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The connection between cultural tourism and VFR tourism from immigrant hosts' perspectives

Cultural tourism study flourished after World War II (Richards, 2018) and Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) tourism drew considerable attention in academia since 1990 (Yousuf & Baker, 2015). The former involves both physical aspects (e.g. heritage sites, monuments and so on) and social aspects (e.g. the way of life of people) of the destination's culture. Here, the motivation for tourists is the culture or the elements of culture (Cohen, 1972) where the tourists may explore the heritage sites (Ashworth & Turnbridge, 1990) or specific attractions (Richards, 1996). The physical and social elements of a destination's culture not only provide motivation (Hughes, 200) and activity sources (Petroman et al., 2013) or both (McKercher & du Cros, 2003) to tourists, but also help to add meanings to those cultural elements (Richards, 2018). On the other hand, VFR tourism is about the shared experiences of visitors and residents who have a prior relationship (Griffin, 2013). Though travelers' primary motivation may be to meet their friends or relatives, experiencing the host community culture would be another motivation for them (Silberberg, 1995). Here cultural tourism is largely defined as experiencing the way of life of a destination. The first group of participants in the study of VFR tourism are the immigrants who left their land of birth to a new destination and became residents. Other participants, the visitors, are the friends or relatives of the immigrants who may or may not be from the immigrants' former country and thus term visiting friends and relatives tourism is about experiences between visitors and residents who have a prior relationship.

Literatures on VFR tourism have found a close relation with migration (Griffin, 2017) as immigrants tend to visit their former home communities and are also visited by their friends or relatives in the migrated places. During their visit to a place the visitors are generally exposed to different cultural attractions (e.g. festivals, events, sites and places of importance) by their hosts' influence. However, the existing literatures have not considered the connection between VFR and Cultural tourism in the same frame. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the connection between VFR and cultural tourism from the immigrant hosts' perspectives of GTA, Ontario, Canada and how these hosts connect themselves and their visitors to the local culture through the interactions of different cultural elements. These interactions include all the elements that represent the way of life of local people which may range from visiting cultural attractions (e.g. sites, monuments and places), experiencing events, attending festivals, tasting foods and so on. In order to meet these objectives, Bangladeshi origin adult immigrants of Greater Toronto Area (GTA) who have hosting experiences will be considered as the population of interest. The study includes a single immigrant community to grasp the depth understanding of that culture and its connection with VFR tourism. Hence the depth understanding of a single culture would allow the researchers to replicate the method and compare it with other cultures.

The sample size for this study will be 25 individuals who will meet the criteria and will be recruited through social media group (Facebook) of the Bangladeshi community in the GTA. The recruitment post will be published in the feed of Facebook group with the approval of the group admin. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted for data collection. The interview guide will cover the participants' experiences of adopting the new culture, the way of connecting themselves with it and forming a potentially hybrid culture, their hosting experiences, the way they share and interpret the new local culture with their visitors, and how the experiences of hosting affect them in their settlement process. The data for this study will be collected in September and October 2019 at the places of participant's convenience or

at Ryerson University research facilities. The high quality ethical standard will be maintained to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The study will use the grounded theory framework for analyzing the qualitative data (Interview responses). The theoretical sampling will allow the researcher to simultaneously collect, code, and analyze data. It will also guide in deciding on what data to collect next and from where to collect them. Data collected through interview will be coded after reviewing transcripts and/or field notes and will be given labels as these data will be treated as potential indicators of concepts which will then be compared to develop theory. The research will break down, examine, conceptualize and categorize data to yield concepts which will then be grouped into categories. Later, relationship among these categories will be made and validated.

The analysis of data is expected to provide a set of well-developed categories that are related to form a theoretical framework to describe the connection between cultural tourism and VFR tourism. The UNWTO (2018) report claimed the continuous expansion of cultural tourism. The connection of cultural tourism with VFR tourism will strengthen the claim as VFR tourism asks for more visits of tourists to a destination for experiencing the destination's culture. It will help to boost up local business because more visits call for more products and services. The visitors will not only experience the culture, they will consume the products and services of the places as well. The service industry (e.g. hotels, restaurants, transportation companies, tour operators) will be benefited from high volume of visitors. Again, the visitors will spend their money on buying products for their necessities or as a token on souvenirs which is anticipated to expand the local retail business. The findings of the study are also hoped to develop an approach to practice cultural tourism and VFR tourism together with implications for tourism marketers, service providers, and agencies working with immigrant communities. The understanding would develop tourism which is more aligned with community interest and would contribute to community development as a whole.

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