

Potentials and Constraints of Fairs and Festivals Tourism: A Study on Bangladesh

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(Abstract: *Bangladesh is a beautiful country. She is full of tourism resources that enable to attract tourists. Among these resources, natural and man-made attractions are notable. Natural scenic beauty, cultural diversity of ethnic minority people, rivers, lakes, hills, heritage and historical sites, various religious festivals, cultural festivals, fairs etc are core tourism resources. Many fairs and festivals are celebrated in every corner of the country throughout the year. These fairs and festivals create appeal for tourists. These fairs and festivals can significantly contribute to the development of tourism industry. This paper has highlighted the prospects of fairs and festivals in the country because it has the scopes of attracting domestic and foreign tourists in these occasions. However, there are some challenges for developing fairs and festivals tourism in the country as well. The researchers have focused on some constraints and provided suggestions to overcome the challenges in terms of developing fairs and festivals for tourism purposes.*)

Keywords: *tourism, attractions, Bangladesh, fairs & festivals, prospects.*

Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Tourism can help to flourish economy of the Bangladesh by creating employment opportunities, where people directly or indirectly involved in this emerging sector (Latif et al., 2016). Bangladesh is a developing country with a lot of tourism potentials. This country is full of aesthetic beauty (Roy & Roy, 2015). People travel from one destination to another for leisure, entertainment, business, recreation, religious purpose, vacation, holiday, education, sightseeing and other activities. Bangladesh is such a place where tourists can enjoy natural beauty, hills, cultural diversity, various fairs and festivals, rivers, lakes, beaches, forests, rural areas, and bio- diversity (Hassan, Ullah, & Chowdhury, 2013). Fairs and festivals are also very attractive and can provide recreational opportunities for the tourists. Different types of fairs and festivals are observed in different seasons and times throughout the year in Bangladesh. These fairs and festivals can attract tourists from home and abroad to provide a cultural flavor of Bangladesh for tourist's enjoyment.

Tourism has become a dynamic sector for the world economy, especially for developing countries. It affects other sectors too. Bangladesh has the opportunity to grow its economy

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through its tourism sectors. Tuhin & Majumder (2004) highlighted that tourism contributes for economic development through promoting among tourists of its natural beauty and profound culture of a country. Moreover, the attractive sites of tourism also contribute to the economy (Hassan, 2018). According to Latif et al., (2014) tourism plays a significant role to cultural and social development through cultural exchange and provides a common platform to meet among different races and nationalities.

The culture of Bangladesh is full of fairs and festivals with its unique importance and features. Thus, fairs and festivals have become an integral part in the lifestyle of people in the country. These are the means of getting pleasure, getting companion with others, and sharing views between each other (Rahman, 2012). These fairs and festivals can be a form of tourism product. These could be an ideal means of meeting various people in a common platform. Some notable fairs and festivals in Bangladesh, religious and social/secular are book fairs, international trade fair, tree fair, Puja, Eid-ul-fitr, Eid-ul-Adha, Buddha Purnima, Basanta Utsab, Nabanna Utsab, Poushmela, Independence Day, Victory Day, Christmas Day, and Pahela Boishakh and so on. Many neighboring countries like India, Bhutan, and Nepal promote festivals and fairs as a form of cultural tourism (Howlader, 2019). Bangladesh has a lot of same fairs and festivals to promote and develop as a form of fairs and festivals tourism. Moreover; these are the integral cultural part of Bangladesh. This paper focuses on fairs and festivals of Bangladesh, opportunities to promote these among tourists and its importance in light of economy, culture, society, and value creation.

Review of Literature: Bangladesh is a large delta, has evergreen forested hills and natural beauties. Vibrant fairs, festivals; merriment and enjoyment are important component of tourism (Latif et al., 2017). Festivals are art where tourists travel to particular destinations to enjoy the arts, to see the traditions, and enjoy the customs of the local people. Rahman (2012) in his paper stated that, festival tourism could be used as Unique Selling Proposition in Bangladesh to the inbound travelers. Festivals are entertaining, which carries traditional and cultural significance, as it is a part of tourism (Joseph & Udoh, 2018). In Athens, festivals were very promising tourism events once upon. It is said that, in the case of building image among tourist, festivals played an important role (Koutoulas, 2004). Moreover, Quinn (2009) stated that festivals are major tourist attractions; part of human society through public display, rituals, and collected celebration. This concept is true in every aspect of life in the world. Further, festivals help bring people in a common platform. Rahman (2012) stated that fairs and festivals have become an integral part in the lifestyle of people in Bangladesh which are the means of getting pleasure, getting companion with others, and sharing views between each other. Congcong (2014) in his paper stated that in the region of China, every year festivals hold which contribute significantly to their economy.

Festivals tourism is a common phenomenon of tourism, to attract tourists to a particular destination. It involves continuous development of tourism resources of a geographical area. This form of tourism has social, economic, and cultural impacts on a location or a destination

(Cudny, 2013). According to Quinn (2010) tourists are attracted by various elements of fairs and festivals to an area or event which are interesting, cultural, and performed in a form of event. Relaxation, entertainment, performance and accessibility are main driving forces of festivities to attract more tourists to a particular destination (Turgay & Dikmen, 2013). Festivals, being a part of cultural tourism, play an important role to promote cultural tourism and contribute to the economic development of a region. Festivals and fairs also provide experiences about a host community as well (Sinha & Murdia, 2018).

Moreover, people meet with one another, share their ideas, thoughts, and learn more on a particular occasions. Besides, the multi-cultural countries such as United States, New Zealand, and Australia, are arranging popular and multi-cultural fairs and festivals of multi-ethnic minorities usually (Lee et al, 2012). Furthermore, fairs and festivals also help people to experience other culture, curiosity and to meet people of similar interests (Cudny & Rouba, 2011). Bangladesh can be an attractive destination because of ethnic minority people dwelling in many regions. These people possess unique culture, heritage, place, livelihood etc. Their myth, rituals, norms, fairs, and festivals etc. are attractive tourism elements for tourists. However, Table one summarizes briefly a sample list of the reviewed documents.

Serial No	Types of Documents	Sample of References	Context/Theme Explored
1	Research Article	(Latif <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Rahman 2012; Joseph & Udoh, 2018; Koutoulas, 2004; Quinn, 2009; Congcong, 2014; Cudny, 2013; Quinn, 2010; Turgay & Dikmen, 2013; Sinha & Murdia, 2018; Lee <i>et al.</i> , 2012; Cudny & Rouba, 2011)	(Vibrate fairs, festivals; festival tourism, Unique Selling Proposition; traditional and cultural significance of fairs; tourism events, building image among tourist of Athens; tourist attractions; human society, public rituals, and celebration; the contribution of festivals to Chinese economy; social, economic, and cultural impacts on destinations; elements of fairs and festivals of event; relaxation, entertainment, performance and accessibility; experiences about a host community; meeting with one another, sharing ideas, thoughts, and learning about occasions; experience other culture, and grow curiosity on fairs)
2	Newspapers	Daily Sun, 2019; Travel Daily News, 2014.	Promotion of fairs and festivals of Bangladesh; festivals and events of Bangladesh.
3	Websites Documents/materials	Travel Mate (2019); Golden Bengal Tours (2001); Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (2016).	Popular festivals in Bangladesh; main cultural fairs and festivals attractions; celebration of cultural festivals of Bangladesh.

Research Gap: Bangladesh is a multicultural country and people of all religions here live with harmony and peace. All religions possess unique festivals, fairs and programs celebrated across the country. These celebrations become a source of fun; get-together opportunities among friends, relatives, and family members. It creates a nexus among multifarious religious faith as well. However, there are many papers published on tourism, fairs, and festivals in home and abroad. But, still there is no study on the potentials and constraints of fairs and festivals tourism development in Bangladesh. That's why; the present study is an attempt to readdress these gaps.

Rationale of the Study: Festivals and fairs tourism are promising sector in Bangladesh. This type of tourism can contribute significantly for the growth of tourism sectors of the country. Moreover, tourists are provided with recreations and opportunities to explore themselves in various activities while travelling to participate to different fairs and festivals held in Bangladesh. This study will highlight the prospects, problems and ways to overcome challenges to the development of fairs and festivals tourism of the country. In addition to that, it will help the policy makers, government authorities and stakeholders to further investigation and research on fairs and festivals tourism. Furthermore, this study will contribute to tourism literature as well.

Objectives of the Study: The objective of the study is to highlight about tourism, fairs, and festivals of Bangladesh. The objectives of present study are as follows:

- To present a brief view of multifarious fairs and festivals in Bangladesh;
- to highlight the prospects and significance of fairs and festivals tourism in the country; and the contributions to tourism development in Bangladesh; and
- to highlight some constraints to fairs and festivals tourism development in Bangladesh and provide suggestions to overcome these obstacles

Research methods

To conduct a study it is necessary to collect information and analyze carefully. The present study has been conducted in current format to make the research more informative (Alauddin, 2014). This research follows a qualitative approach in which data have been collected using secondary sources (Roy & Roy, 2015). To conduct this research, secondary data have been used that were collected from journal articles (e.g. Tourism Management, International Journal of Event Management Research, International Amity Research Journal of Tourism, Aviation and Hospitality, Journal of Business and Social Science) online articles (e.g. Journal of Information and Knowledge Management), book chapters (e.g. School of Hospitality Management and Tourism, Rowley & Slack, 2004; & Guerin, et al., 2018) and many other sources published in different newspapers and from different websites such as Travel Mate (2019); Golden Bengal Tours (2001); Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (2016), Bangladesh Tourism Board, and Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism. The systematic literature search has been framed by the keywords from this paper such as fairs, festivals tourism, general description on various fairs and festivals of Bangladesh and so on.

To make this paper more informative data have been collected from different published websites (e.g. Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (2016), Bangladesh Tourism Board) and papers (e.g. Travel Daily News, 2014). Literatures were gathered from the stated internet and sources. Therefore, a review of literature helped the researchers to make a presentation on the theme of the research.

In addition to that, the content analysis technique has been adopted on fairs and festivals tourism in this study as well (Mohanty, 2018). The reason for choosing content analysis approach is to analyze literature sources because of its appropriateness to analyze any text (Esterberg, 2002). The use of content analysis is popular across the world such as journal articles, newspaper articles and World Wide Web (Puvnesvary *et al.*, 2011).

Analysis and Discussions

1. The Concept of Fairs, Festivals and Tourism: Fairs and festivals are integral parts of our day-to-day lives. These are a part of peoples' cultural life. Fairs and festivals can be classified from different perspectives like traditional, religious, entertainment, business, cultural and recreational. However, before going to elaborate about fairs and festivals its meaning needs to be cleared.

Fair is a common place where people of similar interest meet together for a purpose. Earlier fair was known as a place where buyers and sellers meet together to buy and sell their products. At present fairs are also known as places of entertainment and recreation where people of common interest meet together and build network among themselves. Moreover, fairs can also be looked as religious, cultural, and agricultural perspectives. They come and meet together at a common platform to exchange ideas and knowledge. Today, fairs took place at local, national, regional, and even international levels. "Fairs got held first in 1885 and the number of members was nine hundred. At present one thousand and one hundred fairs are held across the world. (Niekerk & Mathis, 2017). In Bangladesh, fairs are seen to be observed at various places both in rural and city areas. People of common interest come to fairs for a specific time for a purpose of buying and selling commodities. Furthermore, fair is mixture of religious, cultural, and social events, which provide pleasure and entertainment. For example, the Ekushey Book fair, Dhaka International Trade Fair, and National tree fair, etc. are major fairs in Bangladesh (Golden Bengal Tours, 2001). These are arranged in a fixed place every year. Thousands of commuters do come, learn, and buy commodities from these fairs.

Festivals can be defined from various perspectives and based on many contexts. This concept is closely related to religion, education, marketing, culture, folklore, music, and social dimensions. These festivals basically take place in a form of event. Peoples' participation occurs when festivals are held in a particular period. However, certain numbers of people come and celebrate a festival and share their common thoughts there. According to Getz (2013), festivals include myths, rituals, symbol, celebration, communities, culture, co-modification, ceremony,

religious festivity and authenticity. Festivals are celebrated at a certain time which may vary from generation to generation. Moreover, festivals have unique features and characteristics. Bangladesh is a destination from where commuters will get to learn about myth, ceremonies, rituals, fairs, festivals culture, folklore etc. of multifarious religions.

2. Idea about Fair and Festival Tourism: Tourism means the travel of people from one destination to another from outside of their work environment for various purposes. Except these purposes, it cannot be defined as tourism because all travels are not tourism if it has no economic contribution at destinations. Likewise, fairs and festivals cannot be defined as fairs and festivals tourism, if tourists are not present at an event to participate cultural functions, ceremonies, arts, music, dramas, religious rituals etc. However, festival tourism is a modern product of tourism. Furthermore, festival tourism represents vivid image of attraction, marketing activities, community, history, culture, iconic image, customs which are celebrated at a specific time as a form of event tourism (Getz, 1997). Furthermore, Chowdhury (2010) stated that Star Mosque, Kantaji temple, Curzon Hall, National Mausoleum, Central Shaheed Minar, tribal dance, Rathayatra, Pahela Baishakh, and many other fairs and festivals, are significant attractive tourism products of Bangladesh. In addition, to be fairs and festivals tourism; tourist must participate in varied activities like shopping, enjoying game, watching performance of athletes, and so on. Munjal (2015) in his paper stated that, to leverage the prospects of fairs and festivals, cultural events (e.g. heritages sites, arts and crafts, religious attractive sites, and tribal socio-economic factors) must be integrated altogether to make development of a region. Moreover; Bangladesh, a country, has different religious events and festivals (Bishwa Ijtema, Durga Puja, Eid-ul-fitr, Buddha Purnima, Christmas Day, Water festival, Pahela Baishakh, International Mother Language Day, Lalon Mela and so on) (Alauddin et al., 2014). However, Bangladesh has a lot of opportunities in terms of event and festival based tourism development (Rahman et al., 2019).

3. Festival Tourism: Bangladesh is a land of natural beauty with evergreen forest and wondrous wildlife. All six seasons are colorful and vibrate with fairs and festivals. Fairs and festivals are integral part of a nation. These are jewels of culture of a country. Actually, fairs and festivals are termed as cultural identity, demonstration, expiation, and enjoyment. These provide renaissance of life and help to share views as well as interaction among people. Fairs and festivals are important part of cultural tourism of Bangladesh. Social and religious fairs and festivals play an important role in the life of the people of Bangladesh. Bangla New Year day or *Pahela Baishakh*, Victory Day, Independence Day, Ekushey Boi Mela, Lalon Mela, Spring Festival, Folklore Fair, Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Azha, Durga Puja, Buddha Purnima, Christmas Day, Sangrai or *Biju*, Rash Mela, Poet Modhu Mela at Sagardari, Water Festival of Rakhine community, Asia Fair, International Trade Fair, and Bangladesh International Trade Fair etc. are some remarkable fairs and festivals of Bangladesh.

The opportunities of festival tourism development in Bangladesh are immense. As people of all religions, live in this country, everyone is bearing own faith, moral value, tradition, heritage, culture, and belief. All these attributes are important component of festival tourism. Moreover, festivals are celebrated on the basis of religious, social, national, cultural, traditional, or heritage aspects in Bangladesh. For example, people go to the mosque, temple, Pagoda for religious faiths, beliefs, and values. According to Mohanty (2018), festivals must possess unique features depicted in the following figure 01. Based on these attributes, researchers have tried to describe in the context of Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, people of all religions, dwell in different regions of the country. All of them observe different festivals and fairs in different time and events. However, festivals tourism is surrounded by faith, belief, and religious spirituality, celebration, joy of human society; bounded by traditions, myth, customs, culture, and livelihood of the society. Thus, festivals have bearded the same experiences. The gathering of people for religious, cultural, social or traditional reasons has taken a shape of festivals since the ancient time (Mohanty, 2018).

Faith, spirituality, beliefs, secularism and universal brotherhood are found in all religions. As an example, Bishwa Ijtama for Muslims, Durga Puja for Hindus, Buddha birthday for Buddhists, and Christmas for Christians are observed from faith, spirituality, and beliefs. All festivals are based on religious faith, bear traditional values and ensure universal brotherhood among the people of different races and nationalities in Bangladesh. Festivals provide the scopes of gathering mass people, pilgrims and tourists to carry on their interests. The prospects of festivals tourism of a destination will be increased, because festivals follow faiths, spirituality, sacredness and secularism among the people, and among different culture and traditions. For example, festivals observed for religious purposes, provide dual benefits such as merrymaking, enjoyment and better understanding or practicing spiritual life in Bangladesh (Eid-ul-Fitr, Durga Puja, Buddha Purnima and Christmas).

Festivals are part of event tourism. This approach provides and enriches cultural and spiritual lives among people of the country. Moreover, festivals foster peace, traditions and culture; and bring universal brotherhood. Festivals tourism is also attached with heritage tourism. Whereas, heritage tourism involves travelling to ancient canals, ruins of ancient buildings and mausoleums etc. This type of tourism represents the glorious stories of and people of the past. When these places are visited than it takes a festive mood and become glorious moment to enjoy and remember. For example, National Mausoleums at Savar, Dhaka, Central Shaheed Minar, World Cemetery II at Cumilla, are glorious cultural or heritage tourism products in Bangladesh.



Figure 01 : Attributes of festivals (Adopted from: Mohanty, 2018)

4. The Prospects of Festivals and Fairs Tourism in Bangladesh:

Festivals can be classified based on some features, geographical location and duration. Moreover, different festivals and fairs are celebrated in different location and season. Some festivals and fairs are closely related to cultural aspects (*Pahela Boishakh* or Bengali New Year Day) and religious (Eid-ul-Fitr) as well. For general understanding and clarity, a typology of festivals is given in figure 02. Based on the attributes of festivals these can be categorized into following typology.

Festivals and fairs of Bangladesh are very colorful and amazing. Each and every event possesses unique attributes to make commuters amused. All festivals or fair bear one sort of form, spatiality, and time. These are comprised of social, cultural, religious, virtual, multicultural attributes. There are some events celebrated for fixed time and date, duration, and time or season. Moreover, some festivals could be held in particular country, geographical location, and venues (International Trade Fair).

Eidul-Fitr, Eidul-Adha, Durga Puja, Krishna Janmashtami, RathaYatra, Buddha Purnima, Modhu Purnima, Christmas, and Easter Sunday, etc. are some major religious festivals. Some other social and cultural events include Independence Day, Victory Day, the Ekushey book fair, Dhaka International Trade Fair, Shakrain festival, Kite festival/Gruitsob, Noukabaich/Boat rowing event, Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF), Folk Dances, Baul dances, and Jatra (Folk Drama). These festivals and fairs are main attractions for commuters to respect all religions, learn history, socialize, and enjoy multifarious cultural festivals in Bangladesh.

However, these festivals and fairs are celebrated in specific geo-locations, sites, and venues of a country. Bangladesh is no exceptional in these aspects as well. For example, Pahela Boishakh is mainly initiated in the premises of institute of Fine Arts (University of Dhaka). Of course, Pahela Boishakh is celebrated in the several areas of the country. It is a universal event celebrated irrespective of religion, race and caste. On the other hand, Boishabi, Biju, and Sangran (water festival) of tribal community are celebrated at different parts of Chittagong Hill Tracks.

Some fairs and festivals are arranged at particular time and season. Moreover, these events are very popular and attractive festivals for tourists and travelers. The Ekushey Book fair (in the month of February), International Trade fair, Kite festival, boat racing, lalon fair, and Pohela Falgun (in Bengali Falgun month), Pahela Boishakh (universal events) etc. are celebrated at a specific time and season (Travel Daily News, 2014). Moreover, some international and national sports like cricket, football, and indoor games (SAF/South Asian Games) are arranged in Bangladesh where a huge number of commuters and sports lovers from home and abroad to attend on the occasion of that event. As such, these become a place of common platform for all people from all corners of the country and the globe. The typology of festivals has been summarized in the following figure.

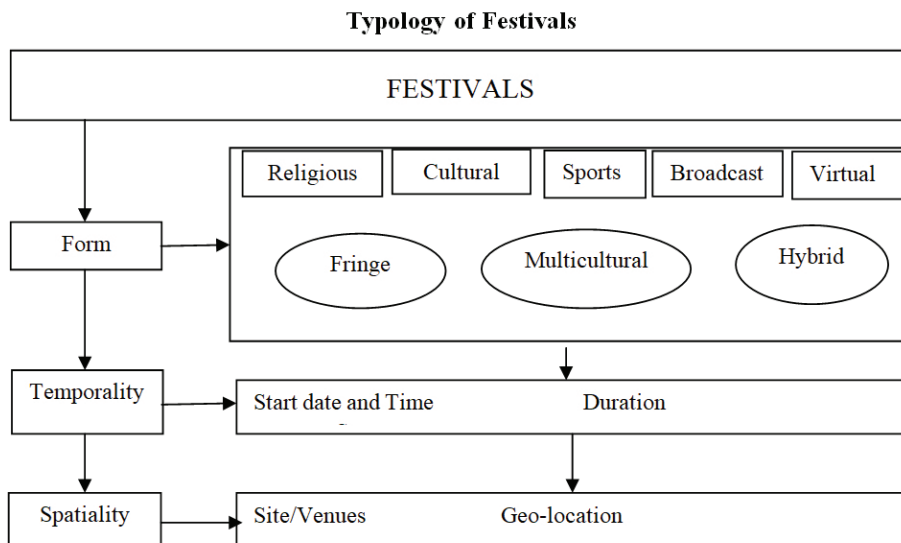


Figure 02: Source: Typology of Festivals by Jago and McArdle, 1999: 7

5. The features of fairs and festivals Tourism: The potentials of fairs and festivals tourism in Bangladesh are huge because she possesses a lot of festivals and fairs. Every year religious, social, cultural fairs and festivals such as agricultural fairs, cultural programs, arts exhibition, international trade fairs, Parbat/Paharimela (ethnic mela in Dhaka), book fairs, tourism fairs, etc. are held across the country. In these events a significant numbers of people or tourists come at a place for buying or selling tourism products, to gather experiences, to meet with friends

and relatives, and share their views and knowledge each-other. According to Congcong (2014) the fairs and festivals should have some unique characteristics (e.g. locality and uniqueness, experiential, cultural, comprehensive, and beneficial for the community). The features of fairs and festivals tourism are as under:

i. **Locality and uniqueness:** Fairs and festivals possess unique features. Locality is also an important attribute for fairs and festivals. Local characteristics and unique culture are main attractive features for fairs and festivals tourism. People or tourists travel to see and experience those fairs and festivals taken place in different parts of the country.

ii. **Participation:** Participation of tourists is inevitable for fairs and festivals tourism. Furthermore, when fairs and festivals are celebrated tourists' presence or participation is a must to particular place. Without interaction among the tourists, between the tourists and hosts, that particular event or fair or festival may not be fruitful.

iii. **Cultural significance:** Fairs and festivals of Bangladesh has become a part of culture. Moreover, culture is an important attribute of fairs and festivals tourism. Culture attracts a tourist to visit a destination. Bangladesh, a multicultural destination, is found living people of different cultures. They possess unique lifestyles, languages, occupations, norms, values, beliefs, traditions, rituals and so on. A tourist can travel to see and learn this cultural diversity.

iv. **Comprehensive:** Comprehensive festival tourism includes events, local foods, cultures, and customs etc. Bangladesh has fame for delicious cuisine and cultural diversity. Moreover, the arrangement of transportation, security, health, tourism and other facilities are equally important for developing fairs and festivals tourism. That's why, all departments with host community need to work together in managing and promoting fairs and festivals tourism in the country.

v. **Benefits for the community:** Fairs and festivals tourism is a new form of tourism that has a huge impact on community and society. Through promoting fairs and festivals tourism a society and community gets benefits. Because, when a tourist visits to a particular destination, he or she spends money which contributes economic benefits for the community of a country.

6. Brief Profiling of Fairs and Festivals Tourism Products in Bangladesh: There are many tourism products of this kind in Bangladesh. These are classified as religious, cultural, arts, handicrafts, dance, native lifestyle of ethnic people, and folk songs. These occasions are observed throughout the years with pleasure and enthusiasm. Moreover, fairs and festivals help bring different types of people in a common platform where people meet for the common purpose. However, common type of fairs and festivals are depicted in the following table. The authors have used subjective judgment to represent fairs and festivals in Bangladesh from the available information in the Table two,

Table 02: Name of fairs & festivals in Bangladesh

Name	Name of some major fairs & festivals in Bangladesh
Religious festivals	Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Adha, Chaand Raat, Mawlid or Mawlid al-Nabi al-Sharif, Laylat al-Qadr, Bara'a Night, Bishwa Ijtema, Durga Puja, Krishna Janmashtami, Holi, Ratha Yatra, Vasant Panchami, Buddha Birthday, Modhu Purnima, Kathina, Easter Sunday etc.
Social /secular/ universal festivals	Independence Day, Victory Day, Begum Rokeya Day, Rabindra Jayanti, Nazrul Jayanti, The Ekushey book fair, Dhaka International Trade Fair, Shakrain festival (Kite festival/Gruuitsob, Noukabaich/Boat rowing event, Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF), Chobimela/Photography festival, Dhaka Art Summit, Pahela Baishakh, Pahela Falgun etc.
Cultural festivals	Folk Dances, Baul dances, Chhau dance, Dak Dance, Fakir dance, Gambhira dance, Ghatu dance, Jari dance, Kali dance, Jatra (Folk Drama), Baul Mela, Langalbandh Mela.
Tribal festivals	Sangrain/Water festival, Biju, Chakma bamboo dance, Maramprodip (lamp dance), Santal dance, Manipuri dance, and so on.

Source: Author's own

Moreover, Table 03 highlights the fairs and festivals observed in Bangladesh each year has been depicted below;

Table 03 Date/month wise fairs and festivals in Bangladesh

Serial No.	Name of some major festivals and fairs in Bangladesh	Date/month	Description of fairs and festivals
01	Eid-ul-Fitr	Each year based on Muslim calendar	The largest festivals of Muslims which is observed all over the world with festive mood. Millions of people share their joy and happiness in this day. People enjoy 3 days Eid holiday.
02	Eid-ul-Adha	Each year based on Muslim calendar (celebrated after 2 months of Eid-ul-Fitr)	Eid-ul-Adha is also religious festival which is celebrated each year by the Muslims worldwide. Millions of devotees celebrate the day with their families, friends, and relatives with happiness and joy.
03	Chaand Raat	Each year based on Muslim calendar	Chand Rat is known as the night before the Eid-ul-Fitr. The children and young people celebrate the night with great enthusiasm. The devotees love to end the preparation of Eid on this night.
04	Eid-e Miladunnabi	Each year based on Muslim calendar	Every year the Muslims celebrate the Eid-e-Miladunnabi. The day is the birth and death day of Prophet Muhammad (s). He was born and died the same day on 12 th Rabiul Awal (Lunar Month).

05	Bishwa Ijtema	Annually	It is known as global congregation of annual gathering of Muslims in Tongi by the river shore of Turag. The prayer takes place for three days by the devotees and listening the reciting from the verses of holy Quran. It is the non-political gathering from more than 150 countries. Bishwa Ijtema has become the largest Islamic gathering with 5 million devotees. In the year, 2001 the number of participants and devotees was almost 2 million and it rose to 5 million by 2010. Moreover, among them 20,000-50,000 were foreign devotees from Asian subcontinent, African countries, Middle East, Central Asia and many more (Lemos, 2016).
06	Durga Puja	Based on Gregorian Calendar	Largest festivals of Hindu community. Different rituals are observed during the occasion. Events are celebrated in temples and lasts for 10 days.
07	Ratha Yatra	Based on Gregorian Calendar (June-July)	Ratha mela or Ratha Yatra is festival of Hindu community in Bangladesh that takes place at Dhamrai and Dhaka city. It usually takes place in the Bengali month of Asdha or within June to July. The program will last for a month. The devotees start the procession at 3.30 pm usually for the Ratha Yatra. Thousands of people take part in the procession.
08	Buddha Purnima	Based on Gregorian Calendar	Buddha Purnima is the most significant festival for the Buddhist community in the country. It is the birth anniversary of Buddha as well the death and enlightenments of Buddha. The day is celebrated across the country with religious mood and rituals at Buddhist temples and monasteries. Millions of Buddha followers observe this day across the country.
09	Christmas	25 th December	The largest day of the Christian community in Bangladesh. The Christian community goes to churches to celebrate the day with joy.
10	International Mother Language Day	21 st February	It is also called the state language day. Every year this day is observed on 21 st February and people visit the Shahid Minars for paying their homage and tribute to the Martyrs. Historically this place is very significant where the tourists can also visit (Hasan & Jobaid, 2014).

11	Independence Day	26 March	This day takes place on 26 March which is a national day in Bangladesh. It is the declaration day of independence from Pakistan in the late hours of 25 March 1971 by the undisputed leader of the nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It is the state festival of Bangladesh and to celebrate the day Bangla Academy and cultural organizations hold socio-cultural functions.
12	Victory Day	16 th December	This national holiday is celebrated on 16 December to commemorate the victory of the allied forces over the Pakistani forces in Bangladesh during the liberation war in 1971.
13	Begum Rokeya Day	9 th December	Begum Rokeya Day is celebrated in the 9 th December every year of the birth and death of Begum Rokeya. This is observed and celebrated by the schools, colleges, and universities, and government as homage to her dedication of work.
14	Pahela Baishakh/ Bengali new year	13/14 April	It is the first of Bengali new year. It has been an integral part of Bengali culture which has been declared as cultural heritage. Students of Fine Arts Institute of Dhaka University organize colorful procession where paper made animals and masks figure significantly. The procession takes place at 9 am to 10 am. Over ten thousand people march at 'Mangal Shobhajatra' at the Dhaka University area which is known as procession for well being.
15	Rabindra Jayanti	25 th Baishakh (May)	It is the birth anniversary of the noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore. Every year the day is celebrated with festive mood and a huge gathering occur on the occasion.
16	Nazrul Jayanti	11 th Jaystha/ May	Nazrul Jayanti is observed on the 11 th Jaystha (May) across the country. Huge gatherings and socio-cultural programs are hidden beauty of the observance of the days.
17	The Ekushey book fair	February	It is an event that takes place every year in the month of February. The book fair is organized by the Bangla Academy at Shahbag within the Dhaka University arena. Thousands of people gather on the premises in the fair which continues for thirty days.

18	Dhaka International Trade Fair	At the end of January	It is an international fair of Bangladesh which is held every year at Bangabandhu Bangladesh–China Friendship Exhibition Center and Purbachal of Dhaka with the combination of Export Promotion Bureau and the ministry of commerce. All kinds of goods are sold at a cheaper price of different countries. Almost thousands of visitors and customers go to the fair to buy their necessary goods and spend good time friends.
19	Shakrain festival (Kite festival)	Bengali month “Poush”.	Shakrain festival or Kite festival is very enjoyable event. It takes place in the old town with colorful kite on the sky. People from different places come to old town to watch the scenes.
20	Dhaka International Film Festival (DIFF)	January to February	Dhaka International Film Festival is held in Dhaka of Bangladesh which is biennial. It was established in 1992. At the first stage it was held once in a year but held twice since 1995. The objective of this festival is to create healthy cine culture in Bangladesh and make global connection with other cinema film makers.
21	Chobimela/ P h o t o g r a p h y festival	Biannually	It is the largest international festival of photography that is held in Dhaka. It is the biggest festival in Asia. The total number of thirty artists from over twenty two countries attended in the festival in 2015 (The Daily Observer, 2015).
22	Baul mela	F a l g u n (F e b r u a r y - March)	Baul mela or Lalon memorial festival is held in the shrine of Lalon in Kustia. Bauls (mystic and folk singers) and devotees of Lalon from home and abroad come to perform and emphasize the mystics of Fakir Lalon Shah. Lalon is known as the king of Baul music which is full of celestial love. Thousands of devotees and researchers attend the event to explore and enjoy the mystic music.
23	Pohela Falgun	First Falgun (February)	It is the arrival of spring which is known as the king of all seasons (Pohela Falgun). This day is warmly welcomed by the residents of Dhaka and others with songs, poems, flowers and dances. Every year thousands of people welcome this season with love and vigor.

24	Langalbandh Mela	Mid April (last day of Chaitra)	Langalbandh Mela is very attractive festival of Hindu community which is held every year on the last day of Chaitra (Mid April) near Sonargaon (approximately twenty seven Km) from Dhaka. It is the religious bath taken by devotees in the rivers. About thousands of devotees take part in this religious festival.
25	Dhaka Art Summit	February-April	It is a non-profit art organization held in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It is organized by the Samdani Art Foundation every year with displaying paintings, art work, video art, sculptures, and many more. The first art summit was held at Dhaka in 2012 of 200 artists with 20,000 visitors, second art summit was held at Dhaka in 2014 of 250 artists with 70,000 visitors, second art summit was held at Dhaka in 2016 of 300 artists with 138,000 visitors. Moreover, the number of participants increased to 350 in 2018 and 500 artists in 2020 with visitors of 317,000 (Mahendru, 2020).
26	Sangrain/ water festival	April 13-18	Sangrain or water festival is a cultural festival of Rakhine and Marma community in Bangladesh. The day is celebrated in festive mood in Hill district, Cox's Bazar, Kuakata, Maheshkhal from April 13 to April 21 every year. A huge number of gatherings held to observe the day with joy and merry making which could be attractive event for tourism (The New Age, 2018).
27	Biju	April 13-16	Biju is a cultural festival of Chakma community in Bangladesh. The day is celebrated in festive mood in Hill districts, Khagrachari, Bandarban, and Rangamati from April 13 to April 21 every year. The day is celebrated in three days, first day is called as 'Phulbiju', the second day is called as 'Mulbiju', and the third day is called 'Gajjya Pajjya Din'. Approximately thousands of people gatherings held to observe the day with joy and merry making which could be attractive event for tourism (The New Age, 2018).

Source: Authors Own

6.1. Religious Festivals in Bangladesh: Bangladesh is secular and democratic country in the world. People of all religions live with harmony and peace in this country. These four religions possess unique ways of festivals and worships of their own religion. Mostly observed religious events practiced in this country are listed below in the figure 03;

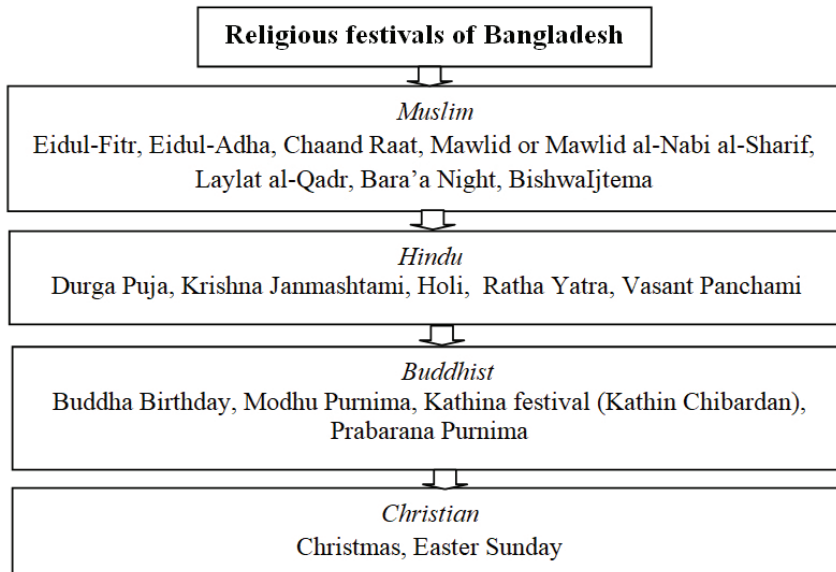


Figure 03: Religious festivals of Bangladesh

Source: Authors own

Muslim festivals: Bangladesh is multi-religion but Muslim dominated country. There are some major festivals like Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Chaand Raat, Milad-un-Nabi, Laylatul-Qadr, Bara'a Night, and Bishwa Ijtema, etc. are significant events (Travel Mate, 2019).

Hindu festivals: Durga Puja, Krishna Janmashtami, Holi, RathaYatra, laxmi Puza, Swareswati Puza and Vasant Panchami are major religious events of Hindu community. These festivals are observed with religious moods across the country.

Buddhist festivals: Buddha's Birthday, Modhu Purnima, Kathina festival (Kathin Chibardan), and Prabarana Purnima are some religious festivals of Buddhist community in Bangladesh. People of Buddhist community go to temples for religious purpose and offer foods, flower, and water before Buddha.

Christian festivals: Christian community also lives with harmony in the country. Christmas and Easter Sunday are notable religious events of the Christianity. They go to churches for prayer. This event has become a meeting place for all.

6.2. Social/secular/universal festivals/fairs: Bangladesh is a secular and democratic country in South Asia. She has different social or secular festivals or fairs of historical and social significance which are being observed around the year. For example, Independence Day, Victory Day, International Mother Language Day, The Ekushey Book Fiar, Pahela Boishakh etc. are some remarkable events of the country. All these festivals and fairs foster to unite a nation upload sound values and promote secular view among the people.

6.3. Cultural festivals: Bangladesh is a country, which has a strong cultural background. People of Bangladesh are extremely proud of their cultural heritage resources. The most remarkable cultural fairs and festivals in Bangladesh are folk dance, Baul dance, fakir dance, Ghatu dance, Jari dance, kali dance and so on. These dances can be linked to folk or classical form. There is the vibrant Bengali Theatre. There are many stages of performances which represent the glorious language movement and Liberation War of Bangladesh, and upload our rich cultural values of the people. Some of the popular theater groups are Dhaka theatre, Nagorik Nattya Sampraday, Kranti, Bibortan, and Matridhara. Furthermore, some foreign cultural performances are held at several venues such as Dhaka Metropolitan Theatre, British Council, Mohila Samity, and Russian Culture Centre.

6.4. Tribal festivals: Bangladesh is inhabited by a large number of tribal people, whose way of life and culture, are diverse and colorful. The cultural life of tribal people significantly plays a role in the life of Bengali. They have their own dress, rituals, customs, tradition, living style, fairs and festivals. Doljatra, Rash Leela, Chakma bamboo dance, Manipuri dance, marama prodip dance, Sangrai or *Biju* etc. are some popular festivals of tribal people. During festival such as, Doljatra and Rash Leela (Full-moon night in February), young girls dressed in colorful robes, perform dance with male performer of their choice. Furthermore, the Manipuris perform a famous dance, based on allegorical love themes of the ancient mythology, is very interesting to enjoy.

7. The Significance of Fairs and Festivals Tourism: The importance of fairs and festivals are inevitable. Fairs and festivals Tourism contribute to the tourism industry in various ways. The significant opportunities are given below:

Fairs and festivals create jobs: Fairs and festivals create some employment opportunities of the country. During book fairs, international trade fairs and travel related fairs in Bangladesh, there are a lot of part time job opportunities. Many people are involved in the production of souvenirs at the cottage industry throughout the year. Thus employment opportunities created for unemployed youth.

Role of economic values: Fairs and festivals contribute significantly for economic development of a country. In these types of festivals huge amount of products and services are sold out. Moreover, these events add value to the GDP growth of a country.

Fairs and festivals create social values: Fairs and festivals are arranged from different perspectives like religious, social, cultural, traditional, and so on. These events create universal brotherhood among people and commuters; bring people to the same interests, facilitate opportunity to share feelings, help improve the image of a country, and thus create goodwill for the destination. That's why, the celebration of these national and social fairs and festivals are significant for Bangladesh.

8. Reasons of Celebrating Fairs and Festivals: Fairs and festivals are part and parcels for the Bangladeshi. These have a profound influence on Bengalis religions, beliefs, faiths, myths, rituals, cultures, society, lifestyles, and so on. Although many fairs and festivals are arranged and celebrated at specific time and season, but these are arranged for varied reasons as well as purposes. These reasons are described below:

Religious reason: Four major religious people dwell at different corner of Bangladesh. So, these people possess and celebrate their own religious rituals. Moreover, Eid, Puja, Purnima, and Christmas are celebrated and arranged with joy and festivity. These are observed form religious faith and beliefs.

Social reason and recreational reason: Human being is social creature. They live in society together bearing social values, norms and beliefs. Many social events are closely related with Bengalis life. All these influence the daily lives of the people in Bangladesh. For example, Kite festival/Guddiutsob, Noukabaich/Boat rowing festival, Film Festival (DIFF), celebration of Begum Rokeya Day, RabindraJayanti, NazrulJayanti, Chobimela /Photography festival, Lalonmela, etc. are celebrated across the country. Such festivals provide the opportunity of commuters to meet with one another and share their ideas and views with others. These festivals provide merriment and recreational facilities for the travelers.

National purpose: There are many significant events in Bangladesh carrying national flavor and values of Bengali lives. Some memorable events are the Independence Day, the Victory Day, and International Mother Language Day. These days are commemorated with deep respects to heroic souls who sacrificed their valuable lives for the wellbeing of the nation. People of all classes of the country observe these days and pay homage to those souls. These events are observed for national purpose all over the country.

Educational purpose: Fairs and festivals can also be observed for the educational purposes. For example, The Ekushey Book fair, science fair, educational seminars, conferences, symposiums, etc are some notable fairs. Every year the Ekushey Book fair is organized on the premises of Bangla Academy. These fairs take festive mood. Thousands of people come to buy books of their favorite writers. These fairs create nexus among intellectuals. Readers can meet with authors, take photograph and autograph with the writers, and even to have snacks with friends and relatives in the temporary food corners at the fair premises.

9. Organizations working for promotion of tourism industry in Bangladesh

9.1 Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC)

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation is working as the National Tourism Organization in the country. To expand tourism activities this organization was established in November 1972 by the order of the President Act 143 and started its journey to function in 1973. It is working as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism. The main vision of BPC is to develop Bangladesh as an exotic tourist destination. There are also several missions for developing tourism industry (e.g. authority to facilitate tourism sector, develop international

standard tourism facilities, infrastructural development, ensure safety and security of travelers, simplify the visa formalities, develop pro-poor tourism, develop nature based tourism, creation of social harmony through tourism, enhance marketing of tourism products, develop human resources to build skilled work force, encourage public and private partnership, cooperate and maintain good relationship with other countries, and handover the commercial activities to private).

It has established many affiliated hotels and motels at tourist destinations all over the country. Some significant hotels and motels established by the BPC are located at Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Kuakata, Dinajpur, Teknaf, Bandarban, Rangamati, Gopalganj, Chittagong, Khagrachari, Maherpur, Rajshahi, and Bogra etc.

The functions of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation are to promote and develop tourism industry, to establish tourism infrastructure in the country, to facilitate all activities concerned with tourism, to facilitate all facilities related to tourism and hospitality, and to establish training institutes to prepare skilled human resources. These are the promising part of tourism activities initiated by BPC. It also conducts administrative, advertising, sales, promotion, marketing, and budgeting/financial activities to develop and promote tourism industry at home and abroad (Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation).

As a part of promotion and marketing, BPC has taken some remarkable initiatives so far. It has established still photo corner, and video to promote tourism industry highlighting natural beauty, seas, Islands, village life, flora & fauna, fairs, festivals, and forest. Moreover, as a part of marketing and promotional activities BPC has approached some activities to build a positive image of the country by showcasing some attractive videos (e.g. Beautiful Bangladesh-School of Life, Beautiful Bangladesh-Land of Stories, Wild Life-A documentary on Sundarbans, Bangladesh, Beautiful Bangladesh-Swamp Tiger and so on). Though, the authority has taken splendid initiatives but not enough to promote tourism at home and abroad. The BPC has to take initiatives to advertise tourism related activities in various television channels, brochures, newspapers, magazines, and in social Medias highlighting the potential of festivals and tourism of Bangladesh.

9.2. Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB)

The Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) was established in 2010, as national tourism organization due to the demand from business sector and tourism industry. The motto of the board is to promote tourism at home and abroad. The activities of BTB are research and development, marketing, and promotion of tourism industry in the country. Moreover, some initiatives taken by the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) for promotion of tourism are Beautiful Bangladesh, ICC Cricket World Cup 2011, Bangladesh Folk Festival 2011, participation in foreign tourism exhibitions, observing world tourism day, Asian Tourism Fair, Folk Festivals 2013, national Kite Festival, Asian Tourism Fair 2015, Face book and Bangladesh, You Tub and Bangladesh

Tourism Board, road show, and many more. Though, the initiatives that have taken by the Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) are better but not enough to establish tourism industry in broader aspects. The BTB has many limitations and weaknesses but it has been taking approach to overcome those limitations.

9.3. Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism was established to regulate aviation industry and tourism sector. The vision and vision of the ministry is to create aviation hub and attractive tourism destination, facilitate safe, security, and efficient civil aviation and attract tourists by providing tourism services and tourism products. The main responsibility of the ministry is to provide world class civil service through providing cargo transportation facilities and world class service to attract foreign and domestic tourists. The civil aviation authority has taken multifarious steps to develop and modernize the three international airports of Bangladesh to meet the Vision of -2021. The tourism has been identified as one of the important service sectors of Bangladesh in the seventh five year plan. Tourism helps to create employment (1.30 million) opportunities and contributes to GDP growth of 2.1 percent. Moreover, the major functions of Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism are to formulate and implement tourism policy to civil aviation and tourism, modernize the airports, civil aviation safety, aerospace security, enhance the service quality, provide license to travel agencies, hotels, restaurants, market tourism products, service, develop skilled manpower, and over control on tourism sector. Though, the ministry has taken lots of initiatives to promote the industry but still the baggage and luggage control systems need to be smooth and hassle free for the travelers.

10. Constraints to the development of fairs and festivals tourism:

Fairs and festivals are part of recreation and merriment for people of a country. People or tourists can travel at any destination for enjoyment and fulfill their needs through traveling and watching fairs or festivals, those take place in Bangladesh. However, there are many problems for developing fairs and festivals tourism in Bangladesh. Though Bangladesh is a land of festivals, still there is lack of proper promotional activities by documenting and videography of these valuable treasures. Furthermore, due to absence of proper initiatives, these fairs and festivals are in the way of distinction (Howlader, 2019). Moreover, sometimes fairs and festivals could be turned into commodity, which is not good. Due to lack of financial crisis, some fairs and festivals organizers have switched their profession in other industry. Furthermore, due to sky-culture and modern technology, fairs and festivals; the cultural tourism product, are being lost with the passage of time. Sinha & Murdia (2018) sated that lack of infrastructure (e.g. accessibility, water supply, and connectivity etc.) are main constraints for developing festivals. They also added that inappropriate security facilities create some problems in festivals areas.

There are some other constraints in celebrating fairs and festivals in the country. In most of the cases, celebration of tourism-related fairs and festivals are initiated by the government organizations (BPC) only. Although these initiatives are praise-worthy, but due to lack of

proper and enough funding, festivals and fairs are impossible to hold. Moreover, there is a gap of collaboration among the stakeholders and organizers of relative events. On the other hand, there is still lack of proper advertisement highlighting fairs and festivals in different print and electronic media. Furthermore, proper initiatives to preserve and conserve these age old fairs and festivals are still absent in the country.

11. Suggestions and policy implications:

Policy makers must understand the worth of fair and festival tourism and they need to take initiatives accordingly. Local community also must be associated in the total process. Their attitudes on tourism and perceptions to its effects on their lives must be cautiously and constantly monitored and evaluated. To exploit the positive impacts of fair and festival tourism, both public and private authorities concerned should introduce effective planning and strategies. They should come forward to provide assistance in order to hold fairs and festivals in different parts of Bangladesh. To overcome the constraints to developing fair and festival tourism in Bangladesh, there should be proper and detailed marketing plan of arranging festivals that is needed to build country's image, ensure originality and quality of fairs and festivals, and fix unique venues or places for these fairs and festivals. Online marketing, local TV channel, social media, mobile advertisement newsletters, catalogues etc. can play a vital role in attracting tourists and informing about tourism products and service (fairs and festivals) (Huq et al., 2015). Financial aid should be provided to the organizers, so that they can organize fair and festivals in a regular basis. Good infrastructural development; safe, secured atmosphere must be ensured and publicity and marketing strategies should be adopted by organizers for promoting festivals events (Sinha & Murdia, 2018). To make the fairs and festivals successful assistance from the government authorities, private sectors, and concerned stakeholders are required (Sharma et al., 2017).

12. Conclusion

The purpose of the study is to highlight the prospects, problems and ways to overcome challenges to the development of fairs and festivals tourism in Bangladesh. Reviewing the secondary data, it can be said that fairs and festivals tourism can be good sources of attractions to catch the attention of commuters to explore Bangladesh. These provide memorable experiences to tourists and are socio-culturally significant. Though there are a lot of opportunities to promote fairs and festivals tourism in Bangladesh but some constraints still prevail over there. Even the success of fairs and festivals tourism largely depends on the cooperation of all stakeholders related to tourism sector development.

This study is unique in its approach to understand the potentials of fairs and festival tourism development in Bangladesh, unlike earlier studies that were based on case studies approach, focused on specific fairs, festivals and events or on different developed and developing countries. In China, the flourishing of festival tourism started in 1980 and such festivals become a

landmark for economic development in Shanghai. At the twenty first century festival activities became more diverse and enjoyable for the both local and foreign tourists at Shanghai. The authority took initiatives such as reading fairs, and TV festivals of Shanghai in order to attract tourists. However, it faced a lot of problems due to lack of awareness among people and poor public participation in festivals at Shanghai (Congcong, 2014). In this context, Bangladesh observes social and religious fairs and festivals across the country with ensuring communal harmony. To make these events more successful, Bangladesh government took some initiatives to attract tourists through observing the Visit Bangladesh Year-2016, Asian Tourism Fair and Life in Rainbow program at different parts of the country. Moreover; heritage tourism, cultural festivals, and fairs are very popular in West Bengal which contributes significantly to boosting regional economy. West Bengal is known as the land of cultural diversity where people of all religions celebrate festivals with religious harmony. This state is endowed with traditional dance, art, music, fairs, events, arts, and so on (Sinha & Murdia, 2018). Bangladesh is such a country with full of social and cultural fairs and festivals where tourists can explore the diversity of culture.

Prior studies relating to fair and festival tourism and cultural tourism have produced different findings. In this aspect, Roy & Roy (2015) have explored focusing the present status and future prospects of tourism in Bangladesh. They explored the types of tourism, the tourism policy in the country, the contribution of tourism, impacts of tourism, tourist destinations and foreign tourist visitor's exports. Latif et al (2017) have also highlighted the potential of tourism products (e.g. the Sundarbans, Kuakata, St. Martin Island, Teknak, Kaptai Lake, hills, archeological and historical places) in Bangladesh in their research paper. But they did not explore the potentials and constraints of fairs and festivals tourism in the country. It might be due to the area specific concentration. In this case, the potentials of fairs and festivals tourism have been left unexplored. Therefore, like much other literature in place, this too has some limitations and hence provides ground for further relevant studies. This study mainly focuses on the prospects, problems and ways to overcome challenges to the development of fairs and festivals tourism in Bangladesh. Again some other perspectives of fairs and festivals tourism in Bangladesh might be explored in further studies. However, despite the limitations, this study will help the policy makers, government authorities and stakeholders for further investigation and research on fairs and festivals tourism.

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