international recognition in association with future economic prospects. Again, lack of synergy, lack of suitable tourism policy, and political crisis may possibly major threats regarding the country's heritage tourism development initiatives.

Actually, the administration or governance structure is an encapsulation of a comprehensive way to deal with planning procedures and advancement in which establishments change themselves toward manageability as a process and an objective (Alipour, Vaziri, and Ligay, 2011). Maximum of the reflected respondents do believe in the importance of experts on different dimensions of governance structure within the institutions for proper decision making in order to guide the system towards the strategic direction. However, some respondents also express their dissatisfaction with the role of law and enforcement members regarding the security issue. One of the participants (respondent #13) explains the scenario as:

".....during the weekdays you may feel unsafe around the area precisely after 4-5 pm. In the evening, some ferocious-looking people play cards or do gambling in some spots of the location. These people are local I guess.... few weeks back there was an incident of car hijack. You hardly see any security people here in time of need. "

The heritage products and services, in association with proper security factors, are the core aspects of heritage tourism development discourse. Lack of properly trained security members around the heritage destinations is another vital concern. In reality, a localised version of governance may possibly play a vital role in how different authorities plan for heritage tourism products and services. The initial step towards this direction is to formulate suitable rules, regulations, and security strategies for heritage tourism development. The concerns related to transportation, food, and shopping options are also not palatable in the heritage tourism outline. The communication option in many heritage destinations is weak, and access is troublesome. There are numerous heritage destinations with no airplane terminal and suitable transportation framework. The number of tourist information offices is insufficient in heritage destinations. So for that reason, tourists face various difficulties in the time of urgent need. At this context, for the foundation of performance there is a requirement for shared connections among role players and their points of view on the acts of the tourism industry strat-

egy and arranging different ways to deal with reasonable systems and difficulties inside and past the limits of the administration setting ([Landthaler, 2014](#)).

In the case of institutional dimensions, the study has identified issues related to operational obligations, proper training, allocation of resources, and irresponsible conduct considering the development of heritage tourism. It is essential to meet the required necessities, discuss the concerns or issues and influences linked with the heritage tourism segment, and deliver necessary support. The findings show that the area of operational obligations indicates the lack of expertise in related tourism staff to produce outputs through group discussions or meetings to develop concern tourism segment. However, some initiatives depend on how experts they are and the support required from the private sector. There is basically no support from local government regarding their training, and the private sector is the only option to stimulate their qualifications through different schemes or incentives. It is clear that the lack of skilled staff or workforces is a major barrier to the present status of inefficient heritage tourism development in Bangladesh. There are actually no academic or professional schemes to build skilled staff to instigate heritage tourism promotion or development initiatives. Surely, a major barrier here is the lack of training as well as poor support from local government or authority.

The analysis of results obtained from interviews shows that the process of integration needs a tactical view in terms of the capacity of the heritage tourism segment with reference to the local government's tourism obligations. There is a clear requirement of connecting different stakeholders to heritage tourism themes, project schemes, and related events. Here, strategic marketing requirements, for example, are those of local government structure and are intensely linked with the activities of the economic development department. Through the expertise level and networking capacity of the local economic development office, the local government can promote or market their heritage tourism products or communities toward potential tourists as well as foreign investors ([Bessière, 2013](#)). The outcomes of the study criticise that the role of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation is also kind of paradoxical in this context. In fact, BPC usually participates in all kinds of international tourism events, whereas the BPC website holds very limited information about heritage tourism features. The pictures are not attractive, and the website contains very limited info about accommodation and transport options related to those heritage destinations. The strategic marketing activities of BPC are not creative or tactically outlined. There is no integration with other departments or stakeholders in the entire strategic development initiatives, which is very important to get an affirmative outcome.

As heritage tourism development guidelines are often influenced by other unsuitable policies, the local authority should involve the related stakeholders to formulate infrastructure and mobility outline, as these dimensions have a vital impact on the success or failure of local tourism activities towards the development of focused segment ([Kelman, 2012](#)). In fact, integration is a substantial dimension of heritage tourism capacity as it illustrates a tactical outline of the industry rather than narrowing the focus to end up with one specific unit of discussion ([Skrbic, Jegdic, Milosevic and Tomka, 2015](#)). As a matter of fact, the findings precisely indicate there is no or very limited level of efficient coordination of responsibilities, although heritage tourism regarded as a potential industry for Bangladesh. There is a mindset that heritage tourism can be a burden towards local government's facilities, whereas some participants also believe that tourism holds an arguable impact on some areas. These kinds of understandings may possibly create a negative set of service delivery, which can impact the cooperation or local support as well as participation of different levels of stakeholders. The scenario has a tendency to negatively influence the major public events around heritage destinations.

In addition, the findings also indicate that the maximum of the private tour operators in Bangladesh does not operate separate marketing section or marketing expert in charge of marketing initiatives due to lack of funds as well as authoritative support. The arrangement and direction of satisfactory distribution of resources and additional support to the heritage tourism industry-related with organisations are key components of the tourism industry's tactical development process ([Deng, Ma, and Cao, 2014](#)). This area is an important consideration for the application of adequate funding related to tourism development priorities. Here the funding components and techniques have identified as to be urged to enhance related project activities while joining extra arranging devices to upgrade the limit of the local authority. The viability of efficient associations with heritage item proprietors and development scheme specialists should be on the advancement motivation. The research investigation indicates that usage of heritage tourism strategic development policy, plan, and procedure relies upon the competency dimension of the workforce employed. From the outcomes, there is a reasonable sign that the dominant part of staff can't execute the concerned task, and no motivating forces exist for staff to enhance their capabilities. This deficiency makes it troublesome for them to liaise successfully with the private segment, and the advancement of different events is affected upon and also the authority and improvement of the heritage tourism segment. On the other hand, findings also show that the allocation of funding related to a focused issue over the last few years indicate no significant increase. It tends to be concluded that no assessment occurred to help any critical increment or request. The portion of the funding has an immediate bearing on the planning and development of this segment. This scenario has a clear degrading impact on the conservation and protection outline of heritage destinations in our country and formulates a strategic marketing obstacle considering promotional activities for those places.

CONCLUSION

Despite a long history of advancement and improvement, the Bangladesh heritage tourism industry is in its initial stage of development. A lot of heritage tourism industry depends on the tourism industry factors ([Wearne, 2017](#)). It may be observed as a composite factor, as the combined of a nation's tourist attraction, transport and convenience, and of ex-

citement, which results in loyalty. In fact, the success factor in the tactical development of the heritage tourism segment in Bangladesh not only relies upon the government but also on other private sector stakeholders. The issue of promotion is critical, whereas TV, newspapers, billboard, radio, and social media can be possibly able to promote strategic heritage product marketing, leading directing to the suitable development of this segment. It is also important to formulate conservation guidelines to protect the country's valuable heritage destinations and attract more international tourists. In addition, funds are needed to be raised in Both government and private sectors through tourism experts at different levels. On the other hand, these heritage destinations may perhaps play a vital role in the cultural, social, economic progress of communities (Ebejer, 2018), so the physical surface that has impacted their creation has additionally to be kept up. Therefore a well-planned as well as effective tourism industry strategic plan for heritage destinations is fundamental to draw in an adequate number of tourists. So it's crucial to identify and configure an appropriate way to settle the issues and challenges emerge during overseeing and promotion of heritage tourism, and once it is made into motion, it will prompt the development model that will be swift the bright prospects of the overall tourism industry business in Bangladesh.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The basic hindrance to study is that as an exploratory investigation, with only a little example, the revelations are confined in how far they can be summed up over the whole of the tourists and tourism-related individuals business in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Regardless, paying little mind to this, it is felt that the signs from the distinctive stakeholders do have both congruity and potential for consolidation in suggestions or ideas. Be that as it may, every one of the interviews was semi-organised or semi-structured, it was observed that a segment of the respondents was not obviously with info as others, and it made the feeling that not all request were understood likewise over all of the interviewees. This scenario influenced a few irregularities between interview procedures regarding the inquiries answered. In like manner, explorative research incorporates a commonly small number of respondents, and the disclosures of this investigation are seen to be from a little sample size.

In reality, the findings accumulated was restricted to Dhaka due to obstacles of time, spending plan, and available appointments or accessible HR touch points. The results should be interpreted in light of these limitations. A last confinement is that local people of those heritage tourist destinations were not met as a contributing part of this examination. Having this perceived the requirements, the present research demands advance examination regarding this point.

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Table 1: Demographic data of participants

Number of participants visited international heritage destination	6	Total respondents	26
		Male	21
		Female	04
Age group	Number of Participants	Heritage tourism destinations Visited by participants in Bangladesh	
18-23	06		
24-29	08		
30-35	07		
35+	04		
		0-3	9
		4-6	13
		6+	03
Last academic qualification	Number of participants		
HSC	05		
Degree	10		
Masters	09		
PhD	01		

Source: Compiled from semi-structured interview procedures

Table 2: The heritage tourism products in Bangladesh

Archeological heritage tourism products	Lalbag fort, Ahsan manzil, Sonargaon, Wari Bateswar, Mainamati, Paharpur, Mahastangargh, Kantaji's temple, Shait gombuj masjid.
Religious heritage tourism products	Seven dome masjid, Binat bibi masjid, Star masjid, Shrine of Hazrat Shah Paran, Shrine of Hazrat Shah Jalal, Dargah of Hazrat Shah Amanat, Shrine of Sultan Baizid Bostami, Choto sona masjid, Hussaini dalan, Tomb of Bibi Mariom, Mughal eid-gah.
Historic heritage tourism products	Central shahid minar, Martyred intellectual memorial, National poet's tomb, Bahadurshah park, Karjon hall, Baldha garden, WWII cemetery, Shilaidah kutibari, Old high court building.

Source: Compiled by author from semi-structured interviews and secondary information

Table 3: The critical concerns associated with heritage tourism development

Major concerns identified with heritage tourism development	Number of participants mentioned about the issue	Major themes identified
Inadequate funding	18	[a] Governance
Lack of tactical planning and coordination	14	
Inadequate technical support	15	[b] Institutional requirements
Government policies	16	
Incapacity of local authority	16	[c] Integration
Lack of security and transportation facilities	15	[d] Resource provision
The conservation and protection of destination	18	

Source: Compiled from semi-structured interview procedures