



Gastronomy Tourism and Destination Competitiveness: Policy, Practice, and Priorities in Indigenous Culinary Systems in Bangladesh

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Abstract – In the contemporary tourism landscape, the ‘Gastronomy Tourism’ is one of most instrumental aspects of experiential tourism, which provides the destinations with a prospect of utilizing the local food culture as its competitive advantage. This study aims to examine the impact of gastronomy tourism on destination competitiveness in Bangladesh, by focusing on the perspectives of the policy, practices and priorities of indigenous culinary systems of Bangladesh. In doing so, this study adopts a qualitative research design by utilizing 30 semi-structured interviews with the tourists and the stakeholders, while analyzing the data by using thematic data analysis method. The findings of this research underscore that Bangladesh has not fully utilized the potential because of lack of institutional coordination, policy integration, and infrastructural limitations, despite its Bangladesh rich and diverse culinary heritage, which is of strong appeal to experience-oriented tourists. Instantaneously, indigenous culinary systems of Bangladesh demonstrated a high potential to improve the destination image, tourist satisfaction and community-based economic opportunities. The study implies to establish the gastronomy tourism a sustainable destination tourism option of Bangladesh by fostering strategic alignment of culinary systems with the tourism governance pathways.

Keywords – Gastronomy Tourism, Destination Competitiveness, Indigenous Culinary Systems, Culinary Heritage, Tourism Policy, Community Participation, Bangladesh.

I. INTRODUCTION

Across developing economies, tourism has emerged as a core focus of economic diversification and cultural representation, with tourism destinations becoming increasingly competitive based on their natural attractions, but also on the value and authenticity of their experiences. Gastronomy tourism is one of the important segments in this changing environment, which can be characterized by the search for food-related experience which reflects the identity, heritage and lifestyle of the destination (Sugartini, 2023). Food, here, is not simply something to consume; it is a medium by which cultural discourses are shared, social relations are played out, and place identities are created. Experience-oriented tourists, who are the typical characteristics of contemporary tourists, are interested in immersive and quality experiences, which make local food a key part of destination attraction (Costa et al., 2021). Consequently, gustatory tourism is becoming an advantage in the sense that it helps to make destinations competitive, through differentiation, image, and augmented tourist satisfaction and spending (Kim et al., 2025).

Bangladesh has a very diverse native gastronomic environment influenced by riverine ecosystem, farming practices, and ethnic multiplicity. The native food systems of areas like the Chittagong Hill Tracts, coastal belts, and the northern districts also constitute their own food practices, food ingredients, and cooking techniques that are based on the long-term cultural knowledge and environmental adaptation (Bhuiyan et al., 2022). Irrespective of this richness, gastronomy tourism in Bangladesh is not well developed and integrated to the formal tourism strategies. Tourism development has so far heavily depended on natural attractions and heritage sites,

yet food is not considered a strategic part of the tourism experience, but a supplement (Hassan and Burns, 2014). A significant structural issue emerged from this mismatch such as lack of coherent policy frameworks, inadequate institutional coordination, and insufficient strategic prioritization to turn indigenous culinary resources into the competitively advantageous tourism resource.

The research problem of this study lies in the limited correspondence between policy, practice, and priorities of indigenous food systems as they still exist in informal and fragmented environments with little role of the destination management bodies and little support of national tourism policies. Hence, the ability of gastronomy tourism to play a role in destination competitiveness is not fully utilized. This gap is even greater in contrast with successful international experiences of how food has been well integrated into destination branding and experience design, which have brought about economic and social-cultural returns (Morrison, 2023). In Bangladesh, though, due to the lack of organized gastronomy tourism programs, not only the market positioning is limited, but also the possibility of community involvement and development in inclusive ways.

Although the literature has considered culinary tourism based on the cultural and experiential dimensions, no context-specific study has investigated the indigenous culinary systems in terms of destination competitiveness and strategic governance in Bangladesh. This paper fills this gap by paying specific attention to the influence of policy, practice, and priorities on the evolution of gastronomy tourism. This aims to critically review the level of recognition, management and integration of indigenous culinary systems in tourism strategies and identify the major constraints and opportunities which have an impact



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on their role in destination competitiveness. Against these backdrops, this study aims to investigate the role of indigenous culinary systems in the development of gastronomy tourism in Bangladesh, secondly, to understand the existing policy and institutional frameworks on the development of culinary tourism, and to determine the strategic priorities of integrating gastronomy tourism into the overall destination competitiveness strategies.

This research is significant because it contributes to a multidimensional aspect. On the academic level, it contributes to the study of gastronomy tourism through a connection between local culinary traditions and destination competitiveness theory and thus addresses a critical conceptual gap. Furthermore, this study practically provides critical insights for the policymakers, tourism officials and players in the sector to integrate it with the most comprehensive and inclusive policies for harnessing the culinary resources' potential in the context of Bangladesh. Moreover, this study outlines critically feasible strategic priorities to foster sustainable development of socio-cultural dimensions i.e. the indigenous food systems for local communities to ensure optimal tourism development outcome through strategic prioritization.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of 'gastronomy tourism' has emerged as an indication of a larger shift in tourist behavior in the international tourism landscape which values experiential preferences, authenticity as well cultural immersion as the destination selection determinants. Sugiartini (2023) defines gastronomy tourism as travel driven tourism endeavor which emphasizes special food and drink experiences. This tourism dimension is not just about food consumption, but it highlights the cultural, historical and social sense of culinary systems. According to the arguments of Costa et al. (2021), gastronomy tourism belongs to the experience economy category of tourism which is multisensory and participatory as the tourists actively interact with food systems in the host location, participating in activities like cooking, tasting, and exploring markets in this form of tourism experience. Such experiential activities have made gastronomy tourism one of the most competitive destination marketing instruments to destinations in the fast-expanding competitive global markets of tourism.

According to Destination competitiveness theory, destinations can gain long-term competitive advantage through proper mobilization of tangible and intangible resources to produce unique visitor experiences (Dwyer et al., 2004). Furthermore, A substantial portion of literature highlights the effect of gastronomy tourism on the competitiveness of the destination. For instance, food heritage is becoming a highly important intangible resource, adding to destination image, emotional connection, and satisfaction of the tourist. The empirical literature reveals that gastronomy tourism may prolong the

duration of tourist stay, boost their spending, and encourage revisiting the same destination, thus enhancing the overall economic performance of destinations (Kim et al., 2025). Moreover, food experiences present a type of narrative in which destinations express their identity and authenticity, and they solidify their standing in the world tourism markets (Hashim et al., 2019).

The impact of indigenous culinary systems as a fundamental element of gastronomy tourism is also highlighted in the literature. For instance, according to Bhuiyan et al. (2022), indigenous food, as locally food, old-fashioned methods of cooking, and practices that are culturally integrated, is a type of intangible cultural heritage and is place-specific and hard to imitate. The previous research conducted by Legrand and Chen (2022) comparatively analyzed different geographical settings of Southeast Asia and Latin America and highlighted that tourists are putting growing importance on indigenous food experiences because of cultural richness and their perceived authenticity (Legrand and Chen, 2022). These findings coherently align with the theory of cultural tourism which incorporates the significance of heritage and identity for determining the destination attraction and associated tourist experiences. In the meantime, local livelihoods are found to be inextricably related to native food systems which seeks to promote the inclusive economic growth via community-based tourism (Talukder et al., 2025).

The positive effects of gastronomy tourism have been identified but effective policy frameworks, institutional coordination, and collaboration among stakeholders are vital in ensuring the successful development of gastronomy tourism. Government agencies and destination management organizations (DMOs) have a key role to play in ensuring that culinary resources are turned into structured tourism products. In literature, it is always noted that the presence of fragmented or informal culinary efforts often does not lead to a competitive edge in the long term unless they are properly incorporated into the destination planning and marketing (Morrison, 2023). The organization of coherent food tourism systems, culinary trails, festivals, and branding strategies have been developed through the coordination of the actions of both the public and the private stakeholders in well-established gastronomy tourism destinations, like Italy and Thailand (Farmaki & Pappas, 2021). These are just some of the examples of how gastronomy tourism is not just about food promotion, but a coordinated system of linking production, culture, and tourism experiences.

The literature about developing countries, however, demonstrates that there are still challenges evident in the effective utilization of gastronomy tourism. The usual limitations consist of inadequate infrastructure, poor marketing skills, and inadequate policy facilitation. Further, the nature of governance like the division of institutional roles and insufficient coordination between tourism and cultural sectors tend to undermine the formulation of coordinated strategies (Islam & Hossain, 2023). Such



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difficulties are especially acute with respect to the countries where the system of tourism is underdeveloped, and where informal economic activities prevail in the cuisine.

The literature on the tourism in Bangladesh has so far been more inclined towards natural sightseeing, ecotourism and heritage tourism with minimal consideration of the strategical role of food. When culinary practices are brought up, they are frequently analyzed either anthropologically or nutritionally and not as an element of tourism competitiveness (Alam & Naser, 2020). Some new research notes the possibilities of culinary tourism in Bangladesh, as many regional cuisines are diverse and can attract tourists (Sanjoy Kumar Acharjee, 2023). These studies are, however, mainly descriptive and fail to delve into the theoretical models of destination competitiveness or resource-based view.

This omission indicates a larger conceptual deficiency in literature. Although gastronomy tourism is often defined as a strategic asset, there is a lack of clarity in many cases on the processes of how culinary systems help to create competitive advantage. Specifically, the influence of policy, institutional actors and governance arrangements on the outcomes of gastronomy tourism is under-studied. Most of the research concentrates on micro-level experiences, including tourist satisfaction and motivation, and does not connect them with macro-level results like destination positioning and competitiveness (Prebensen et al., 2018). This is a de-facto that restricts the development of holistic plans to develop gastronomy tourism.

Despite the common understanding of the significance of authenticity and cultural conservation, there is a lack of studies on how to balance such factors with commercialization and market imperatives. This process is further complicated in developing contexts because of the threat of cultural commodification and marginalization of local people (Legrand & Chen, 2022). These challenges need a delicate approach to policy priorities, stakeholder relations, and community involvement. Therefore, this current study intends to fill in both the empirical and conceptual gaps in literature. It helps fill the gap in the literature on gastronomy tourism in emerging destinations as it specifically deals with Bangladesh. More significantly, it takes a strategic approach that focuses on the interaction of policy, practice and priorities in the development of gastronomy tourism.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is the combines the theories i.e. Destination Competitiveness Theory of Dwyer et al. (2004), the Resource-Based View (RBV) of Barney (1991, and Experiential/Cultural Tourism Theory of Richards and Munsters (2010) to determine the role of gastronomy tourism in destination competitiveness through the indigenous culinary systems. According to the destination competitiveness theory, the success of a destination is based on the capacity of a destination to mobilize distinctive

resources to generate high-quality visitor experiences and long-term economic benefits (Dwyer et al., 2004). In this context, gastronomy tourism serves as a differentiating process by boosting destination image, authenticity and visitor satisfaction.

Furthermore, according to the Resource-Based View (RBV), the indigenous cuisine systems are the most competitively advantage-crafting intangible resources which are invaluable, scarce and hard to copy, hence can elicit competitive edge with a proper management (Barney, 1991). However, such resources are not found in adequate amounts due to lack of supply chain management system for ensuring tourism value, requiring an institutionally coordinated, policy-supported as well as stakeholder-inclusive methods for tourism development methods. Moreover, the experiential and cultural tourism theory highlights that the socio-cultural values of gastronomy tourism are co-created via active tourist engagement in local food and culinary practices, integrated with its stories and traditional legacies (Richards & Munsters 2010).

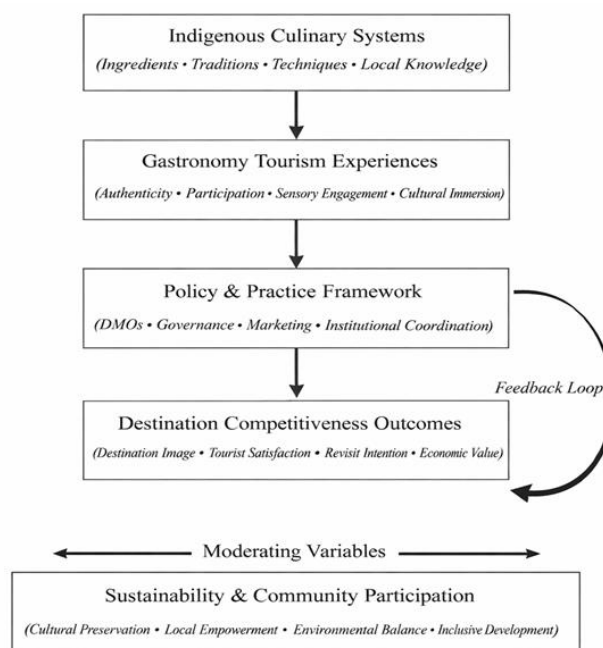


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of this study (Developed by the Researcher)

Table 1: Core constructs and Indicators of the Concepts of the study (Compiled by the Researcher)

Construct	Indicators	Source
Indigenous Culinary Systems	Traditional recipes, local ingredients, cultural practices	Bhuiyan et al. (2022)
Gastronomy Tourism Experiences	Authenticity, participation, sensory engagement	Richards & Munsters (2010)
Policy & Practice	DMO coordination, marketing strategies, institutional support	Morrison (2023)
Destination Competitiveness	Destination image, satisfaction, revisit	Dwyer et al. (2004)



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	intention, economic impact	
Moderators	Sustainability, community participation	Legrand & Chen (2022)

By incorporating these views, the framework posits gastronomy tourism as a process whereby indigenous culinary resources are translated into experience products, through policy and institutional practices, and finally cause destination competitiveness to be achieved. Sustainability and community involvement are also cross-cutting conditions that are included in the framework and contribute to long-term viability. This multi theoretical combination is a way of overcoming constraints of previous studies in that it bridges micro level experiences with macro level strategic results.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study follows a qualitative research design that is based on the research onion framework suggested by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) to provide a methodological structure of aligning research philosophy, approach, strategy, and data collection methods (Saunders et al., 2019). The study is placed in alignment with the pragmatic research philosophy as pragmatism enables the researcher to integrate interpretive knowledge with practical problem-solving and realize that gastronomy tourism is at the crossroad of culture, economy, and governance (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, the study has employed a qualitative mainly inductive method, with some elements of deduction. The inductive dimension is echoed in the inquiry into the emergent trends based on primary information. Simultaneously, theoretical lenses like destination competitiveness and experiential tourism shape the analytical understanding of results (Bryman, 2016). Moreover, the study design is of exploratory nature analyze the contextual nuances of gastronomy tourism as a socially constructed phenomenon, with the meanings and experiences being different among actors and contexts (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

The sampling of this study is based on a ‘purposive sampling strategy’ where participants have direct experience/involvement in gastronomy tourism. The study involves two important groups:

- domestic and international tourists who have experienced the local food experience, and
- stakeholders which will be represented by the restaurant owners, local food vendors, tour operators, and tourism officials.

Thus, a total of 30 participants were chosen to reach saturation of the data, where no new themes are found with further data (Guest et al., 2006). This sample is in line with the qualitative research criteria in tourism research.

The data were collected by using semi-structured interviews, which were in-depth and were guided by an interview protocol that was designed with three thematic

areas of interest, including gastronomic experiences, perceptions of indigenous culinary systems, and the role of policy and institutional support. Face-to-face interviews were held based on the availability of the participants where field notes were kept for documenting contextual nuances of data regarding the subject matters of this study.

Consistent with the framework by Saunders, the time horizon of the study is a cross sectional one as it represents what is observed in a certain period and not the change with time. Although gastronomy tourism is a dynamic area, the cross-sectional design will be suitable in establishing the existing patterns, challenges, and opportunities in the Bangladeshi context.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, and systematic coding, categorization, and interpretation were performed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcribed interview data have been initially undergone open coding to determine the initial concepts, followed by classification into larger themes, including authenticity, accessibility, policy gaps, and experiential value. These themes were then analyzed within the conceptual framework of the study with the micro-level experiences connected to macro-level competitiveness results.

Research has been conducted by following the ethical principles very sincerely. For instance, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants and informed consent was obtained before collecting the data. the principles of anonymity and confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity was strictly followed in the context of discourse of indigenous culinary practices. The research also followed the responsible research tenets by not misrepresenting and misinterpreting the participants’ views and perceptions.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic Overview

Table 2: Findings on Gastronomy Tourism and Destination Competitiveness in Bangladesh (Compiled by the Researcher)

Theme	Sub-theme	Key Insight	Illustrative Quote
Gastronomy as Travel Motivation	Cultural curiosity	Food as primary travel driver	“I planned my trip around food, not just attractions.” (IDI-03)
	Emotional connection	Identity and nostalgia	“Local dishes tell stories of people and culture.” (IDI-07)
Indigenous Culinary Authenticity	Traditional preparation	Authentic cooking preferred	“Village cooking feels more genuine.” (IDI-11)
	Regional distinctiveness	Diverse culinary identity	“Every region has a different



			taste.” (IDI-02)
Experiential Engagement	Participation	Cooking and markets valued	“Cooking with locals was unforgettable.” (IDI-05)
	Sensory immersion	Multi-sensory experience	“Food lets you feel the culture.” (IDI-09)
Structural Constraints	Accessibility	Lack of organized systems	“You can’t find authentic food easily.” (IDI-01)
	Hygiene concerns	Safety issues	“I worried about hygiene sometimes.” (IDI-12)
Policy & Institutional Gaps	Weak coordination	Lack of DMO involvement	“There is no structure linking food to tourism.” (IDI-18)
	Poor promotion	Weak global branding	“Bangladeshi food is not promoted well.” (IDI-20)
Community & Economic Potential	Local empowerment	Income generation	“Tourists help small businesses grow.” (IDI-15)
	Cultural preservation	Heritage continuity	“Food tourism can preserve traditions.” (IDI-22)

Gastronomy as a Motivation to Travel

The results indicate that gastronomy tourism functions as a leading driver of travel especially among the international tourists and has a profound emotional connotation to the domestic travelers. The respondents repeatedly stressed that food was not the peripheral factor of travelling but a key feature that predetermined their choice of destination and the entire experience.

One participant explicitly stated, “Food was actually my main reason to explore Bangladesh; I wanted to experience something different from global cuisines” (IDI-24).

This fact is a manifestation of a more general change in the behavior of tourists, in which experiences and immersion in culture are becoming more and more significant influences of travel motivation (Costa et al., 2021).

The popularity of gastronomy as a reason to travel is closely related to the conceptualization of food tourism in the experience economy where the value is generated not only by the passive consumption of the product but also by the emotional involvement and sensory participation (Sugiartini, 2023). The results also show that gastronomy is both a push and pull factor, in line with previous

motivational theories. The aspiration to experience novelty, escape and travel into culture was a sign of push motivations whereas perceived uniqueness and authenticity of Bangladeshi food was a sign of pull factors.

Nevertheless, the level of motivation displayed by gastronomy in this study seems to be higher than in some of the established tourism destinations where food is usually one of several attractive simultaneously present factors (Kim et al., 2025). This is an indication that gastronomy can be a unique competitive advantage in emerging tourism destinations, where constraints in terms of infrastructure or international branding are present. The results thus add to the current body of literature by pointing out the increased strategic value of gastronomy tourism in underdeveloped destinations.

Indigenous Culinary Authenticity and Cultural Identity.

Authenticity proved to be one of the key factors that were defining tourist satisfaction and perception of gastronomic experiences. The respondents were always able to differentiate between true native food culture and commercialized cuisine and show a preference towards the former.

A participant remarked, “The best meals I had were not in restaurants but in local homes; that’s where the real culture exists” (IDI-26). This interpretation aids the notion that the indigenous foodways are the intangible cultural heritage, which is embedded within the local practices, ecological practices, and social identities (Bhuiyan et al., 2022).

The results are very close to the cultural tourism theory where authenticity is a major determinant of tourist involvement and image of the destination (Richards and Munsters, 2010). The indigenous food was seen as an immediate manifestation of local identity by the tourists, thus, increasing the level of emotional attachment and perceived value. This is congruent with the existing research that indicates that genuine culinary experiences enhance destination branding and differentiation (Legrand and Chen, 2022).

Nevertheless, also in the study, there is a tint of a clash between authenticity and adaptation. The stakeholders complained that some of the traditional foods were modified, as per the expectations of the tourists, this has been a challenge of cultural commodification. This finding is a bit different than earlier literature in which authenticity is typically assumed to be a constant concept. Instead, the results suggest that authenticity within gastronomy tourism is a bargaining and dynamic process, which is guided by tourist-producer and market-based interactions. Such a nuanced awareness is a subset of the contemporary debate of authenticity in the study of tourism.

Interactive Experiences and Co-Creation of Value.

The experiential element of gastronomy tourism was greatly manifested in the experiences of the participants



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with a special emphasis on the active involvement and participation. Tourists were keen to engage in interactive activities like cooking with local families, attending local markets, and engaging in cultural events related to food.

One of the respondents commented,

“I was also able to learn about the culture of a local family as I cooked with them: something that no museum could have given me information about” (IDI-27).

Such observation is in line with the experiential tourism theory, which models tourism as a process of value co-creation among tourists and the host (Prebensen et al., 2018). In this sense, food experiences are not passive, but interactive and tourists can experience cultural practices in a tangible and meaning-making sense. Gastronomy in terms of sense of taste, smell, touch and interpersonal communication makes it easier to remember and more emotionally resonant.

In comparison to other destinations of established gastronomy, however, the experiential experience in Bangladesh is mostly informal and unstructured. Even though this will make it more authentic, it will lower scalability and access. This note is not entirely consistent with the current literature, which focuses on the well-organized culinary tourism products, like food trails and festivals (Morrison, 2023). The findings therefore suggest an appalling disjuncture between experiential possibility and institutionalization, meaning that there should be equal formalization that does not distort authenticity, but rather enhance access.

Gastronomy Tourism Development Structural Constraints.

Although it has a high demand and abundant sources of culinary goods, the research can determine that there are major structural limitations that are hindering the growth of gastronomy tourism in Bangladesh. Problems with accessibility, infrastructure and hygiene were often mentioned by the participants.

One tourist observed,

“People must have local contacts to get some real food or they are missing something” (IDI-28).

This does not have structured systems, like curated food tours, online platforms, or food mapping, limiting the possibility of tourists having access to authentic experiences. These findings can be correlated with the literature on tourism development of the emerging economies where infrastructural incompleteness is cited as a primary factor that restricts the competitiveness (Islam and Hossain, 2023).

The other emergency issue that was raised was the issue of hygiene particularly on the side of foreign tourists. Despite the fact that food safety risks are inseparable with street food and local restaurants, which are considered as the components of gastronomy tourism, the perceived risks of food safety adversely affect the destination image and saturation of the tourists. This finding is in line with other

existing literature that has indicated the quality of service and safety to be key factors in the experiences of tourists.

In general, it can be concluded that the main constraint in the development of gastronomy tourism is structural constraints, as opposed to the shortage of resources. These issues should be resolved by arranging investments in infrastructure, training, and quality assurance systems.

Institutional and Policy Gaps.

The research shows that there are a strong policy and institutional vacuum on gastronomy tourism in Bangladesh. Poor involvement of destination management organizations and lack of strategy were reported to be common among the stakeholders.

One of the stakeholders says that,

“They do not have any national approach to the promotion of food tourism; everything is done on a case-by-case basis” (IDI-29).

This finding is a good example of destination competitiveness theory, which highly emphasizes the role of institutional coordination in transforming resources to competitive advantage (Dwyer et al., 2004). Culinary assets are disjointed and unsatisfied without effective policy frameworks and governance structures.

The results also correspond with the results of Morrison (2023) who is of the opinion that destination management needs to be combined with a number of other sectors which include tourism, culture and agriculture. On the other hand, the case of Bangladesh is characterized by a breakdown in institutions and absence of prioritization of gastronomy tourism in policy.

This is a big contrast with the finest world experiences where gastronomy is tactically planned as the national branding and tourism development. The findings therefore demonstrate the importance of the integration of such policies to achieve the potential of the indigenous culinary systems.

Community involvement and Economic possibility.

The participation of the community proved to be a crucial aspect of the sustainability and economic effect of gastronomy tourism. Tourism was regarded as a good source of revenue and appreciation of culture by local businesses and small entrepreneurs.

A participant mentioned,

“The tourists are curious about our food and we should be motivated to serve them” better (IDI-30).

This finding is in line with the literature that focuses on the importance of gastronomy tourism in the realization of inclusive development and empowerment of the local people (Talukder et al., 2025). The indigenous culinary systems when integrated in tourism can give an opportunity to earn money, build competencies, and preserve the culture.



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Nevertheless, the results also suggest that the community involvement is mostly informal and not backed by the institutional structures. Without appropriate training, financial aid as well as inclusion of policy, the local communities cannot have all the benefits of tourism. This indicates a very critical gap between the possibilities and the actuality with regard to the need to have participatory models of governance.

Implication to Destination Competitiveness Synthesis

The results indicate that gastronomy tourism can play a major role to enhance destination competitiveness in Bangladesh. The concept of resource-based view is congruent with native food systems with a unique and incomparable source base (Barney, 1991). When transformed into experiential offerings, these resources can be utilized to produce destination differentiation, image and economic value. Successful policy integration, institutional coordination, and stakeholder engagement are, however, the basis of the implementation of these benefits.

The study, therefore, confirms that competitiveness is not solely based on the presence of resources but on the mobilization and ability to use the resources in a strategic fashion. It bridges one of the key gaps between the micro-level experiential perspectives and macro-level outcome of competitiveness. Through elements of the destination competitiveness theory, resource-based view and the experiential tourism theory, the findings indicate that the use of culinary heritage may only create competitive advantage when influenced by policy and institutional coordination. The research is an addition to the scarce literature on gastronomy tourism in up-and-coming destinations, which provides a context-specific approach to undermine the prevalence of Western-based models.

The results imply to policy makers that gastronomy tourism is a main tourism activity and cannot be considered a peripheral activity, but it should be given certain strategies and resources. Indigenous cuisine can be used by tourism practitioners, such as tour operators and hospitality providers, to create immersive and differentiated tourism products, such as culinary trails, cooking experiences, and community-based dining. The local communities will be a tremendous beneficiary as gastronomy tourism will present a source of income generation, entrepreneurship and cultural conservation in case of support structures are created. Thus, the study reveals the importance of institutional coordination, particularly that destination management organizations can align the culinary assets to the national tourism strategies. As seen, there exists the need to amalgamate policy frameworks which interconnect tourism, agricultural and cultural sectors to ensure that they are consistent in development.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored how destination competitiveness through the indigenous culinary system can be enhanced using gastronomy tourism in the context of Bangladesh.

The findings reveal that Bangladesh has a rich and diverse gastronomic culture which can be exploited as a powerful tourism product. The local and international tourist has displayed an interest in immersive and traditional food experiences that are reflective of culture and associated with local culture and identity. Nevertheless, another key disconnect is found in potential versus practice, as well, as indicated in the study.

Indigenous food systems are quite informal and underutilized due to structural constraints, low accessibility and low institutionalization. Absence of policy structures, and integrated governance systems imply that gastronomy tourism cannot contribute to destination competitiveness. Gastronomy tourism is a multidimensional concept, which is based on such dimensions like culture, economy and experience. The effectiveness of its application as a competitive tool, however, does not only rely on the uniqueness of the culinary resources but also on the possibility to transform the culinary resources into structured and accessible tourism products. Thus, by integrating the local food systems into the overall destination policies, the country can be capable of positioning as a unique and culturally diverse tourist destination in the global tourism industry.

Limitations

The study is founded on a qualitative research design whereby in-depth knowledge is prioritized over the generalizability of the statistical figures. Consequently, the results might not be able to reflect all groups of tourists and stakeholders in Bangladesh. The sample size is sufficient to exhaust the themes, but it is quite small, particularly geographically and in the variety of participants. The study was cross-sectional as the data were collected during November 2025 to February 2026. This complicates the process of capturing the change in gastronomy tourism practices over the years. Subjective bias is an element of self-reported data, whereby the participants might have a different interpretation of the experience or give the socially desirable outcome. The research relies on indigenous food systems, although quantitative economic effects are not thoroughly examined, which could provide additional details about the role of gastronomy tourism in developing a country.

Recommendations

The following contextually-based recommendations can be proposed based on the findings and analysis:

Strategic Development

- Developing the national gastronomy tourism strategy in which indigenous cuisine becomes one of the main components of destination branding and competitiveness.
- Integrating gastronomy tourism with other tourism industries such as cultural, rural and heritage tourism and generating combined and diversified tourism products.
- Policy and Institutional Measures.



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- Enhancing destination management organizations to organize stakeholders and to have policy coherency across sectors.
- Creating specific policies which favor small-scale food entrepreneurs and local sellers, such as money incentives and capacity-building initiatives.
- Infrastructure and Accessibility
- Creating systematic campaigns like culinary trails, food festivals and guided gastronomic tours to enhance availability and exposure of indigenous cuisine.
- To boost tourist confidence and satisfaction, investing in improving hygiene standards, food safety regulations and service quality.
- Community Engagement
- Supporting community-based models of gastronomy tourism that will be actively involved in planning and implementation.
- Making sure to have fair benefit-sharing processes in order to promote inclusive economic growth and cultural sustainability.

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