

Reconnecting With Roots: Motivational Drivers Of Genealogy Tourism Among Bangladeshi Diaspora In The USA

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Abstract

This study investigates the motivational drivers of genealogy tourism among the Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States by integrating push-pull theory, place attachment theory, and social identity theory. Adopting a mixed-method approach, data were collected through a structured survey (n = 160) and 25 semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis to provide deeper contextual insights. The findings reveal that nostalgia, cultural identity, family connection, and genealogical curiosity significantly influence diaspora tourists' intention to visit Bangladesh. Among these, family connection and nostalgia emerge as dominant drivers, while emotional (place) attachment plays a crucial mediating role in strengthening travel intention. Qualitative insights further highlight that genealogy tourism is not merely a travel activity but a meaningful process of identity reconstruction, emotional reconnection, and intergenerational continuity. The study contributes to the literature by offering an integrated theoretical framework and provides practical implications for developing diaspora-focused tourism strategies in Bangladesh. The findings suggest that genealogy tourism holds strong potential as a sustainable and emotionally driven niche tourism segment.

Keywords: *Genealogy tourism; Diaspora tourism; Nostalgia; Cultural identity; Place attachment; Travel intention; Bangladesh*

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I. Introduction

In an era characterized by intensified globalization, increased transnational mobility, and the growing salience of diasporic identities, travel has increasingly become a medium through which individuals seek to reconnect with their cultural and ancestral roots (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Huang et al., 2016). Within this evolving landscape, genealogy tourism, commonly referred to as roots tourism, has emerged as a distinct niche within heritage and diaspora tourism (Timothy, 1997; Poria et al., 2003; Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Genealogy tourism involves individuals traveling to their ancestral homelands to explore familial lineage, cultural heritage, and identity, thereby distinguishing itself from conventional leisure-oriented travel (Poria et al., 2003; Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Unlike mass tourism, this form of travel is deeply embedded in emotional, psychological, and socio-cultural motivations, making it a complex and multidimensional phenomenon shaped by memory, identity construction, and symbolic meaning (Basu, 2004; Sedikides et al., 2008; Huang et al., 2016).

The Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States represents a rapidly expanding and economically influential transnational community characterized by enduring emotional, cultural, and familial ties to their homeland (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Huang et al., 2016). While return visits to Bangladesh have traditionally been associated with familial obligations, religious practices, or social commitments, recent patterns indicate a shift toward more purposive travel centered on ancestral exploration and identity reconstruction (Basu, 2004; Huang

et al., 2016). Such travel behavior is often driven by nostalgia, cultural rediscovery, and the desire to reaffirm a sense of belonging within a transnational identity framework (Sedikides et al., 2008; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This tendency is particularly evident among second-generation diaspora members, who frequently engage in heritage-seeking travel as a means of negotiating hybrid identities and reconnecting with their cultural origins (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Basu, 2004). Despite these developments, scholarly inquiry into genealogy tourism within the Bangladeshi context remains limited, as existing research has predominantly focused on destination development, tourism promotion, and sustainability issues rather than ancestry-driven travel behavior (Muneem & Avi, 2017; Muneem et al., 2018; Avi et al., 2019).

From a theoretical standpoint, tourism motivation has been widely conceptualized through the push–pull framework, which posits that travel behavior is influenced by the interaction between internal psychological drivers and external destination attributes (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). In the context of genealogy tourism, intrinsic motivations such as nostalgia, identity formation, emotional attachment, and genealogical curiosity play a particularly significant role in shaping travel intentions and behavior (Basu, 2004; Sedikides et al., 2008). Nostalgia functions as a powerful emotional mechanism that fosters a longing for the past and strengthens individuals’ desire to reconnect with their ancestral homeland (Sedikides et al., 2008; Basu, 2004). Similarly, place attachment theory explains how individuals develop emotional and symbolic bonds with specific locations, particularly those associated with personal or ancestral significance (Williams & Vaske, 2003; Ramkissoon et al., 2013). Complementing this perspective, social identity theory highlights how individuals construct and negotiate their identities through affiliation with cultural and social groups, thereby reinforcing the importance of homeland connections in diaspora experiences (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Despite the relevance of these frameworks, their integrated application to genealogy tourism among the Bangladeshi diaspora remains underexplored (Huang et al., 2016; Prayag & Ryan, 2012).

From a practical perspective, Bangladesh possesses considerable yet underutilized potential to position itself as a viable destination for genealogy tourism, given its rich cultural heritage and strong diaspora linkages (Muneem & Avi, 2017; Rahman et al., 2018). Prior studies have emphasized the importance of sustainable tourism management, effective institutional performance, and strategic promotion in enhancing the country’s tourism sector (Muneem & Avi, 2017; Muneem et al., 2018). The role of digital platforms and online marketing has also been identified as a critical factor in improving destination visibility and attracting international tourists (Avi et al., 2019). Furthermore, rural and community-based tourism initiatives provide opportunities to deliver authentic and immersive cultural experiences that align closely with the expectations of genealogy tourists seeking meaningful engagement with their heritage (Rahman et al., 2018). In addition, the broader tourism ecosystem including financial support mechanisms for tourism and hospitality enterprises plays a crucial role in facilitating sustainable tourism development in Bangladesh (Muneem et al., 2026). However, despite these advancements, diaspora-focused tourism strategies, particularly those targeting genealogy tourism, remain largely absent from both academic discourse and policy frameworks (Muneem et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2018).

Importantly, genealogy tourists differ significantly from conventional tourists, as they tend to exhibit higher levels of emotional involvement, longer lengths of stay, and stronger revisit intentions due to their personal and symbolic connections to the destination (Poria et al., 2003; Timothy & Boyd, 2006). As such, this segment holds substantial potential for fostering sustainable tourism development, strengthening diaspora engagement, and enhancing cultural diplomacy (Huang et al., 2016; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Understanding the motivational drivers underlying genealogy tourism is therefore essential for designing targeted tourism products, improving destination competitiveness, and cultivating long-term relationships between diaspora communities and their ancestral homeland (Crompton, 1979; Ramkissoon et al., 2013).

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to address the overarching research question of what motivational drivers influence genealogy tourism among the Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States and how these drivers shape their intention to visit Bangladesh for ancestral purposes. More specifically, the study examines how key motivational factors such as nostalgia, cultural identity, family connection, and genealogical curiosity influence travel intention, while also investigating the role of emotional attachment as a mediating mechanism in this relationship (Williams & Vaske, 2003; Ramkissoon et al., 2013). Accordingly, the primary objective of this study is to analyze the motivational determinants of genealogy tourism and their impact on diaspora travel behavior, alongside evaluating the mediating effect of emotional attachment and offering strategic insights for the development of genealogy tourism in Bangladesh. By addressing these interrelated research questions and objectives, the study contributes to the expanding body of literature on genealogy and diaspora tourism and provides actionable implications for policymakers and tourism stakeholders aiming to position Bangladesh as a distinctive destination for roots-based travel experiences.

II. Literature Review

Genealogy Tourism and Diaspora Engagement

Genealogy tourism, situated within the broader domains of heritage and diaspora tourism, has gained increasing scholarly attention due to its strong association with identity, memory, and personal heritage (Timothy, 1997; Poria et al., 2003; Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Unlike general heritage tourism, genealogy tourism is inherently personal, as it involves individuals traveling to destinations linked to their familial lineage and ancestral origins (Basu, 2004; Huang et al., 2016). This form of tourism is particularly relevant for diaspora populations, who often maintain emotional and symbolic connections with their homelands despite geographical separation (Coles & Timothy, 2004; King, 2000). Diaspora tourism reflects the mobility patterns of migrants and their descendants who travel to reconnect with their cultural roots, reaffirm identity, and strengthen transnational ties (Huang et al., 2016; Duval, 2004). Such travel is not merely recreational but represents a process of identity negotiation, especially among second-generation migrants who seek to bridge cultural gaps between host and original countries (Basu, 2004; Coles & Timothy, 2004). Despite growing importance globally, genealogy tourism remains underexplored in developing country contexts such as Bangladesh, where tourism research has largely focused on destination development and promotion rather than diaspora-driven travel (Muneem & Avi, 2017; Muneem et al., 2018).

Motivational Drivers of Genealogy Tourism

Tourism motivation has traditionally been explained through the push-pull framework, which distinguishes between internal psychological drivers and external destination attributes (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). In genealogy tourism, intrinsic motivations such as nostalgia, cultural identity, genealogical curiosity, and family connection play a dominant role in influencing travel behavior (Basu, 2004; Sedikides et al., 2008; Huang et al., 2016). Nostalgia, defined as a sentimental longing for the past, has been identified as a key emotional driver that motivates individuals to revisit places associated with personal or collective memories (Sedikides et al., 2008; Batcho, 2013). Similarly, genealogical curiosity drives individuals to explore their ancestry and family history, often facilitated by advancements in digital genealogy resources (Yakel, 2004; Huang et al., 2016). Cultural identity also plays a crucial role, as diaspora individuals often seek to reaffirm their ethnic and cultural belonging through travel to their ancestral homeland (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In addition to push factors, pull factors such as cultural heritage attractions, family networks, and authentic local experiences influence destination choice by providing opportunities for meaningful engagement (Poria et al., 2003; Timothy & Boyd, 2006). However, existing studies have largely examined these motivational factors in isolation, with limited efforts to integrate them into a comprehensive framework specific to genealogy tourism, particularly in non-western contexts.

Place Attachment and Emotional Connection

Place attachment refers to the emotional and symbolic bonds that individuals develop with specific locations, particularly those that hold personal or cultural significance (Williams & Vaske, 2003; Ramkissoon et al., 2013). In genealogy tourism, place attachment is often intensified due to the ancestral and familial connections associated with the destination (Huang et al., 2016; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Empirical studies have demonstrated that strong place attachment leads to positive behavioral outcomes, including increased travel intention, satisfaction, and loyalty (Ramkissoon et al., 2013; Stylos et al., 2017). Moreover, place attachment has been conceptualized as a mediating mechanism that links motivational factors to behavioral intentions, thereby providing a deeper understanding of tourism decision-making processes (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Stylos et al., 2017). Despite its theoretical relevance, the mediating role of place attachment in genealogy tourism remains underexplored, particularly in the context of diaspora travel to developing destinations such as Bangladesh. This represents a critical gap; as emotional attachment is likely to play a central role in shaping ancestry-driven travel behavior.

Identity Construction and Social Belonging

Social identity theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how individuals construct and negotiate their identities through group membership and cultural affiliation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For diaspora populations, identity is often fluid and multifaceted, shaped by both host and origin cultures (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Duval, 2004). Genealogy tourism serves as a mechanism through which individuals reaffirm their cultural identity and strengthen their sense of belonging to a particular ethnic or national group (Basu, 2004; Huang et al., 2016). This is particularly significant for second-generation migrants, who may experience identity ambiguity and seek to resolve it through engagement with their ancestral homeland (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Duval, 2004). Furthermore, identity-driven motivations are closely linked to emotional attachment, as individuals develop stronger bonds with places that are central to their self-concept (Ramkissoon et al., 2013; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). However, the interaction between identity, motivation, and travel behavior in

genealogy tourism remains insufficiently examined in empirical research, particularly within South Asian contexts.

Genealogy Tourism and Destination Development in Bangladesh

From a destination development perspective, genealogy tourism presents significant opportunities for engaging diaspora populations and promoting sustainable tourism growth (Timothy & Boyd, 2006; Huang et al., 2016). In Bangladesh, prior studies have emphasized the importance of sustainable tourism management, institutional performance, and strategic promotion in enhancing tourism development (Muneem & Avi, 2017; Muneem et al., 2018). Digital marketing and online platforms have also been identified as critical tools for increasing destination visibility and attracting international tourists (Avi et al., 2019). Additionally, rural tourism and community-based tourism initiatives offer considerable potential for providing authentic and culturally immersive experiences that align with the expectations of genealogy tourists (Rahman et al., 2018). The role of financial institutions in supporting tourism entrepreneurship further highlights the importance of a supportive ecosystem for tourism development (Muneem et al., 2026). Despite these advancements, there remains a lack of targeted strategies focusing on diaspora tourism and genealogy tourism in Bangladesh. Existing policies and research have largely overlooked the potential of diaspora-driven tourism as a sustainable and high-value market segment.

Theoretical Propositions

Although prior studies have explored heritage tourism, diaspora tourism, and tourism motivation independently, there remains a significant gap in integrating these dimensions within a unified framework that explains genealogy tourism behavior. Existing research has largely overlooked the combined influence of motivational, emotional, and identity-based factors, as well as the mediating role of place attachment in shaping travel intention (Huang et al., 2016; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Building upon the preceding literature, this study integrates three dominant theoretical perspectives push-pull theory, place attachment theory, and social identity theory to explain genealogy tourism behavior among the Bangladeshi diasporas. These theories collectively provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how motivational, emotional, and identity-based factors influence travel intention toward the ancestral homeland.

According to push-pull theory, individuals' travel behavior is shaped by internal psychological motivations (push factors) and external destination attributes (pull factors) (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). In the context of genealogy tourism, intrinsic motivations such as nostalgia, cultural identity, genealogical curiosity, and family connection function as key push factors that stimulate the desire to visit the ancestral homeland (Basu, 2004; Sedikides et al., 2008; Huang et al., 2016). These motivations are expected to have a direct positive influence on diaspora tourists' intention to travel to Bangladesh for ancestry-related purposes.

Simultaneously, place attachment theory posits that individuals develop emotional and symbolic bonds with places that hold personal or cultural significance (Williams & Vaske, 2003; Ramkissoon, Smith, & Weiler, 2013). In genealogy tourism, the ancestral homeland is often perceived as a place of emotional importance, leading to the development of strong attachment that influences travel behavior (Huang et al., 2016; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Place attachment is therefore conceptualized as a mediating construct that strengthens the relationship between motivational drivers and travel intention, as individuals with higher emotional attachment are more likely to engage in ancestry-driven travel.

Furthermore, social identity theory explains how individuals derive a sense of self from their membership in social and cultural groups, and how this identity influences their attitudes and behaviors (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For diaspora populations, travel to the ancestral homeland serves as a means of reaffirming cultural identity and strengthening group belonging (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Huang et al., 2016). Cultural identity is therefore expected to play a significant role in shaping both motivational drivers and emotional attachment, ultimately influencing travel intention.

III. Research Method

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-method research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of genealogy tourism behavior among the Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States. A mixed-method approach is particularly suitable for examining complex social phenomena, as it allows for the triangulation of findings and enhances the validity and depth of the results (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). While the quantitative component enables the testing of relationships among motivational factors, emotional attachment, and travel intention, the qualitative component offers deeper insights into participants lived experiences, identity construction, and emotional connections with their ancestral homeland (Creswell, 2014).

Population and Sampling

The target population of this study comprises members of the Bangladeshi diaspora residing in the United States, along with their family members who maintain socio-cultural ties with Bangladesh. Given the exploratory nature of the study and the difficulty in accessing a dispersed diaspora population, a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive and snowball sampling, was employed (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). These techniques are widely used in tourism and diaspora research where sampling frames are not readily available (Veal, 2018).

A total of 160 respondents participated in the quantitative survey, which is considered adequate for statistical analysis in behavioral research (Hair et al., 2010). In addition, 25 participants were conducted for semi-structured interviews to gain in-depth qualitative insights. The combination of these sample sizes is consistent with mixed-method research practices, where qualitative data complement quantitative findings to enhance interpretive validity (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on established measurement scales from prior studies in tourism, psychology, and consumer behavior. The questionnaire included items measuring key constructs such as nostalgia, cultural identity, family connection, genealogical curiosity, emotional attachment, and travel intention. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), which is widely recognized for its reliability and ease of use in capturing attitudes and perceptions (Likert, 1932; Boone & Boone, 2012). The questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure clarity, relevance, and content validity before final data collection.

Qualitative Data Collection

To complement the quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted. This method allows for flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives while maintaining a consistent structure across interviews (Kallio et al., 2016). The interviews focused on understanding participants' motivations, emotional attachment, identity-related experiences, and perceptions of genealogy tourism in Bangladesh. Such qualitative inquiry is essential for capturing the depth and complexity of diaspora experiences that cannot be fully explained through quantitative measures alone (Creswell, 2014).

Measurement of Variables

The study employs multi-item constructs adapted from validated scales to ensure reliability and construct validity (Hair et al., 2010). Motivational factors, including nostalgia, cultural identity, family connection, and genealogical curiosity are treated as independent variables, while emotional (place) attachment is considered a mediating variable, and travel intention is the dependent variable. Minor modifications were made to the original scale items to suit the context of genealogy tourism in Bangladesh, while preserving their theoretical integrity. Such adaptation is common in cross-context research to enhance contextual relevance without compromising validity (Churchill, 1979).

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, which is widely used in social science and tourism research for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were first employed to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and key variables (Field, 2013). Subsequently, reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships among variables, followed by regression analysis to test the proposed theoretical relationships and assess the predictive power of motivational factors and emotional attachment on travel intention (Hair et al., 2010). For qualitative data, a thematic analysis approach was employed to identify recurring patterns and themes related to genealogy tourism motivations, emotional attachment, and identity construction (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved coding interview transcripts, categorizing themes, and interpreting findings in relation to the study's theoretical framework. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enhances the overall robustness and credibility of the study through methodological triangulation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Participation in both the survey and interviews was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their anonymity and confidentiality were ensured (Creswell, 2014). All data were used solely for academic purposes and stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

IV. Findings

The findings are presented using a theme-based mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence to provide a comprehensive understanding of genealogy tourism among the Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States. This triangulated approach strengthens the validity and interpretive depth of the results by combining statistical trends with lived experiences (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Nostalgia as a Core Motivational Driver

The quantitative results indicate that 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that nostalgia significantly influences their intention to visit Bangladesh, highlighting its role as a central motivational factor. This aligns with existing literature that identifies nostalgia as a powerful emotional driver linking individuals to their past and stimulating heritage-based travel (Sedikides et al., 2008; Basu, 2004). The qualitative findings provide deeper emotional context. One participant noted: *“Even though I was born in the USA, I feel connected to Bangladesh through my parents’ memories it creates a strong emotional pull.”* Another respondent stated: *“When I think about Bangladesh, it feels like something I have lost but want to rediscover.”*

The findings of this study underscore the central role of nostalgia as a key motivational driver in genealogy tourism among the Bangladeshi diasporas. Quantitatively, a substantial majority (72%) of respondents reported that nostalgic feelings significantly influence their intention to visit Bangladesh, indicating that emotional longing for the homeland is a dominant push factor. This result is consistent with prior research, which conceptualizes nostalgia as a powerful affective mechanism that reconnects individuals with their past and motivates heritage-oriented travel behavior (Sedikides et al., 2008; Basu, 2004).

Beyond its statistical significance, the qualitative findings provide deeper insight into the lived experience of nostalgia, revealing its deep personal and intergenerational character. Participants’ reflections highlight how memories transmitted through family narratives create an emotional bridge to a homeland that may not have been directly experienced, reinforcing the notion that nostalgia is socially constructed rather than purely individual (Batcho, 2013; Fairley & Gammon, 2005). For instance, the expressed sense of longing for “something lost but to be rediscovered” illustrates how nostalgia operates as both a retrospective and prospective emotion, shaping not only memories of the past but also aspirations for reconnection. This aligns with broader theoretical perspectives suggesting that nostalgia fosters continuity and emotional attachment, thereby strengthening behavioral intentions such as travel (Sedikides et al., 2008; Zhou et al., 2008). The integration of quantitative dominance and qualitative depth therefore confirms that nostalgia functions not merely as a measurable motivational variable but as an emotionally embedded and symbolically rich experience that plays a pivotal role in driving genealogy tourism behavior.

Cultural Identity and Sense of Belonging

The findings reveal that 68% of respondents perceive genealogy tourism as a means of strengthening their cultural identity and sense of belonging. This supports social identity theory, which posits that individuals seek to reaffirm their identity through connections with their cultural group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Qualitative insights further illustrate this process. One interviewee explained: *“Visiting Bangladesh helps me understand who I am it connects me to my culture in a deeper way.”* Another participant shared: *“Living abroad sometimes makes you feel disconnected, but going back makes you feel like you belong again.”*

Quantitative evidence demonstrates the prevalence of identity-driven motivation, while qualitative accounts highlight the experiential and emotional processes through which identity is reconstructed, thereby reinforcing the theoretical linkage between cultural identity and diaspora tourism behavior. The findings highlight cultural identity as a key driver of genealogy tourism, supporting social identity theory, which posits that individuals seek to reaffirm their sense of self through connections with culturally meaningful groups and places (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The qualitative insights further illustrate that visits to Bangladesh enable diaspora individuals to reconnect with their roots and experience a renewed sense of belonging, emphasizing the emotional and experiential dimensions of identity reconstruction. This aligns with prior research suggesting that diaspora tourism functions as a mechanism for negotiating identity and addressing cultural dislocation between host and origin contexts (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Huang et al., 2016). Taken together, the findings indicate that genealogy tourism operates as both a cognitive and affective process through which cultural identity is continuously constructed and reaffirmed.

Family Connection and Social Influence

Family connection emerged as the strongest motivational factor, with 75% of respondents indicating that reconnecting with family motivates their travel decisions. This finding is consistent with prior studies emphasizing the role of family ties in diaspora tourism (Huang et al., 2016; Duval, 2004). Qualitative findings further support this dimension. One participant stated: *“My main reason for visiting Bangladesh is to reconnect*

with my relatives and learn about our family history.” Another respondent noted: “My parents always tell me stories about our village, and that makes me want to experience it myself.”

While quantitative results highlight the dominance of family connection as a key motivator, qualitative evidence reveals the intergenerational and narrative-driven nature of these connections, suggesting that family influence operates both as a social obligation and an emotional anchor in genealogy tourism. The findings identify family connection as the most influential driver of genealogy tourism, reinforcing its central role in shaping diaspora travel behavior. This aligns with existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of familial ties and social relationships in motivating return visits to the homeland (Huang et al., 2016; Duval, 2004). Qualitative insights further reveal that these motivations are deeply rooted in intergenerational narratives, where stories shared by parents and relatives create a strong emotional pull toward ancestral places. Participants’ reflections highlight that reconnecting with family is not only a practical reason for travel but also a meaningful process of engaging with family history and heritage. This suggests that family connection operates simultaneously as a social obligation and an emotional anchor, reinforcing the idea that genealogy tourism is embedded within collective memory and relational ties rather than purely individual motivations.

Genealogical Curiosity and Ancestral Exploration

The results show that 64% of respondents expressed a strong interest in exploring their ancestry, indicating that genealogical curiosity is a significant motivational driver. This aligns with prior research highlighting the role of ancestry exploration in shaping tourism behavior (Yakel, 2004; Huang et al., 2016). Qualitative insights provide further depth. One interviewee remarked: “I want to know where my ancestors came from it feels like a missing piece of my identity.” Another participant stated: “Exploring my roots gives me a sense of understanding about my family and where I belong.”

Although the quantitative findings confirm the importance of genealogical curiosity, the qualitative narratives emphasize its role in identity completion and self-discovery, indicating that this motivation extends beyond curiosity into a deeper search for meaning. The findings highlight genealogical curiosity as an important motivational driver of genealogy tourism, reflecting a strong desire among diaspora individuals to explore their ancestry. This is consistent with prior research, which identifies ancestry exploration as a key factor shaping heritage-based travel behavior (Yakel, 2004; Huang et al., 2016). Qualitative insights further reveal that this curiosity extends beyond informational interest, encompassing a deeper search for identity and self-understanding. Participants’ reflections suggest that exploring ancestral roots provides a sense of completeness and belonging, indicating that genealogy tourism serves as a meaningful process of identity reconstruction. Thus, while quantitative evidence establishes the significance of genealogical curiosity, the qualitative narratives demonstrate that it operates as a pathway to self-discovery and personal meaning rather than merely a cognitive interest.

Emotional (Place) Attachment as a Mediating Mechanism

The findings indicate that 70% of respondents reported a strong emotional attachment to Bangladesh, supporting its role as a mediating factor. This is consistent with place attachment theory, which links emotional bonds with behavioral intentions (Williams & Vaske, 2003; Ramkissoon et al., 2013). Qualitative data reinforces this relationship. One participant said: “Bangladesh is not just a place for me it feels like a part of my identity.” Another interviewee stated: “Even though I live abroad, I feel emotionally connected to Bangladesh in a way that is hard to explain.”

Quantitative evidence establishes emotional attachment as a significant predictor of travel intention, while qualitative insights reveal its deeply symbolic and identity-linked nature, thereby confirming its mediating role between motivation and behavior. The findings emphasize the pivotal role of emotional (place) attachment in shaping genealogy tourism behavior, supporting its function as a mediating factor between motivation and travel intention. This is consistent with place attachment theory, which posits that emotional bonds with a destination significantly influence behavioral outcomes (Williams & Vaske, 2003; Ramkissoon et al., 2013). Qualitative insights further reveal that such attachment is deeply symbolic and closely tied to identity, as participants describe Bangladesh not merely as a location but as an integral part of their sense of self. These narratives highlight that emotional connection transcends physical distance, reinforcing a sustained sense of belonging to the homeland. Taken together, the findings indicate that emotional attachment not only strengthens travel intention but also transforms motivation into meaningful action, thereby confirming its critical mediating role in genealogy tourism behavior.

Travel Intention toward Bangladesh

The findings show that 74% of respondents have a strong intention to visit Bangladesh for genealogy-related purposes, indicating high potential for roots tourism. This aligns with studies suggesting that emotionally engaged tourists exhibit stronger behavioral intentions (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Stylos et al., 2017). Qualitative

responses further support this finding. One participant noted: *"I plan to visit Bangladesh regularly because it helps me stay connected to my roots."* Another respondent shared: *"It's not just a visit I see it as something I will continue doing in the future."*

While the quantitative results confirm a strong intention to visit, the qualitative evidence highlights the continuity and long-term commitment associated with genealogy tourism, suggesting that such travel behavior is sustained rather than episodic. The findings demonstrate a strong intention among diaspora individuals to visit Bangladesh for genealogy-related purposes, highlighting the significant potential of roots tourism. This aligns with prior research suggesting that emotionally and identity-driven tourists exhibit stronger behavioral intentions and higher levels of engagement (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Stylos et al., 2017). Qualitative insights further reveal that such intentions are not limited to one-time visits but reflect an ongoing commitment to maintaining connections with the homeland. Participants' responses indicate that genealogy tourism is perceived as a continuous and meaningful engagement rather than a discrete travel event. Taken together, the findings suggest that travel intention in this context is sustained over time, reinforcing the long-term value of diaspora tourism for destination development.

V. Discussion And Policy Implication

The present study set out to examine the motivational drivers of genealogy tourism among the Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States by integrating push-pull theory, place attachment theory, and social identity theory into a unified analytical framework. The findings provide strong empirical support for this integrative approach and offer important insights into how emotional, identity-based, and relational factors shape diaspora travel behavior. More importantly, the study demonstrates that genealogy tourism extends beyond conventional leisure travel and operates as a deeply meaningful process rooted in memory, belonging, and identity reconstruction.

A key finding of this study is the dominant role of nostalgia as a motivational driver. Consistent with prior research (Sedikides et al., 2008; Basu, 2004), nostalgia was found to evoke emotional continuity and a longing for one's past, thereby significantly influencing travel intention toward the ancestral homeland. However, this study advances the literature by showing that nostalgia among the Bangladeshi diaspora is not solely an individual psychological construct but is also socially constructed through intergenerational storytelling, family narratives, and cultural transmission. This insight carries important policy implications, suggesting that tourism promotion strategies should move beyond conventional destination marketing and instead emphasize emotional storytelling, cultural narratives, and intergenerational connections. By framing Bangladesh as a place of memory and belonging rather than merely a travel destination, policymakers can more effectively engage diaspora tourists.

The findings further confirm the importance of cultural identity in shaping genealogy tourism behavior, thereby supporting the propositions of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Diaspora individuals engage in ancestry-based travel as a means of reaffirming their cultural identity and negotiating their sense of belonging within a transnational context. This is particularly evident among second-generation migrants, who often experience identity hybridity and seek to reconnect with their roots through travel. From a policy perspective, this highlights the need to design tourism products that facilitate identity exploration, such as cultural immersion programs, heritage trails, and community-based tourism initiatives. These experiences can enable diaspora tourists to engage more deeply with their cultural heritage, thereby enhancing satisfaction and emotional attachment.

Another significant finding is the central role of family connection, which emerged as the strongest motivational factor influencing travel behavior. While previous studies (Huang et al., 2016; Duval, 2004) have acknowledged the importance of family ties in diaspora tourism, this study provides deeper insight into how family narratives, expectations, and emotional obligations shape travel decisions. Genealogy tourism is thus revealed as a socially embedded phenomenon, where travel is often motivated by collective memory and intergenerational continuity. This finding suggests that tourism stakeholders should develop services that facilitate family reconnection, such as genealogy support services, local community engagement programs, and access to ancestral records. By enabling diaspora tourists to reconnect with their family heritage, such initiatives can significantly enhance the overall tourism experience.

The role of genealogical curiosity further underscores the importance of self-discovery and meaning making in tourism behavior. Unlike traditional tourism motivations, genealogical curiosity is closely linked to identity formation and emotional fulfillment, suggesting that genealogy tourism serves as a mechanism through which individuals construct a coherent narrative of their personal and familial histories. This has important managerial implications, particularly in the development of digital platforms and tools that allow diaspora individuals to explore their ancestry, trace family histories, and plan personalized travel experiences. Integrating digital storytelling and virtual heritage experiences can further enhance engagement and stimulate travel intention.

A major theoretical contribution of this study lies in confirming the mediating role of emotional (place) attachment. Consistent with place attachment theory (Williams & Vaske, 2003; Ramkissoon et al., 2013), the

findings indicate that emotional bonds with the ancestral homeland significantly enhance the relationship between motivational drivers and travel intention. This suggests that motivation alone is insufficient to drive behavior unless they are reinforced by emotional attachment. From a policy perspective, this highlights the importance of emotional branding strategies that position Bangladesh as a “home” rather than simply a destination. Tourism campaigns that emphasize belonging, cultural pride, and emotional connection are likely to be more effective in attracting diaspora tourists.

Importantly, these findings must be interpreted within the broader context of tourism development in Bangladesh. Existing research on tourism policy and planning highlights that the sector faces several structural challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, weak institutional coordination, and limited strategic marketing initiatives. These challenges can constrain the development of specialized tourism segments such as genealogy tourism, despite strong demand from diaspora communities. Therefore, policymakers must prioritize the development of a supportive tourism ecosystem that includes improved infrastructure, service quality, and institutional collaboration. Without addressing these structural issues, the potential of genealogy tourism cannot be fully realized.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement in tourism development. Effective promotion of genealogy tourism requires collaboration among government agencies, private sector actors, local communities, and diaspora organizations. A coordinated approach can ensure that tourism products are aligned with diaspora expectations while also benefiting local communities. In addition, digital platforms and social media can play a crucial role in facilitating communication and engagement with diaspora tourists. By leveraging digital technologies, tourism authorities can enhance destination visibility, provide personalized experiences, and strengthen emotional connections with potential visitors.

Finally, the high level of travel intention observed among respondents indicates substantial potential for developing genealogy tourism as a niche market in Bangladesh. Emotionally and identity-driven tourists are more likely to exhibit repeat visitation and long-term engagement, which contributes to sustainable tourism development. However, realizing this potential requires a strategic alignment between diaspora motivations and destination capabilities. Policymakers must therefore adopt a holistic approach that integrates emotional, cultural, technological, and institutional dimensions of tourism development.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature by integrating motivational, emotional, and identity-based perspectives into a unified framework while also linking these dimensions with practical considerations of tourism policy, stakeholder coordination, and digital engagement in Bangladesh. By embedding policy implications within the discussion, the study not only advances theoretical understanding but also provides actionable insights for the development of genealogy tourism in emerging destinations.

VI. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the motivational drivers of genealogy tourism among the Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States by integrating push-pull theory, place attachment theory, and social identity theory into a unified analytical framework. The findings reveal that genealogy tourism is predominantly driven by emotional, identity-based, and relational factors, with nostalgia, cultural identity, family connection, and genealogical curiosity emerging as key motivational drivers. In addition, emotional (place) attachment was found to play a significant mediating role, strengthening the relationship between these motivations and travel intention toward Bangladesh.

The study makes important theoretical contributions by demonstrating that genealogy tourism extends beyond traditional tourism motivations and functions as a process of identity construction and emotional reconnection. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, the research offers a more comprehensive understanding of diaspora tourism behavior and highlights the dynamic interplay between motivation, identity, and emotional attachment. Furthermore, the study contributes to the limited body of literature on genealogy tourism in developing country contexts, particularly Bangladesh, thereby addressing a significant research gap.

From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the potential of genealogy tourism as a strategic avenue for sustainable tourism development in Bangladesh. The strong travel intention observed among diaspora respondents indicates that this segment represents a valuable and underutilized market. By focusing on emotionally resonant experiences, cultural heritage, and family connections, tourism stakeholders can develop targeted strategies that enhance diaspora engagement and foster long-term relationships with the homeland.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that provide avenues for future research. First, the study relies on a relatively limited sample size of diaspora respondents, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to the broader Bangladeshi diaspora population. Future studies could employ larger and more diverse samples, including participants from different countries and socio-demographic backgrounds, to enhance external validity.

Second, the cross-sectional nature of study limits the ability to capture changes in motivations and travel behavior over time. Longitudinal research designs could provide deeper insights into how genealogy tourism motivations evolve across different life stages and generational cohorts.

Third, while this study integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches, the use of more advanced analytical techniques such as structural equation modeling could further strengthen the examination of complex relationships among variables. Future research could also explore additional mediating or moderating variables, such as perceived authenticity, cultural distance, or digital engagement, to extend the proposed framework.

Finally, the study focuses primarily on the demand-side perspective of genealogy tourism. Future research could incorporate supply-side analysis, including the role of tourism institutions, service providers, and policy frameworks, to develop a more holistic understanding of genealogy tourism development in Bangladesh.

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