

## Potential and Challenges of Dark tourism in Bangladesh

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### ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to find out the potential and challenges of Dark Tourism in Bangladesh. The study is a qualitative study. KIs (Key Informant Interviews) method is best suited for this qualitative study as this study has tried to find out individual perception as well as opportunity, potential and challenges to flourish dark tourism in Bangladesh. Primary and secondary both sources of data have been used to conduct this study. The primary data of this study has been collected through an in-depth one to one personal as well as online interview by a structured questionnaire. The key respondents of this study are tourism stakeholders such as government officials (employee of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and employee of Bangladesh Tourism Board) as well as academicians and tourists who have visited any dark tourism destinations in Bangladesh. The study results reveal that Bangladesh has huge potential to bloom dark tourism as it is enriched with dark tourism resources. In spite of various challenges to develop dark tourism such as insufficient government support, inadequate allocation for tourism in the national budget, less attention of authority to dark Tourism destinations, lack of proper management, insufficient infrastructural facilities, lack of professionalism etc., some potential measures for overcoming challenges and promoting dark tourism have also been outlined in this study. This study will provide understandings to those who are tourism stakeholders in Bangladesh such as Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB), Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), Ministry of Civil, Aviation and Tourism as well as private tourism stakeholders who are focused on new form of tourism to attract tourist and people who are interested to know details of dark tourism in Bangladesh. This study will also help to create awareness and take effective steps to develop dark tourism in Bangladesh.

**KEYWORDS:** Dark Tourism, Promotion, Challenges, Tourism Stakeholders

### 1. Introduction

Dark tourism is a new phenomenon in the tourism industry which was introduced in the past two decades ago. The Dark Tourism concept was first initiated by Foley and Lennon (Foley & Lennon,

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1996). Dark tourism is form of tourism in which people are travelling to experience places which are closely related to death, human sufferings, historical events, war, atrocities, tragic events etc. Dark tourism is also known as “Morbid Tourism” (Blom, 2000), “Holocaust Tourism” (Ashworth, 1996; Beech, 2000), “Genocide Tourism” (Beech, 2009), “Prison Tourism” (Strange & Kempa, 2003), “Graveyard Visits” (Seaton, 2002), “Battlefield Tourism” (Smith, 1998), “Phonenix tourism” (Causevic, 2008, Miller, Gonzalez & Hutter, 2017), “Thanatological Tourism” (Yan et al., 2016). Dark tourism has started evolving around the world in a recent era. People have become increasingly interested in traveling to dark tourism spots because they are always eager to know about unknown historical events, tragedy, human sufferings, etc.

Dark tourism is a strong lens through which modern life and death can be experienced and linkages with larger culture and society recognized, rather than a simple "fascination" with death (Stone, 2013). Dark tourism is a unique segment of the tourism business that plays a dynamic role in disseminating information and fetching the sad past into the present” (Molla et al., 2022). Niche tourism is a market portion which has a well-defined attraction or product that can be adjusted with tourist preference (George, 2019). Dark tourism has been recognized as a growing niche tourism market segment (Nhlabathi, 2017). Some authors (Strange & Kempa, 2003) proposed that Dark tourism might be a self-contained industry. The countries, which are enriched with dark tourism resources, are focused on developing this new form of tourism to appeal to national as well as international tourists.

Bangladesh is a country which is enriched with enormous dark tourism resources such as glorious liberation war, language movement (which is recognized as international mother language day by UNESCO), mass movement, tragic event of nation etc. Many places have already been developed relating to those incidents and people are also visiting those places in Bangladesh. But Bangladesh is still lagging in utilizing its enormous dark tourism resources. Because tourism authorities are unaware of the “Dark Tourism” concept and people are not aware that those places are part of dark tourism and they are not familiar with the concept of dark tourism. Despite having great scope to bloom dark tourism, very few promotional activities have been done to attract tourist to dark tourism destinations in Bangladesh. And there is very limited research work that has been conducted on specific dark tourism destinations for finding effective marketing strategy.

In the past two decades, research on dark tourism has mostly focused on six topics: definition, ideas, and typologies; connected ethical concerns; political and philosophical components; the pattern of demand for dark tourist destinations; destination management; and research methodologies (Light, 2017). But there is no study has been found regarding potentiality, challenges and essential measures to develop dark tourism in Bangladesh perspective. So, the study will enrich the literature about dark tourism, which does not exist yet. The study will also be helpful for society by minimizing unawareness and enhancing their knowledge about this form of tourism. As well as the study results, they will helpful for those who are tourism stakeholders in Bangladesh and work on developing different forms of tourism, such as Bangladesh Tourism Board, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, and Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, as well as private tourism stakeholders who

are focused on new forms of tourism to attract tourists and people who are interested to know details of dark tourism in Bangladesh. The main aim of this study is to find out the potential and challenges of Dark Tourism in Bangladesh. To accomplish its aim, the study focuses on-

- i. To analyze historical background of Dark Tourism in Bangladesh which can be used as a crucial Tourism site.
- ii. To analyze ethical issues in Dark Tourism Development
- iii. To understand motivational factors as well as potential factors of Dark Tourism development based on the views of respondents.
- iv. To suggest the measures how to overcome the challenges and Promoting Dark Tourism in Bangladesh

## 2. Literature Review

Foley and Lennon originated the concept of "dark tourism" in 1996 (Foley & Lennon, 1996). Dark tourism has acknowledged a larger portion of scholarly attention in the last two decades (Foley & Lennon, 1996; Seaton, 1996; Tarlow, 2005; Sharpley, 2005; Stone, 2006; Stone & Sharpley, 2008; Stone, 2010; Chang, 2014) and a lot of literature has been written about it. Here, Dark tourism is discussed below:

### 2.1 Concept of Dark Tourism

What is meant by the dark? We define 'dark' as unpleasant, troubling, strange, morbid, contributing to adverse emotions and sensations such as dread, fear, sorrow, or grief, yet political and cultural shifts may alter our impression of the past (Stone, 2006). But "dark" doesn't always mean bad, and dark places can't just be used to think about death, because that reduces the importance of the space and the actions of the tourist (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2009). Author (Stone, 2006) proposes a new idea of darkness, which he refers to as the dark tourism spectrum. Dark tourism has been focused with visitor meetings with areas of death or tragedy that have sparked public outrage, where actual and reproduced sites of the dead, horror, cruelty, or depravity all devoured through tourist activity (Stone, 2013). Dark tourism is also known as "Morbid Tourism" (Blom, 2000), "Holocaust Tourism" (Ashworth, 1996; Beech, 2000), "Genocide Tourism" (Beech, 2009), "Prison Tourism" (Strange & Kempa, 2003), "Graveyard Visits" (Seaton, 2002), "Battlefield Tourism" (Smith, 1998), "Phonenix tourism" (Causevic, 2008, Miller, Gonzalez & Hutter, 2017), "Thanatological Tourism" (Yan et al., 2016). The definition of Dark Tourism is crucial and the purpose of visiting Dark Tourism locations and the advantages gained are also significant aspects of Dark Tourism (Avital, Yaniv & Gila, 2011). Several authors provide different definitions of Dark Tourism. Some definitions are given below:

"Dark tourism denotes to visits to sites of death, tragedy, and atrocities, which are becoming more common in the tourism scene" (Foley & Lennon, 1996). "Dark Tourism has characterized as events involving death, disaster, violence, tragedy, or crimes against humanity" (Dann & Seaton, 2001). "Death is normalized, mediated, and treated less terrifying, making it commodifiable for consumers, according to the definition of Dark Tourism" (Durkin, 2003). "Dark tourism is a niche that interacts

with the concept of death and encourages interactions with the remembrance of fatalities, injuries and mortality” (Seaton, 2018).

## **2.2 Dark Tourism Shades**

Dark means evil, deviance, monstrosity, tragedy, and chaos (Koslofsky, 2011). However, the images of darkness, night, as well as anonymity have also been shown to have positive attributes: it's a time for new things, enthusiasm, and spectacle (Edensor, 2013). Strange and Kempa were the first to distinguish between 'darker' and 'lighter' tourist destinations (Strange & Kempa, 2003). Sharpley proposed that diverse “shades” of dark tourism can be defined based on varied intensities of intention in relation to supply side and demand side. Different sites/experiences might be 'darker' depending on the tourist's interest level or curiosity with death, as well as the magnitude to which a destination is developed to maximize that interest or curiosity. As a result, black or darkest tourism develops when a passion with death is fostered by a deliberate supply of experiences designed to support that passion (Sharpley, 2005). Stone also explored the idea of multiple shades, suggesting a “spectrum of supply” extending as from 'darkest' towards the- 'lightest' types of dark tourism.

The "Darkest" places usually have geographical authenticity – the destination is located on or near the site of death as well as the initial objective wasn't to attract tourists, but rather that the site was established unintentionally (Stone, 2006). “Product category interpretation is genuine, and many sites are history centered, with displays created for commemorative, intellectual, or conservational purposes. ‘The Darkest’ destinations have more political autonomy and ideology than sites on the lighter end. In general, areas where a recent disaster has taken place tend to be the darkest. On the other hand, lighter tourist locations have more infrastructure, and their main goal is to amuse tourists; they are considered by travelers as less authentic (Deutsch, 2014).

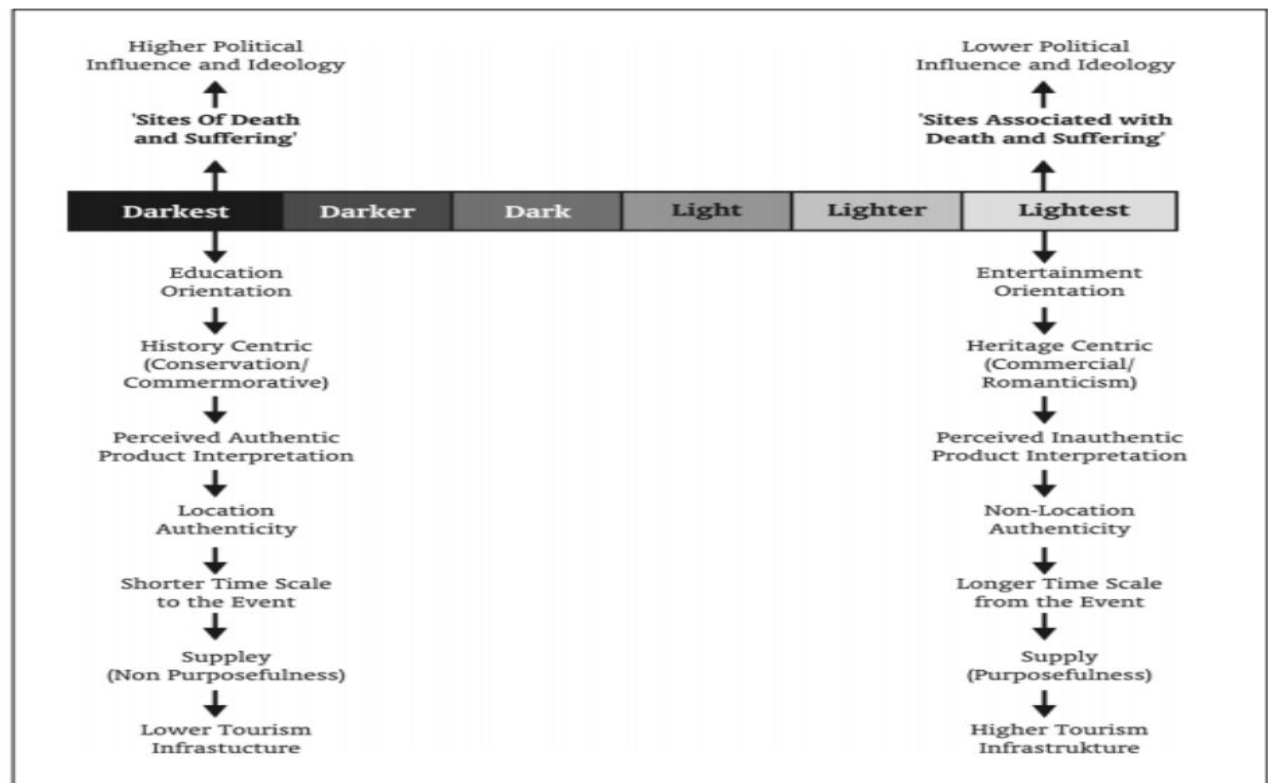
## **2.3 Dark Tourism as a Crucial Tourism Site**

Zerva (2021) mentioned that "Products of Dark tourism may exist on a 'dynamic and fluid intensity continuum,' with diverse destinations potentially being 'darker' than others, relying on several defining factors, views, and product attributes"(Stone, 2006). Different authors described dark tourism product and activity from Different perspective.

Stone has identified seven major kinds of “suppliers”, each with its own set of geographical, historical, political, and philosophical characteristics that influence the perceived power of 'darkness' inside any Dark tourism product. The intensity of the first spaces is ranked as softer otherwise light, whereas the later represents the harder or else darker portion of dark tourism, depends upon factors like the discussion and debate, the identity of the location, the chronological time under investigation, the purposefulness, or the extent of tourism facilities (Stone, 2006). From supply side, these seven products are given below:

Theatricalized Sites of Tragedy denote sightseer attractions, excursions, and places that mostly emphasis on entertainment and have a profitable object, and which reproduce or fictionalize bereavement and horrific occurrences. These sites may be considered less authentic because they

provide sanitized items in terms of presentation (Stone, 2010). Dark exhibitions are those attractions and destinations that merge product design with education to reflect prospective learning opportunities. They provide items and/or experiences revolving around death, misery which frequently have a commemorative, educative, or philosophical message. These products may be seen as more genuine and serious and thus have a 'dark edge'.



**Figure 1: Spectrum of Dark Tourism; Source: (Stone, 2006)**

Dark Dungeons are places and attractions that showcase past prison and judicial codes to present consumer. These product kinds typically combine theatre & education as their most important merchandising focus, have a very powerful commercialism and tourist infrastructure, and inhabit places that were unsuitable for dark tourism in past. Dark Resting Places concentrate on cemeteries and grave monuments as prospective dark tourism goods (Seaton, 2002). They may be viewed as historically significant and genuine, with a conservation and commemoration ethics.

Dark Shrines are places that profit off the practice of memorizing and honouring the recent death. For brief periods of time, these kinds of events control the news agenda, leading to higher levels of political consciousness and effect for a certain Dark Shrine location within the media era (Stone, 2010). Dark Conflict Sites which are associated to conflict, battlefields, and war cemeteries all over the world, are particularly relevant to World Wars I and II are referred as Dark Conflict Sites (Virgili et. al., 2018). Visitors will recall their parents or relatives who served in the military, and there is still some enough of a connection to act as a memorial. Such sites are now frequently commercialized

and used to spread political beliefs and propaganda (Lennon & Smith ,2004). Dark Camps of Genocide are these sites memorialize places of cruelty, crimes, calamity, and suffering through history, directed by a powerful political ideologies or religious connotation, such as Inquisition locations (Lennon & Smith, 2004).

#### ***2.4 Motivational factors and Prospect of Dark Tourism***

Motivation is a need or condition that makes a tourist want to do something. In terms of tourism motivation, that action is to take a vacation that is likely to make them happy by meeting the needs or conditions (Robinson et al., 2011). There are various sorts of Dark Tourism destinations, and the reasons for visiting these places are diverse. The motivations of dark tourism will undoubtedly vary depending on the intensity of meanings for diverse people inside various social networks. (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). It's difficult to say what draws travelers to dark locations where tragedy has occurred. Dark tourism motives can be difficult to interpret because they can appear as a mix of veneration and the pleasure of stepping into proximity to death (Ntunda, 2014).

Understanding distinct tourist motives can aid in the development of visitor attractions, as well as the development of better products and services (Bowen & Clarke, 2009). Different motivating forces are classified and identified using the push and pull principle. Internal reasons are defined as push factors that encourage tourists to explore activities to meet their needs such as desire for leisure and escapism, adventure, and social engagement. Pull factors can be defined that are unique to a destination, like facilities and amenities or cultural attractions that make tourists want to go there. The knowledge of tourists about destinations might be considered a pull factor. (TITTA, 2010). Some new researchers argue that engaging in dark travel experience is a participatory process between the traveler and the place that accentuates the symbolic significance of the location (Apostolakis, 2003; Biran et al., 2011).

The research of dark tourism must concentrate on the mental motives that drive tourism growth. (Podoshen, 2013). Visitors go to Dark sites because they really want to know the truth otherwise, they are fascinated by death (Seaton, 1996). 'Education, Remembrance or Entertainment" were some of the reasons people went on dark tourism trips (Foley & Lennon, 1996). Tourists expressed curiosity about uncommon traveler attractions to artifacts for self-uniqueness and expression (Ashworth, 1998). The reasons for visiting dark locations have been enumerated and studied from various angles and methods. Scholars propose motivation factors from supplier perspective (Stone, 2006), correlation between fatal attractions & motivation (Seaton, 1999). Other approaches are socio-cultural perspective (Gillen, 2018; Stone & Sharply, 2008), scrutiny of motivational components in potential visitors (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005).

As stated above that the literature proposes a wide range of motives, the most comprehensive motivational factor is identified by Dann (Dann, 1998), who recognizes several influences, such as: a. panic of phantoms (i.e., trying to overcome childish fears); b. hunt for novelty; c. escapism; d. the commemoration of crime; e. basic bloodlust; f. on a more basic level, 'filleting with death' that is,

willing to undertake journeys, g. 'Holiday time in hell' (O'Rourke 1988; Pelton 2003), that challenge or heighten tourists' feeling of mortality.

Curiosity, the urge for seeing to their own eye, seeing a destination 'distinct' from the normal tourism destinations seem to be powerful motivators with predicted feelings of grief, misery, and empathy (Isaac & Cakmak, 2014; Nawijn et al., 2016; Isaac et al., 2017).

### ***2.5 Ethical Concern in Dark Tourism***

During the first decade, ethical concern of dark tourism was very important in research (Light, 2017). Some researchers (Clark, 2014; Dale & Robinson, 2011; Lennon, 2010; Lennon & Foley, 2000), tourism at areas of suffering and death expressed doubts about the social acceptance and appropriateness of presenting sites related to death for tourist activities as well as the wider issue of whether profiting from death or the tragedy is acceptable (Garcia, 2012; Seaton, 2009). Many people believe that the charging fee for delivering depressing and ghastly stories is wrong, because sadness can be turned into a commodity for increasing the number of tourists. "Doing a tour in which actual experiences are shared, however horrific they may appear, should not upset anyone" (Garcia, 2012.).

Another ethical argument concentrated on visitor perspective (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005) that increased interaction with tragedy and misery may render it much more ordinary or acceptable, instead of frightening and unacceptable, according to dark tourism (Ashworth, 2004; Ashworth, 2008; Robb, 2009). There is a propensity to judge visitors to dark tourism locations harshly, presuming they are uninformed, inclined to perceive such locations as nothing more than entertainment, or prone to act improperly or insensitively (Beech, 2001; Braithwaite- & Leiper, 2010; Clark, 2014; Frew, 2012; Gould, 2014; Krisjanous, 2016; Lennon & Mitchell, 2007; Sather Wagstaff, 2011). A more serious ethical issue centered on how tourists are presented with areas connected with suffering and death. Early reports on dark tourism claimed that commodification sanitized, twisted, or perhaps misrepresented catastrophic historical occurrences (Foley & Lennon, 1996; Foley & Lennon 1997; Lennon & Foley, 1999; Lennon & Foley, 2000). Also, the educational importance of destinations of death was hurt by the focus on spectacle and enjoyment (called as "dark edutainment" by Sharpley & Stone, 2009 and "dartainment" by Dale & Robinson, 2011).

"Overall, ethical issues of dark tourism (especially the consequences of commodification) have produced more questions than answers. While opponents have been willing to point out what they consider as being trivializations or distortions of death sites, they have become not as much of willing to provide solutions. By the end of 2000s, the discussion over the ethical issues of dark tourism has died down, and academic attention has shifted to other topics" (Light, 2017).

### ***2.6 Dark Tourism Avenue in Bangladesh***

Dark tourism has enormous scope to flourish in Bangladesh because Bangladesh has glorious history about liberation war, language movement etc. as well as some tragic events of nation. There are many dark tourism destinations in Bangladesh. Some of dark tourism destinations are discussed in detail below:

### **2.6.1 National Martyrs' Memorial**

The National Martyrs' Memorial (known as Jatiyo Sahid Sriti Soudho) is one of the national monuments in Bangladesh. It is dedicated to those people who had sacrificed their lives in the liberation war in 1971 which war divided Bangladesh from Pakistan and brought independence for us. It is situated in Savar, Dhaka which is just 35 kilometers north-west of Dhaka which is the capital of Bangladesh (Amin & Islam, 2012). The memorial consists of seven pairs of triangle-shaped prisms or walls. The outer pair is the smallest in altitude but widest in spread, and the inner pair forms the building's pinnacle. These seven pair walls illustrate important chapters of Bangladesh's history: Language movement (1952), victory in the provincial election (1954), constitution movement (1956), movement against educational commission (1962), Six-point movement (1966), mass upsurge (1969), and finally liberation war in 1971. In 1982, the main structure, as well as artificial lakes and other amenities, were completed. It was officially opened for all on December 16, 1982 (Sharmin & Halim, 2019).

### **2.6.2 Shaheed Minar**

The Shaheed Minar is in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It is commemorating to those people who sacrifice their lives for Language Movement in 1952 what was then East Pakistan. On 21st and 22nd of February 1952, Pakistani police opened fire on protestors who were claiming official recognition for Bengali language as their native tongue. Political activists as well as students from Dhaka Medical College (DMC) and Dhaka University (DU) were slain. The massacre took place near Ramna Park and DMC (Sharmin & Halim, 2019). The entire monument was ultimately ready in 1963 and remained until the independence war in 1971. It was again destroyed by Pakistani during the Operation searchlight in 1971. It was reconstructed in that year when Bangladesh got independence. Later, it was enlarged in 1983. Every year on 21st February, it is celebrated as "Shaheed Dibas" or "Martyrs' Day", and it is also celebrated as "International Mother Language Day" which is declared by UNESCO on 17th November 1999.

### **2.6.3 The Liberation War Museum**

"Muktijuddho Jadughor" is also known as the Liberation War Museum located in Agargaon, Dhaka. This museum commemorates the liberation war of Bangladesh which results in Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan. The museum has gathered around 21,000 artefacts during 2016, some of which are on display and more of which are stocked in the archives of the museum. Because of space limitations, all artifacts could not be displayed. To overcome this limitation, the liberation war museum relocated to Agargaon which has 3500 square meters of gallery space and started construction of the building in 2013 (Sharmin & Halim, 2019).

### **2.6.4 Memorial of Independence**

The Museum of Independence is also known as "Swadhinata Museum" and is located at Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka. This is the first underground museum in Bangladesh. There are no such museums in the country. It was inaugurated on 25th March 2015 at the 45th independent day of Bangladesh. It

is opened for visitors from Saturday to Wednesday at 9:30am – 3:00 Pm. This museum explains the history of Bangladesh from Mughal period to its independence in 1971 (Sharmin & Halim, 2019).

### ***2.6.5 Bangladesh Military Museum***

The former name of “Bangladesh Military Museum” was “Army Museum” which was established in Mirpur Cantonment, Dhaka on March 1987 and inaugurated on 26th November 1987. This museum was relocated to Bijoy Sarani, Dhaka and renamed as “Bangladesh Military Museum”. This museum is located besides Novo Theater, Bijoy Sarani, Dhaka (Bangladesh Military Museum, n.d.). There are six distinct divisions within the museum, comprising exhibitions for the Bangladesh Air, Navy and Army Force. This museum is designed to resemble the Novo Theater. All museum’s artifacts are displayed in a corkscrew arrangement, and another remarkable feature of this museum is its extensive usage of augmented reality (Sharmin & Halim, 2019).

### ***2.6.6 Shaheed Buddhijibi Smritisoudho***

Shaheed Buddhijibi Smritisoudho is also termed as a “martyred intellectual memorial” which is situated in Mirpur, Dhaka. It is commemorated to those intellectuals to whom the force of Al-Badr was killed on the 14th of December 1971. The main monument consists of red brick triangles erected by a black granite altar and a magnificent marble foundation plaque. Besides this monument, there is a mass graveyard. The most significant part of this memorial is that Bir Shrestho Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman and Bir Shrestho Hamidur Rahman were buried in this graveyard (Sharmin & Halim, 2019).

### ***2.6.7 Maynamoti War Cemetery***

Maynamoti War Cemetery is also known as Comilla War Cemetery, which is in Cantonment, Comilla. This war cemetery commemorates that hero who had sacrificed their lives in the Second World War. There are 736 Commonwealth graves in the war cemetery. These graves were brought from various area around the country such as Faridpur, Dhaka, Pakshy, Santahan, Saidpur and Sirajganj and some graves from Burma (Myanmar). These graves were transferred into this cemetery by the Army Graves Service. The Christian tombs are located between the hill and entrance which are far away from Muslim tombs (Maynamoti War Cemetery, n.d.).

### ***2.6.8 Chittagong War Cemetery***

Chittagong War Cemetery is located in Badsha Meah Road, Joynagar Mauza, Chittagong. This war cemetery commemorates that hero who had sacrificed their lives in the eastern front in Second World War II. There are 755 Commonwealth graves in the war cemetery. 400 bodies were first buried under army supervision in this cemetery. After the war, the rest of the bodies were brought from different burial places such as Dhaka, Lusai, Khulna, Cox’s Bazar, Jessore, Dhowa Palang, Rangamati, Dohazari, and Patiya. And 6500 names of seamen and naval employee were kept in a register of the cemetery who died during the action of the war (Chittagong War Cemetery - Banglapedia, n.d.).

### 3. Research Methodology

**Research Design:** This study utilizes a qualitative exploratory research design to examine the opportunities and difficulties associated with dark tourism, especially from the viewpoints of stakeholders engaged in its development, marketing, and interpretation (Deb, 2021). A qualitative approach is suitable when the aim of the research is to comprehend the meanings, experiences, and interpretations surrounding complex and socially constructed phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given that dark tourism encompasses sensitive cultural, emotional, and ethical issues, this design facilitates a thorough investigation of its dynamics within specific contexts.

**Sample Size, Sampling Technique, and Data Collection:** Key Informant Interviews (KII) serve as the main technique for gathering data for the study (Stone, 2012). KII's are in-depth interviews with people who have special knowledge or insight into the topic being studied on dark tourism (Marshall, 1996). Moreover; Sharpley and Stone (2009), KIIs are especially well-suited for studying tourism that deals with death, trauma, or disasters, where contextual awareness and ethical sensitivity are crucial and crucial for comprehending cultural and managerial aspects or when documentary evidence may be scarce (Sy et al., 2007).

The key informants in the context of dark tourism could include tourism stakeholders such government officials (employee of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, employee of Bangladesh Tourism Board), academicians, Tour operators, tour guides, and tourists. In this study, a purposive sampling method is employed to identify individuals capable of providing in-depth and pertinent information based on their experiences in dark tourism.

In this study, a total of 20 respondents were interviewed, whereas a total of 12 to 15 participants is interviewed to reach data saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). KII has been conducted through face-to-face interview; each interview approximately 20-30 minutes consumed for question answer, recording with prior consent, interview with prior consent of recording and transcribed verbatim analysis.

**Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure:** A semi-structured interview guide will be developed, allowing flexibility while maintaining consistency across interviews (Clark, 2014). A thematic analysis is adopted due to the understanding of dark tourism and its impact on the benefits ethical and cultural concerns, Management and promotional challenges Policy and future development recommendations. The data is analyzed using thematic analysis, a flexible method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The steps include manual coding and/or use of qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo or Atlas.ti), each supporting the organization and interpretation of themes.

**Ethical Considerations:** All participants are provided with clear information about the study and their rights. Personal identifiers are anonymized in transcripts and final outputs. Respondents have the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Due to the nature of dark tourism involving

traumatic sites, care will be taken to conduct interview with empathy and cultural respect (Stone, 2012).

## 4. Data Analysis

### 4.1 Demographic Details

Among the 20 interviewees, an equal number of male and female took part in the interview session. 11 interviewees are under 25, 08 aged between 26 and 50, and 01 interviewees are in the 51–75 age group. There are 04 participants who are married and 16 participants are unmarried. There are government officials such as an employee of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) as well as four academicians, four tour operators and tour guides, and ten tourists who took part in the interview session. Ten tourists, four tour operators and tour guides earn below 30,000; government officials from BPC and BTB earn between 60,000 to 89,000. Academicians earn between 30,000 to 59,000. Fifteen interviewees hold post graduate degrees, and the remaining five interviewees hold undergraduate degrees.

**Table: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

	Status	No of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	10	50%
	Female	10	50%
Age	Below 25	11	55%
	26-50	08	40%
	51-75 or above	01	5%
Marital Status	Married	04	20%
	Unmarried	16	80%
Occupation	Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC)	01	5%
	Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB)	01	5%
	Academician	04	20%

	<i>Tour Operators and Tour Guides</i>	04	20%
	<i>Tourists</i>	10	50%
<i>Monthly Income</i>	<i>Below 30,000</i>	14	70%
	<i>30,000-59,000</i>	04	20%
	<i>60,000-89,000</i>	02	10%
<i>Education</i>	<i>Graduation</i>	05	25%
	<i>Post-Graduation</i>	15	75%

#### **4.2 Knowledge management and Dark Tourism**

Most of the interviewees have already knowledge about dark tourism concept. Very few interviewees don't have any knowledge about dark tourism concept, but they have visited dark tourism destinations in Bangladesh. Interviewees have come to know about dark tourism through academic book and class lecture, social media through watching some short promotional videos or photos about dark tourism, newspaper, conducting assignment on dark tourism, article, google and videos on YouTube. Interviewees have also gathered knowledge about dark tourism by visiting dark tourism destinations in Bangladesh such as National Martyrs Memorial, Shaheed Minar, Mainamati War Cemetery, Liberation War Museum, Martyred Intellectual Memorial and Jalladkhana Killing Field etc.

#### **4.3 Key Ethical issues and Dark Tourism**

Most of the interviewees have stated that visitors don't face any ethical dilemma to visit any dark tourism destinations in Bangladesh such as- "I really don't think any tourists will face any ethical dilemma to visit dark tourism destinations in Bangladesh as most of the places related with liberation war of Bangladesh." (Male 05, #08)

Only two interviewees have stated that very few visitors may face ethical dilemma to visit some specific form of dark tourism destinations in Bangladesh- "There are different dimensions of dark tourism destination in Bangladesh such as museum, memorial, graveyard. All the people in the society may be interested in visiting museums and memorial related to dark tourism. But whenever talk about graveyard places, there are small group of people who are illiterate, not open-minded, believed in superstition, they don't feel any interest to those places and some well-educated people think that these places lose its significance being a tourism spot." (Male 07, #13)

#### **4.4 Motivational & Potential Factors of Dark Tourism**

All interviewees have stated that Bangladesh has huge potentials for dark tourism and stated scope of potentiality in this form of tourism. Some statements regarding potential of dark tourism in Bangladesh have been outlined:

“Huge potentiality of dark Tourism in Bangladesh because of its glorious history of liberation war, historical movement, dark night of the nation 15th august, 1975”. (Male 05, #08)

“Bangladesh has so many dark tourism places related to victorious liberation war as well as world heritage document recognized by UNESCO which can attract both domestic and international tourism, but they are not well promoted as well as authority gives less attention to conserve these dark tourism spots. There is no doubt that Dark Tourism in Bangladesh has huge potentiality if effective marketing strategy can be undertaken to promote dark tourism resources. For example, Haor places is getting popularity by tourist recently when they are extensively promoted as Haor tourism and now many tourists participate in this form of tourism each year.” (Male 10, #20)

Different motivational factors influence dark tourist for travelling dark places. Interviewees explained as-

“I like to explore the history of tragic events that’s why I go to visit dark tourism places”. (Male 08, #17).

“People go to visit dark tourism destination from the aspect of social responsibility that as a citizen of Bangladesh to learn about national historical events is their duty. When they will be aware about history and culture, they will teach young generation about glorious past and young generation then also go to visit”. (Female 02, #07)

Dark tourism is started to bloom in Bangladesh. So, people may go there for education and research purpose; people may go there to relate their knowledge about dark tourism to real life experience”. (Male 03, #05).

#### **4.5 Promoting Dark Tourism**

Interviewees explain effective promotional channel to promote dark tourism in Bangladesh as-

“Nothing can be better than social media specifically Facebook to promote dark tourism in Bangladesh because in this digital era, people have spent a certain period on Facebook regularly which will help to reach broader target market. Instagram can be another option for promoting dark tourism where short videos regarding dark tourism can be uploaded to attract tourist”. (Female 02, #07)

“For promoting dark tourism, a search engine based on dark tourism can be launched where people may get details about all dark tourism destinations in Bangladesh. Besides, travel related TV channel can be launched where documentary on dark tourism destinations can be broadcasted as well as make television commercial (TVC) on dark tourism.” (Female 07, #12)

#### **4.6 Key Challenges of Dark Tourism**

The author has asked all the interviewees about challenges of dark tourism in Bangladesh. Some statements regarding challenges of dark tourism in Bangladesh have been found from interview session are outlined below:

“For developing any form of tourism in a country, not only tourism resource but also some additional facilities are required such as easy access, accommodation, security facility, information availability etc. And most important requirement is cooperation from other ministry along with ministry of civil, aviation and tourism to develop dark tourism. But there is less cooperation from other ministries to ministry of civil, aviation and tourism for developing dark tourism. Security system is not well-managed in many dark tourism places.” (Male 09, #19).

“There is no specific allocation in the national budget for developing dark tourism in Bangladesh. Dark tourism places are well managed for a specific time within a year when national days are celebrated based on those dark tourism places. After that, those places are misused by local people and no proper security system in those places in rest of the year. If government support cannot be ensured, it is quite impossible to develop dark tourism in Bangladesh”. (Female 03, #17).

“Lack of professionalism and lack of educational material related to dark tourism are major challenges for developing dark tourism in Bangladesh”. (Female 06, #12).

“Lack of tour guide, misinterpretation of information & negative perception about dark sites, lack of appropriate marketing strategies is some of the challenges to develop dark tourism in Bangladesh”. (Male 07, #13).

#### **4.7 Measures to Overcome Challenges of Dark Tourism**

Some statements in terms of potential measures to overcome challenges of dark tourism in Bangladesh have been found from interview session are outlined below:

“Allocation for developing dark tourism should be secured in the national budget. Authority should give more attention toward managing dark tourism resources not only on a specific period but also around the whole year. Dark tourism destinations should be protected by the authority and take steps against local people so that they cannot misuse for other purposes such as illegal activities (taking drugs, crime etc.), political activities. (Male 10, #20)

“Dark tourism will be developed in Bangladesh if Prime Minister of Bangladesh takes proper planning regarding dark tourism through the standing committee of the parliament. Any decisions from this standing committee will be the most effective steps for blooming dark tourism. Financial support from govt is essential. Cooperation among ‘Ministry of Liberation war’, ‘Ministry of Land’ ‘Ministry of Civil, Aviation and Tourism’ and local administration should be ensured. Security system around the dark tourism spots should be strictly maintained”. (Male 03, #05)

## **5. Discussion on the Findings**

The study results suggest that Bangladesh has huge potentials to bloom dark tourism because it is enriched with enormous dark tourism resources. Developing dark tourism is ethical because it will help the young generation to learn about their origin, history of his/her nation, be respectful to mankind who sacrifice lives for greater interest and understand the significance of tragic events. Some specific motivational factors influence dark tourists for travelling to dark places. They are historical curiosity, emotional attachment, explore tragic events, eagerness to discover unknown history, education and research purpose, connect history with real life experience, scope to visit more than one place on a day trip, social responsibility, patriotism, contributing in the tourism economy and also motivated from peer group and social media. Digital marketing must be used for promoting dark tourism in Bangladesh.

Various challenges must be faced to develop dark tourism in Bangladesh. The challenges are insufficient government support, inadequate allocation for tourism in national budget, less attention of authority to dark Tourism destination, lack of knowledge and educational material related to dark tourism, lack of proper management, absence of tour guide in dark tourism destinations, insufficient infrastructural facilities (safety and security, undeveloped communication channel, recreational facilities), lack of professionalism less cooperation from other ministries, lack of available information about dark Tourism destination, exploits dark sites for other purposes, insufficient marketing strategy to promote dark tourism, indifference to the significance of the dark tourism spots.

Various potential measures have been found from this study to overcome challenges of dark tourism in Bangladesh are ensure government support, ensure allocation for dark tourism in national budget, ensure infrastructural development, maintain cooperation among related stakeholder, authority should be more attentive, make arrangement for tour guide, maintain proper planning, management and effective marketing strategy, increase promotional activities to make people aware about dark tourism, ensure available information regarding dark tourism, make sure proper usage of dark sites and assure professionalism in the tourism authority.

### **5.1 Key findings**

Several findings have been identified from the results of this study which are stated in this section:

- **Ethical Concern:** Ethical issues are a major concern in dark tourism because emotional attachment is related to dark tourism places. Developing dark tourism is ethical because it will help the young generation to learn about their origin, history of his/her nation, be respectful to

mankind who sacrifice lives for greater interest and understand the significance of tragic events. But some interviewees also think that developing dark tourism is unethical because it encourages young generation toward death and tragic events. Young generation may be misguided from this form of tourism and inspired for death, doing crime, violence, occurring tragic events etc. And there are small group of people who are illiterate, not open-minded, believed in superstition, they don't treat graveyard places for dark tourism spots as ethical and some well-educated people think that these places lose its significance being a tourism spot.

- **Potentials of Dark Tourism:** Most of the interviewees have stated that Bangladesh is enriched with enormous dark tourism resources such as glorious liberation war, significant historical movements (language movement, six-points movement, mass movements etc.), and many museums and memorials related to dark tourism around the country. So, Bangladesh has huge potentials to bloom dark tourism if dark tourism resources are properly utilized.
- **Motivational Factors of Dark Tourism:** Dark tourism is an emerging form of tourism related to death, human sufferings, war, tragic events etc. which is completely different from any other form of tourism. So, different motivational factors influence dark tourists for travelling to those places. Specific motivational factors of dark tourism from Bangladesh perspective have been found out in this study. They are historical curiosity, emotional attachment, explore tragic events, eagerness to discover unknown history, education and research purpose, connect history with real life experience, scope to visit more than one place on a day trip, social responsibility, patriotism, contributing in the tourism economy and also motivated from peer group and social media.
- **Effective Promotional Channel:** social media is the most effective promotional channel for dark tourism in Bangladesh. Among social media, Facebook is the best suited for social media as an effective promotional channel. In addition, search engine optimization regarding dark tourism, documentary and television commercial based on dark tourism, launching travel related TV channel, advertisement on YouTube, online blog on dark tourism can be effective promotional channel for dark tourism in Bangladesh. All of the elements have been found in this study as effective promotional channels are part of digital marketing. So, digital marketing must be used for promoting dark tourism in Bangladesh.
- **Challenges of Dark Tourism:** As dark tourism concept is flourished in past two decades ago and people are not aware of this form of tourism, that's why dark tourism is not well developed in Bangladesh still now. Though Bangladesh is enriched with enormous dark tourism resources, it is still lagging to utilize its resources. To develop dark tourism in Bangladesh, there are various challenges must be faced. The study has found out some challenges regarding developing dark tourism in Bangladesh.
  - First, most of the people are indifference about the significance of dark tourism sites because there are no available information and educational material regarding dark

- tourism in Bangladesh. So, lack of knowledge, available information, and educational materials related to dark tourism are one of the major challenges to develop dark tourism in our country.
- Another challenge is insufficient government support and inadequate allocation or no allocation in national budget of Bangladesh to develop dark tourism. And authorities do not pay proper attention to dark tourism destinations and also do not take any appropriate steps to avoid misuse of dark sites by local people throughout the year. So, local people easily get access to exploit dark sites for various purposes which degrade the significance of that destination. After that, absence of professionalism in tourism authority, dearth of proper management and insufficient infrastructural facilities (safety and security, undeveloped communication channel, recreational facilities) are challenges to flourish dark tourism in Bangladesh. Next, there is less cooperation from other ministries to ministry of civil, aviation, and tourism which is another major issue for the growth of dark tourism properly.
  - Furthermore, a tour guide is one of the most vital elements for developing any form of tourism because he shares facts and stories about the destination, entertains tourists and answers all queries regarding destination. But on dark sites, there is no available tour guide from whom tourists may get information and directions during their trip. So, the absence of tour guides in dark tourism destinations is another obstacle to the growth of dark tourism. Finally, insufficient marketing strategies and lack of massive promotional activities to promote dark tourism are the major challenges in the development of dark tourism in Bangladesh.
  - **Measures to Overcome Challenges of Dark Tourism:** To develop dark tourism in Bangladesh, many challenges must be faced undoubtedly as dark tourism is an emerging form of tourism and people are not so much familiar to this concept. As Bangladesh has huge potentials of dark tourism with enormous dark resources, so challenges can easily be prevented through effective steps taken by the authority to develop dark tourism. Various potential measures have been found from this study to overcome challenges of dark tourism in Bangladesh.
    - Firstly, proper government support to develop dark tourism must be ensured as well as sufficient allocation in national budget for infrastructural development and proper planning, management and effective marketing strategy for dark tourism destinations must be ensured.
    - Secondly, tourism authorities who are responsible for managing and protecting dark tourism sites should be more attentive throughout the whole year so that these sites cannot be misused. To avoid misuse of dark tourism sites, proper steps must be taken. Therefore, to ensure proper management of these tourism sites, authorities should maintain proper coordination among public and private tourism stakeholders as well as among different concerned ministries.

- Thirdly, dark tourism will bloom if information regarding dark tourism can be available for tourists everywhere. To provide better experience and attract tourist in dark tourism destinations, tour guides must be ensured in these sites so that they can explain the facts about the destination and make tourists more interested to travel more dark tourism related destinations.
- Fourthly, there must be tourism experts in tourism authority who are aware of this concept in order that proper decision and planning can be done for flourishing dark tourism. So, professionalism in the tourism authority must be assured.
- Finally, there is no other way to develop any form of tourism without undertaking extensive promotional activities around the country as well as in the world. Therefore, promotional activities regarding dark tourism must be increased to make people aware and overcome challenges to develop dark tourism in Bangladesh.

## **6. Conclusion and Implications**

As dark tourism is a new and distinct form of tourism which is closely related to death, historical events, war, human sufferings, tragic events, it requires different tourism resources and different motivational factors to attract tourist. Dark tourism is relatively a recent phenomenon which is completely untouched but existed for years without awareness in Bangladesh. Many places have already been developed in Bangladesh related to liberation war, historical event, tragic events of the nation which are parts of dark tourism. So, it can be said that Bangladesh has huge potential comprising with numerous dark resources to bloom dark tourism.

The study has been stated the challenges that dark tourism is facing to develop in Bangladesh and stated some potential measures to overcome those challenges which have been found from the interview session. If proper steps have been taken by tourism authority to develop dark tourism, dark tourism will play an effective role in the economy of Bangladesh. This paper may be helpful to future researchers who will do research work in this field. For scope of future research, the researcher suggests that future researcher may work with specific dark tourism destination as this study proposes generalize information regarding dark tourism all over the country and future researcher may work with effective marketing strategy for promoting dark tourism. As the researcher collected data from limited dark tourism spots, future researchers may collect from dark sites all over the country to get more accurate information.

### **6.1 Implications of the study**

This study findings provide understandings to those who are tourism stakeholders in Bangladesh and work for developing different forms of tourism through Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB), Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), Ministry of Civil, Aviation and Tourism as well as private tourism stakeholders who are focused on new form of tourism to attract tourist and people and also who are interested to know details of dark tourism in Bangladesh.

This study will help the development of literature for further studies and practically, dark tourism encompasses various implications, including economic, socio-cultural, ethical, and governance

aspects. For instance, historical war sites can be transformed into educational tourist destinations featuring exhibitions, which contribute to job creation and diversify tourism beyond just natural attractions (Deb and Nafi, 2021) Furthermore, this approach can strengthen national pride and identity. It is essential for government and tourism stakeholders to adhere to preservation laws and guidelines, while also ensuring that local communities are actively involved in the decision-making process. Infrastructural development such as accommodation, communication, security system, information system and recreation facility should be assured around dark tourism sites to attract tourists. Dark tourism destinations should have available tour guide facility who will explain the proper history and significance of sites that will help to attract domestic as well as international tourists. Government should give special attention in developing dark tourism in Bangladesh and financial support should be ensured in the national budget.

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